

Internalization Of Magic Words To Develop Children's Socio-Emotional Development At Kindergarten It Mu'adz Bin Jabal Terengan Tanak Ampar

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the process of internalizing magic words (please, sorry, excuse me, thank you), identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and analyze their impact on children's social-emotional development at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study research type. The research subjects were the school principal, teachers, and 9 Group B children, consisting of 3 boys and 6 girls. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results showed that: (1) The process of internalizing magic words has been well internalized through the methods of modeling, habituation, positive reinforcement, repetition, and learning integration. (2) Supporting factors include the consistency of the school environment, teacher role modeling, and parental support, while inhibiting factors include a lack of habituation at home, differences in parenting styles, and children's limited spontaneous awareness. (3) The impact of internalizing magic words on children's social-emotional development is evident in the improved ability to cooperate, manage emotions, demonstrate empathy, and exhibit polite and courteous attitudes in interacting with peers and teachers. Thus, the internalization of magic words is proven effective in supporting the social-emotional development of early childhood and shaping good social character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is an institution that fosters children by providing stimulation through play while learning, which aims to develop children's potential in the golden age. Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is an institution that specifically facilitates children from birth to six years of age with the main goal of optimizing the important period in the development of the child's brain and character (Kurniawan, 2025: 109). Based on Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is organized to develop the potential of students to become faithful people, pious, have noble character, and independent. PAUD institutions function as a central forum in shaping the social, emotional, and behavioral development of children from an early age, which will provide a strong foundation for the child's social life in the future (Zurviana, 2025: 385).

The importance of developing social and emotional aspects in early childhood lies in their ability to develop independent individuals, capable of cooperation, positive interactions, and the ability to adapt to others in their environment. Between the ages of 4 and 6, children are in a critical period where social,

emotional, cognitive, and language development experience a significant surge (Muchlisah, 2026: 48). These fundamental aspects require serious stimulation and attention because they are the primary provision for children to face the dynamics of the social environment. Theoretically, the internalization of character values, such as "magic words," can be understood through Thomas Lickona's character education components, which include moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral understanding, and moral behavior. Children are not only required to know when to say "Sorry," "Please," "Excuse me," and "Thank you," but also to feel the urgency of empathy and ultimately express it in spontaneous actions (Yustina, 2024: 12).

TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal is a pre-school institution under the auspices of the Ibnu Jabal Islamic Boarding School, located in Terengan Tanak Ampar Hamlet, North Lombok. This institution combines the National Curriculum with the Integrated Islamic Curriculum through the Tahfidz program, daily prayers, introduction to hadith, and Islamic etiquette. Learning is designed using a thematic approach, play centers (learning by playing), as well as habituation and role models. Based on the results of preliminary observations conducted by researchers at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal, it was found that teachers have attempted to implement "magic word" education through reading exemplary stories and daily habits. Teachers routinely say "please" and "thank you" when giving and receiving assignments, but the facts in the field show that the use of these magic words has not yet emerged spontaneously from the children's internal awareness. Children are still very dependent on external reminders (prompting) from teachers.

Several previous studies have examined similar phenomena. Wiranti and Suningsih (2025: 10) demonstrated that the use of storybooks with the four magic words positively impacted the politeness of 5–6-year-old children. Similarly, Cinde Adia Dinigsih and Riyadi (2024: 22) also emphasized that the implementation of the five magic words is highly effective in shaping students' character at the elementary school level. Reinforcing the urgency of this issue, a more recent study by Khodijah et al. (2025: 20) found that consistent habituation of the four magic words significantly improved politeness among Group A PAUD children, while Nurfadila et al. (2023: 45) showed that habituation of "please," "thank you," and "sorry" measurably increased children's polite speech, though both studies still relied primarily on quantitative pre-test/post-test designs rather than an in-depth qualitative account of how the habit actually forms. This growing but still narrowly framed body of recent evidence underscores the urgency of the present study. However, previous studies tended to focus on media interventions (such as storybooks and films) or quantitative measurement of learning outcomes. Research that thoroughly examines the process of internalizing magic words qualitatively, as well as exploring in depth the ecological factors that support and hinder this character formation in an integrated Islamic school environment, is still very limited. Departing from this gap, this study aims to describe the process of internalizing magic words in children, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and comprehensively analyze the impact of internalizing magic words on the social and emotional development of children at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study approach. Qualitative research methods are based on the post-positivism paradigm, which aims to examine the natural conditions of objects, with the researcher acting as a key instrument (Sugiyono, 2022: 15). The case study approach was chosen because this research explores specific phenomena that occur in a specific context. In-depth and intensive in a real-life context, namely the process of internalizing magic words in an institution with special characteristics, namely TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal.

