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Development of Religious Moral Values in Early Childhood Through Exemplary Storytelling Activities at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten, Jambi City

Nur Anisyah[1]; Anisah[2]; Siti Marwah[3]
[1,3]Institut Islam Ma'arif Jambi, Indonesia
[2]UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin, Indonesia
[1]Correspondence Email: anisyahsuid12jmb@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the development of religious moral values in early childhood through exemplary storytelling activities at one single school : Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City. Early childhood represents a critical phase in the formation of character and moral values. Through the storytelling method, children can internalize the moral messages embedded within exemplary narratives. This study employs a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques encompassing observation, interviews, and documentation analysis. The informants in this research comprised three primary groups: teachers, parents, and the participating children at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten. The findings indicate that storytelling activities not only enhance children's comprehension of religious values but also bolster their social and emotional competencies. Consequently, such activities can serve as an effective strategy for character education within early childhood educational settings.

Keywords: *Development; Early Childhood; Religious Morals; Storytelling*

A. Introduction

The development of religious moral values in early childhood constitutes a crucial aspect of education, particularly in Islamic educational institutions. At Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City, exemplary storytelling activities are anticipated to serve as an effective method for instilling religious moral values in children. According to research conducted by Nurani (2020), moral values taught from an early age can foster strong character and noble conduct in children. Storytelling activities not only captivate children's attention but also provide them with a deeper understanding of religious values.

Statistics indicate that 85% of children involved in exemplary storytelling activities demonstrate improved comprehension of religious moral values (Sari, 2021). This underscores the potential of storytelling as an effective tool in religious education for early childhood. Through exemplary narratives, children can learn about honesty, responsibility, and compassion-values that are essential in Islam.

Storytelling activities at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten involve not only teachers but also parents. This aligns with Rahman's (2019) assertion that parental involvement in children's education is vital for reinforcing values taught in school. By listening to the same exemplary stories at home, children can discuss and consolidate their understanding of the moral values presented.

Furthermore, storytelling activities can enhance children's language skills. Children who actively participate in such activities exhibit superior language abilities compared to those who do not. This demonstrates that storytelling benefits not only moral development but also cognitive growth in children. Consequently, exemplary storytelling activities at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City hold substantial potential for developing religious moral values in early childhood. Through an

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engaging and interactive approach, children can learn and comprehend religious values in a more appealing and digestible manner.

Several previous studies highlight the effectiveness of storytelling approaches in developing religious moral values. First, Nurani (2020) found that integrating religious education from an early age through exemplary narratives significantly enhances children's character formation, emphasizing values such as honesty and compassion in an Islamic context. Second, Sari (2021) reported that 85% of early childhood participants in storytelling activities demonstrated improved understanding of moral values, based on national statistical data, underscoring storytelling's role as an incwlusive educational tool. Third, Rahman (2019) emphasized the importance of parental involvement in reinforcing values taught through storytelling, where home-school collaboration leads to sustained behavioral changes in children. These three studies provide an empirical foundation for the current research, though further contextual exploration in specific institutions like Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten is needed.

B. Theoretical Review

1. Development of Religious Moral Values

The development of religious moral values in early childhood is a pivotal element of education that shapes children's character and personality. According to research by Dwyer (2018), introducing moral values early enhances children's social interaction skills and empathy development. Storytelling activities, particularly those involving exemplary narratives, represent an effective method for conveying these values. Through stories, children can grasp religious moral concepts in an engaging and accessible manner.

In the Islamic tradition, character education emphasizes the refinement of the soul to cultivate virtues and eliminate vices, drawing from classical thinkers such as Ibn Miskawayh. His ethical framework, rooted in balancing the soul's faculties-appetitive, irascible, and rational-promotes habituation to virtues like integrity, courage, and generosity from a young age. This involves role modeling, repeated practice, and adherence to shari'a (Islamic law) and sunna (traditions), aiming for moral happiness and proximity to God. Such theories align with religious education by integrating mind and soul, where early training prevents corruption and fosters actions that are fine and good, as seen in the use of prophetic narratives to inspire noble behavior.

Exemplary narratives drawn from various religious sources, such as the Qur'an, the Bible, or other sacred texts, provide concrete examples of virtuous behavior for children to emulate. For instance, the story of Prophet Muhammad, renowned for his noble traits such as honesty, patience, and generosity, can inspire children to adopt similar behaviors. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (2020) indicate that crime rates among adolescents can decrease by up to 30% if they are equipped with robust moral education from an early age. The importance of storytelling in moral value development is also supported by Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which posits that children learn through experiences and interactions with their environment. Storytelling not only aids in understanding moral values but also stimulates children's imagination and creativity. Additionally, these activities enhance language proficiency, a foundational skill for interpersonal communication.

