

Instilling Islamic Values in Early Childhood through the Story of Prophet Yusuf: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Background of the study: Instilling Islamic values in early childhood lays a strong foundation for building moral character and spiritual awareness. Early childhood is a critical stage when children are highly responsive to the values and behaviors around them. In Islamic education, storytelling especially stories of the Prophets has long been seen as an effective way to teach values. One powerful example is the story of Prophet Yusuf, which contains many important lessons relevant to character education.

Aims and scope of paper: This paper explores how Islamic values can be introduced to young children through the story of Prophet Yusuf. It focuses on key values found in the narrative, such as honesty, patience, piety, forgiveness, and gratitude. The paper also discusses how these values can be taught using methods that are suitable for the developmental stage of early learners. These methods include storytelling, discussion, roleplay, and daily routines that reinforce good behavior.

Methods: The study uses a qualitative library research method. Data were collected from secondary sources, including academic books, journal articles, and interpretations of the Qur'an that examine Prophet Yusuf's story and Islamic character education. The analysis follows a descriptive-interpretive approach to identify key themes and teaching strategies.

Results: The findings show that Prophet Yusuf's story is rich in Islamic values and can be a valuable tool for moral teaching in early childhood. The values in the story are relatable and can help children develop positive behavior when taught in a simple and engaging way.

Contribution: This paper contributes to Islamic early childhood education by offering a structured approach to using religious stories for value-based learning. It also shows that Qur'anic stories are not only spiritually meaningful but also culturally relevant for building character. The study encourages educators and parents to use storytelling as a practical and meaningful method to support children's moral and spiritual growth.

INTRODUCTION

While previous studies have broadly addressed the significance of moral education in early childhood, many of them tend to focus on general Islamic values or on a wide range of Qur'anic narratives without offering a concentrated pedagogical framework for a single story (Ayuni et al., 2025; Bulla et al., 2025; Cholimah et al., 2024; Ismail, 2016). Research by Hostini and Rahmi et al., for instance, underlines the importance of integrating Islamic values into the curriculum, yet these works do not deeply explore the didactic potential of a specific prophetic narrative in early learning contexts (Hostini, 2022; Rahmi et al., 2023). Similarly, studies by Sukmono and Kusuma discuss Qur'anic storytelling as an instructional method, but their analyses remain general in scope and lack a targeted examination of the pedagogical adaptability of individual stories to various developmental stages (Sukmono & Kusuma, 2021). This indicates a clear gap in the literature—there is limited research that systematically dissects the moral values embedded in a specific Qur'anic story, aligns them with early childhood developmental needs, and offers concrete pedagogical applications.

The story of Prophet Yusuf holds unique didactic value compared to other prophetic narratives. Not only does it present a complete life journey filled with moral and spiritual lessons (Langsæther, 2019; Lo Presti et al., 2023; Tirri, 2023; Wahlers et al., 2024; Willemse et al., 2008; Yuliana & Busyro Karim, 2024; Zakhari & Bates, 2025), but it also offers a coherent narrative arc that is cognitively engaging for young learners. As Zulhelmi highlights, the themes of patience, honesty, resilience, and forgiveness are woven throughout the story, allowing for repeated reinforcement of these values in different learning contexts (Zulhelmi, 2022). However, most existing analyses of this story, such as those by Mutamakin and Erwanto, have been conducted from theological or literary perspectives, often intended for adult audiences (Mutamakin & Erwanto, 2024). They rarely address how these values can be translated into age-appropriate learning experiences for early childhood education. This represents a further research gap—there is an absence of frameworks that bridge scriptural exegesis with practical pedagogical strategies suitable for young children.

In addition, while storytelling is widely acknowledged as a powerful educational method (Maureen et al., 2020), few studies have specifically explored religious storytelling in the context of contemporary early childhood classrooms, especially within the Islamic education setting. The increasing influence of digital media, shifting family structures, and globalization pose new challenges for moral education (Croitoru & Munteanu, 2014; Epstein, 2018; Gholami et al., 2011; Laidlaw et al., 2021). Many children are now exposed to conflicting moral narratives from multiple sources, making it even more urgent to develop engaging, culturally rooted, and theologically sound storytelling approaches. The lack of contextualized, research-based resources for educators and parents in Muslim communities further compounds this issue.

