

Analysis of Teachers' Competence in the Application of Islamic Storytelling Methods: A Case Study at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten

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Abstract

This study examines teachers' competence in implementing Islamic storytelling methods in early childhood education at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, and analyzed thematically. The findings show that teachers' competence comprises three interrelated dimensions: (1) understanding of Islamic values and story content, (2) expressive and interactive storytelling skills, and (3) the ability to create a meaningful and emotionally supportive learning atmosphere. Islamic storytelling shows a positive contribution to children's character development, reflected in observable behavioral changes such as increased patience, kindness, self-control, and prosocial attitudes, as well as the child's ability to remember and apply moral values in daily activities. However, variations in expressive competence and limitations in structured professional training and classroom conditions remain key challenges. This study contributes by proposing an implicit competence model for Islamic storytelling that integrates value mastery, pedagogical expressiveness, and reflective practice, highlighting the need for systematic professional development in early childhood Islamic education.

Keywords: Islamic storytelling; Teacher competence; Character education; Early childhood education.

Abstrak

Abstrak berisi: Penelitian ini meneliti kompetensi guru dalam menerapkan metode bercerita Islami pada pendidikan anak usia dini di Taman Kanak-kanak ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi kelas, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi guru terdiri dari tiga dimensi yang saling terkait: (1) pemahaman terhadap nilai-nilai Islami dan isi cerita, (2) keterampilan bercerita yang ekspresif dan interaktif, dan (3) kemampuan menciptakan suasana belajar yang bermakna serta mendukung secara emosional. Bercerita Islami terbukti memberikan pengaruh menunjukkan kontribusi positif terhadap

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perkembangan karakter anak, tercermin dari perubahan perilaku yang dapat diamati seperti meningkatnya kesabaran, kebaikan, pengendalian diri, dan sikap prososial, serta kemampuan anak untuk mengingat dan menerapkan nilai moral dalam kegiatan sehari-hari. Namun, variasi dalam kompetensi ekspresif dan keterbatasan dalam pelatihan profesional yang terstruktur serta kondisi kelas tetap menjadi tantangan utama. Studi ini berkontribusi dengan mengusulkan model kompetensi implisit untuk bercerita Islami yang mengintegrasikan penguasaan nilai, ekspresif pedagogis, dan praktik reflektif, menyoroti kebutuhan akan pengembangan profesional yang sistematis dalam pendidikan Islam anak usia dini.

Kata kunci : : Bercerita Islami; Kompetensi guru; Pendidikan karakter; Pendidikan anak usia dini.

I. Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) has a strategic role in shaping children's character and personality from an early age. In the midst of globalization and technological advances, there are great challenges in instilling moral and spiritual values in children. In general, various studies show concern about the decline of children's character, such as individualistic attitudes, low social concerns, and lack of religious values in daily behavior (Nuralimah et al., 2025). In particular, Islamic ECE institutions face a great responsibility to provide education that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually superior, through learning strategies that are appropriate to the stage of child development. One relevant approach is the Islamic storytelling method, which is able to convey noble moral values in a fun and easy to understand manner. Through stories that contain Islamic values, such as the stories of the prophet, companions, and other exemplary stories, children learn to recognize the values of kindness, honesty, and care from an early age (Faizin & Helandri, 2023); Latif, 2021). This method is a medium to build children's personalities with Islamic characters and in accordance with the moral values taught in religion. The storytelling method also helps the development of language, imagination, and children's ability to listen and interact (Mujahidah et al., 2021; Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018).

Various previous studies have proven that storytelling methods are effective in improving children's understanding and character, such as studies by Rohmah et al. (2024) which shows that Islamic stories can increase the empathy and discipline of PAUD children. Research Janson (2017) also emphasized that Islamic stories can foster religious attitudes in children. However, there are still few studies that specifically evaluate the competence of teachers in applying this method, especially in the context of early childhood education based on Islamic values. In fact, the effectiveness of the storytelling method is greatly influenced by the readiness, skills, and creativity of teachers as the main facilitators in the learning process (Hwang et al., 2023).

