

Enhancing Children's Religious Vocabulary through Islamic Values-Based Language Learning Activities at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa, Embung Kandong Village

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ABSTRACT

Religious vocabulary development is an important component of early childhood language education, particularly in Islamic early childhood education institutions where language learning is closely associated with religious habituation and character formation. This study aimed to examine the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning, identify the forms of religious vocabulary introduced, and analyze its effectiveness in improving children's religious vocabulary at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa, East Lombok, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative descriptive classroom action research design based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants comprised 25 children, supported by classroom teachers and the school principal as informants. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and oral and practical language assessments. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by source and technique triangulation. The findings demonstrated substantial improvement in children's religious vocabulary following the intervention. The mean score increased from 11.2 at the pre-action stage to 16.4 in Cycle I and 21.1 in Cycle II, representing an overall improvement of 88.39%. Qualitative findings also indicated better pronunciation, contextual understanding, confidence, and spontaneous use of religious expressions. The study concludes that Islamic values-based language learning effectively integrates vocabulary development with religious habituation and character formation through contextual, enjoyable, and consistent activities. The findings provide practical implications for developing developmentally appropriate Islamic language-learning practices in early childhood education.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) constitutes a foundational stage for developing children's language, character, social competence, and spiritual awareness. At this stage, language is not merely a means of communication but also an important medium through which children recognize, express, and internalize values. In Islamic ECE contexts, the development of religious vocabulary is therefore particularly important because children's familiarity with expressions such as *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, *insya Allah*, greetings, daily prayers, and other religious terms can connect

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linguistic development with the formation of religious attitudes and practices. Hidayat (2018) emphasizes that children's developmental processes are closely related to the social and educational environments in which they interact. Accordingly, religious language should be introduced through meaningful experiences that correspond to children's developmental characteristics rather than through abstract memorization alone. The integration of Islamic values into early childhood education is also increasingly recognized as an important approach for connecting cognitive, linguistic, moral, and spiritual development (Pulungan & Hayati, 2024).

The development of vocabulary is a central component of children's language acquisition because vocabulary provides the foundation for understanding information, communicating needs, expressing ideas, and participating in social interaction. Research on vocabulary development indicates that children acquire language through continuous interaction with their environment and through opportunities to hear and use words in meaningful contexts (Sulistiani et al., n.d.). Nana (n.d.) further argues that vocabulary constitutes an important basis for language mastery and influences children's ability to organize and express ideas. Similarly, Nurmila and Ntelu (n.d.) explain that vocabulary mastery in early childhood supports children's ability to interact and adapt to their social and cultural environment, while Prastyo et al. (n.d.) emphasize that adequate vocabulary facilitates children's comprehension of information in both oral and written forms. These arguments indicate that religious vocabulary should be viewed as an integral component of early language development, particularly in Islamic educational settings where religious expressions are part of children's everyday communication.

Despite its importance, the development of religious vocabulary remains challenging in early childhood classrooms. Preliminary observations at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa, Embung Kandong Village, identified several problems related to children's use of religious vocabulary. Many children were not yet accustomed to spontaneously using *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, and *insya Allah* in daily activities. The integration of Islamic values into language learning had also not been implemented systematically, while opportunities for children to practice religious vocabulary through play and concrete activities remained limited. Islamic stories were not routinely used to enrich children's religious language, and daily prayers and Islamic greetings had not yet become fully consistent classroom habits. In addition, meaningful religious contexts, such as collective prayer or visits to the mosque, had not been systematically incorporated into language-learning activities. The learning process also tended to emphasize cognitive aspects without sufficiently integrating children's affective and spiritual development. Such conditions suggest a need for learning practices that place religious vocabulary within meaningful communicative experiences.

The issue is particularly relevant because language learning in ECE should involve active interaction rather than one-way transmission of information. Learning can be understood as a process involving both children's learning activities and teachers' instructional activities (Kusuma, n.d.). Moreover, learning involves the conscious organization of an environment that encourages learners to respond to particular learning situations (Telaumbanua, 2021). Within ECE, therefore, language learning should create an environment in which children listen, imitate, speak, respond, and repeatedly use vocabulary in natural situations. However, classroom interaction may be hindered when children are reluctant to speak, have difficulty paying attention, or are difficult to manage during learning activities (Daeng et al., 2020). Such challenges reinforce the importance of developmentally appropriate strategies that make children active participants in language learning.