This study addresses these gaps by focusing on the story of Prophet Yusuf as a case study for moral value transmission in early childhood education. Unlike previous works, it undertakes a dual analysis: first, a textual and thematic examination of the story to identify its core moral lessons; and second, the formulation of a pedagogical framework that adapts these lessons into practical storytelling strategies for early learners. This dual approach ensures that the study is both theoretically grounded and pedagogically applicable. Moreover, it situates the discussion within the broader aims of Islamic character education, responding to the current need for culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate moral instruction.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of scriptural exegesis, developmental psychology, and instructional design to produce actionable insights for early childhood educators and parents. By narrowing the focus to one Qur'anic narrative, the study provides a depth of analysis that is often missing in broader overviews. It also acknowledges the lived realities of 21st-century learners, considering how traditional moral lessons can be communicated effectively in modern educational settings. Through this contribution, the research not only fills a scholarly gap but also offers practical benefits for the design of early childhood curricula and parental engagement strategies rooted in Islamic values.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a library research method with a qualitative approach. The research process involved reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing a broad range of literature related to early childhood education, Islamic values, and the story of Prophet Yusuf. The reviewed sources included scientific books, peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, and credible digital documents that discuss moral education and storytelling within Islamic pedagogy (Irawan & Mutmainah, 2022). The study focused on understanding how the moral values embedded in the narrative of Prophet Yusuf can be effectively integrated into early childhood education through storytelling.

Research Subjects

The “participants” in this literature-based study were not human respondents but rather scholarly sources that served as the primary units of analysis. These sources were selected purposively based on relevance, credibility, and recency, with priority given to works published in the last ten years. The analyzed materials included: a) The Qur’anic text of Surah Yusuf and its authoritative interpretations; b) Peer-reviewed journal articles and books on Islamic moral education and early childhood pedagogy; c) Studies and reports documenting the use of religious storytelling in educational contexts.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature review process. Relevant literature was identified using academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ, employing keywords such as Prophet Yusuf storytelling, Islamic values in early childhood, and Qur’anic pedagogy. The inclusion criteria required that the sources: a) Directly discuss moral education or storytelling in Islamic pedagogy; b) Be peer-reviewed or otherwise academically credible; c) Be published within the last decade, except for classical tafsir references.

The instrument used in data collection was a document analysis sheet, which guided the extraction of key moral values—such as honesty, patience, gratitude, piety, and forgiveness—from each source.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques. The process consisted of three main stages: a) Identification: Extracting moral values and key themes from the story of Prophet Yusuf; b) Categorization: Organizing the values into thematic clusters aligned with early childhood developmental objectives; c) Interpretation – Mapping each value to potential storytelling strategies for educators and parents.

To ensure the validity of findings, source triangulation was employed, verifying the consistency and accuracy of information across multiple references (Munir & Maulana, 2023). The analysis followed thematic coding procedures and adhered to the PRISMA guidelines (Liberati et al., 2009) to maintain transparency and rigor in the literature review process. Since the study relied exclusively on secondary data, no statistical tests were performed; the focus remained on qualitative interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the story of Prophet Yusuf significantly contributes to shaping the moral character of young children, particularly in fostering values such as honesty, patience, sincerity, and forgiveness. When presented in an engaging and interactive manner, the story captures children's attention, allowing them not only to enjoy the narrative but also to internalize and imitate the values conveyed. From an early age, these habits lay the foundation for Islamic character development. This research aims to explore the extent to which the story of

Prophet Yusuf can serve as an effective educational tool in instilling Islamic values in early childhood.

The Story of Prophet Yusuf

The narrative of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) as revealed in the Qur'an is a rich account filled with moral and spiritual teachings, making it highly relevant for character education in early childhood. Yusuf is portrayed as a child who exemplified honesty, patience, and compassion from an early age. He dreamed of eleven stars, the sun, and the moon bowing before him—a symbolic vision of his honorable destiny (Qur'an, Surah Yusuf: 4). However, jealousy among his brothers led to him being cast into a well, an ordeal that tested his patience and unwavering faith in Allah SWT.

Throughout his life, Yusuf developed into a wise and trustworthy figure, eventually gaining the trust of the king of Egypt due to his divinely inspired ability to interpret dreams (Pratama, 2017). When reunited with his brothers, Yusuf chose to forgive them, demonstrating the virtue of mercy, letting go of resentment, and promoting peace and love. His story not only conveys faith but also imparts lessons in honesty, patience, and forgiveness values essential to instill in young children through developmentally appropriate learning methods (Zulhelmi, 2022). With a simple and engaging narrative style, the story of Prophet Yusuf serves as an effective medium for nurturing Islamic values from an early age.