Teachers' competence in telling stories is the key to the success of the application of the storytelling method. These competencies include the ability to choose story materials

that are appropriate for the child's age, the skill of telling stories with interesting intonation and expressions, and the ability to manage the classroom atmosphere so that children stay focused and enthusiastic about listening to stories (Wacana et al., 2024). Competent teachers will be able to make the storytelling method a fun learning experience for children and effective in conveying moral messages.

However, in practice, there are still several problems related to the competence of teachers in the application of the Islamic storytelling method at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten. Some teachers have difficulty choosing stories that suit children's developmental needs. Others are less skilled in telling stories in an interesting way, so children easily lose attention. This is due to various factors, such as lack of training or mentoring for teachers, limited relevant story materials, and teachers' lack of understanding of effective storytelling techniques.

In addition, in some ECEs, the method of telling Islamic stories has not yet become part of a structured curriculum, so its application is highly dependent on the initiative of each teacher (Rofiq et al., 2024; Zahir Salehi M, Zeinaddiny meymand Z, 2023). As a result, there is a gap in the application of this method, both in terms of frequency, quality of delivery, and its impact on children's moral development and character. This condition raises the need to analyze more deeply the competence of teachers in using the storytelling method, especially in the context of delivering Islamic stories. This gap is an important foundation to dig deeper into the extent of teachers' competence in applying Islamic storytelling methods effectively.

Although Islamic storytelling has long been recognized as a strategic method for instilling Islamic values and shaping character in early childhood education, its implementation in practice does not always reflect its full pedagogical potential. In the context of TK ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, variations in teachers' competencies are evident, particularly in terms of mastery of story content, expressive and interactive storytelling skills, and consistency in classroom implementation. In some cases, storytelling practices tend to be delivered in a less flexible manner, which may limit meaningful interaction, engagement, and value clarification with children. These conditions are closely related to the limited availability of structured and continuous professional training specifically focused on Islamic storytelling in early childhood settings. Consequently, the process of internalizing Islamic values through storytelling is not always achieved optimally, with moral messages sometimes remaining at a surface level rather than being deeply embedded in children's attitudes and daily behavior.

In response to these challenges, this study is considered urgent as teacher competence plays a central role in determining the effectiveness of Islamic storytelling as a medium for Islamic character education in early childhood. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the competence of teachers in the application of Islamic

storytelling methods at TK ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, particularly in selecting and delivering Islamic stories and integrating them into daily learning activities. This study also aims to identify the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing Islamic storytelling methods and to explore possible strategies to enhance teachers' competencies and improve the effectiveness of Islamic storytelling in supporting the internalization of Islamic values and character formation.

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions are formulated: (1) How do teachers at TK ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan demonstrate competence in implementing Islamic storytelling methods in early childhood learning?; (2) What factors support and hinder teachers' competencies in applying Islamic storytelling methods?; (3) How does the implementation of Islamic storytelling influence the internalization of Islamic values and character development in early childhood?; (4) What strategies are employed by teachers to improve their competencies in Islamic storytelling?.

II. Research Method

This study involved teachers at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten who teach children aged 4–6 years. Four teachers were purposively selected as research participants based on their experience and active involvement in implementing Islamic storytelling methods in classroom learning. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants met specific criteria relevant to the research focus, allowing for in-depth exploration of teachers' competencies rather than statistical representation.

Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during storytelling activities to examine teachers' storytelling practices and children's interactions with the stories. In-depth interviews were carried out to explore teachers' understanding of Islamic story content, storytelling techniques, and perceptions of the impact on children's character development. Documentation included audio-visual recordings of storytelling sessions and instructional materials used by teachers to support the learning process. This study adopted a qualitative descriptive case study design, aiming to provide an in-depth analysis of teachers' competence in implementing Islamic storytelling methods. Qualitative data were analyzed to capture patterns of meaning related to teachers' understanding, practices, challenges, and strategies in Islamic storytelling within the specific context of early childhood education.

