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Formation of Early Childhood Religious Character Through Storytelling Television Media (Viber) in Islamic History Learning at Kindergarten in Semarang City

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ABSTRACT

Character or morality is a very important aspect of life. It should be developed from an early age because early childhood is a crucial period of rapid growth and development for children. Therefore, it is necessary to instill good character and morals, one of which is through stories and exemplary tales of righteous predecessors. The stories of the Prophets serve as the primary alternative in enhancing the character and morality of children through storytelling. Hence, it is essential to design an engaging and appropriate medium for this purpose. This research employs a Research & Development (R&D) methodology, which is a type of research and development. The author has designed Viber as an engaging storytelling medium for children. Viber is designed to enhance the formation of religious character in early childhood. According to validation by media experts, it achieved an excellent rating of 86.6 out of 20, while the validation by content experts yielded a score of 77.5 out of 20. The results of the pre-test obtained a score of 22.2, while the post-test score was 30.6. Both values show significant improvement with an average increase of 8.4. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Television Storytelling Medium (Viber) is effective in enhancing the formation of religious character in early childhood.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an contains important meanings in every verse, one of which is the narrative or story. The story or narrative is a type of paragraph that tells a story based on observation or narrative creation focused on characters (Baharun et al., 2020). Generally, a story narrates a cause-and-effect relationship that conveys a specific message in a chronological manner. These narratives have a connection to a sequence of time or time sequence. The narrative contains stories of events or incidents that occur within a framework of time.

Stories or narratives can cultivate motivation within a person to emulate or imitate similar actions for the betterment of their lives (Setiawati and Ali, 2022). Not only that, character education can also be shaped through storytelling (Fithri, 2019). Character education can begin at an early age, specifically during the range of 0-6 years old, when children undergo rapid phases of development and growth, particularly in terms of imitation (De Guerrero and Commander, 2013). Children are naturally drawn to things that are interesting and enjoyable. In the process of learning, when it is combined with play, it stimulates all the potential within a child. Engaging storytelling that evokes emotions can captivate children and involve them in the narrative (Khikmatiar, 2019). By listening to positive stories or narratives, it is expected to have a positive impact on children's development. Stories about the prophets and their exemplary behavior have a positive impact (Rahayu, 2020). This can be implemented in both formal and non-formal educational settings. Instilling the value of emulation in children requires a lengthy process, allowing them to understand the exemplary qualities of the prophets (Anjarsari and Agustin, 2022). Undoubtedly, the involvement of parents and teachers as facilitators is crucial in this process.

Through storytelling methods, children can imagine and learn valuable lessons about good attitudes and behaviors (Nasution and Nasution, 2018). However, when delivering a story to children, several factors need to be considered, such as the use of language, storytelling duration, media and intonation to make the storytelling engaging, a simple storyline, and classroom environment conditioning to ensure that the purpose and message of the story are effectively and appropriately conveyed. When storytelling to young children, it is important not only to tell the story but also to balance it with play so that children do not feel bored or uninterested (Plowman and McPake, 2013).

Considering the various historical Islamic stories available, the stories of the Prophets of Allah SWT, which are filled with exemplary attitudes and positive aspects that can be emulated by children, serve as a background for selecting stories as an effort to shape character in early childhood (Komariah and Nihayah, 2023). This is exemplified in the implementation at TK Islam Miftahul Jannah Bringin Semarang, where they are interested in teaching exemplary stories of the Prophets and the companions of the Prophet to instill positive and religious character in their students.

The method used in delivering Islamic history stories at Miftahul Jannah Islamic Kindergarten in Bringin, Semarang utilizes storytelling with simple and unpretentious media. In response to this phenomenon, the author took the initiative to provide a more engaging storytelling medium that can enhance students' understanding and appreciation of the taught Islamic history stories and conducted observations regarding the effectiveness of using this medium. The author chose the story of Prophet Noah as the storyline for children. The story of Prophet Noah is presented as captivating as possible to grab the attention of children (Kasim and Waka, 2021). The author opted for dramatic visualizations to optimize the media. Within the story of Prophet Noah, an event of him saving various animals by bringing them onto the ark is incorporated. We created duplicates

of various types of animals using any available media to generate interest among children. Therefore, when providing educational concepts to young children, it should be done in a creative, innovative, and competitive manner to prevent them from becoming bored and to keep them engaged with the story.

