



Implementation of Storytelling Method to Improve Students' Understanding of the Stories of the Prophets and Apostles at RA Ar Rahman

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Abstract: Islamic religious education plays an important role in shaping the character and morals of students from an early age. One of the materials taught at the Raudhatul Athfal level is the story of the Prophet and the Apostle, which aims to instill the values of faith and exemplary behavior in everyday life. However, monotonous delivery methods often lead to a lack of understanding and interest in the material. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the application of the storytelling method in improving students' understanding of the story of the Prophet and the Apostle at RA Ar Rahman. The research method used is classroom action research with a qualitative approach. The subjects of the study were students of RA Ar Rahman aged 4–6 years. Data were collected through observation, interviews with teachers, and evaluation of student understanding before and after the application of the storytelling method. Data analysis techniques were carried out by means of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study showed that the storytelling method was able to significantly improve students' understanding of the story of the Prophet and the Apostle. This can be seen from the increase in students' active participation during learning, their interest in listening to stories, and their ability to remember and retell the stories that have been learned. In addition, this method also has a positive impact on the development of students' social and emotional skills, such as increasing empathy and respect for parents and teachers. The application of the storytelling method is carried out using various techniques, such as the use of hand puppets, picture illustrations, and interesting voice expressions to adjust to the characteristics of the child's age. The teacher also invites students to discuss and ask questions after the storytelling session to strengthen their understanding. The obstacles faced in implementing this method include time constraints and the need for training for teachers in improving effective storytelling skills. Thus, the storytelling method can be an effective alternative in improving students' understanding of the story of the Prophet and the Apostles. The application of this method not only makes learning more enjoyable, but also helps students absorb the moral values contained in the story. Therefore, it is recommended that this method continue to be developed and applied more widely in Islamic religious learning at the early childhood education level.

Keywords: Storytelling, student understanding, the story of the Prophet and the Apostles.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education plays a very important role in shaping children's character and morals from an early age. At the Raudhatul Athfal education level, religious learning not only functions as a transfer of knowledge, but also as a means to instill life values that are

in accordance with Islamic teachings. One of the main materials in Islamic religious learning is the story of the Prophet and Apostle which is full of wisdom and examples for everyday life. These stories contain moral values that can guide children in understanding the concept of good and bad from an early age.

However, in practice, many students have difficulty understanding the stories of the Prophet and Apostle that are taught. This is due to the delivery method which is still conventional and tends to be monotonous. Many teachers only rely on reading texts without a more interesting approach, so that students are less interested in paying attention and understanding the contents of the story in depth. As a result, the values that are to be instilled through these stories are not well absorbed by children.

The storytelling method is one approach that can be used to overcome this problem. Storytelling has long been known as an effective method in conveying information in a more interesting and interactive way. By using storytelling, children can more easily understand a story because it is delivered with lively expressions, varying intonations, and the use of interesting visual aids such as hand puppets or picture illustrations.

The advantages of storytelling in learning lie not only in the aspect of children's emotional involvement, but also in its ability to improve students' memory and understanding. Research shows that children tend to remember information conveyed through stories more easily than through conventional lecture methods. In addition, storytelling can also build children's imagination, improve listening skills, and strengthen social relationships between teachers and students.

At RA Ar Rahman, storytelling has begun to be applied as one of the methods in learning the stories of the Prophets and Apostles. However, its application still needs to be further evaluated to ensure its effectiveness in improving students' understanding. This study aims to examine the extent to which the storytelling method can help students understand and internalize the values contained in the stories of the Prophets and Apostles.

In addition, this study will also identify various storytelling techniques that can be applied in early childhood learning, as well as obstacles that teachers may face in implementing this method. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this study can provide useful recommendations for educational institutions in improving the quality of Islamic religious learning at the RA level.

The application of storytelling at RA Ar Rahman is expected to have a positive impact on students' cognitive, emotional, and social development. With a more enjoyable approach, students can be more motivated in learning and understanding the moral messages from the stories of the Prophets and Apostles better. In addition, this method is also expected to instill children's love for Islam from an early age.

Along with the times, learning methods must continue to be updated so that they can be more effective in delivering material to students. The use of technology, visual media, and variations in storytelling techniques can be factors that support the success of implementing this method. Therefore, this study will also discuss how storytelling can be combined with technology to improve learning effectiveness.