This study was conducted through four main stages: (1) preparation, (2) data collection, (3) data analysis, and (4) report and recommendation preparation. An overview of the research procedure is presented in Figure 1.

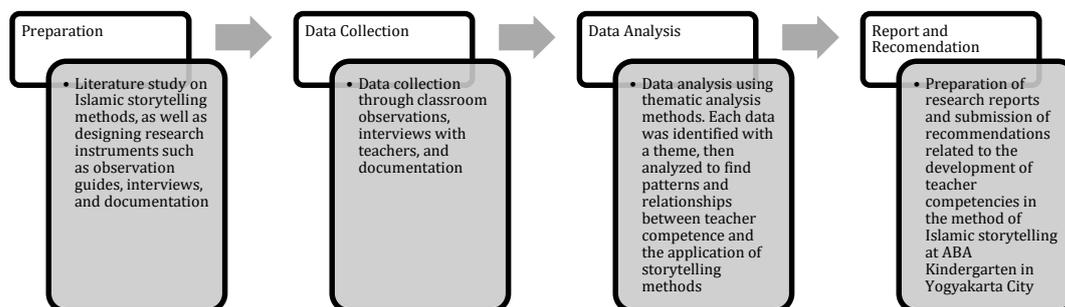


Figure 1. Research Flow Diagram

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which is well suited to exploratory qualitative research aimed at identifying patterns of meaning across data sets. This study adopted the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), which offers a systematic yet flexible approach to qualitative data analysis. The analysis involved data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation, followed by open coding to identify meaningful units related to teachers' competencies, implementation practices, challenges, and strategies in Islamic storytelling. The codes were then organized into potential themes by examining patterns and relationships among them, after which the themes were reviewed, defined, and refined to ensure conceptual clarity and coherence in relation to the research objectives. All coding and theme development processes were conducted by the researcher with continuous comparison across data sources.

To enhance data trustworthiness, triangulation of data sources and data collection techniques was applied by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation, thereby strengthening the credibility and consistency of the findings. The themes generated from the thematic analysis are presented in Table 1 in the Results and Discussion section.

III. Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study derived from thematic analysis of data collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. The analysis focused on identifying patterns related to teachers' competencies in implementing Islamic storytelling methods, the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing these competencies, the impact of Islamic storytelling on children's character development, and strategies employed by teachers to enhance their storytelling practices. The themes and subthemes generated from the thematic analysis provide a structured representation of the key findings and serve as the basis for the presentation and discussion of the results, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Main Themes and Subthemes of The Study

No.	Main Themes	Subthemes	Description
1.	Teachers' Competence in Implementing Islamic Storytelling Methods	Understanding of Islamic story content	Teachers' comprehension of Islamic stories and the moral and religious values conveyed
		Storytelling delivery skills	Expressive narration, voice modulation, use of gestures, and interaction with children
		Consistency of implementation	Regularity and integration of storytelling activities into daily learning practices
2.	Planning and Classroom Implementation of Islamic Storytelling	Story selection and preparation	Teachers' processes in selecting and preparing Islamic stories aligned with learning objectives
		Classroom adaptation	Adjustment of storytelling methods to children's developmental levels and classroom contexts
3.	Supporting and Inhibiting Factors	Supporting factors	Institutional support, religious school culture, peer collaboration, and parental involvement
		Inhibiting factors	Limited professional training, time constraints, and lack of instructional resources
4.	Impact of Islamic Storytelling on Children's Character Development	Internalization of Islamic values	Children's understanding and acceptance of Islamic moral and religious values
		Behavioral manifestations	Observable attitudes and daily behaviors reflecting Islamic character
5.	Strategies for Enhancing Teachers' Competence in Islamic Storytelling	Professional self-development	Independent learning, reflection, and self-initiated improvement efforts
		Collaborative strategies	Peer discussion, sharing experiences, and informal professional collaboration

The themes and subthemes summarized in the table above provide the analytical framework for the presentation of the results and discussion. The following subsections elaborate each theme in detail, supported by empirical data.

