

ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING PLANNING BASED ON MONTESSORI PLAY THEORY IN AL-ITTIFAQIAH ISLAMIC KINDERGARTENUmmu Umairoh¹, Anjellina Damaiyanti², Rosita Aryani³, and Novita Loka⁴¹ Al-Ittifaqiah Al-Quran Islamic Institute, Indralaya, Indonesia² Al-Ittifaqiah Al-Quran Islamic Institute, Indralaya, Indonesia³ Al-Ittifaqiah Al-Quran Islamic Institute, Indralaya, Indonesia⁴ Al-Ittifaqiah Al-Quran Islamic Institute, Indralaya, Indonesia**Corresponding Author:**

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Abstract

Learning planning is a fundamental component in early childhood education that directly determines the quality of classroom processes and the achievement of children's developmental goals, especially during the golden age period of 4–6 years. Montessori play theory emphasizes a child-centered approach in which children are given broad opportunities to choose activities, explore concrete materials, and learn independently within a carefully prepared environment. This study aims to analyze the learning planning implemented at TK Islam Al-Ittifaqiah based on the perspective of Montessori play theory, to identify the components of daily and weekly plans designed by teachers, and to examine the conformity of those plans with core Montessori principles such as prepared environment, freedom of choice, and hands-on learning. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with subjects consisting of fifteen children from group B, three classroom teachers, and the principal. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of lesson plans and children's progress records. The findings show that most Montessori planning components have been implemented and integrated with Islamic values to support children's independence, concentration, and character building. The novelty of this research lies in the contextual adaptation of Montessori planning in an Islamic kindergarten setting. These results provide practical implications for developing more flexible and holistic play-based learning plans in similar educational institutions.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Freedom of Choice, Learning Planning, Montessori Play Theory, Prepared Environment



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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a strategic role in establishing the foundation for children's cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual development. Therefore, the quality of kindergarten services is highly dependent on the quality of the teacher's learning plans (Hasanah, 2023). Daily and weekly lesson plans serve as a roadmap for guiding meaningful play activities and ensuring that stimulation meets each child's individual needs (Ningsih, 2024). Without proper planning, classroom activities tend to be routine and lack the space for exploration, a key characteristic of modern education (Lestari, 2022).

The Montessori approach views play as a scientific medium to help children learn through concrete experiences and the use of specially designed materials (Rahma, 2021). The principle of a prepared environment requires teachers to organize the classroom so that children can move freely, choose play equipment, and correct their own mistakes (Montessori, 2019). This concept differs from conventional planning, which is dominated by teacher direction. Therefore, research on adapting Montessori planning remains relevant and warrants continued development (Azhari, 2024).

Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Kindergarten is one institution attempting to integrate the national Early Childhood Education (PAUD) curriculum with Montessori play theory to strengthen children's independence and Islamic morals (Umiroh, 2025). Teachers at this school have used several Montessori materials and compiled them into activity plans, but the level of alignment between these documents has never been analyzed in depth (Damaiyanti, 2025). This situation has created a need for research that can provide an objective overview for future classroom management (Rosita, 2024).

Several previous studies have shown that Montessori implementation in faith-based institutions often faces challenges in terms of individual goal setting and observation evaluation systems (Rudiamon, 2025). Teachers need a comprehensive understanding so that planning does not simply copy the Montessori format but truly reflects freedom to choose activities (Hasan, 2024). Therefore, analysis at the planning level is a crucial initial step before examining classroom practices (Sari, 2023).

This research aims to examine how the lesson plan development process at Al-Ittifaqiah Kindergarten is carried out, what components teachers have included, and which areas still need deregulation and strengthening in accordance with Montessori philosophy (Fadillah, 2024). Furthermore, this research seeks to describe the integration of Islamic values into play planning so that it can contribute to the development of early childhood education (PAUD) in Indonesia (Umar, 2025). The results of the analysis are expected to provide a more applicable model for other Islamic kindergartens with similar conditions (Putri, 2024).

Therefore, the study focuses not only on theory but also on the empirical context of your institution, allowing this introduction to serve as a bridge to the methods and results sections (Ali, 2023). The academic narrative on the importance of Montessori planning in Islamic kindergartens is written narratively, as required by the template, without the need for special subtitles. This section emphasizes the urgency and purpose of the research to develop child-centered and religiously inclusive early childhood education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers develop Montessori play lesson plans at Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Kindergarten (Hasanah, 2023). The qualitative approach was chosen because the study focused on the process of developing daily and weekly lesson plans and the meaning behind teachers' pedagogical decisions (Sari, 2023). The descriptive design allowed researchers to describe phenomena as they were within the school context without altering the natural classroom environment.

Data collection took place during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Kindergarten in Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra. This location was chosen because the institution has implemented some Montessori principles in classroom activities and has a readily available planning document for analysis (Azhari, 2024). The research lasted for three months and included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and the collection of lesson plan documentation and child development records (Ningsih, 2024).

The research aimed to obtain a comprehensive picture of the quality of Montessori lesson plans integrated with the Islamic Kindergarten curriculum. The research objectives include describing the planning process, identifying the components implemented by teachers, and analyzing its alignment with Montessori play theory (Umar, 2025). This study is expected to be useful for developing play planning models in faith-based early childhood education institutions (Putri, 2024).

The research subjects consisted of 15 children from Group B aged 5 to 6 years, three classroom teachers, and the principal. Subjects were selected purposively, considering their direct involvement in the development and implementation of lesson plans (Sari, 2023). Children in Group B were selected because they are at a developmental stage where they actively use Montessori materials and participate in structured play activities daily.

