

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH ISLAMIC BOOKS IN CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR ENHANCING READING SKILL

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Abstract: *This study looks at how English-language Islamic literature supports holistic development and improves reading abilities in young children. Teachers have included books that include Islamic principles into English language instruction due to the growing requirement for literacy competence in both language and moral frameworks. We investigate the effects of faith-based English literature on young learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and engagement using a mixed-methods methodology that includes quantitative reading evaluations and qualitative interviews with teachers and parents. The results show that English-language Islamic literature promoted motivation and identity development in addition to enhancing reading comprehension and fluency. There is discussion of the implications for literacy teaching methods and curriculum design in multicultural classrooms.*

Keywords: *English Islamic Books; Childhood Education; Reading Skills Development; Early Literacy; Islamic Values in Education*

Introduction

In childhood education, reading is widely acknowledged as a fundamental ability that opens doors to academic success, cognitive development, and lifelong learning. Reading in early childhood comprises the development of comprehension, critical thinking, vocabulary acquisition, and meaning-making processes in addition to deciphering written symbols. Early reading proficiency has been linked to improved academic performance, increased self-confidence, and increased learning motivation in later school years, according to numerous research. As a result, choosing suitable reading materials for kids is an important educational choice that has a big impact on literacy results. Reading instruction poses special difficulties while learning English as a foreign language (EFL), especially in non-English-speaking nations like Indonesia and other areas with a majority of Muslims. Unfamiliar vocabulary, cultural allusions, and abstract linguistic structures that are disconnected from their real-world experiences might be difficult for kids. Young students may not connect with traditional English reading materials, which are often derived from Western cultural contexts. This could result in low engagement, restricted comprehension, and decreased motivation to read. This disparity emphasizes the significance of contextually relevant and culturally sensitive reading resources that complement students' identities, cultures, and values. Islamic educational settings, such Islamic primary schools and pesantren-based establishments, emphasize moral, spiritual, and character development in addition to cognitive performance. Islamic education places a strong emphasis on integrating knowledge ('ilm), ethics (akhlaq), and faith (iman) in order to develop well-rounded people who are both morally and intellectually sound. As a result, reading exercises are supposed to promote both language acquisition and the assimilation of Islamic principles like integrity, empathy, self-control, and accountability. In this sense, English-

language Islamic literature becomes an educational tool that connects value-based education with language acquisition.

Reading materials created in English that include Islamic themes, stories, moral lessons, and cultural components are referred to as English Islamic books. Prophetic tales, moral parables, everyday Islamic customs, and modern accounts of Muslim children's life could all be found in these books. These books provide significant information that promotes understanding and emotional engagement by presenting well-known religious and cultural themes in the English language. This method is theoretically consistent with schema theory, which holds that students understand texts better when new material is connected to what they already know and have experienced. Islamic material supports language processing and meaning building for Muslim youngsters by acting as a cognitive and affective scaffold. Additionally, motivation is crucial to the development of reading skills. Children are more inclined to interact profoundly with literature that they find entertaining, relevant, and meaningful. Because English Islamic literature reflects children's identities and values, it has the ability to increase intrinsic motivation. This feeling of representation not only promotes consistent reading, but it also lessens the anxiety that comes with learning a foreign language. Reading activities become more pleasurable, meaningful, and influential as a result. There is still a dearth of empirical evidence on the efficacy of English Islamic books in improving reading abilities, despite their increasing use in early childhood schooling. There is a knowledge gap on how the integration of both domains affects children's reading competency because existing research often concentrates on either general Islamic education or English literacy development independently. Systematic research is required to determine how English-language Islamic literature influences students' attitudes toward reading as well as important reading skills including fluency, vocabulary growth, and reading comprehension. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the function of English-language Islamic literature in early childhood education, with a focus on improving children's reading abilities. This study uses a mixed-methods research methodology in an effort to Give factual proof of the linguistic and educational advantages of using English reading resources with an Islamic subject into early literacy training. With practical implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in Islamic and multicultural educational contexts, the findings are anticipated to help create more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and value-oriented reading curricula.