A. Teachers' Competence in Implementing Islamic Storytelling Methods

The findings indicate that teachers at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten understand Islamic storytelling as an effective method for conveying Islamic values in early childhood learning. Teachers emphasized that storytelling is not merely a means of delivering religious information, but a meaningful approach to shaping children's character through moral and spiritual messages embedded in stories. One teacher stated,

Storytelling is a very effective method for conveying Islamic values to children, especially through stories of the Prophet and his companions (Int-T2).

Another teacher explained,

Children find it easier to understand religious messages when conveyed through stories, because the stories are close to their lives (Int-T3).

This understanding reflects the relevance of storytelling to early childhood characteristics, particularly children's preference for concrete, imaginative, and narrative-based learning experiences (Halimah et al., 2020; Sari & Suryana, 2019). Islamic stories containing exemplary figures are therefore perceived as effective media for value internalization (Azizah, 2022; Subki, 2024). Teachers also demonstrated awareness that Islamic storytelling requires expressive oral delivery. As one respondent noted,

Storytelling is not just about reading a text, but using facial expressions, voice intonation, and body movements so that children are interested and understand the story (Int-T1).

This finding supports previous studies indicating that expressive storytelling enhances children's engagement and moral understanding (Fatmawati, 2025; Mazrur et al., 2023). From a developmental perspective, such imaginative and emotionally engaging learning is aligned with Piaget's view that early childhood learners are in the preoperational stage, where symbolic and narrative forms of learning are particularly effective. However, despite this conceptual understanding, variations were found in teachers' mastery of story content. One teacher admitted,

Sometimes I still rely too much on the story text, so I feel less free when conveying its moral message (Int-T1).

This reliance on written texts suggests that understanding Islamic storytelling at a conceptual level does not always translate into flexible pedagogical practice. Observation data support these interview findings by showing differences in classroom implementation. In some cases, teachers were able to convey stories clearly and maintain children's attention even under less conducive classroom conditions. In other situations, teachers appeared more focused on reading texts, which limited interaction and value clarification. This pattern resonates with Cajete's (2017) view that storytelling is most meaningful when delivered as a lived, interactive learning experience rather than as a rigid instructional activity.

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten possess a foundational understanding of Islamic storytelling as a pedagogical method for character education. Nevertheless, variations in confidence and content mastery affect how effectively this understanding is translated into classroom practice, which has implications for the depth of Islamic value internalization in early childhood learning.

B. Planning and Classroom Implementation of Islamic Storytelling

The findings indicate that teachers at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten employ systematic and creative steps in planning Islamic storytelling activities. Teachers

generally begin by determining story themes aligned with learning objectives and selecting story content from various sources, including books and digital media, which are then adapted to children's developmental levels. One teacher explained,

I usually determine the theme first according to the learning objectives, and after that, I look for a story that fits and is appropriate for the child's age (Int-T2).

This indicates that storytelling is not conducted spontaneously but is preceded by deliberate pedagogical planning. Teachers also emphasized the importance of preparation in supporting effective storytelling. As one respondent stated,

Before telling a story, I usually summarize it first, then prepare media like pictures or dolls so the child is more interested (Int-T3).

Another teacher highlighted the role of preparatory activities, noting that

Ice breaking and circle time are important so that children are ready and focused before listening to a story (Int-T1).

These statements reflect teachers' awareness that children's emotional readiness and attention significantly influence their engagement during storytelling activities. Observation data support these interview findings, showing consistency between planning and classroom implementation. Teachers were observed preparing concrete teaching aids—such as dolls, picture cards, and miniatures of Islamic symbols—and delivering stories using expressive intonation and gestures (Figure 2). This practice illustrates teachers' understanding that storytelling effectiveness depends not only on story content but also on how it is presented in ways that attract children's attention.



Figure 2. The Teacher use Miniature Ka'ba and Elephants when Telling Stories

From a pedagogical perspective, these practices demonstrate the application of child-centered learning principles, in which storytelling activities are designed around children's interests, attention spans, and emotional readiness. This finding aligns with Khotijah et al. (2020), who emphasize that effective storytelling preparation involves mastery of story content, developmental appropriateness, and appropriate media selection. Similarly, Iswinarti et al. (2020) argue that the quality of storytelling preparation plays a more decisive role than delivery alone.

