

Introducing the Wonders of Nature: A Collaboration of Religion and Science for Early Childhood

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Abstract: This research explores how introducing the wonders of nature through the collaboration of religion and science can enhance early childhood education. Utilizing a qualitative approach and library research, it investigates theories related to child development, religious education, and science instruction for young children. The focus is on how integrating religion and science can promote environmental awareness and spiritual values from an early age. The results indicate that religious education and science teaching complement one another. Religious values such as gratitude, responsibility, and respect for nature provide a strong moral foundation, while science education helps children develop a rational understanding of natural phenomena, like the water cycle and photosynthesis. This combined approach not only fosters intellectual growth but also encourages the development of children's environmental consciousness and character. The study also highlights the crucial role that parents and teachers play in holistically merging religious and scientific teachings. A comprehensive curriculum tailored to children's developmental stages is essential for effectively introducing the wonders of nature. This form of education aims to impart both academic knowledge and a sense of responsibility for environmental stewardship. In conclusion, the collaboration between religion and science offers an effective educational model for early childhood, nurturing a generation that is both intellectually and spiritually aware. This is vital for fostering environmental sustainability and equipping children to meet future challenges.

Keywords: Early childhood, wonders of nature, religion, and science.

Introduction

Nature is a life source abundant in beauty and mystery, offering humanity a way to explore its roots and the environment that surrounds it. From magnificent mountains to sprawling oceans, nature exudes tranquility, bringing comfort and inspiring gratitude. Earth's vast array of flora, fauna, and ecosystems exemplifies nature's vital role in maintaining life's equilibrium. By appreciating and understanding nature, humans are encouraged to make thoughtful choices to safeguard it for future generations. Thus, nature is essential for sustaining life and serves as an enriching learning environment, particularly for young children.

Nature's wonders are visible everywhere, through both natural phenomena and the biodiversity they support. Events like rainbows,

rainfall, and seasonal changes captivate and deepen our understanding of the world. For children, observing these marvels can awaken curiosity and stimulate a desire to explore. What may appear simple to adults, like a bird in flight or a blooming flower, is often mesmerizing to a child. Therefore, allowing children to observe and learn about nature's wonders encourages an early appreciation and care for the environment.

In today's urbanized world, the importance of introducing young children to nature has only intensified. Urbanization and limited green spaces mean that many children have restricted access to natural environments, spending more time indoors and with technology. Yet, interacting directly with nature greatly benefits children's physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development. Early exposure to nature helps children grow with a

balanced understanding of both the modern world and the natural one.

Outdoor play enhances children's gross motor skills, like jumping, running, and climbing, while also strengthening fine motor skills, such as hand coordination and dexterity. Activities like crawling, gathering leaves or stones, and handling small objects support these skills. Additionally, interacting with natural elements like sand, water, and soil enriches children's sensory and fine motor development (Aliriad et al., 2024, p. 129). Nature-based activities also build cognitive skills, social-emotional growth, cause-and-effect comprehension, observational skills, creativity, focus, and imagination (Yıldırım & Akamca, 2017, p. 1). Nature meets a variety of human needs, from the simplest to the most complex (Sudarman et al., 2022, p. 21). making it a valuable resource for learning and imagination (Dowdell et al., 2011, p. 31).

Furthermore, nature fosters empathy and compassion in young children. Through interactions with plants, animals, and other natural elements, children learn to value and care for life around them. Those who regularly experience nature often develop a nurturing attitude toward other living beings, even in social settings. They are also more likely to appreciate natural resources and be conscious of environmental preservation. With time, these values become part of their character and personal values.

Exposure to nature also benefits young children's mental well-being. Spending time in natural settings, breathing fresh air, and feeling sunlight promotes calmness and joy. Nature has been shown to lower stress levels and improve focus, both crucial for children's growth. Outdoor activities further support restful sleep and boost immune health. Therefore, introducing children to nature early on establishes a foundation for their physical and mental wellness.

Beyond its health advantages, nature is a rich source of life lessons. Children can observe life cycles, ecosystems, and food chains in a concrete, hands-on way. They witness plant growth, animal behaviors, and the balance within natural ecosystems. Such experiences deepen children's knowledge and inspire a sense of wonder and

respect for nature. Learning through direct contact with nature leaves a more lasting impression than theoretical classroom lessons.

Nature also encourages problem-solving and decision-making abilities. When exploring natural surroundings, children face minor challenges that require independent thinking. For example, finding a path in a forest or figuring out how to cross a small stream encourages creativity and adaptability. These skills are invaluable and help children tackle everyday challenges, whether they involve social interactions or unexpected situations.

