

The Urgency of Islamic Media Literacy in Early Childhood in the Midst of the Flow of Digital Content at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has brought major changes in social life and the education system, including at the early childhood education level. Children now live in an era of unlimited information flows that can provide benefits as well as risks, especially for the development of their character and spirituality. This study aims to examine the urgency of Islamic media literacy for early childhood in the context of education at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal. Islamic media literacy is seen as a child's critical ability to access, understand, and filter digital content based on Islamic values. Through a qualitative-descriptive approach, this study highlights the importance of the role of Islamic educational institutions in shaping a religious media literacy culture, as well as the need for collaboration between teachers, parents, and a supportive digital environment

Keywords: *Islamic Media Literacy, Early Childhood, Digital Content, Islamic Education*

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Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the last two decades has brought major disruptions in the patterns of social interaction, education systems, and information consumption of global communities, including in Indonesia. One of the most significant impacts of these advances is the abundance of digital content that can be easily accessed by a wide range of groups, including early childhood children. On the one hand, digital content provides great opportunities for a more interactive and varied learning process. But on the other hand, without adequate assistance and understanding of media literacy, children are very vulnerable to being exposed to content that is not in accordance with moral, social, and spiritual values that should be instilled from an early age (Baharun, 2016).

Early childhood is in the golden age, which is a very crucial period in the formation of character, values, and habits that will continue to be carried into adulthood (Santrock, 2011). At this stage, children have a high absorption of stimuli that come from the environment, including digital media which is currently an integral part of daily life. Unfortunately, much of the digital content circulating contains messages of violence, consumerism, individualism, and even vulgar content that is contrary to religious teachings. This raises serious concerns about the direction of children's moral and spiritual development, especially in the context of Islamic education (Friday, Friday and Arifin, 2024).

In the perspective of Islamic education, the formation of noble morals and the cultivation of monotheistic values from an early age are the main foundations. Therefore, the urgency of strengthening Islamic media literacy is very vital. Islamic media literacy is not only interpreted as children's ability to understand and use media, but more than that, it includes a critical understanding of the content of media messages as well as the ability to distinguish content that is in accordance with Islamic values (Yusof et al., 2021). This literacy is important so that children not only become passive consumers, but also be able to become selective and wise individuals in accessing and interpreting information received through digital media (Noviansah, 2020).

RA Amalia Darma Sunggal as an Islamic-based early childhood education institution has a strategic responsibility in preparing the Qur'ani generation who are able to face the challenges of the times, including the rapid flow of digital information. In this context, strengthening Islamic media literacy at RA Amalia Darma is not only aimed at fortifying children from negative media influences, but also to instill love for Islamic values through appropriate digital content. Islamic media literacy education needs to be systematically designed through an integrative approach between media-based learning, parental mentoring, and creative use of technology but still based on sharia principles.

Therefore, a study on the urgency of Islamic media literacy for early childhood at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal is very important. This study is expected to make a scientific contribution in formulating an Islamic media education model that is relevant to the needs of the times and in accordance with the psychological development of children. More than that, this research is also expected to be able to be a foothold in designing institutional internal policies that are more responsive to the challenges of digital media and oriented towards strengthening children's religious character from an early age (Wibowo, 2020).

Research Methodology

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research, which is data collected in the form of words, images, not numbers (Sudarwan Danim, 2002). According to Bogdan and Taylor, as cited by Lexy J. Moleong, qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviors (Moleong, 2000). Meanwhile, descriptive research is a form of research aimed at describing or describing existing phenomena, both natural and man-made phenomena.

The data collection in this study is as follows, namely. Observations, interviews and documentary studies. Observation is observation that is carried out by involving oneself in the

situation of the object being studied (Cardon, 1996). Then the interview, the method of data collection by way of one-sided question and answer is carried out systematically based on the research objectives (Scott, 2004). The reason for using the interview method is with the intention of obtaining information from sources in depth for the resource persons including teachers, school principals, students and other education personnel. Next is the study document, namely collect written data, in the form of documents that are considered relevant to support the discussion of the research (Nawawi, 1998).

The data analysis used is the version of Miles and Huberman, that there are three flows of activities, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Akbar, 2009). The analysis has started from formulating and explaining the problem, before going into the field and continuing until the writing of the research results. Data analysis becomes a handle for further research until, if possible, a grounded theory. However, in qualitative research, data analysis is more focused during the process in the field along with data collection (Sudarto, 1997).

Results

This study aims to explore in depth how the implementation of Islamic media literacy is applied in RA Amalia Darma Sunggal and identify the factors that support and hinder the process. Data were obtained through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The narrative of these results is systematically compiled based on two main problem formulations.