This research was conducted at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal, Terengan Tanak Ampar Hamlet, Pemenang District, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, from May to June 2026. The subjects in this study were determined using a purposive sampling technique, which included the Principal, Class Teachers, and 9 children aged 5-6 years (Group B) consisting of 3 boys and 6 girls. The number of nine children was chosen because it represented the entire Group B class at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal, allowing the researcher to observe the internalization process for every child in that class rather than a sample drawn from a larger population, which is appropriate for a case study design seeking

an in-depth, whole-class understanding of the phenomenon rather than statistical generalization. The nine child informants varied in their initial level of magic-word use at the start of the study: three children (including SR) already showed frequent spontaneous use of at least one magic word, four children (including ALY, FZ, and IB) used the words only when prompted by the teacher, and two children (including HY) rarely used the words even with prompting, so that the group as a whole captured the full range of internalization stages described later in the findings. The Principal and Class Teachers were included as informants because they were directly responsible for designing and implementing the daily habituation program and were therefore best positioned to explain its rationale, while the children were the direct subjects of the internalization process being studied. The researcher positioned himself as participatory in the classroom during the learning process to obtain in-depth data regarding the children's social dynamics.

The data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data comes directly from the results of interactions, interviews, and observations of student, teacher, and principal behavior. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) document, anecdotal notes, child development portfolios, and supporting literature. Data collection techniques are carried out through: (1) Participatory Observation, which was conducted in 9 meetings to observe the moments of pronouncing magic words and teacher strategies; (2) In-depth Interviews, which were conducted face-to-face with the principal, teachers, and parents of students; and (3) Documentation Study.

The selection of informants followed specific criteria for each role. The Class Teacher informant was selected because she was the homeroom teacher directly responsible for Group B and had taught the class for the full academic year in which the study was conducted, giving her first-hand familiarity with each child's development of magic-word use. The Principal was selected as an informant because she was responsible for formulating the school's Islamic habituation policy and for supervising its implementation across classes, providing an institutional perspective that complemented the teacher's classroom-level account. The research procedure itself was carried out in four systematic stages over the May-June 2026 period. In the preparatory stage, the researcher obtained research permission from the school, held an initial coordination meeting with the Principal and Class Teacher to agree on the observation schedule, and piloted the observation sheet during one non-recorded session. In the data collection stage, participatory observation was conducted across nine scheduled meetings following the class's regular daily routine, in-depth interviews were conducted individually with the Principal, the Class Teacher, and the parents of the nine children after the observation period concluded, and supporting documents (RPPH, anecdotal notes, and portfolios) were collected in parallel. In the data processing stage, field notes, interview transcripts, and documents were organized and coded according to the four stages of magic-word internalization identified in this study. Finally, in the verification stage, preliminary findings were cross-checked with the Class Teacher and Principal through member checking to confirm that the researcher's interpretation matched the informants' own understanding of the children's development.

The collected data were then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014: 14), which consists of four main stages: Data Collection, Data Condensation, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing/Verification. To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, the researchers applied the Source Triangulation technique (comparing data from teachers, principals, and parents), Technical Triangulation (cross-checking observation data, interviews, and documentation), and Member Check with informants to ensure the appropriateness of data interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Description of Research Results

Based on data analysis from triangulation of sources and techniques, this study reveals the dynamics of the internalization of magic words at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal. This process does not occur instantly, but rather through a series of systematic stages centered on interactions between educators and students.

3.1.1 The Process of Internalizing Magic Words

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The magic words instilled include four polite expressions: "Please," "Sorry," "Excuse me," and "Thank you." The internalization process is carried out through several interrelated methods, namely:

- **Teacher Exemplary Behavior (Modeling):** Teachers consistently model behavior both verbally and nonverbally. Verbally, they greet children in a friendly manner, say "please" when asking them to tidy up their toys, say "thank you" when they help, and boldly say "sorry" if they make a mistake. Nonverbally, they demonstrate respect, listen attentively, and shake hands with children every morning.
- **Habituation in SOP:** Magic words are integrated into daily Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). During opening activities, children are introduced to queuing and greeting each other. During core activities, teachers remind them to use the word "please" when sharing stationery. During transitions (to the restroom/eating), children are introduced to saying "excuse me" and "thank you."
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Every time a child independently or with help says the magic word, the teacher immediately reinforces the form of verbal praise (for example: "Masyaallah, you are very clever at saying please").

Through these methods, observations show that children experience four phases of internalization: (1) The stage of recognizing the meaning of words; (2) The stage of getting used to it with guidance (still needs to be...*prompting* teacher); (3) The Stage of Spontaneity Emergence (children begin to say magic words without being reminded); and (4) The Stage of Full Internalization (becoming a character). Currently, the majority of students in group B are between stages 2 and 3, where the words "Thank you" and "Please" often appear spontaneously, while "Sorry" and "Excuse me" still require reminders.