Moreover, nature provides a social setting where children can interact and learn alongside their peers. Activities such as hiking, camping, or simply playing in a park become shared experiences that promote teamwork. Children learn to share, help each other, and collaborate toward shared goals. They also develop respect for personal space and learn to care for each other in various contexts. Thus, nature is more than just a playground; it is a place for cultivating social values.

Finally, introducing young children to nature plays a crucial role in cultivating a generation that values environmental conservation. Children accustomed to nature from a young age are more likely to develop a heightened environmental awareness. They grow up understanding that nature is a vital part of life, deserving protection and care. These early, direct experiences in nature help shape children into responsible stewards for the earth's future. Thus, early exposure to nature benefits both individual development and planetary sustainability.

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in establishing the foundational aspects of an individual's life, fostering not only intellectual intelligence but also emotional and spiritual intelligence. During this period, stimulation needs to be maximized, and a holistic approach is essential to support the growth and development of young children in all aspects. One intriguing approach in early childhood education is the integration of religion and science. Religion provides moral and spiritual values, while science offers a rational basis for understanding the natural

world. These two elements complement each other to create a well-rounded and holistic education.

In modern education, religion and science are often perceived as opposing forces. However, their collaboration can bring positive impacts, particularly in early childhood education. One theme that can be introduced to young children is the concept of natural wonders. Through a cohesive teaching approach that integrates religious values and scientific understanding, children not only gain intellectual insights into natural phenomena but also develop a deep respect for the environment, grounded in strong moral principles.

This study examines the role of religion and science in early childhood education, focusing on how their collaboration can help children understand natural wonders, develop character, and foster environmental awareness. The objectives of this study are as follows: first, to explore how the introduction of natural wonders through the collaboration of religion and science impacts young children; second, to explain how this collaboration can cultivate environmental awareness and spiritual values in early childhood; and third, to elucidate the roles of parents and teachers in integrating religious and scientific learning for young children.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review method. A literature review was chosen as it allows the researcher to analyze theories and previous studies related to religious education, science, and early childhood development. The data collected comes from various sources, including books, journal articles, and other relevant documents. This approach enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic discussed, as well as to identify areas where religion and science can complement each other in early childhood education.

Results and Discussion

Introducing Natural Wonders Through the Collaboration of Religion and Science

Introducing natural wonders through the collaboration of religion and science for young children is an effective approach to instilling holistic values. In early childhood, children are in an exploratory phase and have a high level of curiosity about the world around them. Their curiosity is due to rapid brain development at this stage (Qonita et al., 2024, p. 84). Through this approach, they are taught that nature is not merely beautiful scenery but also a divine creation with spiritual significance. On the other hand, scientific knowledge helps them understand various phenomena and encourages logical and rational thinking (Asry, n.d., p. 1) dan berpikir secara logis dan rasional (Buyung & Burhanuddin, 2023, p. 3). This collaboration introduces children to a balanced concept of science and religion in understanding the wonders of nature.

This approach can begin by encouraging children to observe simple things like blooming flowers, the changing colors of the sky, or insects in a garden. Each of these phenomena can be explained from both religious and scientific perspectives. For example, a blooming flower can be described as a sign of God's greatness, creating beautiful life. In science, children can learn that flowers bloom due to photosynthesis, which involves sunlight energy. Thus, they not only learn to observe the beauty of nature but also develop gratitude for God's creation and scientific understanding of natural processes.

Other natural wonders, such as rain, can also serve as an integrated teaching topic of religion and science. From a religious perspective, rain can be seen as a blessing from God, giving life to all beings on Earth. In science, children can be introduced to the water cycle, from ocean evaporation and cloud formation to rainfall. Teaching this concept allows children to understand that natural phenomena are not only scientific processes but also carry profound spiritual meaning. It teaches them to appreciate every element of nature as part of God's creation.

Similarly, the transition between day and night can be an opportunity to teach children about the wonders of nature through religion and science. Religiously, this transition is a sign of God's power governing the universe, while scientifically, children can learn that this is due to Earth's rotation. This collaboration helps children understand that science and religion provide different but complementary explanations. This approach will help them form a broader perspective on the world and the universe.

Introducing natural wonders can also be done through simple activities like gardening or planting together. In these activities, children can be taught to view plants as living beings created by God for human benefit. At the same time, they also learn scientific concepts about plant growth, from seeds to maturity. This religious and scientific approach teaches children that plants must be cared for as they play a vital role in maintaining the natural balance, while also introducing values of responsibility and empathy from an early age.