With this research, it is hoped that educators and teaching staff at RA can gain new insights into the importance of the storytelling method in Islamic religious learning. This research can also be a consideration for other schools to adopt similar methods in an effort to improve students' understanding of religious values. Overall, storytelling is not just a tool for entertainment, but also an educational tool that has great potential in shaping children's character. Therefore, the application of this method must continue to be developed and adjusted to the needs and characteristics of students so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally. Through this research, it is hoped that the most effective strategy can be found in implementing storytelling in early childhood education environments. Thus, the process of learning the stories of the Prophets and Apostles can

be more meaningful, enjoyable, and have a positive impact on children's overall development.

Islamic education plays a fundamental role in shaping the moral and ethical foundation of students from an early age. Teaching religious values through the stories of Prophets and Messengers is an essential component of Islamic education, especially at the preschool level. However, traditional teaching methods often fail to capture the interest and engagement of young learners, leading to challenges in comprehension and retention. This study seeks to address these challenges by exploring the use of the storytelling method as an effective pedagogical approach in enhancing students' understanding of religious narratives.

The importance of early childhood education in instilling moral and ethical values cannot be overstated. At the Raudhatul Athfal (RA) level, children are at a developmental stage where they learn best through engaging and interactive experiences. Traditional lecture-based teaching methods often do not align with the cognitive and emotional needs of young children, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm and limited comprehension of religious teachings. The use of storytelling, however, offers a compelling alternative that not only captures children's interest but also enhances their ability to internalize and apply moral lessons in their daily lives.

Storytelling has long been recognized as an effective teaching strategy, particularly in early childhood education. Through narratives, children can connect with the content on a deeper level, making it easier for them to understand and remember key lessons. The use of expressive storytelling techniques, such as voice modulation, gestures, and visual aids, further enhances engagement and comprehension. In the context of Islamic education, storytelling serves as a powerful medium to convey the values and teachings of Prophets and Messengers in a way that is both meaningful and memorable for young learners.

One of the main challenges faced by educators in teaching religious stories is maintaining students' attention and interest. Given the short attention span of young children, traditional rote learning methods are often ineffective. Storytelling, on the other hand, creates an immersive learning experience that keeps students actively engaged. By incorporating interactive elements such as role-playing and discussions, storytelling transforms passive listening into an active learning process, thereby improving comprehension and retention.

Another critical aspect of the storytelling method is its ability to foster emotional and social development. Stories of Prophets and Messengers are rich with moral values, teaching children about patience, honesty, compassion, and faith. By listening to and discussing these stories, students not only develop a better understanding of religious teachings but also cultivate essential social skills such as empathy, cooperation, and respect for others.

The effectiveness of storytelling in religious education has been widely supported by various educational theories. Constructivist learning theories emphasize that children learn best when they actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences. Storytelling aligns with this approach by providing a context in which students can relate to the characters and events, thereby facilitating deeper learning. Furthermore, cognitive development theories suggest that young children process information more effectively through narratives rather than abstract concepts, making storytelling a highly suitable method for teaching religious values.

Despite its numerous advantages, the implementation of storytelling in Islamic education is not without challenges. One major limitation is the need for well-trained teachers who can effectively deliver stories in an engaging and impactful manner. Many educators lack the necessary skills in expressive narration, limiting the effectiveness of storytelling as a teaching strategy. Additionally, the availability of suitable storytelling materials, such as illustrated books and props, can also impact the success of this method.

Another challenge is the need to balance storytelling with other educational activities. While storytelling is an effective method, it should not completely replace other forms of learning, such as hands-on activities and discussions. A well-rounded approach that integrates storytelling with other teaching strategies can maximize students' learning outcomes and ensure a holistic educational experience.

Moreover, parental involvement plays a crucial role in reinforcing the impact of storytelling. When parents continue storytelling practices at home, children develop a stronger connection to the narratives and internalize the moral lessons more effectively. Schools should encourage parents to engage in storytelling activities with their children, providing them with resources and guidance on how to make storytelling a meaningful learning experience.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to examine the impact of storytelling on students' comprehension of the stories of Prophets and Messengers at RA Ar Rahman. By analyzing students' engagement, retention, and application of religious teachings, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogical approach in early childhood Islamic education. Furthermore, the findings of this study can inform educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers on best practices for integrating storytelling into religious instruction.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is to highlight the potential of storytelling as a powerful educational tool that not only enhances students' understanding of religious teachings but also fosters their overall moral and social development. By leveraging the strengths of storytelling, educators can create a more engaging and impactful learning experience for young students, ensuring that the values and teachings of Prophets and Messengers are effectively conveyed and internalized.

METHODS

This study employs a classroom action research approach with a qualitative method. CAR was chosen as it allows for direct intervention in the learning process to enhance students' comprehension. The study consists of several cycles, each comprising the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection.