One promising response is to integrate Islamic values into language activities through play, storytelling, singing, dialogue, daily routines, and direct religious experiences. Sujiono (2020) highlights the importance of play-based approaches, including singing, dialogue, and role play,

because these activities provide enjoyable opportunities for children to develop language skills. Fauzi (2021) similarly explains that stories and illustrated media can stimulate children's imagination, narrative abilities, and vocabulary development. Hidayat (2018) emphasizes that young children learn more effectively through concrete and meaningful experiences than through abstract memorization. In addition, Rohman (2022) stresses that teachers' consistency in using appropriate, polite, and meaningful language is essential because children tend to imitate what they hear from adults. Consequently, religious vocabulary can be strengthened when teachers consistently model religious expressions during greetings, prayers, classroom conversations, storytelling, and other routine activities.

Previous studies provide empirical support for integrating religious values and language-oriented activities in ECE. Aziz et al. (2024), for example, found that Islamic songs can support children's understanding and internalization of Islamic values, including daily prayers, Islamic greetings, and *kalimat thayyibah*. Singing also provides a pleasant environment that encourages children to repeat and spontaneously use religious expressions. Poku (2022) demonstrated that singing can improve children's vocabulary mastery by increasing participation, confidence, and willingness to use newly acquired words. Meanwhile, Setiawati (2020) found that consistent religious habituation, including morning prayers, *dhiker*, short-surah memorization, recognition of *hijaiyah* letters, and *Asmaul Husna*, can gradually develop children's religious character. These studies demonstrate the effectiveness of enjoyable activities and habituation, but they address different dimensions of children's development.

Several studies have further emphasized the relationship between language and religious development. Sari and Hamdani (2022) reported that daily activities can be used to develop children's religious language, while Maulana and Fitriani (2023) highlighted language as a medium for developing children's religious character. Hasanah (2019) emphasized the teacher's role in strengthening children's religious vocabulary, particularly through consistent verbal stimulation. Fauziah and Nurhidayah (2018) likewise argued for the implementation of Islamic values within ECE curricula. Arifin (2024) showed that religious contexts can provide meaningful opportunities for children's language development. Pulungan and Hayati (2024) further demonstrated the relevance of integrating Islamic values into ECE from a religious-educational perspective. Collectively, these findings suggest that language, habituation, religious values, and meaningful learning environments should not be treated as separate domains.

The theoretical basis for this integrated approach is also supported by perspectives on religious education and early childhood development. Mutiah (2019) argues that religious and moral values are more readily internalized by young children when introduced through habituation, modeling, and enjoyable activities. Sujiono (2020) similarly emphasizes that values such as honesty, responsibility, cleanliness, and politeness can be introduced through routine and thematic activities. Rohman (2022) identifies simple but meaningful practices such as prayer, greetings, short-surah recitation, and Islamic storytelling as effective means of introducing Islamic values. Fauzi (2021) adds that role play, storytelling, singing, and habituation can transform religious values from abstract concepts into everyday practices. Hidayat (2018) maintains that these experiences contribute to the development of children's moral and spiritual foundations.

The integration of Islamic values, however, also requires adaptation to contemporary ECE curricula. Pedhu (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of moral and religious education as an initial foundation for children's subsequent educational development, while Syi'aruddin (n.d.) explains that Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith provide principles for guiding human conduct in accordance with goodness and human nature. In the context of curriculum

development, Astuti et al. (n.d.) argue that Islamic educational institutions need integrative strategies that preserve Islamic identity while responding to curriculum developments. This perspective is particularly relevant to the implementation of learning that is exploratory, enjoyable, and child-centered while simultaneously maintaining religious values.