Observing small animals, such as insects or birds, can also be an engaging topic for teaching children about natural wonders. Religiously, animals are seen as beings that should be respected and treated well. Scientifically, children can learn about ecosystems and the important roles each creature plays in the food chain. This collaboration teaches them that caring for animals is part of respecting God's creation and that every creature has an interconnected function. This attitude helps to foster a generation that cares for the diversity of life forms in nature.

Introducing the universe and solar system can also be part of teaching natural wonders that integrate religion and science. Children can be introduced to concepts of planets, stars, and galaxies, as well as how they are all interconnected within a vast cosmos. Religiously, the universe is often viewed as a sign of God's infinite greatness. Through science, children can learn about rotation, revolution, and gravity, which maintain the solar system's balance. Introducing the universe allows children to recognize a connection between the Quran and science (Rahmawati & Bakhtiar, 2018, p. 203). This collaboration teaches them to admire

the beauty and order of the universe as evidence of God's greatness.

Nature exploration activities, such as walking in a park or observing the night sky, can be a good way to introduce natural wonders to young children. In these activities, parents or teachers can explain that nature is a gift from God that must be preserved. Meanwhile, science can offer explanations about the elements they observe, such as types of plants or natural processes. This approach provides children with the opportunity to connect spiritual values with scientific knowledge in real experiences, making it easier for them to understand.

Using stories or fables can also be an effective way to introduce natural wonders with a religious and scientific approach. Through stories, children can learn religious values (Nazhifa et al., 2023, p. 801) and understand natural phenomena in an enjoyable way (Septiana et al., 2019, p. 6). For instance, a story about a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis can illustrate the process of metamorphosis and the wonder of God's creation. This allows them to learn scientific knowledge and spiritual values in a relevant and engaging context. Such stories reinforce their understanding of nature as something awe-inspiring with deep meaning..

The integration of religious and scientific learning in introducing natural wonders also helps children understand that nature has intrinsic value that must be protected. They learn that damaging nature is both a denial of God's gift and a disruption of the ecosystem's well-crafted balance. In religion, respecting nature is part of faith, while science explains the rational consequences of environmental damage. Children who understand both aspects early on will grow into individuals who are more responsible and aware of the importance of preserving the environment.

Through this collaboration, children are also taught that nature exists not only for exploitation but also for respect. They learn that every living creature has a right to live and thrive according to its purpose. This instills moral and ethical values such as gratitude, responsibility, and empathy. Thus, this religious and scientific education not only introduces them to scientific concepts but also

fosters a character that cares for the environment and other living beings.

Children introduced to natural wonders with a religious and scientific approach from an early age will have a strong moral foundation and robust scientific understanding. They will grow into individuals with critical thinking, respect for nature, and deep spiritual sensitivity. In the future, they will be a generation more prepared to face environmental challenges with responsibility and wisdom. This integration is expected to foster future leaders who value nature and always consider ecological impacts in every decision they make.

The Collaboration of Religion and Science in Fostering Environmental Awareness and Spiritual Values in Early Childhood

The development of environmental awareness and spiritual values in early childhood can be effectively achieved through a harmonious collaboration between religion and science. Religion provides a foundation of ethical and spiritual values (Zain et al., 2024, p. 96), while science offers a rational understanding of natural phenomena (Kristyowati & Purwanto, 2019, p. 185). When well integrated, both can strengthen children's comprehension of the environment and their responsibilities toward it. Religious education instills the concept that nature is a creation of God to be preserved, while scientific education imparts the knowledge needed to protect and conserve the environment.

In religious views, nature is often seen as a manifestation of God's greatness, worthy of respect and care. Religious education can help children perceive nature as a sacred entity that requires preservation. Science, on the other hand, introduces children to fundamental concepts of ecosystems, life cycles, and the negative impacts of human behavior on the environment. With this dual understanding, children can come to see environmental preservation not only as a moral obligation but also as a spiritual commandment to uphold.

Beyond instilling values of respect for nature, the collaboration of religion and science can also foster gratitude and wonder within children

towards the universe. Spiritual values in religion, such as gratitude and reverence, can be enhanced by a scientific understanding of the complexity of life in nature. For example, when children learn about the water cycle or photosynthesis, they may come to appreciate how God created an interconnected system of life. This awareness will help children value nature as something significant, rather than merely an object to be exploited.

Understanding spiritual values through religious and scientific approaches can also strengthen positive character traits in children. Those taught that nature is a gift to be protected, and who learn how nature functions, tend to develop greater empathy and a sense of responsibility. Empathy toward other living beings—humans, animals, and plants—can be nurtured when children realize that all living things play a vital role in the balance of ecosystems. This character-building is crucial for cultivating a generation more mindful of environmental sustainability.