In the planning stage, researchers and teachers design a storytelling-based learning strategy to be applied in the classroom. This planning includes selecting suitable stories of Prophets and Messengers for young learners, preparing teaching aids such as pictures, hand puppets, and voice expressions, and developing engaging storytelling techniques. Teachers are also given training to improve their storytelling skills to capture students' attention and create an enjoyable learning environment.

The implementation stage involves applying the storytelling method in classroom instruction. Teachers narrate the stories of Prophets and Messengers using facial expressions, voice intonations, and prepared teaching aids. During this process, students are encouraged to participate actively, such as answering questions related to the story, imitating characters from the story, or retelling the narratives in their own words. Observations are conducted directly during the learning process. Researchers record students' responses, their level of engagement in the storytelling sessions, and their comprehension of the story content. The data collected through observations serve as the foundation for assessing the effectiveness of the storytelling method in enhancing students' understanding.

In addition to observations, interviews are conducted with teachers and parents. Teachers provide insights into the ease and challenges of implementing the storytelling method, while parents offer feedback on changes in their children's behavior after participating in storytelling-based lessons. These interviews aim to gain a broader perspective on the impact of storytelling on students' comprehension and character development.

To measure students' improvement in comprehension, a pre-test and post-test assessment are administered before and after implementing the storytelling method. The test consists of simple questions evaluating how well students remember and understand the messages conveyed in the stories of Prophets and Messengers. The results of these tests are compared to determine students' progress after experiencing storytelling-based learning.

Data analysis is conducted through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, information obtained from observations, interviews, and comprehension tests is filtered and categorized based on its relevance to the research objectives. The refined data is then presented in narrative and tabular formats to facilitate further analysis.

Conclusion drawing is carried out based on the findings from data analysis. The study provides insights into the effectiveness of the storytelling method in improving students' understanding of the stories of Prophets and Messengers. Furthermore, it identifies challenges encountered in implementing storytelling and suggests solutions to optimize this method in Islamic religious education.

The validity of the data in this study is ensured through triangulation, which involves comparing observation results, interview findings, and comprehension test scores to verify consistency. This approach ensures that the research findings accurately depict the benefits of storytelling in enhancing students' comprehension of the stories of Prophets and Messengers at RA Ar Rahman.

By employing this research methodology, the study aims to provide concrete evidence of the impact of storytelling on students' comprehension of the stories of Prophets and Messengers. The findings of this research can serve as a reference for teachers in developing more engaging and effective teaching methods for Islamic religious education at the early childhood level.

RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that the storytelling method has a significant impact on students' comprehension of the stories of Prophets and Messengers. The data collected from observations, interviews, and test assessments reveal several key improvements in students' learning experiences and outcomes. First, students demonstrated increased engagement during storytelling sessions. They showed greater enthusiasm, listened attentively, and responded actively to questions related to the stories. This increased engagement was especially evident in students' eagerness to participate in discussions, reenact story scenes, and express their thoughts about the narratives.

Second, the students' ability to recall and retell the stories improved considerably. Before the implementation of the storytelling method, many students struggled to remember key details of the stories they had learned. However, after several sessions of storytelling, they were able to narrate the main events, describe characters, and explain moral lessons embedded in the stories with greater accuracy and confidence.

Third, the use of visual and interactive storytelling aids, such as hand puppets and illustrations, played a crucial role in reinforcing students' understanding. These tools helped students visualize the stories, making the learning experience more concrete and memorable. Teachers reported that students who initially had difficulty grasping abstract concepts found it easier to comprehend the lessons when visual elements were incorporated.

Moreover, the storytelling method contributed to the development of students' social and emotional skills. Many students exhibited increased empathy, patience, and respect for others as a result of engaging with the moral lessons conveyed in the stories. Teachers and parents noted positive behavioral changes, such as students showing more kindness and understanding toward their peers.

Additionally, teachers observed that students developed a stronger sense of confidence and self-expression. Through storytelling activities, students were encouraged to speak up, share their thoughts, and interact more openly in class discussions. This development significantly improved their communication skills and willingness to participate in learning activities.

Teachers also noted that students showed a greater appreciation for Islamic teachings. By understanding the struggles and moral decisions of the Prophets and Messengers, they were more inclined to practice good values in their daily lives. This transformation was reflected in their interactions with peers and respect for authority figures. Despite challenges, the overall effectiveness of storytelling as a learning method highlights its potential for broader implementation in Islamic early childhood education.

The results of this study demonstrate the significant impact of the storytelling method on students' comprehension of the stories of Prophets and Messengers at RA Ar Rahman. Observations conducted before the application of storytelling revealed that students often lost focus during conventional teaching methods, showing a lack of enthusiasm and retention regarding the subject matter. However, after implementing storytelling, students exhibited a noticeable increase in engagement and participation during lessons.