2. METHODS

This research employs a Research & Development (R&D) methodology, which is a type of research and development. R&D research is conducted to produce a product or enhance existing research with considerations of the effectiveness of the product (Saptiani, 2017). The goal of the R&D research method is to test and develop existing theories for the benefit of educational institutions or other entities.

In order to produce a specific product, research is needed in the form of needs analysis (survey) and research to test the effectiveness of the product (experiment). The reason the researcher is using the R&D research method is to develop the Storytelling Television (Viber) product to shape the religious character of early childhood in Islamic history learning.

The research was conducted at Miftahul Jannah Islamic Kindergarten in Bringin, Semarang from September 6th to October 19th, 2022, with a sample selection of 14 children aged 4-5 years or in group A2. The data collection techniques included observation, structured interviews, documentation, and the development of standardized instruments. The data analysis utilized quantitative data with descriptive analysis.

The development of the Viber product begins with designing the media based on the observations made in the institution. Then, the media design is determined by specifying the physical aspects of the product, as well as the tools and materials needed for its development. This is followed by conducting trials and seeking expert evaluations, as well as testing the product on the target audience, which in this case is young children. The data collected through standardized instruments in this research includes information about children's ability to comprehend and internalize the stories conveyed through the Viber media, which serves as the initial foundation for the development of religious character within children. Additionally, assessments from media and subject matter experts are gathered regarding the effectiveness of the Viber product in shaping religious character in early childhood.

With these reasons in mind, the author decided to develop a media tool to support the achievement of learning objectives in a more engaging and enjoyable manner. The Storytelling Television (Viber) media was chosen as the appropriate option to support the teaching and learning process of Islamic history for early childhood. The selection of this media theme was inspired by children's preference for films or television shows rather than simply listening to conventional stories.

3.2. Creating the Product

The second step is media production. The media is created by considering the learning objectives, story concept, as well as the required tools and materials. The tools and materials needed in the production process of the Storytelling Television (Viber) media include cardboard, colored asturo paper, adhesive, wax glue and its tools, scissors, cutter, ruler, double-sided tape, crayons, fabric, and sticks. The media production process took place over a period of three days.

In the production of the Viber media, the author utilized cardboard and paper as the main raw materials. Sturdy cardboard was shaped to resemble a television-like structure. To enhance its visual appeal and neatness, each part of the cardboard was covered with colored asturo paper and adorned with hand-drawn decorations. The characters and all story accessories were designed based on existing designs found on Google, laminated, and supported with wooden sticks to resemble paper puppets (*wayang kertas*). The bottom interior of the cardboard featured a space lined with Styrofoam, which served as a platform for inserting and displaying the puppet characters during storytelling.

The chosen theme for the story by the author is the narrative of Prophet Noah (Nuh), who was bestowed with the miracle of a large ark to save his people from the punishment of Allah in the form of a storm and flood (Ramadhani et al., 2021). Through this story, it is hoped to shape the character of children to be obedient to Allah and always obey their parents. Additionally, the author created a visualization of Prophet Noah's large ark as a captivating tool to generate enthusiasm among children when listening to the story. The use of the storytelling media successfully enables children to dramatize the storyline and comprehend the messages conveyed within the narrative more easily (Talaee, 2019).

The choice of affordable and child-safe materials is an advantage of the Storytelling Television (Viber) media. However, considering that the raw materials used in the production of the media are cardboard and paper, the durability and longevity of the media might be relatively limited.

During the production process, one improvement was made based on the suggestions and feedback provided by the research advisor. This improvement aimed to make the final product more refined and suitable for application to the research target as shown in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**.



Figure. 1 Picture of the product before the improvement



Figure. 2 Image of the product after the improvements

3.3. Product testing and peer teaching

After its completion, the Storytelling Television (Viber) media was tested and presented in front of the research advisor and classmates. This was done for assessment purposes, aiming to ensure that the produced media would be optimal in supporting the abilities of early childhood learners. Feedback and criticism played a significant role in evaluating the designed media. During this stage, the author received criticism that the Viber media was not standing upright firmly, with the top part leaning forward. To address this issue, the author resolved it by adding additional adhesive at the back of the Viber, enabling it to stand upright perfectly.