This collaboration can also bridge the perceived divide between religion and science, which are often thought to be at odds. Teaching children from a young age that science and religion can coexist equips them with an understanding that both are equally essential in life. They will not feel pressured to choose between science or religion but will instead comprehend that the two complement each other. This approach can mitigate future cognitive conflicts and encourage openness to new ideas grounded in moral and ethical values.

For effective integration, creative learning strategies are needed, whereby religious and scientific values are conveyed through enjoyable activities. Activities like gardening, observing animals, or simple nature explorations can effectively introduce these concepts. During such activities, teachers or parents can explain how nature is God's creation while teaching the scientific processes underlying plant growth or animal life. Children can better absorb lessons when presented through activities that directly engage them.

Children who gain an early understanding of the collaboration between religion and science in

environmental stewardship are more likely to grow into wise and responsible individuals. Through early education that integrates spiritual values and scientific knowledge, they can develop a more compassionate attitude towards global environmental issues. This is crucial, as future generations will face increasing environmental challenges. By understanding that caring for nature is part of worship and scientific duty, children can establish a solid foundation for contributing to environmental conservation.

In educational approaches that integrate religion and science, teachers and parents have the opportunity to instill the concept of ecological balance as a reflection of God's goodness and greatness. Children can be taught that all elements of nature are interconnected and interdependent and that maintaining this balance is a form of respect for God's creation. An integrated religious and scientific education can help children grasp the concept of harmony within the natural environment, fostering moral values such as empathy, responsibility, and social awareness.

Young children have a high capacity to understand abstract concepts with the help of visual and hands-on approaches, making this collaborative education especially effective when packaged into concrete activities. For example, teachers can invite children to observe insects in a garden or collect fallen leaves, linking these observations to religious lessons on creation and the life cycle. Children will learn that every creature has a role and purpose on Earth, and that they too have a responsibility to appreciate and preserve nature.

This approach can also help children recognize the beauty of nature as a reflection of God's goodness, which is expected to cultivate a sensitivity and appreciation for the environment. Through nature exploration combined with spiritual explanations, children will more easily grasp the concept that nature is a "trust" from God to be safeguarded and conserved. In this regard, science supports religious perspectives by showing how the ecosystem balance can be disrupted by excessive human exploitation. Ultimately, this collaboration can establish a stronger ecological and spiritual awareness within children.

Environmental awareness shaped by the integration of religion and science is essential for addressing future global ecological challenges. If children are taught early on that protecting the environment is both a form of worship and their responsibility, they are more likely to grow into individuals who make wise decisions in managing natural resources. This collaborative education also fosters a generation more prepared to face climate change and environmental degradation through morally and scientifically grounded solutions. This development is crucial for ensuring that future generations can offer solutions that are not only practical but also ethical.

Moreover, this collaborative approach can serve as an essential tool in addressing the spiritual crisis often experienced in modern times. By learning that nature is a manifestation of God that must be preserved, children can gain a deeper sense of purpose in life and avoid excessive consumerism. This education instills values such as compassion, empathy, and simplicity, which are vital in the era of globalization and consumerism. Through the approach of religion and science, children will learn not only about nature but also about how to be responsible and caring human beings.

The Role of Parents and Teachers in Integrating Religious and Scientific Learning for Early Childhood

Parents and teachers play a crucial role in integrating religious and scientific education in early childhood. These two figures are primary sources of knowledge for children during their formative years (Rahman et al., 2022, p. 155), helping them understand the world around them from both spiritual and scientific perspectives. Parents have the opportunity to instill religious values at home, while teachers introduce scientific concepts formally in school. When done harmoniously, the collaboration between parents and teachers in teaching religion and science can provide children with a strong foundation for facing life.

In a family context, parents can teach environmental values through daily activities by instilling religious values related to environmental care. For instance, parents can teach children not to

litter, emphasizing that maintaining cleanliness is part of faith. Children can also be involved in caring for plants at home as a way of appreciating God's creations. These small habits, though simple, help children internalize religious values that will form the foundation of their behavior.

On the other hand, teachers play a role in introducing scientific concepts that complement children's understanding of the importance of preserving the environment. Teachers can provide scientific explanations about life cycles, ecosystems, and how human behavior impacts nature. By imparting this knowledge, children can see the positive impact of their actions on the environment and how their efforts contribute to sustainability. Teachers' involvement in teaching science with religious values has a significant influence on shaping children's awareness.