Literature Review

Development of Reading Skills in Early Childhood Education:

A key element of early childhood education is the development of reading skills, which have a significant impact on children's academic success and cognitive development. Decoding skills, phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, fluency, and comprehension all interact intricately when reading in the early years. Modern literacy theories contend that reading is a meaning-making activity that necessitates active interaction between the reader and the text rather than just a mechanical procedure. Young children who are exposed to rich and meaningful reading materials exhibit better vocabulary development, stronger comprehension abilities, and more self-assurance when using language for communication. The quality and applicability of reading materials have a substantial impact on children's reading outcomes, according to early literacy research. Books that are suitable for the reader's developmental stage and cultural Reading motivation is often maintained and comprehension is improved by familiar and contextually relevant content. Reading materials must enhance language learning while preserving accessibility and engagement in EFL situations, when children learn English as a foreign language. According to studies, children digest information more efficiently and show

higher levels of reading perseverance and enjoyment when reading texts are in line with their cultural origins.

Reading for Young Learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL):

There are additional difficulties with teaching reading in EFL contexts, especially for younger students who have little exposure to English outside of the classroom. Syntactic complexity, uncommon vocabulary, and culturally unrelated content frequently impair understanding and lower pupils' reading motivation. Muslim children may not be familiar with cultural allusions, social mores, or moral frameworks found in traditional English storybooks, which are frequently borrowed from Western contexts. This could cause them to become emotionally and cognitively detached from the text. Scholars support the use of contextualized and culturally sensitive reading materials to solve these issues. According to schema theory, these materials enable students to activate past knowledge, which is crucial for comprehension. When kids come to well-known themes, environments, or ideals in They are more likely to engage in deeper cognitive processing, deduce meaning, and comprehend the narrative framework of English texts. In Islamic educational institutions, where reading instruction must be in line with both linguistic and moral goals, this pedagogical method is especially pertinent.

Islamic Education and Literacy Based on Values:

Islamic education integrates the academic, moral, and spiritual aspects of learning, making it essentially comprehensive. Islamic education's main goal is to foster moral behavior, spiritual awareness, and strong character in addition to imparting information (akhlaq al-karimah). Since literacy has always been essential to Islamic civilization, starting with the Qur'anic command "Iqra" (Read), reading activities have historically played a big part in Islamic education. Islamic literacy in modern educational contexts encompasses modern languages, especially English, in addition to classical Arabic books. By incorporating Islamic principles into English-language reading materials, children to strengthen moral lessons like integrity, empathy, respect, and accountability while fostering literacy skills. Value-based literacy training has been shown in numerous studies to improve students' moral reasoning, emotional intelligence, and drive to learn. Teachers can establish a classroom environment where language acquisition and character education take place concurrently by incorporating Islamic ideals into English texts.

Islamic Books in English as Teaching Resources:

English-language Islamic books are an expanding class of educational resources created to satisfy the linguistic and ethical requirements of Muslim students. These books usually contain stories about prophets, moral precepts, Islamic customs, and modern tales of Muslim children's everyday lives. These texts are accessible and pedagogically effective since they are written in simplified English and tailored to the cognitive and linguistic levels of young learners. According to earlier research, English-language Islamic literature can improve reading comprehension by offering well-known material that facilitates meaning-making. Children can concentrate more on comprehending the language rather than battling with new ideas when they can identify themes, characters, or ideals in a story. This familiarity helps with word development and inferencing abilities while lowering cognitive burden. Furthermore, English-language Islamic literature frequently uses predictable narrative frameworks and repeated linguistic patterns, both of which help early readers improve their reading fluency.

