



Integration of Islamic Values in Early Childhood Education: A Comprehensive Framework

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Abstract *This research aims to develop a comprehensive framework in the integration of Islamic values in early childhood education (PAUD), in order to support the formation of Islamic character, morals, and ethics from an early age. A qualitative approach with a case study method is applied to five early childhood education institutions in Indonesia that have implemented Islamic values in their curriculum. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation analysis of school principals, teachers, and parents. The results of the study show that these early childhood education institutions use exemplary methods, Islamic storytelling, and play activities as the main approach in teaching Islamic values to children. The exemplary method is the most dominant technique because it provides direct examples in daily behavior, while Islamic storytelling is used to convey moral messages in an interesting and easy-to-understand manner for children. Play activities are also integrated with Islamic values, allowing children to learn in a fun and age-appropriate setting. However, this study also found challenges such as limited training for teachers and limited time in implementing the Islamic curriculum to the maximum. Therefore, recommendations for regular teacher training and the development of Islamic modules are prepared as an effort to improve the quality of teaching. The framework resulting from this study makes a significant contribution to the development of an Islamic-based PAUD curriculum that is flexible and adaptive, and is expected to be a practical guide in supporting children's character education from an early age.*

Keywords early childhood education, Islamic values, role models, Islamic storytelling, play activities

1. Introduction

Early childhood education (PAUD) is an important foundation in the development of individual character and personality in the future. Research has shown that values instilled at an early age play a major role in shaping children's morals and ethics in the future (Nurhasanah & Nuryati, 2018; Wahyuni & Kurniasih, 2020; Fitriani, 2021). In Indonesia, the integration of Islamic values in PAUD is considered very relevant, considering that the majority of the population is Muslim. In Islamic education, the cultivation of religious values, such as honesty, patience, and compassion, is considered essential in shaping a good child's personality (Suharti, 2019; Rahayu & Budiono, 2021; Pratiwi & Suparman, 2022).

The urgency of this research is increasing along with the development of an increasingly complex and modern era, where children are faced with the challenges of globalization that can affect their mindset and values (Rahmawati, 2020; Kamil &

Ridwan, 2021; Nurul & Fadilah, 2023). A study found that the influence of digital media in early childhood can erode traditional moral values if not accompanied by strong religious education (Hasanah & Azzam, 2022; Munir & Setiawan, 2023; Zulfa, 2023). Therefore, the integration of Islamic values in early childhood education is an urgent need to form a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually and morally strong.

According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, more than 70% of early childhood education institutions in Indonesia are currently trying to integrate religious curriculum in their learning (Ministry of Religion, 2022; Fathoni & Purwanto, 2023; Syarifudin, 2023). The diagram below shows the increase in the number of institutions that have adopted Islamic values in the ECCE curriculum over the past five years. This shows an increased awareness of the importance of Islamic value-based education from an early age. Bandura's social learning theory supports this concept, that learning at an early age through observation and imitation can strengthen the internalization of positive values in children (Bandura, 1977; Rahman & Fauzan, 2022; Hanifa, 2023).

Research related to the integration of Islamic values in early childhood education shows various approaches used by educators to instill moral and spiritual values in children. For example, research by Rahman et al. (2021) found that the storytelling method with Islamic content is effective in improving the understanding of religious values in early childhood (Rahman et al., 2021; Aziz & Nurhayati, 2022; Zainal, 2023). Another study by Sari and Abdullah (2020) shows that the application of exemplary methods in Islamic education has a significant influence on children's positive behavior (Sari & Abdullah, 2020; Marini & Andini, 2022; Fadli, 2023).

However, previous research has tended to focus on one particular method of approach, such as storytelling or example, without developing a comprehensive framework that can integrate these various approaches. Moreover, there are not many studies that explore how to effectively adapt these approaches in the context of dynamic and modern early childhood education (Aminah & Kurniawan, 2021; Shabrina & Salamah, 2022; Fauzi, 2023). Therefore, there is a clear gap in terms of the need for a comprehensive and systematic framework for the integration of Islamic values in early childhood education.

This study seeks to offer a comprehensive framework for integrating Islamic values in early childhood education, by combining a story-based approach, role models, and play activities that are appropriate to the child's age (Syafiq & Marlina, 2023; Hakim & Wijayanti, 2023; Firdaus, 2023). Unlike previous studies that only focused on one approach, this study combines several methods in one framework, which is expected to provide practical guidance for educators in applying Islamic values effectively and holistically.

This research aims to develop a systematic and comprehensive framework in integrating Islamic values in early childhood education, which involves various approaches that are in accordance with children's development (Wijayanti, 2023; Hartanto & Putra, 2023; Damayanti, 2023). With this framework, it is hoped that it can help early childhood education institutions in providing education that not only

focuses on cognitive aspects, but also on the formation of Islamic character and morals.

2. Method

Type of Research

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. This method was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of integrating Islamic values in early childhood education (PAUD) through observation, interviews, and analysis of documentation in several early childhood education institutions that implement Islamic value-based education (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The population of this study is all early childhood education institutions in certain regions that integrate Islamic values in their curriculum. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling technique, which is to select an early childhood education institution that is considered representative and has an Islamic education program that has been running for at least 3 years. The sample taken consisted of five PAUD institutions spread across the research area, including school principals, teachers, and parents of students as the main participants.

Research Instrument

The research instruments used included semi-structured interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation. The interview guide is prepared with a focus on aspects of integrating Islamic values in daily learning, while the observation sheet is designed to record activities and interactions that contain Islamic values in the learning process. Documentation, such as syllabi, lesson plans, and activity notes, are also collected to complete the data (Moleong, 2017).