Nevertheless, a gap remains in previous research. Existing studies have generally examined Islamic songs as a medium for religious-value development (Aziz et al., 2024), singing as a strategy for general vocabulary development (Poku, 2022), or religious habituation as a means of character formation (Setiawati, 2020). Other studies have discussed religious language, teacher roles, Islamic curricula, and religious contexts separately (Arifin, 2024; Fauziah & Nurhidayah, 2018; Hasanah, 2019; Sari & Hamdani, 2022). Few studies have specifically examined how Islamic values-based language learning activities can be deliberately organized to improve children's religious vocabulary within a particular Islamic PAUD context. The present study addresses this gap by positioning religious vocabulary as the intersection between language development and Islamic value internalization. This approach is consistent with the view that children's vocabulary develops through social interaction, meaningful experiences, teacher modeling, and repeated exposure to language in contextual settings (Mutiah, 2019; Rohman, 2022; Sujiono, 2020).

Therefore, this study focuses on Enhancing Children's Religious Vocabulary through Islamic Values-Based Language Learning Activities at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa, Embung Kandong Village. Specifically, the study examines the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning, identifies the forms of religious vocabulary introduced and used by children, and investigates changes in children's religious vocabulary following the learning activities. By integrating language learning with Islamic values, play, storytelling, habituation, teacher modeling, and meaningful religious contexts, the study seeks to contribute to the development of a more holistic ECE practice in which linguistic and spiritual development are addressed simultaneously. The findings are expected to provide practical implications for PAUD teachers and institutions in designing contextual, enjoyable, and sustainable language-learning practices that strengthen children's religious vocabulary while laying an early foundation for their moral and spiritual development.

METHODS

1. Research Approach and Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design using a descriptive qualitative approach. The design was selected because the study aimed to examine and improve the process of children's religious vocabulary development through Islamic values-based language learning activities in an authentic early childhood education setting. Classroom action research was considered appropriate because the teacher and researcher could collaboratively identify learning problems, implement corrective actions, observe their effects, and continuously improve the instructional process. Arikunto (2021) described classroom action research as a reflective inquiry conducted by practitioners to improve the rationality and quality of educational practices. Accordingly, the present study followed a cyclical action-research process consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The intervention focused on integrating Islamic values into language-learning activities through daily *kalimat thayyibah*, Islamic greetings, daily prayers, Islamic storytelling, singing, role-play, thematic activities, and direct religious experiences. The cyclical design allowed the researchers and teacher to evaluate children's responses and vocabulary development after each intervention and to modify subsequent activities based on the findings.

2. Research Setting and Period

The study was conducted at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa, Embung Kandong Village, Terara District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, an Islamic-oriented early childhood education institution. The research was carried out from April to June of the 2024/2025 academic year. The implementation covered approximately three months and consisted of three action cycles. Each cycle incorporated planning, implementation, observation, and reflection to ensure that the intervention developed progressively in response to children's learning needs.

3. Participants and Informants

The study population consisted of 31 children, comprising 16 children in Class A and 15 children in Class B. From this population, 25 children who met the participation criteria and were able to participate in the research activities were selected as the primary participants. The children constituted the central subjects of observation because the study specifically examined changes in their ability to recognize, pronounce, understand, and use religious vocabulary.

In addition to the children, the study involved the classroom teachers and the head of the PAUD institution as informants. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the children's learning processes and their knowledge of the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning. Purposive selection was considered appropriate because informants needed to possess relevant experience and close involvement with the educational activities under investigation. Mutiah (2019) emphasized that the selection of informants in early childhood educational research should consider their proximity to children's activities and their relevance to the learning processes being studied.

4. Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected using observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and oral and language-practice tests. The use of multiple instruments enabled the researchers to capture both the learning process and changes in children's religious vocabulary from complementary perspectives.

Observation. Direct observation was conducted throughout the learning activities to document children's participation, responses, and use of religious vocabulary. Particular attention was given to children's ability to use expressions such as *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, *insya Allah*, Islamic greetings, daily prayers, and other religious terms. Observation also examined teacher strategies, classroom interactions, children's engagement in storytelling, singing, role-play, and other Islamic values-based activities. An observation sheet was prepared to ensure that the learning process and vocabulary-related behaviors were documented systematically.