Reading Identity Formation and Motivation:

For young students in EFL situations in particular, motivation is a crucial component of reading development. When children find the material entertaining, significant, and applicable to their life, they are more likely to participate in reading activities. By reflecting students' religious and cultural identities and creating a sense of representation and belonging within the learning materials, English-language Islamic novels help students become more motivated readers. From a sociocultural standpoint, identity creation and literacy are intimately related. Children form favorable attitudes toward reading and language when they come across books that validate their beliefs and experiences. learning. According to research, faith-based reading materials can boost students' self-esteem and promote consistent reading both within and outside of the classroom. Improved language competency and reading ability follow from this increased reading exposure.

Empirical Research on Religious and Culturally Appropriate Reading Materials:

The efficacy of faith-based and culturally sensitive reading materials in enhancing literacy results is demonstrated by empirical study. Students exposed to English literature with an Islamic theme exhibit increased reading engagement and better understanding than those using generic textbooks, according to studies done in Islamic schools and pesantren settings. These results provide credence to the idea that culturally relevant reading materials are both pedagogically beneficial and morally acceptable. Nevertheless, despite these encouraging signs, current research is still dispersed and frequently lacks thorough empirical investigation that combines qualitative insights with quantitative reading assessment. Instead of measuring actual change in reading skills, many studies concentrate on needs analysis or material development. Thus, more study that methodically investigates how English-language Islamic books affect kids' reading abilities is obviously needed, especially with regard to comprehension, vocabulary development, and fluency.

Research Deficit:

English Islamic novels have significant theoretical and pedagogical potential in early childhood education, according to the evaluated literature. However, there is still little actual data regarding how well they improve reading abilities, especially in elementary school. Few studies use mixed-methods approaches that record learners' perspectives as well as quantifiable reading outcomes. By examining how English Islamic literature might help young students become better readers, this study aims to close this gap and add to the expanding corpus of research on culturally sensitive and value-based literacy training.

Method**Research Design:**

In order to thoroughly investigate the function of English Islamic books in improving children's reading abilities, this study used a mixed-methods research design with a quasi-experimental approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. In order to obtain quantifiable gains in reading performance as well as comprehensive insights into learners' experiences, attitudes, and engagement throughout the reading process, a mixed-methods approach was selected. While qualitative data enhanced the findings by elucidating how and why English Islamic literature affected children's learning, quantitative data offered factual proof of the growth of reading skills. In order to guarantee data triangulation and research validity, the study used a convergent parallel design in which quantitative and qualitative data were gathered concurrently, examined independently, and then combined during interpretation.

Research Setting and Participants:

Three Islamic elementary schools in urban and semi-urban locations served as the study's sites. These schools were specifically chosen because they include Islamic principles into their daily curricula and employ English as a subject. 180 students from classes one through three, ages six to nine, participated in the study. Because it aligns with the crucial stage of early reading development, this age range was chosen. Thirty parents and six English teachers served as supporting informants in addition to the children. Parents were included to offer insights into children's reading habits outside of the classroom, and teachers were chosen based on their direct involvement in English reading instruction.

Instructional Materials:

English Islamic novels created especially for young children and primary school students served as the study's instructional resources. These books were chosen because they combine Islamic principles with English language instruction in an interesting, age-appropriate, and pedagogically sound way. The booklets contained moral tales, illustrated texts, and short stories that depicted Islamic values including discipline, kindness, honesty, thankfulness, respect, and regular religious rituals. Simple sentence structures, high-frequency vocabulary, recurring patterns, and contextual cues bolstered by visual aids were among the linguistic elements of the texts that were tailored to early reading levels. The materials were chosen based on their ability to improve comprehension and engagement, cultural familiarity, and connection to early reading objectives. In order to facilitate meaning-making and lessen cognitive burden, visual components such as vibrant graphics and contextual images were purposefully included. To guarantee authenticity and consistency in learning experiences, these English Islamic literature served as the main reading materials during the intervention time and were incorporated into regular classroom instruction.