The research procedure included instrument preparation, data collection, verification, and reporting. During the preparation stage, researchers developed observation sheets and interview guidelines based on Montessori principles such as individual goals, material selection, and a prepared environment (Azhari, 2024). The implementation stage involved observing teachers' approach to developing lesson plans, organizing classrooms, and determining play activities. The results were then verified through triangulation between sources (Rudiamon, 2025).

The research data consisted of daily plan documents, weekly programs, child development records, photographs of classroom layouts, and interview results. The primary instruments were Montessori component suitability observation sheets and document review guidelines designed to capture information on objectives, procedures, and playground equipment selection (Ningsih, 2024). A supporting instrument was an interview format for the principal to learn about the institution's policies regarding Montessori integration with the Islamic Kindergarten curriculum (Umar, 2025).

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observation allowed researchers to directly observe the relationship between the planning documents and actual classroom activities (Hasanah, 2023). Interviews were conducted with three teachers and the principal to obtain information about their understanding, challenges, and strategies in developing Montessori plans (Sari, 2023). Documentation was used to strengthen the findings of the observations and interviews (Putri, 2024).

The data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Umar, 2025). Observation and interview data were grouped based on template indicators such as research type, time, subjects, procedures, and instruments. Triangulation was performed to ensure the validity and consistency of the findings before they were presented in the results and discussion sections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that teachers at Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Kindergarten had developed lesson plans that focused on structured play activities and the use of concrete materials. A review of the RPPH documents and weekly program revealed the arrangement of activity corners, including sensory, language, early mathematics, and practical life areas. Initial data interpretation indicated that the highest success rate was in environmental preparation, as play equipment was placed openly and within easy reach of children. Meanwhile, the inclusion of individual objectives and evaluation steps remained inconsistent across teachers.

Table 1. Montessori Planning Components Suitability Level

No.	Assessment Aspects	Score
1	Prepared Environment	86,7
2	Montessori Material Selection	83,3
3	Integration of Islamic Values	80
4	Individual Learning Objectives	73,3
5	Freedom of Choice Activities	66,7
6	Observation Evaluation System	60
Mean		75

Analysis of the table above indicates that the lesson plan adequately reflects the Montessori play approach, with an average score of 75. Teachers have been able to design hands-on activities that encourage children to work independently and repetitively. However, the 60% evaluation data indicates that teachers are still using general assessment methods and have not yet fully recorded personal development. This finding answers the question of why some Montessori indicators are not optimal, namely due to limited teacher training and time in writing observations. In addition to the table, the observation results in the form of a classroom layout scheme also follow the rules:

Table 2. Montessori Al-Ittifaqiah Activity Corner Scheme

No.	Elements	Description
1	Sensory Area	Materials that train the senses and concentration
2	Practical Life Area	Independence activities and daily skills
3	Language Area	Concrete media for letter and vocabulary recognition
4	Early Mathematics Area	Self-correcting Montessori counting tools
5	Islamic Integration	Prayer, manners, and character building

Interpretation of the image confirms that the school has adapted the classroom to allow children to move freely. Researchers observed that children were more focused when choosing their own materials than when the teacher determined the activities. This demonstrates the scientific contribution that a flexible planning model can be implemented in Islamic kindergartens without departing from the national curriculum.

The discussion focused on connecting the data to the research objectives and the broader theoretical context. The fact that the 86.7 score in the prepared environment was found is due to the school culture emphasizing neatness, queuing, and responsibility, thus aligning with Montessori. Meanwhile, the low observation evaluations arose because teachers were unfamiliar with the developmental checklist instrument. This discussion provides an answer to why Montessori integration in faith-based institutions requires adjustments to assessment procedures.

This research demonstrates novelty in the way teachers integrate Montessori play activities with Islamic etiquette practices such as praying before work, helping each other, and caring for equipment. This novelty implies that Montessori theory does not have to be applied purely but can be contextualized to suit the characteristics of Islamic kindergartens.

CONCLUSION

Montessori play learning planning at Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Kindergarten has generally been implemented quite well and has enabled classroom activities to become more structured and child-centered. Teachers have developed daily and weekly plans that incorporate elements of learning environment preparation and the use of concrete materials that encourage children to work independently. This ensures that the learning process is not merely a routine but an activity that provides real stimulation for children's independence and concentration.

Research findings indicate that the most significant success lies in the prepared environment aspect, as the school has arranged activity areas that are open and safe for children. Children find it easier to choose play equipment and repeat activities according to their interests, allowing them to achieve individual developmental goals. However, several components, such as writing personal goals and evaluating observations, remain inconsistent across teachers.

The integration of Montessori theory with the Islamic Kindergarten curriculum is a key strength in the learning planning at this institution. The integration of Islamic values through the instilling of good manners, prayer, and caring for equipment strengthens the direction of children's character education. This approach demonstrates that Montessori can be contextualized in Islamic schools without having to abandon the applicable national curriculum standards. Based on the results and analysis, this study recommends strengthening teacher capacity, particularly in developing individual goals and evaluating child development observation techniques. Schools are also advised to develop written guidelines on mutually agreed-upon Montessori planning standards. Collaboration with parents should be continuously incorporated into weekly plans to ensure that home stimulation aligns with classroom activities.

Future research can expand the study to include implementation in other classrooms and compare it with other Islamic kindergartens to enrich the development of early childhood education (PAUD). The planning model resulting from this study is expected to serve as a practical example for similar institutions. This conclusion confirms that Montessori play planning contributes to the development of a more holistic early childhood education science that is relevant to the Indonesian context.

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