Teachers also utilize a variety of media to convey Islamic stories, ranging from picture storybooks, hand puppets, and printed visuals to digital media such as videos and audiovisual presentations. This media variation reflects teachers' pedagogical adaptation to children's learning styles in the digital era. However, interview data suggest that media use alone is insufficient without expressive storytelling skills. One teacher admitted,

Sometimes the media is already available, but if the delivery is not expressive enough, children quickly lose focus (Int-T1).

This indicates that effective storytelling requires an integration of material preparation and expressive delivery. In terms of evaluation, teachers employ informal and formative strategies to assess children's understanding, such as reflective question-and-answer sessions, simple games, and observing children's spontaneous responses. These practices align with authentic assessment approaches in early childhood education, which emphasize contextual and participatory evaluation (Becker et al., 2023; Flynn, 2018). Overall, the findings suggest that teachers at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten demonstrate a relatively strong capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate Islamic storytelling activities, although variations in expressive delivery and classroom dynamics remain key challenges.

C. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Implementing Storytelling

The findings reveal that the implementation of Islamic storytelling at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten is shaped by an interplay of supporting and inhibiting factors, both internal and external. Teachers identified internal factors—particularly motivation, readiness, and mastery of storytelling techniques—as key determinants of successful implementation. One teacher stated,

The most important thing is the teacher's readiness and willingness to keep learning, because if the teacher is not prepared, the outcome won't be optimal either (Int-T2).

This suggests that teachers perceive personal commitment and professional readiness as foundational to effective storytelling practices. External support also plays a significant role. Teachers emphasized the importance of access to Islamic storybooks, props, and digital media in facilitating storytelling activities. As one respondent explained,

Media such as dolls, pictures, or videos are very helpful for children to stay focused and easily imagine the story (Int-T3).

This finding is consistent with Rahiem (2021), who highlights the role of visual and interactive aids in enhancing children's participation and understanding in storytelling contexts. However, the data indicate that such resources function as enabling tools rather than decisive factors. Despite these supports, teachers also encounter various challenges.

Internally, limited preparation time, lack of confidence, and insufficient experience in expressive storytelling were frequently mentioned. One teacher admitted,

Sometimes I still lack confidence and am not used to telling stories with expression, so the story feels a bit awkward (Int-T1).

Externally, classroom dynamics—such as children’s fluctuating moods, rapid loss of concentration, and uncondusive learning environments—pose ongoing challenges, particularly during later learning sessions when children tend to be fatigued. These conditions reflect the emotional and behavioral volatility of early childhood learning contexts, as noted by Davis (2017).

A critical reading of these findings suggests that the presence of facilities and media does not automatically ensure effective storytelling. While resources provide important support, their impact depends largely on teachers’ pedagogical confidence and adaptive capacity. This aligns with Al-Hawamleh (2019), who argues that value-based and religious narratives foster moral awareness only when they are developmentally appropriate and supported by responsive pedagogical strategies. Without such alignment, storytelling risks remaining superficial rather than transformative.

In response to these challenges, teachers employ adaptive strategies, including compiling stories from multiple sources, creating self-made visual media, using ice-breaking techniques, and engaging in self-directed learning through workshops and digital platforms. Teachers also emphasized reflection and collegial collaboration as part of their professional growth. This finding supports Bleach’s (2014) assertion that early childhood teacher professionalism is built through reflective practice, continuous learning, and adaptive responsiveness. Overall, the findings indicate that the effectiveness of Islamic storytelling is not determined by a single factor, but by the synergy between teachers’ internal competence, institutional support, and adaptive pedagogical strategies. Critically, the data suggest that strengthening Islamic storytelling practices requires sustained professional development focused not only on media provision, but also on enhancing teachers’ confidence, expressiveness, and reflective capacity to respond to dynamic classroom conditions (Xiao et al., 2023).