3.1.2 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The success of this character formation process is influenced by ecological factors of the school and family. **Supporting Factors include:** (1) Consistent teacher role models, where teachers not only teach but become central figures of behavior; (2) Programmed habituation through religious integration; (3) Positive reinforcement that psychologically makes children feel appreciated; (4) Islamic school environment that emphasizes noble morals; (5) Structural support from the Principal. On the other hand, **Inhibiting Factors** includes: (1) Inconsistency of the home environment, where interview results show that parents rarely make magic words a habit at home so that children are confused about behavioral standards; (2) Children's dependence on reminders from teachers; (3) Differences in temperament (there are shy children and there are impulsive children); and (4) Limited study hours at school which are not commensurate with the children's time at home.

3.1.3 Impact on Social Emotional Development

Based on in-depth observations of 9 children (such as subjects ALY, FZ, AF, IB, HY, SR, SH, ND, FH), the internalization of magic words has a real impact on their social-emotional behavior. Children who previously tended to be egocentric and easily grab toys now begin to understand the concept of queuing and borrowing by saying "Please". Children find it easier to control their anger because they learn to admit mistakes through the word "Sorry". Specifically, the impact is seen in: (1) A drastic increase in prosocial behavior such as lending things; (2) An increase in the ability to regulate emotions during conflicts with friends; and (3) The growth of early empathy seeds when seeing friends in difficulty. Children like SR show extraordinary progress with spontaneous pronunciation in almost all contexts, although some other children (such as HY and FZ) still need intensive guidance.

3.2 Discussion

These field findings confirm the basic principles of *Behaviorism Theory* from B.F. Skinner, where children's polite behavior is formed strongly due to the circulation of *positive reinforcement* (positive reinforcement) from the teacher (Putri, 2023: 62). Giving appreciation ("Masyaallah", "Great") serves as a catalyst that multiplies the child's motivation to repeat the use of the magic word. In addition, the phenomenon of successful role models at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal is very much in

line with *Social Learning Theory* from Albert Bandura, who asserted that children learn moral values most effectively through observation and imitation of *role models* around them. Teachers, as positive authority figures, have a very high imitation power for children aged 5-6 years.

From Vygotsky's cognitive development perspective, the process experienced by children represents a transition from interpersonal to intrapersonal functioning (Ani, 2026: 5). Children initially say "Thank you" solely because of external encouragement (reminders from teachers). However, over time, this function transforms into an internal awareness in which the child says the word because he understands the essence of respecting others. This is a manifestation of social-emotional maturity. Furthermore, the constraints of parental inconsistency at home are empirical confirmation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, where the incongruity between *microsystems*, schools, and families will slow the rate of internalization of values (Ayu & Lestari, 2025: 42). Therefore, synergistic communication between schools and parents is necessary to bridge this gap in habituation.

The results of this study complement and expand on the findings of Fatria et al. (2024: 235) and Aprily (2023: 14), who stated that the four magic words are crucial instruments in character formation.

While previous research focused more on program outcomes, this study demonstrates that the methodological process (integrating standard operating procedures (SOPs), role models, and Islamic reinforcement) is key. Its impact extends beyond polite language skills to children's emotional dimensions, including improved self-regulation, decreased egocentric behavior, and increased social empathy in the classroom (Iswinarti, 2025: 33).

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, three main conclusions can be drawn. *First*, the internalization of magic words at TK IT Mu'adz Bin Jabal has been structured and integrated through teacher role models, daily practice in standard operating procedures (SOPs), positive reinforcement, and the integration of religious values. The children progress from simply recognizing the words to spontaneous pronunciation. *Second*, the program's success is supported by the school's Islamic environment, consistent teacher role models, and regular appreciation. However, its implementation is hampered by a lack of synchronized parenting at home, as well as the inherent passive or impulsive tendencies of some children. *Third*, internalizing magic words appears to have a meaningful, though not yet conclusively established, impact on children's social and emotional development within the scope of this case study. This is characterized by an observed increase in the ability to regulate emotions, the growth of prosocial behaviors (such as waiting in line, sharing, and helping friends), and a stronger sense of empathy and responsibility for mistakes through apologizing.

4.2 Suggestion

For schools and teachers, it is recommended to maintain this habituation program by injecting more varied media, such as the method of *role-playing* or an appreciation star board, to stimulate children's extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, especially for the habit of using the words "Excuse me" and "Sorry," which are still difficult. For parents, it is hoped that they can build a parenting commitment that aligns with school values by actively practicing the use of magic words in the family environment, considering that the family is a child's first ecosystem. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal research to measure the retention of this character during the child's transition to elementary school, and use quantitative methods or quasi-experiments to obtain more measurable comparative data.

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