In-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with classroom teachers and the head of the institution. The interviews explored the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning, teachers' strategies for introducing religious vocabulary, children's initial difficulties, changes observed during the intervention, and factors supporting or constraining the learning process. The interviews provided contextual information that could not be obtained solely through classroom observation.

Documentation. Documentation was used to complement observational and interview data. The documented materials included observation notes, photographs of learning activities, recordings of children's verbal performances, instructional media, and relevant institutional learning records. The combination of observation, interviews, and documentation strengthened the credibility of the findings by allowing information obtained through one technique to be compared with evidence from other techniques. Moleong (2021) explained that triangulation can be used to establish data credibility by comparing information obtained through different techniques and sources.

Oral and language-practice tests. Oral and practical language assessments were conducted to identify children's development in religious vocabulary. The activities included simple question-and-answer sessions, role-play, and naming religious vocabulary based on pictures or concrete situations. The assessments were administered at the end of each action cycle so that changes in children's vocabulary performance could be identified progressively. The assessment focused on children's ability to recognize, pronounce, and appropriately use targeted religious vocabulary in meaningful situations rather than merely recall isolated words.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman qualitative data-analysis framework, which involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research rather than only after all data had been collected.

During data reduction, observation records, interview transcripts, documentation, and oral-test results were selected, organized, and condensed according to the research focus. Information unrelated to children's religious vocabulary development or the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning was excluded from the primary analysis.

During data display, the reduced data were organized into descriptive narratives and tables to facilitate comparison across action cycles. The displays included information concerning children's participation, the types of religious vocabulary introduced, children's ability to use the vocabulary, teacher strategies, and changes observed from one cycle to another. This organization enabled the researchers to identify patterns and developments in children's vocabulary performance.

Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified by interpreting patterns emerging from the observations, interviews, documentation, and oral-practice assessments. The interpretation focused on how the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning contributed to children's religious vocabulary development. Sugiyono (2022) stated that qualitative data analysis should be conducted systematically and continuously from the beginning of data collection through the completion of the research so that the conclusions accurately represent the conditions observed in the field.

6. Data Trustworthiness

The credibility of the findings was established through technical and source triangulation and member checking. Technical triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained through observation, interviews, documentation, and oral and language-practice tests. For example, children's observed use of religious vocabulary during classroom activities was compared with their performance in oral practice and supported by documentation and teacher interviews. This procedure helped determine whether findings obtained from different data-collection techniques demonstrated consistent patterns.

Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants and sources, particularly classroom teachers, the head of the PAUD institution, and direct observations of the children. Differences or inconsistencies were examined before interpretations were finalized. Moleong (2021) noted that triangulation provides a means of establishing data validity by examining information from different sources or through different techniques within the same research context.

The researchers also conducted member checking by discussing preliminary interpretations and findings with the classroom teachers and the head of the institution. The informants were invited to confirm whether the researchers' interpretations accurately represented the learning processes and changes observed during the intervention. Their feedback was considered in refining the final interpretation of the findings.

7. Classroom Action Research Procedure

The intervention was implemented through three action cycles, with each cycle consisting of four interconnected stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The procedure was designed to allow the instructional strategy to be progressively improved based on evidence obtained from the preceding cycle.

During the planning stage, the researcher and teacher collaboratively prepared learning activities aimed at strengthening children's religious vocabulary. The learning plans incorporated Islamic storytelling, *kalimat thayyibah*, daily prayers, Islamic greetings, songs, role-play, and thematic activities. Observation instruments, interview guidelines, documentation procedures, and oral and practical language-assessment instruments were also prepared before the implementation of each cycle.

During the acting stage, the teacher implemented the planned Islamic values-based language activities. Children were encouraged to actively hear, repeat, recognize, and use religious vocabulary through enjoyable activities such as storytelling, singing, role-play, dialogue, prayer, greetings, and direct practice. The teacher functioned simultaneously as facilitator and language model by consistently demonstrating appropriate religious expressions in classroom interactions. Oral and practical activities were also conducted to assess children's ability to apply the targeted vocabulary in contextual situations.