D. The Impact of Islamic Storytelling on Children’s Character Development

The findings indicate that Islamic storytelling has a tangible impact on children’s character development, both behaviorally and emotionally. Teachers consistently reported observable changes in children’s attitudes after storytelling sessions, particularly related to self-control, kindness, patience, and prosocial behavior. One teacher explained,

After listening to the story of Umar bin Khattab, some children who usually spoke harshly became calmer and started to understand why they should speak politely to their friends (Int-T1).

Another teacher highlighted changes in social behavior,

When we tell stories about the Prophet or the companions, children begin to practice queuing and sharing, even without being reminded repeatedly (Int-T3).

These interview findings are reinforced by classroom observations, which show that children were able to recall previous stories, mention the characters, and spontaneously apply moral messages in daily classroom interactions. This suggests that storytelling functions not merely as cognitive transmission but as a process of value internalization through lived experience. Children's responses toward Islamic storytelling were also notably positive. Observational data revealed high levels of enthusiasm, such as children asking teachers to repeat stories, searching for storybooks independently, and actively participating during storytelling sessions. One teacher stated,

The children often ask to hear the story again, and some of them retell it in their own words while playing (Int-T4).

This finding aligns with Thambu (2017), who emphasizes that narrative-based learning effectively instills moral values by engaging children emotionally and contextually. Rahiem (2021) further notes that expressive delivery—through voice modulation, facial expressions, and visual media—strengthens children's emotional attachment to stories, making moral messages more memorable than passive media consumption. From an analytical perspective, the impact of Islamic storytelling lies in its multisensory and affective nature. As supported by Rahiem et al. (2020), dramatized storytelling that integrates verbal, visual, and emotional elements fosters deeper engagement and moral reflection. In this study, children did not merely understand Islamic values at a surface level but demonstrated behavioral imitation and emotional resonance with story characters.

Thus, Islamic storytelling emerges as a holistic pedagogical approach rather than a simple instructional technique. Its effectiveness depends on consistent implementation, teachers' expressive competence, and the ability to connect story values with children's concrete experiences. Strengthening teachers' storytelling skills and reflective practices is therefore crucial to maximizing the character-building potential of this method in early childhood education.

E. Strategies for Enhancing Teachers' Competence in Islamic Storytelling

The findings show that professional development is perceived by teachers as a crucial factor in improving their competence in implementing Islamic storytelling methods at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten. However, teachers acknowledged that formal training specifically focused on Islamic storytelling for early childhood is still limited. Most learning experiences related to storytelling were obtained from informal or non-

early childhood-specific contexts, such as religious activities or general teaching practices.

This condition is reflected in the following interview excerpts,

Actually, we have practiced it before, but there has never been any specific training on storytelling for young children (Int-T4).

If there isn't a special training for storytelling for children, it's usually combined with other materials (Int-T2).

These statements indicate a gap between teachers' awareness of the importance of storytelling competence and the availability of structured institutional support. Classroom observations further confirmed this gap, as some teachers still relied on conventional storytelling tools and showed limited experimentation with new techniques or expressive variations. Despite these limitations, teachers demonstrated reflective awareness and self-initiated efforts to improve their storytelling skills. Several teachers reported learning independently by accessing digital resources and practicing through daily teaching experiences,

So we have to look for it from our own sources, sometimes watching videos, sometimes learning from classroom experience (Int-T1).

In addition, teachers emphasized the importance of feedback and reflection as part of their learning process, although its implementation was not always optimal due to children's limited verbal responses,

Usually after telling a story, I ask the children, but sometimes the answers are still brief (Int-T3).

These findings align with Grantham-Caston and DiCarlo (2019), who argue that reflective practices—particularly through observation and self-evaluation—can enhance teachers' instructional awareness and interaction quality. However, the data suggest that self-directed learning alone is insufficient without systematic guidance and professional scaffolding. Teachers therefore proposed several strategic efforts to strengthen their competence, including the facilitation of Islamic storytelling training by institutions, the provision of more varied storytelling media, and the integration of capacity-building programs within teacher learning communities (KOMBEL-Komunitas Belajar). One teacher explicitly stated,

At the institution, perhaps one of the teacher competency materials is storytelling, so it is indeed facilitated (Int-T2).