2. Concept of Moral Values in Early Childhood Education

Storytelling excels in conveying moral values by evoking children's emotions and imagination. A study by Hartley (2020) reveals that children engaged in storytelling are more likely to comprehend and retain taught moral values. In this context, exemplary narratives from religious figures can serve as an effective tool for instilling these values. A concrete example is the story of Prophet Isa, which illustrates compassion and sacrifice. By narrating this story, children can learn the importance of sharing and assisting others. Data suggest that children exposed to such values tend to exhibit altruistic behaviors in their environments (Smith & Jones, 2021). This indicates that teaching moral values through stories extends beyond theory to produce tangible impacts on children's behavior.

Within Islamic perspectives on moral education, figures like al-Ghazali emphasize the purification of the heart and soul as foundational to ethical development. His teachings advocate for nurturing children as divine trusts, instilling good habits (adab) through guidance from parents, teachers, and peers to avoid vices and embrace virtues. This involves integrating knowledge with action,

where moral education purifies intentions, fosters self-discipline, and aligns behavior with divine will, preventing spiritual corruption and promoting inner peace and societal harmony from early childhood.

However, not all exemplary narratives are suitable for every age group. Thus, educators must select stories appropriate to children's comprehension levels. Educators should adapt delivery methods to make stories more engaging and comprehensible, such as by incorporating props or visual aids. Research by Anderson (2022) demonstrates that using media in storytelling can enhance children's interest and understanding of moral values.

In summary, developing moral values through exemplary storytelling represents an effective approach in early childhood education. By selecting appropriate narratives and employing engaging delivery methods, children can learn morality in a enjoyable and meaningful way.

3. Methods of Storytelling Activities in Moral Development

Methods for storytelling activities in developing religious moral values can be implemented in various ways. One commonly used method is storytelling, where educators or adults narrate exemplary tales with expressive emotion. According to research by Ramirez (2021), this method increases the appeal of the story and fosters greater child engagement in the learning process.

In addition to storytelling, another applicable method is role-playing. In this approach, children are invited to enact characters from the stories they hear. Through role-playing, children not only listen but also directly experience the taught moral values. Research by Lee (2020) shows that children involved in role-playing demonstrate deeper understanding of moral values compared to those who merely listen to stories.

The use of visual media can further enrich storytelling experiences. By leveraging images, videos, or props, educators can facilitate easier comprehension of the story's context. A study by Thompson (2023) indicates that children learning with visual media are better able to recall and apply taught moral values. Moreover, it is essential to involve children in post-story discussions. These discussions enable children to reflect on and internalize the learned moral values. According to research by Green (2022), group discussions following storytelling activities can enhance children's critical thinking skills and reinforce their understanding of morality.

By applying diverse methods in storytelling activities, educators can create richer and more meaningful learning experiences for children. This not only aids in moral value comprehension but also equips children with skills necessary to navigate daily life challenges.

C. Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach using a case study method. Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City was selected as the research site due to its flagship program in developing moral values through storytelling activities. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during storytelling sessions, while interviews were held with teachers, parents, and participating children.

Data collection techniques comprised three primary methods: (1) participant observation, conducted over 10 storytelling sessions to document children's engagement, interactions, and immediate responses; (2) semi-structured interviews, held individually with teachers (45-60 minutes each), parents (30-45 minutes), and children (15-20 minutes using age-appropriate questions) to elicit insights on effectiveness and behavioral changes; and (3) documentation analysis, involving review of activity records, lesson plans, and thematic schedules to verify routine implementation. All data were collected over a 3-month period to ensure comprehensiveness.

Data from observations revealed that children exhibited high enthusiasm in engaging with storytelling activities. They actively participated, both in listening and discussing after the stories concluded. This aligns with research by Hasanah (2021), which states that active child participation in storytelling enhances their understanding of taught values. Interviews with teachers provided valuable insights into the activities' effectiveness. Teachers reported that “after participating in storytelling, children showed positive behavioral changes, such as greater politeness and respect for peers.” These

findings support prior research indicating that storytelling contributes to character formation in children (Yusuf, 2020).

Documentation gathered during the research also demonstrated that storytelling activities at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten are conducted routinely and systematically. Each week features a different theme, preventing boredom and sustaining children's anticipation. This is crucial for maintaining interest and ensuring continuous learning of diverse moral values. Through a systematic and planned research method, it is anticipated that the results will offer a clear depiction of developing religious moral values in early childhood via exemplary storytelling at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns and themes systematically. This involved: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and notes; (2) initial coding to label key features related to moral value development, such as enthusiasm, behavioral changes, and value internalization; (3) theme generation by collating codes into broader categories (e.g., "impact on empathy" or "role of parental involvement"); (4) theme review and refinement against the dataset for coherence; and (5) interpretation to draw connections with existing literature. Triangulation across data sources enhanced validity, while member checking with informants verified accuracy. This rigorous process ensured a clear depiction of how exemplary storytelling fosters religious moral values in early childhood at the site.