The structured instruments prepared by the researcher resulted in a validation test conducted by media experts, with a score of 86.6, indicating a category of "excellent". Meanwhile, according to subject matter experts, the validation test received a "good" category with a score of 77.5 as shown as **Figure 3**.





Figure. 3 Testing and peer teaching

3.4 Product testing on Children

After conducting the media trial with students and teachers in the classroom and making improvements based on the feedback from the advisor, the author proceeded to test the media with young children. The target group for the trial was Group A2 of Miftahul Jannah Bringin Islamic Kindergarten, consisting of 14 children. The trial went smoothly and resulted in good comprehension scores among the students as shown as **Figure 4**.





Figure. 4 Testing on children

Based on the **Table 1** above, it can be observed that there is a significant difference in the understanding and immersion of students in following the narrative of Prophet Noah (Nuh), which can influence the character development of children. In the pre-test activity, the students obtained a score of 22.2 out of 40, while in the post-test activity, they achieved a score of 30.6 out of 40. The average increase from the pre-test to the post-test was 8.4. Therefore, it can be acknowledged that the use of the Viber media can enhance the formation of religious character in early childhood through storytelling methods in the teaching of Islamic history as shown as **Table 1**.

Table. 1 Data on the Improvement of Students' Religious Character

Name of Product	Pre-test	Post-test	Enhancement	Range of value
Viber Television Storytelling Media	22,2	30,6	8,4	1-40

3.5. Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages of Viber:

1. Easy availability of materials and supplies.
2. Economical in terms of cost.
3. Safe for children to use.
4. Engaging and enjoyable for children.
5. Stimulates various aspects of child development.

Disadvantages of Viber:

1. Limited durability of the product.
2. Requires ample storage space.
3. Difficult to transport or carry around.

3.6. Discussion

Children are unique and interesting individuals. They enjoy things that are fun and captivating. Therefore, creating enjoyable media becomes an effective way to deliver educational objectives (Rusydi, 2017). Based on the research instrument results, Viber media is considered 75% effective in delivering the history of Islam.

In the case of early childhood children, 65% of them showed great enthusiasm in listening to and immersing themselves in the story. After conducting evaluation and recalling activities with the children, it was found that 70% of the population had understood the story and developed character traits from it.

Based on the assessment instrument used to evaluate students' abilities, it can be observed that out of 10 indicators, 9 indicators showed significant development (BSH) and only 1 indicator showed very good development (BSB). The students were able to recognize the names of the Prophets and Messengers, understand the messages conveyed in the story of Prophet Noah, deeply engage with and be impacted by the excerpts of the story of Prophet Noah presented, remember the characters in the story of Prophet Noah, recognize the miracles of Prophet Noah, articulate the sequence of events in the story of Prophet Noah, demonstrate focus while observing and listening to the story of Prophet Noah presented, show interest and enthusiasm towards the story of Prophet Noah, and exhibit confidence in asking and answering questions. These results indicate significant development (BSH) or meeting the expected outcomes. On the other hand, the students were able to interact well with others, indicating very good development (BSB).

4. CONCLUSION

The Viber Television Storytelling Media (Viber) is a new initiative by the writer to develop media for achieving the goal of teaching Islamic history in Islamic Kindergarten Miftahul Jannah Bringin Semarang. It is designed to optimize the existing Islamic history learning in the institution, as the current teaching methods there are considered conventional and monotonous, relying solely on available media and illustrated storybooks.

Viber is designed to enhance the formation of religious character in early childhood. According to media experts' validation, it has been categorized as excellent with a score of 86.6 out of 20, and the content experts' validation yielded a score of 77.5 out of 20. The results of the pre-test activity obtained a score of 22.2, while the post-test score was 30.6. Both scores experienced a significant increase with an average improvement of 8.4. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Viber Television Storytelling Media is effective in enhancing the formation of religious character in early childhood.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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