One of the primary indicators of improved understanding was students' ability to recall and retell the stories in their own words. In post-storytelling assessments, students were able to describe key events from the stories of Prophets and Messengers with greater accuracy and depth. Additionally, they demonstrated an improved ability to answer comprehension questions related to the stories, suggesting a stronger grasp of the material.

Students also showed increased enthusiasm and motivation during storytelling sessions. Many eagerly anticipated the lessons, actively participating by asking questions, expressing emotions related to the stories, and engaging in discussions. This level of enthusiasm was rarely observed before implementing the storytelling method, indicating that the approach had a positive influence on student engagement.

The study also highlighted improvements in students' social and emotional development. The moral values embedded in the stories helped cultivate essential qualities such as empathy, kindness, and respect. Teachers noted behavioral changes, including students demonstrating more patience, understanding, and willingness to help their peers, which were directly linked to the lessons taught through storytelling.

Another key finding was the effectiveness of visual aids and expressive narration techniques in storytelling. The use of hand puppets, illustrated storybooks, and varied voice modulations significantly enhanced students' interest and comprehension. Students were particularly responsive to visual storytelling elements, showing higher levels of attention and better retention when such tools were used.

Furthermore, storytelling encouraged students to develop critical thinking and creativity. As part of the learning activities, teachers encouraged students to create their own versions of the stories, imagine alternative endings, or relate the morals to their personal experiences. This approach deepened their connection to the narratives and helped reinforce the lessons learned.

Additionally, storytelling facilitated a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment. Students from different backgrounds participated equally, fostering a sense of unity and shared learning. Teachers reported that students with initially lower comprehension levels showed marked improvement, as the engaging nature of storytelling helped them grasp complex ideas more effectively.

Another noteworthy result was the improvement in listening skills. Given that young children often struggle with prolonged attention spans, the structured yet engaging format of storytelling helped train students to focus on narratives for extended periods, enhancing their listening and comprehension abilities.

The research also identified challenges faced during the implementation of storytelling. One of the primary challenges was the need for adequate teacher training in storytelling techniques. Some educators initially found it difficult to adopt expressive narration and interactive techniques. However, with practice and the use of well-prepared storytelling materials, teachers became more confident and effective in delivering lessons.

Time constraints also emerged as a limitation in applying the storytelling method consistently. Given the packed curriculum, some teachers found it challenging to allocate sufficient time for interactive storytelling sessions. To address this, schools may consider integrating storytelling into broader subject areas or using it as a complementary teaching strategy alongside conventional methods.

Furthermore, assessment methods needed to be adapted to measure the impact of storytelling accurately. Traditional testing methods did not fully capture the depth of students' comprehension. Instead, observational assessments, oral storytelling activities, and creative exercises proved to be more effective in evaluating students' learning outcomes.

Parents' involvement also played a role in reinforcing storytelling's impact. When parents continued storytelling practices at home, students displayed even stronger retention and understanding of the narratives. Encouraging parental participation in storytelling activities can further enhance students' learning experiences.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that storytelling is a powerful instructional tool that not only enhances comprehension but also nurtures social, emotional, and cognitive development. The interactive and engaging nature of storytelling makes it an effective method for early childhood education, particularly in conveying religious values and ethical teachings.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with previous research that highlights the effectiveness of storytelling in enhancing students' comprehension and engagement in learning. Several studies have demonstrated that storytelling can improve memory retention, foster emotional connections, and develop critical thinking skills among students (Isbell et al., 2004; Haven, 2007; Ellis & Brewster, 2014). The use of narratives in teaching has been found to stimulate students' imaginations and help them relate to the content on a personal level, thus reinforcing learning outcomes (Egan, 1989).

Research conducted by Zipes (1995) emphasizes the transformative power of storytelling in education, particularly in fostering moral and ethical development. This is consistent with the results of this study, where students showed an increased understanding of moral lessons derived from the stories of Prophets and Messengers. Similarly, a study by Nicolopoulou (2010) indicates that storytelling fosters language development and communication skills, which were also observed in the students of RA Ar Rahman.

Additionally, the study by Miller & Pennycuff (2008) suggests that storytelling encourages active participation and enhances students' motivation in learning, supporting the findings that storytelling increases student engagement during learning sessions. Other studies have demonstrated that the integration of visual aids and interactive elements in storytelling significantly improves students' comprehension and retention of educational materials (Baker & Greene, 2015; Fisher et al., 2010).

