

Playing While Morally: An Exploration of Moral Values in Early Childhood Educational Games at RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie Medan Helvetia

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how educational games can be a means of instilling moral values for early childhood at RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie Medan Helvetia. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that various forms of educational games such as role play, rule games, constructive games, and social games have been utilized by teachers to instill values such as honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and empathy. Children show active involvement and absorb moral messages through fun play activities. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator who directs the game and inserts Islamic values contextually. Thus, educational games have proven to be an effective medium for strengthening early childhood character naturally and contextually.

Keywords: Educational Games, Moral Values, Islamic Character, Early Childhood

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Introduction

Early childhood is known as the *golden age*, which is a developmental period that greatly determines the direction of a person's life in the future. In this phase, children are in a very receptive condition to various forms of stimulation, both physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual. Therefore, educational interventions during this period are very important to form solid personality foundations, including the formation of moral and moral values that will guide children's lives in the future.

Early childhood education is not only oriented towards the development of cognitive and basic skills, but must also pay attention to the affective and spiritual dimensions. From the perspective of Islamic education, strengthening moral values and forming noble morals are the main goals of education. This is affirmed in various verses of the Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which emphasize the importance of instilling manners, morals, and ethics from an early age. As the Prophet PBUH said: *"Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble morals"* (HR. Ahmad). This hadith shows that morality is not only part of education, but is the core and spirit of education itself.

But in practice, instilling moral values in early childhood requires a distinctive approach and in accordance with their developmental characteristics. Early childhood learns most effectively through hands-on experience and fun activities. Play is one of the most natural and effective ways to introduce various concepts and values to children. In play activities, children can learn to know themselves, understand others, and learn about norms, rules, and social-moral values in a fun and stress-free atmosphere.

Educational games are a type of game that is consciously designed to contain educational elements. Not only to train cognitive abilities, educational games can also be a very effective means of instilling moral values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, mutual respect, and empathy. Through games, children learn to regulate emotions, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and understand the meaning of right and wrong. So, playing is not only a recreational activity, but also a very potential character education medium.

RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie Medan Helvetia is one of the early childhood education institutions that has a vision of instilling Islamic values and shaping children's character from an early age. In its efforts to foster children's morals, this institution utilizes various learning methods, including educational games combined with moral values. However, even though the practice is ongoing, a deeper exploration of how games are used to instill moral values, the extent to which these values are understood and applied by children, and how the role of teachers in facilitating this process is still rarely the focus of systematic scientific studies.

This research is very important and relevant in the context of character education which has recently been increasingly promoted by the government and society. In the midst of globalization, technological developments, and rapid social changes, the challenges in fostering children's morals are increasingly complex. Therefore, it is necessary to find effective and fun educational strategies so that moral values can still be strongly instilled from an early age. Educational games, if designed and implemented appropriately, can be a creative solution in fostering children's character without neglecting their needs to play and socialize.

With this background, this study aims to explore in depth how educational games are used as a means of instilling moral values in RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie Medan Helvetia. This research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of fun and contextual moral value-based learning methods, and can be a reference for other early childhood education institutions in developing integrative learning curricula and strategies between cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects.

Theoretical Studies

In Islamic education, morals or morals have a very high position. Morality is not only a cognitive aspect, but is integrated into children's behaviors, habits, and ways of thinking. The process of cultivating morals begins from an early age, when children are in the golden age of character formation. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, *"I was sent to perfect noble morals."* (HR. Ahmad).

Educational games are play activities designed with a purpose in mind Learning. Jean Piaget said that children learn through environmental exploration and play activities. In the context of Islamic education, games are a natural means to introduce noble values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy.

Types of educational games that are relevant to inculcate moral values include:

1. Role-playing (e.g., playing a doctor, teacher, or godly child)
2. Rules games (e.g. queue games, number dice games)
3. Social games (e.g. group games)
4. Constructive play (e.g. arranging blocks, making miniatures)

Through play, children can interact with friends, resolve conflicts, learn to share, and follow rules—all of which are part of the process of internalizing moral values. With the assistance of teachers, Islamic values such as patience, honesty, and helpfulness can be inserted subtly and contextually in the game

Research Methods

The research used in this study is qualitative research that provides descriptive information in written or oral narratives about the people and behaviors observed. In this study, the author examines the phenomenon that occurs in RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie Medan Helvetia to obtain the truth of information based on the theoretical framework of the questions asked scientifically. The research approach used is a field-based descriptive approach in natural conditions taken from written or oral narratives and the behavior of the people observed consisting of school principals, teachers and students.