During the observing stage, the researcher and teacher systematically documented the learning process, children's participation, teacher-child interactions, and children's use of religious vocabulary. Particular attention was given to children's responses during oral questioning, role-play, picture-based vocabulary activities, and other practical language tasks. The observation results were subsequently compared with interview, documentation, and assessment data.

During the reflecting stage, the researcher and teacher jointly evaluated the effectiveness of the implemented activities based on all collected evidence. The reflection identified successful strategies, remaining difficulties, children requiring additional support, and aspects of the intervention that needed modification. When children's vocabulary development remained below the expected level, the learning activities were revised and strengthened in the subsequent cycle. This iterative process followed the fundamental principle of classroom action research, in which instructional actions are systematically repeated and refined to address actual classroom problems (Arikunto, 2021).

Overall, the methodological procedure enabled the study to examine not only whether children's religious vocabulary developed, but also how Islamic values-based language activities were implemented, how children responded to them, and how instructional practices were progressively improved across the three action cycles. This design consequently provided a contextual and replicable framework for investigating religious vocabulary development in an Islamic early childhood education setting.

RESULTS

1. Implementation of Islamic Values-Based Language Learning at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa

The implementation of Islamic values-based language learning at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa was conducted systematically, integratively, and contextually through an integrative thematic approach adapted to the characteristics and everyday experiences of early childhood learners. The teacher integrated language development with Islamic values through enjoyable, meaningful, and practical routine activities that could be applied in children's daily lives.

Observations conducted across several learning sessions showed that the teacher did not merely introduce vocabulary verbally but also demonstrated its practical use in authentic situations. For example, before beginning an activity, the teacher invited the children to recite *bismillah* together, while *alhamdulillah* was recited after the activity had been completed. Islamic greetings, such as *assalamu'alaikum* and its response, *wa'alaikumussalam*, were consistently incorporated into morning activities and dismissal routines. The teacher also introduced expressions such as *insya Allah* and *masya Allah* in contexts that were easily understood by children, such as expressing hope or showing admiration for Allah's creation.

The learning methods were varied and adapted to the developmental characteristics of early childhood. These included illustrated Islamic stories, Islamic-themed children's songs, role-play, simulations of religious practices, and simple dialogues. The teacher also provided visual learning materials, including posters displaying *kalimat thayyibah*, pictures of mosques, daily prayers, and prayer schedules. These materials functioned as visual supports that strengthened children's memory and engagement during the learning process.

Interviews with the classroom teacher revealed that the approach served not only to develop children's language skills but also as a means of cultivating religious character and continuously habituating children to Islamic values. The teacher explained that children tended to understand and imitate language more easily when it was used in real-life situations and repeated consistently. The teacher also acknowledged the importance of both verbal and non-verbal modeling in developing children's habits of using religious vocabulary in their everyday lives.

Learning documentation further demonstrated that the activities were implemented consistently and involved two-way interaction between teachers and children. This interaction provided children with opportunities to express their understanding of language and Islamic values. Photographic documentation showed that the children were enthusiastic during the learning activities and gradually became accustomed to using Islamic expressions in various situations.

Overall, the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa integrated language development and value formation through contextual, enjoyable, and experience-oriented activities. This approach created a religious learning environment while simultaneously supporting children's language development.

2. Forms of Religious Vocabulary Introduced and Used in Learning Activities

Based on observations, documentation, and interviews with the teacher, the religious vocabulary introduced and used in learning activities at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa was designed to reflect practical Islamic values that could be understood and applied by young children. The vocabulary was not introduced solely through verbal instruction but was also practiced through various daily activities, allowing it to become part of children's habitual language use.

The introduction of religious vocabulary was conducted progressively, beginning with Islamic songs, illustrated stories, group prayers, and verbal habituation during everyday interactions. The learning strategies included singing, role-play, question-and-answer activities, and simulations. Through these activities, the teacher provided verbal models and encouraged children to pronounce and use religious vocabulary according to the relevant context.