A. Research Results

Form of Implementation of Islamic Media Literacy in Early Childhood at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal

RA Amalia Darma Sunggal as an early childhood Islamic education institution shows a real effort in integrating Islamic values into digital media-based learning. Based on the results of observations and documentation, several forms of Islamic media literacy activities have been implemented, although they are still limited and have not been thoroughly structured in the official curriculum. Teachers routinely play Islamic educational videos containing stories of the prophet, Islamic manners, daily prayers, and Islamic children's songs. This video plays through projectors and speakers available in some classrooms. The use of murattal is also part of the habituation activity every morning before learning begins. The children seemed enthusiastic and showed special attention when listening to the chanting of the holy verses of the Qur'an and watching Islamic shows.

In practice, the use of digital media has not become a permanent part of the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH). Media is more widely used as a visual aid and a timer during the transition of activities. For example, when the child is waiting for his turn or waiting to be picked up, the teacher plays Islamic videos to keep the child in a positive and educational atmosphere. In addition to video media, teachers are also active in telling Islamic stories using digital picture aids or picture books. On some occasions, teachers use Islamic applications such as short letter memorization applications or daily prayers as learning support media. However, only some teachers master the use of this application due to training limitations.

Islamic media literacy activities are not only limited to watching or listening, but are also directed to instill values. Teachers associate media content with daily morals, such as the importance of telling the truth, respecting parents, sharing with friends, and maintaining cleanliness. These values were re-discussed through Q&A after the media was played, although not all classes applied post-media reflection consistently.

Children are not just passive spectators. In some sessions, they were asked to imitate the prayers that were broadcast, sing Islamic songs, or retell the content of the stories they had watched. This approach gives children space to build critical understanding and simple communication skills around Islamic content.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Implementation of Islamic Media Literacy at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal

The implementation of Islamic media literacy at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal runs with various challenges, but is also supported by a number of potentials that can be further developed. The results of the interviews show that the teachers at RA Amalia Darma have a strong commitment to guiding children with Islamic values. The principal also strongly supports the use of Islamic digital media as part of children's moral and character learning. This commitment is a strong foundation for the development of media literacy programs in the future.

Children show a high interest in visual media such as Islamic animation, songs, and prophetic stories. This is a great opportunity for teachers to use the media as a tool for value transformation. Children tend to absorb moral messages more easily through interesting and age-appropriate shows.

Although it is not evenly distributed, some parents have shown support for the school's efforts to introduce Islamic media. They began to restrict children's access to digital content that was not educational and replaced it with Islamic applications such as educational games, memorization, and Islamic cartoons. This is a positive signal in building educational synergy between school and home.

Meanwhile, the inhibiting factor is that the majority of teachers have not received special training on Islamic media literacy. This leads to limitations in their ability to select, evaluate, and utilize Islamic content that is relevant and developmentally appropriate to children. Teachers also admitted that it was difficult to develop a learning strategy that systematically integrated Islamic media.

Some classes do not have adequate devices such as projectors, speakers, or stable internet connections. In fact, existing devices are used interchangeably and often experience technical problems. This causes media-based activities to not be carried out regularly and optimally. RA Amalia Darma does not have a specific Islamic media literacy curriculum. The existing activities are individual teacher initiatives and do not have a standard evaluation standard. The absence of guidelines causes Islamic media literacy to only be a complement, not the main part of the learning process.

Most parents do not understand the importance of Islamic media literacy and have not accompanied their children in digital media consumption. Many children are still free to access their devices to watch random videos without a value filter. This risks damaging the results of value development carried out in schools. RA Amalia Darma has not collaborated with Islamic media institutions or platforms to provide quality educational content. In fact, many digital da'wah institutions and Islamic content developers can be strategic partners in improving the quality of children's media literacy.

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, it can be concluded that the implementation of Islamic media literacy at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal has been carried out in basic forms such as Islamic video playback, murattal habituation, and Islamic stories. However, this activity is not structured and still faces a number of challenges such as limited facilities, lack of teacher training, and lack of parental participation. However, the great potential can be seen from the enthusiasm of teachers and children's enthusiasm for Islamic media, which is the main capital in the development of Islamic media literacy programs that are more planned and systematic.

B. Discussion

The development of digital technology today has changed the patterns of communication, learning, and information consumption at various age levels, including early childhood. The findings of the research at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal show that early childhood has become active users of digital media even though they do not have mature critical and moral thinking capacity. This is in line with the statement that early childhood is in the

"preoperational" phase in Piaget's theory of cognitive development, where children begin to recognize symbols, language, and visual imagery but do not yet have the ability to think logically and reflectively. Therefore, exposure to unfiltered digital content is very risky to affect the formation of children's character and morals (Lubis et al., 2024).

