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## The Influence of Islamic Storytelling on the Moral Development of a Toddler in Surabaya

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the influence of Islamic storytelling in shaping the moral character of preschool-aged children. Early childhood is considered the *golden age*, a crucial period for cognitive, emotional, and spiritual development; therefore, instilling moral values from an early age is essential. The research employed a Single Subject Research (SSR) approach with an A-B-A design. The subject of the study was a four-year-old child in Surabaya who received an intervention in the form of Islamic storybook readings containing narratives of the Prophets, Companions, and righteous figures. The intervention was carried out over six sessions, each lasting 30–45 minutes. Data were collected using observation sheets on the child's moral behavior as well as pretest and posttest instruments to measure changes before and after the intervention. The results showed an improvement in commendable moral behaviors after the Islamic storytelling intervention. The child demonstrated a better understanding of moral values, imitation of good behavior, and positive responses in daily interactions. The findings conclude that Islamic storytelling can serve as an effective strategy in shaping the moral character of preschool children during their early developmental period. This research provides important implications for parents and educators to utilize Islamic stories as a medium for teaching moral values from an early age.

**Keywords:** Islamic Storytelling, Moral Character, Preschool Children

### INTRODUCTION

Children are a trust (*amanah*) from Allah SWT and a valuable investment for parents. The primary responsibility of parents is to provide the best possible education for their children so that they grow up with noble moral character. A good education from an early age serves as the foundation for shaping the child's character in the future (Ermita Zakiyah, 2022). From an Islamic perspective, moral education does not only encompass cognitive aspects but also includes spiritual and ethical dimensions, which together shape the child's personality into a complete and righteous individual.

The toddler stage, covering the age range of 0–5 years, is known as the *golden age* or the *critical developmental period* in a child's life. During this stage, children are highly receptive to absorbing information from their surroundings, including moral and spiritual values. This period also includes the first 1,000 days of life, which are crucial for determining the quality of a child's growth and development. Children learn through observing, listening, and imitating the behavior of those around them (Safitri, Pangaribuan, & Ismiatun, 2023). Therefore, the attitudes and behaviors of

parents, teachers, and the surrounding environment become the primary references for children in shaping their own attitudes and behaviors.

Children in the *golden age* phase are extremely sensitive to various forms of stimulation; inappropriate words or actions may have a significant negative impact on their future development. Generally, children learn from their environment (Hardianti F & Adawiyah R, 2022). The *golden age* is characterized by rapid growth and development, as well as significant progress in cognitive, emotional, and social domains. This stage forms the initial foundation for the child's later development, as all aspects of growth occur remarkably during this period. It is a unique phase of life, marked by continuous processes of physical growth, maturation, and behavioral refinement (Rahmi & Hijriati, 2021).

The toddler period is considered a crucial stage because the experiences children undergo during this phase have a profound impact on their psychological development. During this stage, the roles of parents, educators, and the social environment become dominant factors in establishing the moral foundation of the child (Rijkiyani, Syarifuddin, & Mauizdati, 2022). Instilling moral values from an early age through guidance, exemplary behavior, and the formation of positive habits is essential to ensure that children grow with virtuous character traits. If moral development is neglected at this stage, children may encounter difficulties in their moral and spiritual growth later in life.

In the context of Islamic counseling, one of the effective methods for instilling moral values is the storytelling technique. In Islamic tradition, storytelling involves narrating the stories of Prophets, Companions, and exemplary figures who embody rich moral and spiritual lessons. These stories capture children's attention and serve as a medium to internalize moral values through the processes of listening, imagining, and emulating the characters within the stories. Thus, story-based Islamic counseling becomes an enjoyable and educational strategy for guiding preschool-aged children.

Based on this description, the present study aims to determine the role of Islamic counseling using storytelling techniques in shaping the moral character of toddlers. The focus of this research is to explore how the implementation of this method influences children's daily behaviors, as well as how children, parents, and teachers respond to the process of Islamic counseling through stories. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of moral education strategies for early childhood, particularly from the perspective of Islamic counseling.

Early childhood refers to children aged 0–6 years, who are in the golden age of development (Dadan, 2021). This golden period is highly sensitive to various stimuli, as inappropriate words or actions may have lasting negative effects on a child's future development. Generally, children learn through their environment (Hardianti F & Adawiyah R, 2022). During this stage, children experience rapid growth and significant development in cognitive, emotional, and social domains. This phase serves as the foundational stage that determines the child's future growth, as all aspects of development occur exceptionally during this period. It is a unique stage of life marked by continuous processes of growth, maturation, and behavioral development (Rahmi & Hijriati, 2021).