D. Result and Discussion

The research findings indicate that exemplary storytelling activities at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City successfully enhanced children's understanding of religious moral values. From the observations, 90% of children could retell the heard exemplary stories and relate them to their daily behaviors. This demonstrates that storytelling serves not merely as entertainment but as an effective learning medium.

Picture: Storytelling Activity at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten



The findings from this qualitative case study at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City reveal the profound impact of exemplary storytelling activities on the development of religious moral values in early childhood. Through a combination of participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis, the research uncovered multifaceted benefits, including enhanced comprehension of moral concepts, positive behavioral shifts, and strengthened social-emotional skills. These outcomes not only affirm the efficacy of storytelling as an educational tool but also highlight its alignment with Islamic pedagogical principles, such as those emphasizing habituation

and role modeling from prophetic narratives. In the following sections, the results are discussed in detail, organized by key themes derived from thematic analysis, with connections to existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Observations conducted over 10 storytelling sessions demonstrated that children displayed high levels of engagement, with approximately 90% able to retell the exemplary stories and connect them to their everyday behaviors. For instance, during sessions featuring narratives about Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions, children were observed actively listening, asking questions, and mimicking positive actions such as sharing toys or expressing gratitude. This ability to retell and apply stories indicates that storytelling transcends mere entertainment, functioning instead as a dynamic learning medium that facilitates the internalization of values like honesty, compassion, and mutual assistance. The systematic weekly themes-ranging from stories of patience to those of generosity-prevented monotony and sustained children's interest, ensuring progressive exposure to diverse moral lessons.

This finding is consistent with the method's emphasis on thematic variety, as documented in lesson plans, which allowed for scaffolded learning where simpler stories built toward more complex ethical dilemmas. Children, aged 4-6 years, showed immediate responses such as smiling, clapping, or discussing story elements post-narration, suggesting emotional resonance with the content. Such engagement aligns with Piaget's cognitive development theory, referenced in the theoretical review, where interactive experiences aid in assimilating moral concepts into existing schemas (Dwyer, 2018). Moreover, the 90% retell rate surpasses the 85% improvement reported in national statistics (Sari, 2021), underscoring the tailored effectiveness of these activities in an Islamic kindergarten setting.

Integrating recent literature, this enhanced comprehension mirrors results from Faizin and Helandri (2023), who found that Islamic stories significantly influence moral education in early childhood by making abstract concepts tangible through narrative structures. Their study, conducted in a similar Indonesian context, reported comparable retention rates when stories were delivered with expressive elements, reinforcing the current observation that emotional delivery-such as varying tone and gestures-amplifies learning outcomes. Similarly, Jannah et al. (2023) emphasized storytelling's role in improving moral development for 5-6-year-olds, noting that repeated exposure leads to better value application in daily interactions, much like the behavioral connections observed here.

Interviews with teachers and parents provided rich qualitative insights into the behavioral transformations fostered by storytelling. Teachers, in their 45-60 minute sessions, consistently reported that children exhibited increased politeness, respect for peers, and empathy after participating in activities. One teacher noted, "Children who were previously quick to argue now pause and recall story lessons on patience, leading to fewer conflicts in the classroom." Parents, interviewed for 30-45 minutes, echoed these sentiments, with many observing home-based changes; for example, a mother described her child becoming more patient and appreciative of friends, attributing this to discussions of stories like those of the Prophet's compassion. These accounts were triangulated with documentation, such as activity logs showing pre- and post-session behavioral notes, confirming sustained improvements over the 3-month period.

The social-emotional benefits extend beyond individual changes, promoting group harmony. Children participated in post-story discussions, where they reflected on moral dilemmas, enhancing critical thinking and emotional regulation. This aligns with Prabowo (2021), who documented improvements in empathy and social skills among storytelling participants, and further supported by Hartley (2020), who highlighted storytelling's capacity to evoke emotions that lead to retained moral understanding. In an Islamic framework, these changes resonate with al-Ghazali's emphasis on purifying the heart through guided habits, where stories serve as tools for instilling adab (good manners) from a young age.

Drawing from new empirical evidence, Khoiroh (2025) explored storytelling's implementation in improving understanding of prophetic stories, finding that it not only boosts comprehension but also translates into observable behavioral shifts, such as increased cooperation—similar to the peer respect noted here. Al-Hawamleh (2019) adds depth by examining teachers' perspectives on storytelling as a promoter of moral consciousness, suggesting that religious narratives foster a sense of ethical

awareness that manifests in daily conduct, corroborating the parental reports of patience and appreciation. These integrations underscore that the activities at Darul Arifin are not isolated but part of a broader effective strategy in Islamic early education.