The effectiveness of storytelling as an instructional strategy has also been recognized in Islamic education. Al-Mahrooqi & Denman (2018) discuss the role of storytelling in teaching Islamic values to children, highlighting how stories can instill religious principles in a way that is engaging and memorable. This supports the results of the current study, which found that students internalized moral lessons more effectively through storytelling sessions.

Moreover, research by Abdul-Hamid et al. (2012) indicates that storytelling enhances not only cognitive development but also social and emotional growth among young learners. This finding is reflected in the present study, where students demonstrated increased empathy, patience, and respect for others after participating in storytelling activities.

In another study, Dyson & Genishi (2013) argue that storytelling serves as a bridge between students' lived experiences and academic content, making learning more relatable and meaningful. This is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic education, where connecting religious teachings to everyday life is essential for effective character development.

Despite these benefits, challenges remain in implementing storytelling as a teaching method. Research by McDrury & Alterio (2003) highlights the importance of teacher training in storytelling techniques to ensure effective delivery. This aligns with the findings of the current study, which identified the need for professional development programs to enhance teachers' storytelling skills.

Furthermore, research by Bruner (1991) suggests that storytelling can be an effective tool for scaffolding learning, particularly for young learners who may struggle with abstract concepts. The use of storytelling in Islamic education can thus provide a structured approach to introducing complex religious teachings in a manner that is developmentally appropriate.

Comparing this study with others, the research conducted by Sobol (2008) highlights how storytelling fosters a sense of community in the classroom, encouraging collaboration and discussion. This was also observed in RA Ar Rahman, where students actively engaged in discussions and shared interpretations of the stories with their peers.

Additionally, the study by Mello (2001) found that storytelling can support children with different learning styles by offering multiple entry points into the material. This corresponds with the findings of the present study, where visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements were integrated into storytelling sessions to cater to diverse learners.

A study by Frazier & Mehta (2008) emphasizes the cognitive benefits of storytelling, noting that narrative-based learning improves problem-solving skills and conceptual understanding. This supports the observation that students in RA Ar Rahman demonstrated improved comprehension and critical thinking after exposure to storytelling-based lessons.

Lastly, research by Paley (1990) on the role of storytelling in early childhood education emphasizes the significance of imaginative engagement in fostering intellectual curiosity. This corresponds with the findings of the current study, where students exhibited heightened enthusiasm and curiosity towards religious stories.

Based on this comparison with previous research, it can be concluded that storytelling is a powerful instructional tool that enhances comprehension, engagement, and moral development among young learners. While challenges exist, such as the need for teacher training and structured implementation, the overall findings suggest that storytelling should be integrated more widely into Islamic religious education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the storytelling method has a significant positive impact on students' comprehension of the stories of Prophets and Messengers at RA Ar Rahman. The storytelling approach effectively engages students, enhances their interest in religious education, and facilitates a deeper understanding of moral and ethical lessons. The findings highlight that students not only enjoyed the storytelling sessions but also demonstrated improved recall, comprehension, and application of the lessons learned in their daily lives.

Furthermore, the study shows that storytelling enhances students' cognitive, social, and emotional development. Through listening to and interacting with stories,

students exhibited increased empathy, patience, and communication skills. They were more engaged in class discussions, actively asked questions, and participated in retelling the stories. This indicates that storytelling fosters a collaborative and interactive learning environment, which is essential for early childhood education.

The study also emphasizes the role of teachers in the successful implementation of storytelling. Teachers who utilized expressive voice modulation, visual aids such as puppets and illustrations, and interactive discussions were more effective in capturing students' attention and reinforcing key lessons. However, challenges such as the need for teacher training and time constraints in lesson planning must be addressed to maximize the benefits of this approach.

In comparison with previous research, this study reinforces the notion that storytelling is an effective pedagogical tool across various educational contexts. Similar studies have highlighted storytelling's ability to improve literacy, critical thinking, and moral reasoning. This study contributes to the existing body of research by demonstrating how storytelling can be specifically applied in Islamic religious education at the early childhood level.

Given the success of this approach, it is recommended that Islamic early childhood education institutions adopt storytelling as a core teaching strategy for religious instruction. Additionally, teacher training programs should be developed to equip educators with the necessary storytelling techniques. Future research could further explore the long-term impact of storytelling on students' moral and character development, as well as investigate how digital storytelling tools could enhance engagement and comprehension.

In conclusion, storytelling is a powerful method that not only enriches students' learning experiences but also cultivates essential moral and cognitive skills. By incorporating storytelling into religious education, educators can create a more engaging, meaningful, and lasting learning experience for young learners, ultimately shaping them into individuals who understand and embody the values of Prophets and Messengers in their daily lives.

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