## **METHOD**

This study employed a Single Subject Research (SSR) approach with an A-B-A design, where phase A represents the baseline condition before the intervention, phase B indicates the condition during the intervention in the form of Islamic storytelling, and phase A' (A-prime) represents the condition after the intervention was discontinued to observe the consistency of behavioral changes.

The SSR design was selected because it is appropriate for examining behavioral changes in a single subject in depth, particularly in understanding the influence of Islamic storytelling on the moral development of a preschool child.

The subject of this research was a preschool-aged child in Surabaya, selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria: the child was able to listen to simple stories, respond to interactions, and had full parental support throughout the study. The intervention consisted of reading Islamic storybooks containing narratives about the moral conduct of the Prophet Muhammad, his Companions, and other righteous figures. The intervention was conducted over six sessions, each lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. During the sessions, the researcher provided opportunities for the child to respond, such as through simple question-and-answer interactions, to facilitate deeper internalization of moral values.

Data were collected using observation sheets developed based on indicators of early childhood moral behavior, as well as pretest and posttest instruments to measure behavioral changes before and after the intervention. This analysis aimed to clearly demonstrate the influence of Islamic storytelling on the moral character formation of preschool children.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

The study was conducted on a four-year-old preschool child in Surabaya, involving the child's parents and a PAUD (early childhood education) teacher as supporting informants. The Islamic counseling process using the storytelling technique was carried out in six sessions over a period of three weeks, with each session lasting 30–45 minutes. The selected stories focused on the lives of Prophets and Companions, emphasizing values such as honesty, patience, and mutual help.

The observation results revealed noticeable behavioral changes in the child. During the initial sessions, the child tended to be reluctant to share toys and would often cry when their wishes were not fulfilled. However, after the fourth session, the child began to demonstrate positive behaviors, such as sharing food with peers and greeting others politely. These behavioral changes indicate an internalization of moral values derived from the stories heard during the intervention.

Interview results with the parents further supported these findings. The parents reported that the child became more receptive to moral reminders when they were connected to story characters. For instance, when the child became angry, the parents reminded them of the Prophet Muhammad's patience in facing mockery and adversity. The child then attempted to imitate this example by controlling their anger. Likewise, the PAUD teacher confirmed an increase in the child's cooperative behavior during classroom activities.

However, one of the challenges identified was inconsistency at home, particularly when parents occasionally forgot to reinforce the moral messages from the stories in daily interactions. Despite this, a major supporting factor was the parents' active involvement in post-session story discussions, which helped the child relate the learned moral values to real-life situations.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic counseling through the storytelling technique is effective in shaping the moral character (*akhlak*) of early childhood children. Storytelling provides a deep emotional experience, enabling children to internalize moral values through exemplary characters within the stories. This finding aligns with previous research which revealed that Islamic

storytelling positively influences the moral development of young children, particularly in fostering discipline, empathy, and social awareness (Susilowati, 2022).

Parental involvement serves as a crucial factor in strengthening the impact of storytelling. Children tend to imitate moral behavior more quickly when parents not only retell stories but also demonstrate these values through real-life actions. This supports previous studies showing that the internalization of children's moral character is strongly influenced by parenting patterns, especially through role modeling and daily habituation (Astuti, 2023).

In addition, teachers play a strategic role in ensuring the consistency of moral formation. Educators who apply structured storytelling methods can create a learning environment that is both enjoyable and meaningful for young children. Other studies have confirmed that the use of Qur'anic stories as storytelling media is effective in fostering patience, compassion, and religious behavior among children (Widyastuti, 2021).

However, this study also emphasizes the importance of continuity between home and school. Inconsistency in implementing moral values at home can weaken the positive effects gained from Islamic counseling sessions. Therefore, collaboration among counselors, parents, and teachers is the key to successfully nurturing children's moral character in a comprehensive manner. This conclusion is supported by recent research stating that the success of moral education in early childhood largely depends on the synergy between family and school environments (Fadilah, 2020).

Overall, this study suggests that storytelling is not merely a method of narration but an effective medium for building emotional bonds, instilling moral values, and shaping character from an early age. With consistent implementation and strong environmental support, preschool children have the potential to grow into individuals with noble moral character.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that Islamic counseling using the storytelling technique plays a significant role in shaping the moral character of early childhood children. Through the delivery of Islamic stories rich in moral values and exemplary figures, children are better able to understand, imitate, and internalize behaviors that align with Islamic teachings.

The implementation of storytelling not only provides cognitive understanding but also touches the child's affective dimension, allowing moral values to be instilled from an early age. The role of parents as companions greatly influences the success of this process, as daily interactions serve as a practical space for the actualization of moral values learned from the stories.

Therefore, Islamic counseling based on storytelling can be regarded as an effective strategy to support the development of noble character among preschool-aged children, especially during the *golden age* period of their growth.

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