Storytelling activities offered direct avenues for children to absorb core Islamic values, with selected narratives focusing on figures like Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions. Through these stories, children learned the significance of honesty (e.g., the Prophet's trustworthiness as Al-Amin), compassion (e.g., aiding the needy), and mutual assistance (e.g., community support in early Islam). Observations revealed children applying these in play, such as helping classmates during activities, while interviews confirmed that parents reinforced these at home, creating a seamless school-family continuum. Documentation analysis of thematic schedules showed intentional selection of stories aligned with Islamic teachings, ensuring cultural relevance and depth.

This direct learning is bolstered by data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), which indicates that story-based religious teaching enhances comprehension of doctrines. In detail, the activities incorporated elements like props (e.g., simple puppets depicting companions) and visual aids, making abstract values concrete and memorable. Children's responses during child-friendly interviews (15-20 minutes) included phrases like "The Prophet helps others, so I help my friend," illustrating value internalization. This process supports Rahman (2019)'s advocacy for parental involvement, as home discussions amplified school lessons, leading to consolidated understanding.

Recent studies further validate this approach. Khasawneh and Khasawneh (2024) investigated digital storytelling in Islamic education, finding it enhances achievement and moral thinking, analogous to the traditional exemplary narratives used here, which similarly promote ethical reflection. Faizin and Helandri (2023) also affirm that Islamic stories as media for moral education provide direct, relatable examples that children emulate, aligning with the observed application of honesty and compassion. By integrating these, the discussion highlights storytelling's versatility in conveying religious values effectively.

Despite the successes, variations in children's comprehension levels posed challenges. Some children, particularly those with shorter attention spans or language barriers, required additional explanations to fully grasp moral messages. Observations noted that 10% of participants occasionally disengaged, necessitating adaptive strategies like simplified retellings or small-group follow-ups. Teachers addressed this by developing inclusive instructional methods, such as using visuals for visual learners or role-playing for kinesthetic ones, ensuring all children benefited. Interviews revealed that teachers felt equipped through prior training but suggested ongoing professional development to handle diversity.

These challenges are not unique; Lee (2020) and Thompson (2023) discuss similar issues in role-playing and visual media applications, recommending adaptive techniques that were effectively employed here. In an Islamic context, Al-Hawamleh (2019) notes that teacher perspectives on storytelling emphasize flexibility to promote moral consciousness across varying abilities. Jannah et al. (2023) further suggest that for 5-6-year-olds, challenges like comprehension gaps can be mitigated through repeated, interactive sessions, mirroring the routine implementation at Darul Arifin. By overcoming these, the activities model resilience in moral education.

Overall, the exemplary storytelling activities at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten prove highly effective in fostering religious moral values, serving as a replicable model for other institutions. The integration of school, parental, and community efforts—evident in the triangulation of data—ensures holistic development. This aligns with broader literature, such as Yusuf (2020) on character formation through storytelling and Hasanah (2021) on active participation's role in value understanding. The findings also contribute to Islamic educational theory, echoing Ibn Miskawayh and al-Ghazali's principles of soul refinement through narrative habituation.

Incorporating contemporary insights, Khoiroh (2025) demonstrates that prophet-focused storytelling improves understanding and behavior, supporting the thematic variety used here. Khasawneh and Khasawneh (2024) extend this to moral thinking development, suggesting that such activities have long-term implications for societal harmony. Ultimately, this study illustrates storytelling's potential to nurture noble individuals, with the 90% success rate and positive changes providing empirical evidence for its adoption in early childhood curricula.

E. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that exemplary storytelling activities at Darul Arifin Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City have a positive impact on developing religious moral values in early childhood. These activities not only enhance children's understanding of moral values but also contribute to their character formation. Parental involvement is also crucial, as it reinforces school-taught values. Therefore, it is recommended that other educational institutions consider implementing similar activities in their curricula. The success of these activities highlights the need for teacher training in developing engaging and effective teaching methods. Thus, it is hoped that religious moral values can be firmly instilled in children from an early age.

The development of religious moral values in early childhood through exemplary storytelling represents a highly effective approach in education. These activities not only assist children in understanding moral values but also equip them with essential social and emotional skills. However, challenges in implementation must be addressed to maximize their benefits.

Recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of storytelling activities include providing training for educators on engaging and effective storytelling techniques. Additionally, educators should be encouraged to conduct research in selecting exemplary narratives appropriate to children's development. Adjusting the curriculum to allocate space for storytelling is also vital to ensure consistent implementation.

Through these steps, it is anticipated that developing religious moral values via storytelling will yield positive impacts on children's character development. Concurrently, it is important for parents and the community to support these efforts by fostering a conducive environment for moral education. Through collaboration among educators, parents, and the community, moral values can be instilled more effectively, enabling children to grow into noble and responsible individuals.

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