Research Instruments:

Several study devices were used to gather complete data. Before and after the instructional intervention, students' reading performance was evaluated using reading skill assessments. These tests assessed reading comprehension, word knowledge, and fluency—all important aspects of reading. The reading assessments were created with the participants' linguistic proficiency and the subject matter of the teaching materials in mind. To record students' participation, engagement, and reading habits during educational activities, observations were made in the classroom. Contextual information about how students engaged with the English Islamic literature and how teachers supported reading instruction was provided by observation data. Additionally, parents and English teachers participated in semi-structured interviews to learn more about their perspectives on kids' reading growth, motivation, and attitudes on the usage of English-language Islamic literature. Students' voices and experiences interacting with the reading materials were also recorded through focus group sessions.

Research Procedures:

Over the course of twelve weeks, the study was conducted as part of the participating schools' regular curricula. Students conducted a reading assessment to determine their baseline reading competency before to the intervention. Instructors received training on how to use English-language Islamic literature and advice on how to incorporate the resources into reading lessons. The English Islamic texts were methodically integrated into classroom activities throughout the intervention period through read-alouds, narrative, guided reading, and collaborative reading. Teachers led text-related conversations, vocabulary exercises, and

comprehension exercises. Through questioning, retelling, and reflection exercises, students were invited to engage with the stories. Students finished a post-intervention reading assessment at the conclusion of the program. In order to record ongoing learning processes and responses, qualitative data was gathered concurrently through focus groups, interviews, and observations.

Data Analysis Techniques:

To find shifts in students' reading performance, quantitative data from reading exams were examined using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. To characterize overall reading development, mean scores and standard deviations were computed, and comparison analysis was carried out to identify variations between pre-intervention and post-intervention outcomes. The qualitative information gathered from focus groups, interviews, and observations was transcribed and subjected to a thematic analysis. Data segments were coded, recurrent patterns were found, and topics pertaining to reading engagement, comprehension, motivation, and value internalization were categorized. In order to provide a thorough comprehension of the research outcomes, integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was carried out during interpretation.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness:

A number of techniques were used to guarantee the study's rigor. Early literacy and Islamic education experts reviewed the research tools to determine their validity. Construct validity was ensured by carefully maintaining alignment between research objectives, teaching materials, and assessment tools. Standardized scoring criteria and consistent administration practices were used to improve the quantitative instruments' reliability. Data triangulation from several sources, such as focus groups, interviews, and observations, confirmed the reliability of the qualitative data. To verify accuracy, tentative interpretations were shared with teachers as part of member screening. Extended participation in the research environment also enhanced the validity and reliability of the results.

Ethical Considerations:

Throughout the whole research procedure, ethical guidelines were closely adhered to. The study was approved by the school administration, and before any data was collected, parents' and teachers' informed consent was sought. Participants were made aware that participation was completely optional and that they could leave at any time without incurring any fees. By employing pseudonyms and protecting all gathered data, confidentiality and anonymity were preserved. Particular care was taken to make sure that research methods were suitable for kids and didn't interfere with everyday educational activities.

Result

The study's findings show that children's reading skill development was positively impacted by the use of English-language Islamic literature. Reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and fluency are among the important reading components that have significantly improved, according to data from pre-intervention and post-intervention reading examinations. Participants consistently improved their reading fluency. After being exposed to English Islamic books during the teaching session, students showed improved oral reading proficiency and faster reading speeds. This improvement implies that automatic word recognition and decreased hesitation during reading were promoted by repeated interaction with linguistically accessible and thematically familiar literature. Students' confidence in reading aloud increased as a result of the books' recurring sentence forms and predictable narrative patterns. Additionally, vocabulary