Islamic Values in the Story of Prophet Yusuf

The story of Prophet Yusuf is not merely a historical account but is filled with lessons in ethics, faith, and devotion that serve as a solid foundation for instilling Islamic values in early childhood. Values such as honesty, patience, faith in Allah, and forgiveness are clearly illustrated throughout Yusuf's life journey, from his youth to adulthood (Mahfud, 2022). For young learners, this story becomes a powerful educational tool, as its narrative format delivers moral and spiritual messages in a way that aligns with their cognitive and emotional development. With the right pedagogical approach, the story of Prophet Yusuf can help embed Islamic values in a joyful and meaningful manner.

The Value of Patience in the Story of Prophet Yusuf

One of the central values depicted in Prophet Yusuf's story is patience. From an early age, he endured severe trials jealousy from his brothers, being thrown into a well, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and imprisoned. Despite these challenges, Yusuf remained patient and never held grudges, consistently upholding righteous behavior. This patience exemplifies the attitude of a true believer who trusts that every test from Allah SWT carries wisdom and purpose (Munir & Maulana, 2023).

This value is vital in teaching children how to respond calmly to challenges. According to (S et al., 2023) patience is a foundational Islamic virtue that must be introduced early through story-based emotional learning. (Fatwakiningsih, 2024) also emphasizes the use of heroic figures like Yusuf to cultivate resilience in young learners. Reinforcing this through structured storytelling has proven effective in classroom contexts (Mahfud, 2022; Hasan, 2023).

For young children, this story offers a concrete example of how to be patient in everyday situations, such as waiting their turn or dealing with minor frustrations. The value of patience can be nurtured through engaging storytelling and daily reinforcement at home or in school. Children learn that patience is not weakness but a strength of character and emotional independence.

The Value of Gratitude in the Story of Prophet Yusuf

Gratitude is another profound value embedded in the life of Prophet Yusuf. Despite enduring a series of hardships, he remained grateful to Allah for every blessing, whether in the well, in the house of the Egyptian ruler, or while leading as a state official. This value is vital in teaching children how to respond calmly to challenges. According to (S et al., 2023) patience is a foundational Islamic virtue that must be introduced early through story-based emotional learning. (Fatwakiningsih, 2024) also emphasizes the use of heroic figures like Yusuf to cultivate resilience

in young learners. Reinforcing this through structured storytelling has proven effective in classroom contexts (Mahfud, 2022; Hasan, 2023). Yusuf never complained about his fate; instead, he acknowledged that all his successes were gifts from Allah SWT (M. Z. Al-Farizih et al., 2024). This shows the importance of gratitude in cultivating a positive outlook and strong faith.

Young children can be taught gratitude through the story of Prophet Yusuf by highlighting how he stayed joyful and trusted Allah in all circumstances. Teachers and parents can encourage children to express thanks in daily life after meals, during play, or when receiving help. This practice fosters humility and inner happiness that does not depend on external situations.

The Value of Honesty in the Story of Prophet Yusuf

Honesty is one of the most prominent traits in Prophet Yusuf's life. Even when wrongly accused of a crime he did not commit, Yusuf remained truthful, knowing that honesty might lead to further hardship (Andriono, 2021). Even as a powerful leader, he never abused his position and always acted justly. This value is critical for children, especially during their early character development (SYALSABILLA, 2023).

Honesty is a key ethical component in early moral development. Emphasize that religious narratives provide a contextual framework for embedding this value. (A & Basri, 2023) found that children who regularly heard stories of the Prophets showed stronger integrity-related behaviors. Additionally, (A. Al-Farizih et al., 2024) links honesty in storytelling with higher levels of emotional literacy and trust-building in young students.

By presenting Yusuf's story in simple terms, young children can learn that telling the truth is a noble act that pleases Allah. They also come to understand that lies bring negative consequences, while honesty builds trust. Teaching honesty from an early age lays the foundation for children to become responsible, transparent, and morally grounded individuals.

The Value of Forgiveness in the Story of Prophet Yusuf

Forgiveness is a noble quality that stands out prominently in the story of Prophet Yusuf, particularly when he forgives his brothers who had wronged him in childhood. Despite having the authority to punish them, Yusuf chose reconciliation over revenge. This act reflects spiritual maturity and a commitment to peace, values central to Islamic teachings (Mutamakinn & Erwanto, 2024). For early childhood, forgiveness can be introduced through storytelling that emphasizes its benefits restoring friendships and bringing inner peace. Since young children often face minor conflicts, this story serves as an effective way to help them understand that forgiving others leads to happiness and frees the heart from resentment.