Integrating religious and scientific learning requires a creative and interactive approach to prevent children from feeling bored (Sofiyulloh, 2022, p. 192). Parents and teachers can create activities that combine these concepts, such as gardening, observing insects, or conducting simple water experiments. In these activities, parents can explain the spiritual concept that water is a blessing from God that must be preserved, while teachers provide scientific explanations of the water cycle. This collaboration allows children to learn holistically, without separating religion and science.

Collaboration between parents and teachers in educating young children on religion and science will be more effective with good communication. Parents and teachers need to share information about the lessons taught at home and school to ensure that children receive consistent learning experiences. Parents can continue the lessons learned at school, while teachers can support the values taught by parents at home. With good communication, parents and teachers can create a conducive and consistent learning environment for children.

As primary figures in early childhood education, parents and teachers also serve as role models, demonstrating respect for both religion and science. Children tend to imitate what they see from adults around them, so parents and teachers

must exhibit attitudes that reflect the values they teach. For example, parents who diligently care for plants at home or teachers who maintain the cleanliness of the school environment provide concrete examples that children can follow. This role modeling strengthens children's religious and scientific learning.

Integrating religious and scientific learning is expected to cultivate a generation with both moral and scientific awareness regarding environmental preservation. Parents and teachers who provide balanced education in religion and science will raise children with strong spiritual values and a sound scientific understanding. In the future, these children will become individuals who contribute positively to environmental preservation and serve as role models for the next generation. This collaboration is essential for creating a generation capable of addressing global challenges with strong values and rational thinking.

To integrate religious and scientific learning, parents and teachers must design interactive and meaningful learning approaches for children. One effective approach is project-based learning or exploration activities that actively involve children. For instance, a vegetable gardening project at home or school can serve as a means for parents and teachers to teach the importance of caring for nature as part of religious values. Parents and teachers can explain that caring for plants is an expression of gratitude to God and that properly tending plants is a responsibility given by God to manage nature.

Parents and teachers can also collaborate by using daily moments as opportunities to instill religious and scientific values. For instance, while strolling through a park or engaging in outdoor recreation, parents can provide simple explanations about the beauty of God's creation, while teachers complement this with scientific aspects, such as photosynthesis or the life cycle of animals encountered. Such collaboration not only educates children but also helps them understand that science and religious values can go hand in hand.

It is crucial for parents and teachers to convey that preserving the environment is a form of respect for God, who created the universe.

Through this approach, children will understand that protecting the environment is not just a scientific concern but also part of their spiritual beliefs and responsibilities. Religious values linked to scientific knowledge help children feel more connected to nature and instill a sense of responsibility to protect it.

The active role of parents and teachers in teaching religious values integrated with science can also foster children's curiosity. An approach based on the wonders of nature will motivate them to delve deeper into God's creations scientifically, such as researching natural phenomena or observing surrounding plants and animals. This curiosity is essential in supporting learning processes and shaping a scientific mindset rooted in religious values. Children will grow into individuals with critical thinking and broad perspectives.

Ultimately, the collaboration between parents and teachers in teaching religion and science affects not only children's knowledge but also their character formation. With a solid religious foundation and adequate scientific knowledge, children can understand their responsibilities toward the environment and society. This collaboration will shape children who care for nature, have a high social spirit, and think rationally and empathetically. The generation formed through this integration will face future challenges with strong values and a mature scientific understanding.

Discussion

The approach of introducing the wonders of nature through collaboration between religion and science for young children opens doors for holistic educational methods, connecting spiritual values with scientific understanding. This type of education not only enriches children's understanding of nature but also fosters respect for God's creations and logical thinking. Children are introduced to the view that nature is a blessing from God that must be protected and appreciated, while science teaches them to understand natural phenomena through rational explanations, such as photosynthesis, the water cycle, and Earth's rotation.

This discussion underscores how the collaboration of religion and science helps instill moral values, empathy, and responsibility in children from an early age. Through this approach, they learn that environmental conservation is not merely an option but a spiritual and scientific responsibility. The concept that nature is God's creation governed by scientific laws also supports children's character formation, teaching them that any action that harms nature goes against moral and ethical values. Moreover, integrating religion and science allows children to understand that these disciplines complement rather than conflict with each other, avoiding future thought conflicts.

Conclusions

Integrating religion and science in introducing the wonders of nature in early childhood has the potential to create a generation that is more environmentally conscious, spiritually grounded, and scientifically proficient. Children taught through this collaborative approach will be more critical and care for environmental sustainability and possess a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between humans, nature, and God. This education prepares them to face future environmental challenges and make wise, morally-based decisions. A harmonious collaboration between parents and teachers in teaching these concepts is crucial to achieving this goal and forming individuals with a solid scientific understanding and deep spiritual depth.

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