Data Collection Technique

Data is collected through several techniques, namely:

1. In-depth interviews with school principals and teachers to find out the application of Islamic values in the PAUD curriculum.
2. Direct observation of the learning process in the classroom to see the practice of integrating Islamic values.
3. Analysis of documents on learning plans, curriculum, and school activity programs that are relevant to the inculcation of Islamic values.

Research Procedure

The research procedure is carried out in the following stages:

1. Preparation stage: Determining the location of the research, selecting the PAUD institution as a sample, and designing research instruments.
2. Data collection stage: Conducting interviews, observations, and collecting relevant documents.
3. Data analysis stage: Analyze the results of interviews, observations, and documentation that have been collected.

4. Reporting stage: Compile research results in the form of a comprehensive report and prepare recommendations based on research findings.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis. The data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation are coded based on key themes related to Islamic values, integration methods, and supporting and inhibiting factors in the educational process. This analysis is carried out in depth to produce conclusions that represent the application of Islamic values in early childhood education in a complete and comprehensive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006)..

3. Result & Discussion

Implementation of Islamic Values in the Early Childhood Education Curriculum

The addition of discussion in this section will further explain the results of the implementation of the Islamic value curriculum in the formation of early childhood character. Based on observations in the field, children who receive Islamic value education show positive social behaviors such as being more empathetic, helping friends, and more disciplined in following school rules (Yusuf & Aisyah, 2023; Womb & Paradise, 2024; Nurhadi & Zain, 2024). Teachers also revealed that this change in attitude was seen gradually but consistently after the implementation of the Islamic value-based curriculum.

Parental support also plays an important role in supporting the formation of Islamic values-based character. Parents who are involved in school activities, such as religious activities, also help strengthen the values that have been taught at school (Rahma & Kurniati, 2022; Hasan & Syarif, 2023; Widodo, 2024). Therefore, collaboration between schools and parents is expected to be further improved in the application of Islamic values in early childhood education.

Methods of Integrating Islamic Values: Example, Storytelling, and Play Activities

In this additional section, we will expand on the benefits of combining the methods of example, storytelling, and play. Islamic storytelling methods not only teach religious values, but also stimulate children's imagination and language skills, which are important aspects in their cognitive development (Fitri & Nurhidayah, 2023; Mulyono & Santoso, 2024; Rahayu, 2024). Islamic storytelling makes it easier for children to remember and internalize Islamic values because it is presented in the form of stories that are easy to understand.

Play activities designed with Islamic content, such as role-playing as a prophet or companion, also serve to instill Islamic values indirectly, which makes the learning process fun for children (Aini & Kusuma, 2022; Wahyuni & Ramadhani, 2023; Faizah, 2024). These play activities allow children to learn about empathy, cooperation, and respect for others in a context that suits their psychological development.

Challenges in Integrating Islamic Values in Early Childhood Education

In this section, additional discussions will focus on solutions to overcome challenges in the integration of Islamic values in early childhood education. One of the proposed solutions is the development of a special training module for early childhood education teachers, which focuses on creative and innovative teaching strategies for Islamic values (Sari & Pratama, 2022; Yunus & Arifin, 2023; Andriani, 2024). This training module can include effective storytelling methods, how to manage classes with an Islamic approach, and how to insert Islamic values into play activities.

In addition, schools need to provide special time for Islamic value learning sessions in a daily schedule, without disrupting the formal curriculum (Hasbullah & Triana, 2023; Fadhilah & Kamil, 2024; Wahid, 2024). This allows teachers to pay more attention to in-depth Islamic values to children without pressure from the academic aspect.

Gap and Innovation in the Framework of Integration of Islamic Values in Early Childhood Education

Additions to this section emphasize the importance of developing a flexible and adaptive framework, so that teachers can adapt it to the needs of the child and the local context. A flexible framework allows for the teaching of Islamic values that can be adapted to the local cultural background, so that these values can be more easily accepted by children (Suryani & Nawawi, 2023; Asyafah & Hidayat, 2024; Putra & Rahayu, 2024).

The use of technology is also proposed within this framework, such as Islamic-based apps that feature prophetic stories, daily prayers, and Islamic educational games that can be accessed by children and parents at home. This technology is expected to be a relevant teaching tool in the digital era (Hanafi & Maulida, 2023; Anwar & Syarif, 2024; Kusuma, 2024).

Recommendations for Improving the Teaching of Islamic Values in Early Childhood Education

Additions to these recommendations include suggestions to provide easy access to Islamic resources for teachers and parents, such as e-books, modules, or videos that contain guidelines for the application of Islamic values in early childhood. This resource is expected to be used by parents and teachers to enrich their understanding and skills in educating children based on Islamic values (Nasution & Zain, 2022; Fatimah & Ramli, 2023; Widjaja, 2024).

In addition, further research is proposed to measure the effectiveness of the resulting framework, as well as its impact on children's character development in the long term. This long-term study will provide deeper data on the sustainability of the integration of Islamic values in early childhood education and help improve and strengthen the existing curriculum.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that the integration of Islamic values in early childhood education can be done effectively through a comprehensive

approach, involving exemplary methods, Islamic storytelling, and play activities. The results of this study revealed that early childhood education institutions that implement Islamic values in the curriculum show positive results on the development of children's character, including an increase in social behavior such as empathy, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. These approaches not only make it easier for children to understand Islamic values, but also provide a fun and age-appropriate learning experience.

The study also found several challenges, including time constraints and a lack of specialized training for educators in conveying Islamic values creatively. However, proposed solutions, such as training for teachers and the development of Islamic-based modules, can be an important step to improve the quality of teaching. These findings make a significant contribution to the world of education, especially in designing a flexible framework to integrate Islamic values in early childhood education in a systematic and sustainable manner. This framework is expected to be a practical guide for early childhood educators and institutions in shaping the character of the younger generation who have strong spiritual and moral intelligence.

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