In Islamic pedagogy, forgiveness is tied to emotional intelligence and spiritual depth. (Wulansari et al., 2023) describe how storybooks on prophetic figures lead to increased acts of forgiveness among peers. (Hasan, 2023) emphasizes that stories from the Qur'an serve as models for managing interpersonal conflict in early educational settings. This aligns with (Salsabila & Nurhadi, 2024), who demonstrate the effectiveness of Yusuf's story in shaping prosocial behaviors.

The Value of Piety in the Story of Prophet Yusuf

Yusuf's piety and devotion to Allah SWT are evident throughout his life. When tempted by the wife of the Egyptian official, he chose imprisonment over disobedience to God. His decision reflects the belief that obedience to Allah is far more valuable than temporary worldly pleasure. This devotion shaped him into a person of strength, integrity, and unwavering reliance on divine guidance (M. Z. Al-Farizih et al., 2024). Introducing piety to young children requires a gradual, developmentally appropriate approach. One way is to help them understand that Allah sees everything and loves good deeds. Through the story of Prophet Yusuf, children can learn that staying close to Allah brings peace, blessings, and a strong spiritual foundation from an early age.

Piety, or taqwa, is foundational in building a spiritually grounded personality. (Walid & Hasan, 2024) explain that Surah Yusuf has immense psychological relevance in guiding children toward God-consciousness. (Hanafi & Zahra, 2024) argue that Qur'anic stories stimulate spiritual

intelligence when integrated into values education. Moreover, (Maulana, 2024) highlights the role of storytelling in nurturing awe, obedience, and religious discipline in preschool-aged children.

The Importance of Islamic Value Education in Early Childhood

Instilling Islamic values during early childhood is a crucial foundation for shaping children's attitudes, habits, and worldview. This developmental stage often referred to as the golden age is characterized by a heightened ability to absorb information and imitate observed behaviors (Rahmi et al., 2023). Introducing Islamic principles at this formative period enables children to develop a mindset and behavioral patterns that align with religious teachings. This process involves more than the delivery of abstract concepts; it emphasizes concrete, engaging, and enjoyable experiences that embody these values in everyday life.

Furthermore, early Islamic education plays a vital role in shaping a child's Islamic identity holistically. When children are introduced to core values such as honesty, patience, and gratitude from a young age, these principles are more likely to be internalized and practiced into adulthood. Value-based education encompasses not only the cognitive domain but also emotional (affective) and behavioral (psychomotor) aspects, influencing how children think, feel, and act in accordance with Islamic teachings (Hostini, 2022). Therefore, it is essential for parents and educators to employ developmentally appropriate strategies to ensure that these values are not only understood but also applied in daily life.

In the context of Islamic education, the stories of the Prophets as narrated in the Qur'an serve as powerful tools for instilling moral values in young children. For instance, the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), peace be upon him, offers rich lessons in honesty, patience, forgiveness, and devotion to Allah SWT. These meaningful narratives, when conveyed through age-appropriate language and engaging storytelling, become more accessible and impactful for children. Thus, Islamic value education should be seen not merely as a formal obligation, but as a fundamental necessity in nurturing a morally grounded and responsible generation.

Strategies for Teaching Islamic Values through the Story of Prophet Yusuf to Young Children

Teaching Islamic values to early childhood learners requires strategies that align with their developmental stage. One of the most effective approaches is storytelling, particularly by using prophetic narratives such as the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), peace be upon him. Storytelling enables young children to grasp abstract concepts through concrete and engaging narratives, making values such as honesty, patience, and piety more comprehensible and easier to internalize (Sukmono & Kusuma, 2021). When presenting the story of Prophet Yusuf, it is essential to use simple, age-appropriate language and engaging visual aids. Illustrated books or age-appropriate animated videos can significantly enhance children's interest and understanding of the narrative. Following the story, a brief discussion about the moral lessons contained within the tale can help children connect these values to their own everyday experiences.

Creative activities such as drawing scenes from the story or participating in role-playing exercises can further reinforce children's comprehension of the values being taught. These activities not only make the learning process more enjoyable but also encourage children to actively express their understanding. Through such interactive methods, Islamic values can be effectively integrated into the children's daily lives.