Research and Discussion Results

This research was conducted at RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie Medan Helvetia with the aim of revealing how educational games are used as a means of learning moral and moral values for early childhood. Data were collected through direct observation of children's play activities, in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, and documentation of learning activities related to character education.

Based on the results of observations, it can be seen that teachers at RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie consistently integrate moral values into various Educational type of game. Games are not only used to develop children's motor and cognitive skills, but also as a vehicle to instill the values of honesty, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation.

Some types of educational games used include:

1. Role play: Children are invited to play the role of characters in daily life, such as being a godly child who helps parents, being a friend who helps a friend who has fallen, or being a teacher who teaches students to pray. In this activity, children are invited to live their roles and experience firsthand values such as helping, caring, and respecting others.
2. Rule-based games: Teachers apply games that have clear rules, such as throwing a ball while naming a commendable trait, a relay game that requires cooperation, or an Islamic number board game that contains a moral message. This game trains children to be disciplined, honest, and follow the rules with responsibility.
3. Social games: In some activities, children are divided into small groups to

complete a challenge together, such as making a collage with the theme "good children" or arranging blocks with the theme of "mosques and houses of worship". This activity fosters a sense of togetherness, cooperation, and tolerance.

4. Symbolic games: Children also play imaginatively with props such as dolls, kitchen toys, or miniature mosques. They create their own stories that naturally give rise to moral values. In this process, teachers observe and sometimes insert reflective questions to reinforce the child's understanding of the values that emerge in the game.

From the results of interviews with teachers and principals, information was obtained that the use of games as a medium for learning moral values was indeed planned and became part of the thematic learning strategy. The teacher not only provides the tools, but also guides the process with a narrative that contains a moral message and inserts Islamic teachings according to the ongoing situation.

The teacher also noted that after children participate in games that contain moral values, they tend to show positive changes in attitudes in daily life, such as saying greetings, apologizing if you make a mistake, and help a friend without being told. This shows that the values conveyed through play are truly understood and applied by the child.

The results of this study strengthen the understanding that games not only function as a tool of entertainment or motor development, but are also an important medium in early childhood character education. In the context of Islamic education, moral learning carried out through the play approach is a form of actualization of educational methods that are in accordance with the nature and development of children.

In line with constructivist theory, children build understanding and meaning through active interaction with the environment. Games become a bridge between the real world and imagination, allowing children to experience and express moral values in a contextual way. When children play as "good kids" or "helpful friends," they are actually learning to internalize good values in a form that fits their world.

In addition, this approach is also in accordance with the social learning theory of Albert Bandura, which states that children learn through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In educational games, children not only observe the good behavior exemplified by teachers or friends, but also have the opportunity to imitate and practice them in a safe and fun play atmosphere. This process makes moral values not only known verbally, but also felt and lived emotionally and socially.

Teachers have a central role in this process. They are not only observers, but also directors, facilitators, and at the same time models who reinforce moral values in the context of the game. With the guidance of teachers, children are able to reflect on their playing experiences and understand Islamic values more deeply. Teachers who consistently instill Islamic values in various activities also form a class culture with religious nuances and build a learning climate that is conducive to children's moral development.

Overall, the educational games used at RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie not only support the character-based early childhood education curriculum, but also become an effective medium in instilling Islamic moral values from an early age. Creatively and meaningfully developed games capable of being A bridge between children's real-life learning and practice.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This research shows that educational games at RA Islamiyah Al Yatimie Medan Helvetia play an important role in instilling Islamic moral values and morals to early childhood. The various forms of play adapted to the child's character provide not only fun, but also a means to learn about responsibility, honesty, empathy and cooperation.

Teachers as companions have a strategic role in directing the course of the game so that

it still contains the content of values. In a fun and stress-free way, children are able to absorb moral values and apply them in everyday life.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational games continue to be developed in early childhood learning activities, by strengthening the integration of Islamic values in each form of play. Teachers are also expected to continue to increase creativity in designing games with moral nuances. Collaboration with parents is also needed so that the values learned in the game can continue to be internalized at home.

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