Early childhood Islamic education is seen as a mandate and a sacred fitrah. This is affirmed in QS. Ar-Rum: 30 and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH that every child is born in a state of fitrah. Therefore, the great responsibility for parents and educational institutions is to maintain and guide the fitrah so that it remains directed according to Islamic teachings. Islamic media literacy is an important instrument in this process, because it functions not only as a technical tool for media mastery, but also as a spiritual and ethical process in the use of technology in Islam (Parapat et al., 2023).

This research found that RA Amalia Darma has begun to apply Islamic media through various simple approaches, such as video playback of prophetic stories, murattal audio, digital Islamic stories, and songs with monotheistic nuances. Although it is still incidental and has not been integrated into the curriculum, this approach shows a positive direction in building early awareness of the media as a means of religious education.

The concept of media literacy includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages through the media. In early childhood, media literacy cannot be separated from the guidance of adults, both teachers and parents, which functions as a value filter. In this case, the Islamic media literacy approach applied by RA Amalia Darma is still in the early stages, namely providing limited access to Islamic content, but has not yet reached the stage of critical analysis and evaluation of children on the content (Abdi Syahril Harahap, 2022).

The findings that children began to show an understanding of Islamic figures, prayers, and prophetic stories from digital media showed that there was a process of internalizing values, which is in accordance with the *learning through play approach* in early childhood education. This concept was reinforced by Vygotsky through the theory of *sociocultural learning*, that children learn through social interaction and media that function as a mediation tool. Therefore, Islamic media can be an effective mediation tool if used consistently and with the right pedagogical approach.

The main challenges found in this study are related to the limited competence of teachers in the field of Islamic technology, the lack of training in the use of educational media, and the lack of guidelines or curriculum that integrate Islamic media literacy in teaching and learning activities. This is relevant to the results of a study that emphasizes the need for media management reform in Islamic educational institutions to present learning that is contextual and in accordance with the times (Siregar, 2023).

Family is also a big obstacle in the success of Islamic media literacy. Some parents allow their children to access digital content freely without filters and time controls. This raises concerns about screen addiction and content consumption that is contrary to Islamic values. A study from the American Academy of Pediatrics (2016) shows that excessive exposure to digital media in early childhood can cause negative impacts such as speech delays, attention disorders, and even behavioral disorders.

In Islamic education, the role of the family as the first madrasah is very important. The Prophet PBUH reminded that it is parents who shape the personality of children (HR. Bukhari and Muslim). Therefore, Islamic media literacy is not only the responsibility of teachers in schools, but must also be a collective awareness at home. In this context, it is necessary to be a joint strategy between teachers and parents to assist children in selecting, screening, and using media according to the values of Islamic faith and morals (Harahap et al., 2024).

The strategies that RA Amalia Darma has pursued, such as the screening of Islamic media, the involvement of parents through parenting days, and the monitoring of children's watch journals, are concrete steps in building healthy and religious media awareness. This is in line with the *media-literate parenting* approach, which prioritizes assistance and active control from parents over children's media consumption.

To strengthen Islamic media literacy systemically, more strategic interventions are needed. The Islamic literacy movement in schools will only succeed if there is an integration between the curriculum, teacher training, and school culture. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an Islamic media literacy curriculum that is oriented towards character building, by including indicators of literacy achievement based on Islamic values. On the other hand, teachers need to be equipped with training in content creation, children's Islamic media curation, and Islamic digital pedagogy in order to be able to use the media effectively (Munisa, 2020).

The provision of Islamic media resources, whether in the form of applications, videos, or digital books, needs to be expanded so that teachers and parents have safe and appropriate references. Collaboration with children's Islamic app developers, digital da'wah institutions, or Islamic parenting communities can be a creative solution to close the gap in quality Islamic media.

Conclusion

Islamic media literacy is an urgent need in early childhood education, especially in the midst of the rapid flow of digital information that is often not in accordance with Islamic values. The results of research at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal show that Islamic media literacy efforts have been carried out through various forms of Islamic media-based learning activities, such as videos of prophetic stories, murattal audio, Islamic stories, and religious songs. Children show a positive response to media that contains tawhid and moral values, but the implementation of this program is still limited by the absence of a curriculum, lack of teacher training, and lack of active parental involvement.

The existence of Islamic media literacy is not only a learning tool, but also as a strategic instrument to form character, spirituality, and moral awareness from an early age. Therefore, an integrated and collaborative strategy is needed between teachers, parents, and educational institutions to present digital media that is educational, Islamic, and in accordance with early childhood development. The suggestions from the results of this study are as follows:

1. Preparation of a special curriculum for Islamic media literacy based on early childhood and Islamic values.
2. Improving teacher competence through routine training on the use and selection of Islamic digital media.
3. Strengthening parental participation through Islamic parenting programs and guidelines for the use of media at home.

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