The role of parents and educators is vital in this process. They must serve as role models by embodying the Islamic values illustrated in the story of Prophet Yusuf. Consistency between the moral lessons taught and the everyday behavior of adults around the child strengthens the learning process and facilitates the internalization of these values. Therefore, teaching Islamic values through the story of Prophet Yusuf represents a practical and impactful strategy for character development in early childhood (Pulungan & Hayati, 2024).

Implications

The findings of this study underscore the pedagogical potential of the story of Prophet Yusuf as an effective medium for fostering Islamic values in early childhood education. When employed

as a storytelling resource, this narrative facilitates the internalization of core virtues—such as honesty, patience, and piety—through an approach that is both engaging and developmentally appropriate. Beyond its role in classroom instruction, the use of this story can also strengthen the continuum of moral education between school and home, fostering consistency in value transmission. This highlights the importance of integrating culturally and religiously relevant narratives into early childhood curricula as a means of promoting holistic moral and spiritual development.

Research Contribution

This study provides a structured and theoretically grounded framework for integrating Qur'anic narratives—specifically the story of Prophet Yusuf—into early childhood education. By systematically identifying and mapping the moral values embedded in this prophetic story, the research bridges the gap between scriptural teachings and pedagogical practice. The contribution lies in its ability to translate theological content into developmentally appropriate moral education strategies that align with early childhood learning objectives. Furthermore, the study enriches the field of Islamic pedagogy by offering a model that educators and parents can adopt to foster virtues such as honesty, patience, gratitude, piety, and forgiveness in young learners. This approach not only supports the internalization of Islamic values but also responds to contemporary challenges in moral education, including the influence of digital media and multicultural environments on children's value formation.

Limitations

The scope of this research is confined to a literature-based analysis and does not involve empirical testing in classroom or community settings. As a result, the findings and proposed strategies are theoretical in nature and may require adaptation to suit specific educational contexts. Variations in teaching effectiveness could arise from factors such as the educator's pedagogical competence, the socio-cultural environment of the child, and the availability of supporting instructional resources. Additionally, because the analysis focuses solely on the story of Prophet Yusuf, the applicability of the framework to other Qur'anic narratives remains to be tested.

Suggestions

Future research should extend this work through empirical investigations that implement the proposed storytelling strategies in real classroom environments. Such studies would enable the assessment of their effectiveness in promoting moral development among early childhood learners. Experimental or quasi-experimental designs could be employed to compare outcomes between groups exposed to different prophetic narratives. Moreover, comparative analyses involving multiple Qur'anic stories—such as those of Prophet Musa, Prophet Ibrahim, or Prophet Muhammad—could provide a broader understanding of the pedagogical potential of Islamic storytelling. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable to examine the sustainability of moral values acquired through this method over time.

CONCLUSION

The Qur'anic account of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) encompasses a rich repository of Islamic values that hold significant pedagogical potential for character formation in early childhood. Core virtues—such as patience, honesty, piety, forgiveness, and gratitude—are exemplified through the life experiences of Prophet Yusuf in ways that are both tangible and inspiring for young learners. When conveyed through developmentally appropriate and engaging pedagogical methods, this narrative can serve as a powerful and enjoyable medium for fostering moral and spiritual growth in early education contexts.

Introducing Islamic values through the story of Prophet Yusuf enables children to comprehend, internalize, and demonstrate virtuous behaviors in daily interactions. Examples include exercising patience in minor challenges, practicing honesty in communication with

parents and teachers, and extending forgiveness to peers. Through the application of dynamic storytelling techniques and consistent reinforcement across home and school environments, educators and parents can integrate this prophetic narrative into the broader framework of character education. Thus, the story of Prophet Yusuf functions not merely as a historical or theological account but as a practical, contextually relevant resource for instilling Islamic moral principles in early childhood.

Future research is recommended to empirically investigate the classroom application of the story of Prophet Yusuf, with particular emphasis on its influence on children's behavior and value internalization. Studies employing observational methods, educator feedback, and child-centered assessments would provide valuable evidence regarding the pedagogical efficacy of religious storytelling in early childhood education, thereby enhancing its theoretical and practical contributions to Islamic pedagogy.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

NF was responsible for conceptualizing the research topic, conducting the literature search, and writing the introduction and conclusion. S contributed to the analysis of Islamic values within the story of Prophet Yusuf and the structuring of the theoretical framework. FJ focused on translating and paraphrasing the research content into academic English, as well as editing and finalizing the manuscript. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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