This perspective is consistent with Herman et al. (2025), who emphasize that continuous and structured professional development positively correlates with pedagogical creativity and teaching effectiveness. Consequently, strengthening teachers' competence in Islamic storytelling requires a systemic approach that combines targeted

training, institutional support, and consistent practice, enabling Islamic values to be internalized more effectively by early childhood learners.

F. Implications for Islamic Early Childhood Pedagogy

The findings of this study offer several important implications for both theory and practice in Islamic early childhood education. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the view that Islamic storytelling should not be positioned merely as a narrative technique for moral instruction, but as a relational and affective pedagogical practice. The effectiveness of value internalization is shown to depend not only on the content of Islamic stories, but also on teachers' expressive competence, emotional engagement, and interactional strategies. This supports previous studies emphasizing that storytelling becomes pedagogically meaningful when it actively involves children's emotions and lived experiences (Thambu, 2017; Rahiem, 2021).

Furthermore, this study extends existing literature by highlighting the importance of pedagogical embodiment in value-based learning. In the context of ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten, Islamic values are more effectively internalized when teachers are able to model, dramatize, and contextualize moral messages through storytelling practices that align with early childhood developmental characteristics (Halimah et al., 2020). This suggests that theories of Islamic character education in early childhood need to move beyond normative value transmission toward more practice-oriented and interactional pedagogical frameworks.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that strengthening teachers' competence in Islamic storytelling requires systematic and institutionalized professional development. While teachers' self-directed learning initiatives demonstrate reflective awareness, reliance on individual motivation alone may result in uneven pedagogical quality across classrooms. Consistent with Herman et al. (2025), this study underscores the need for structured training programs, collaborative teacher learning communities, and adequate pedagogical resources to support the sustainable implementation of Islamic storytelling in early childhood settings. In addition, Islamic storytelling should be integrated as a habitual pedagogical practice within daily learning routines, rather than as an incidental or supplementary activity. Such integration can foster a coherent learning culture in which Islamic values are experienced continuously and meaningfully by children. These implications highlight the strategic role of institutions in transforming Islamic storytelling from an individual teaching practice into a shared pedagogical culture that supports holistic character formation in early childhood education.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, this study concludes that teachers' competence in implementing Islamic storytelling methods at ABA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Kindergarten

encompasses three interrelated dimensions: (1) conceptual understanding of Islamic values and story content, (2) expressive and interactive storytelling skills, and (3) the ability to create a meaningful, engaging, and emotionally supportive learning atmosphere for early childhood. Teachers demonstrate strong enthusiasm for using Islamic stories as a medium for character formation, reflected in their efforts to select relevant story materials, adapt media, and employ various expressive techniques so that moral values can be understood and practiced by children in their daily lives.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on Islamic early childhood education by proposing an implicit teacher competence model in Islamic storytelling, which integrates value mastery, pedagogical expressiveness, and reflective practice. This model highlights that effective Islamic storytelling is not merely a matter of delivering religious narratives, but a pedagogical process that requires emotional engagement, interaction, and contextualization in accordance with children's developmental characteristics. In this sense, the study extends existing discussions on value-based pedagogy by emphasizing storytelling as a relational and embodied practice in Islamic character education.

Despite these positive findings, this study also identifies several challenges, including limited access to structured professional training, variations in teachers' expressive skills, classroom dynamics, and constraints related to media and learning conditions. Teachers respond to these challenges through self-reflection, peer discussions, and informal learning initiatives; however, such efforts remain largely individual and uneven without systematic institutional support. This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it was conducted as a single-case study in one kindergarten, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the number of participants was relatively small, focusing on in-depth qualitative insights rather than broad representation. Future research is therefore recommended to involve multiple institutions, larger samples, and comparative designs to further validate and refine the proposed competence model, as well as to explore its applicability in diverse Islamic early childhood education contexts.

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