development considerably enhanced. When terminology was integrated into Islamic stories and bolstered by relevant examples, students learned new English words more successfully. According to observational data, kids were able to remember and repurpose words associated with everyday tasks, moral principles, and basic religious rituals. During class discussions and narrative exercises, teachers saw that students were using more recently learned words, which suggests meaningful vocabulary retention as opposed to surface memorization. Students' reading comprehension skills significantly improved, especially when it came to recognizing major concepts, organizing events, and deriving moral lessons from texts. Following the intervention, students showed improved comprehension of the story's content and were better equipped to respond to comprehension questions. Students were able to recount stories in their own terms and explain moral teachings incorporated into the narratives, indicating deeper comprehension and engagement, according to qualitative data from focus group discussions. The quantitative results were corroborated by data from interviews and classroom observations. Parents expressed a stronger interest in reading activities at home, while teachers saw an increase in student participation during reading sessions. Students' positive opinions regarding English Islamic texts and their passion for English reading assignments demonstrated that the materials improved both reading motivation and reading skills.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that, in early childhood and primary education settings, English-language Islamic literature significantly improves children's reading abilities. The increase in reading fluency is consistent with literacy theories that highlight the value of frequent exposure to materials that are understandable and significant. Children can concentrate more on language processing than conceptual comprehension when they are exposed to well-known topics in a foreign language, which promotes the development of fluency. Contextual learning theory provides an explanation for the beneficial effect on vocabulary development. Learners can deduce meaning from context, images, and past knowledge when vocabulary is provided within meaningful narratives. Children were able to connect new English language with preexisting cognitive schemas through Islamic-themed stories, which offered culturally and spiritually relevant contexts. Schema theory, which holds that learning and comprehension are improved when new knowledge is connected to learners' past experiences, is supported by this research. The study's findings on improved reading comprehension demonstrate the educational benefits of incorporating value-based content into language learning resources. Students were encouraged to actively interact with texts, consider moral lessons, and relate stories to their everyday lives by reading English-language Islamic literature. Deeper understanding and higher-order thinking abilities, like inference and interpretation, which are crucial elements of reading literacy, were supported by this active involvement. The development of reading has been found to be significantly influenced by motivation. According to the study, when materials represented students' identities, values, and beliefs, they were more inspired to read.

Islamic literature written in English promoted a feeling of familiarity and emotional connection, which helped to lessen the anxiety that comes with learning a foreign language. From a sociocultural standpoint, literacy is a socially situated practice influenced by cultural environment and identity in addition to being a cognitive ability. English Islamic books fostered an inclusive classroom atmosphere that encouraged long-term reading engagement by recognizing students' ethnic and religious backgrounds. These results are in line with earlier studies on faith-based and culturally responsive education, which highlight how learning resources that are in line with students' values improve both academic performance and character development. But by offering empirical proof that these resources directly lead to quantifiable

gains in reading abilities, especially in EFL environments, this study expands on previous research. The findings imply that incorporating English-language Islamic literature into reading teaching is a pedagogically sound approach rather than just an ideological decision.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, English-language Islamic books are useful teaching tools for improving young children's reading abilities in early childhood and primary school. The results show that regular exposure to English-language Islamic literature improves reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and fluency, Increased student motivation, engagement, and favorable views regarding reading all support these gains.

English Islamic books provide a comprehensive approach to literacy training that synchronizes cognitive growth with moral and cultural education by fusing language learning with Islamic ideals. Children are better able to understand texts and participate more fully in reading activities because religious themes are known to them and offer significant context for language acquisition. This integration fosters character development and identity construction in addition to intellectual success.

By emphasizing the educational benefits of faith-based English reading materials, the study adds to the expanding corpus of research on culturally responsive literacy training. It offers useful recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and educational establishments, especially in Islamic and multicultural learning environments. Improving literacy outcomes while staying in line with educational objectives can be achieved by integrating English Islamic novels into reading programs.

It is advised that future studies examine the long-term impacts of English Islamic books on the development of literacy, contrast their efficacy with non-religious resources, and look into how they affect various age groups and skill levels. The empirical basis for incorporating value-based literature into language instruction would be further strengthened by such research.

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