The teacher also strengthened visual learning by displaying religious-vocabulary posters on classroom walls and preparing illustrated word cards to support children's memory. Each vocabulary item was introduced in a realistic situation closely related to children's experiences. Consequently, vocabulary learning did not rely exclusively on mechanical memorization but was supported by understanding and concrete experiences.

The religious vocabulary introduced and practiced during the learning activities is presented in Table 1.

No.	Religious Vocabulary	Context of Use
1	Bismillah	Used when beginning activities, such as eating, studying, and entering the classroom.
2	Alhamdulillah	Used after completing tasks, finishing meals, or expressing happiness and gratitude.
3	Assalamu'alaikum – Wa'alaikumussalam	Used when entering and leaving the classroom and when greeting teachers and peers.
4	Insya Allah – Masya Allah	Used when expressing hope or admiration for Allah's creation.
5	Daily prayers (before eating, studying, etc.)	Memorized and practiced routinely during learning activities and daily religious practices.
6	Asmaul Husna	Introduced through songs, group memorization, and thematic learning activities.

Through these enjoyable learning activities, the vocabulary was not merely memorized but was practiced reflectively and communicatively in children's everyday interactions. Teacher interviews indicated that children gradually became able to distinguish the appropriate contexts for using particular religious expressions. For example, children increasingly demonstrated an understanding that *bismillah* should be said before eating, while *alhamdulillah* should be said after completing an activity or meal. This finding indicated not only increased vocabulary knowledge but also the emergence of positive religious habits.

Thus, the forms of religious vocabulary introduced in the learning process represented both linguistic development and the cultivation of Islamic character from an early age through consistent and enjoyable learning experiences.

3. Improvement in Children's Religious Vocabulary Following Islamic Values-Based Language Learning

The improvement in children's religious vocabulary was assessed through oral and practical language tests administered during the pre-action stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The assessment covered children's ability to recognize, pronounce, and use religious vocabulary appropriately in relevant contexts, including Islamic greetings, daily prayers, and *kalimat thayyibah*.

Based on the assessment results and observations of the development of each child ($n = 25$), the following mean scores were obtained:

Table 2. Improvement in Children's Religious Vocabulary Mastery Across the Action-Research Stages

Stage	Mean Score (Maximum = 25)	Level of Mastery
Pre-action	11.2	Beginning to Develop
Cycle I	16.4	Developing Well
Cycle II	21.1	Developing Very Well

The findings demonstrated a progressive increase in children's religious vocabulary throughout the action-research process. The mean score increased from 11.2 at the pre-action stage to 16.4 in Cycle I, and subsequently to 21.1 in Cycle II.

a. Quantitative Improvement Analysis

The quantitative analysis demonstrated a progressive improvement in children's religious vocabulary across the action-research stages. As presented in Table X, the mean scores increased consistently from the pre-action stage through Cycle I and Cycle II, indicating the effectiveness of the implemented Islamic values-based language learning activities.

Table 3. Quantitative Improvement in Children's Religious Vocabulary

Comparison Stage	Initial Mean Score	Final Mean Score	Mean Score Increase	Percentage Increase
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Pre-action → Cycle I	11.2	16.4	5.2	46.43%
Cycle I → Cycle II	16.4	21.1	4.7	28.66%
Pre-action → Cycle II	11.2	21.1	9.9	88.39%

The percentage increase was calculated using the formula: $(Final\ Mean - Initial\ Mean) / Initial\ Mean \times 100\%$. The overall increase from the pre-action stage to Cycle II was **88.39%**, indicating substantial improvement in children's religious vocabulary mastery.

b. Qualitative Indicators of Improvement

In addition to the numerical scores, substantial qualitative changes were observed during the learning process. Three prominent developments were identified. First, pronunciation clarity improved. Children became increasingly accurate and confident in pronouncing religious expressions such as *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, and *assalamu'alaikum*. Second, contextual understanding improved. Children increasingly understood when and in what situations religious vocabulary should be used. For instance, they demonstrated an understanding of using *bismillah* before eating or beginning an activity and *alhamdulillah* after completing an activity. Third, confidence and participation increased. Children became more willing to use religious vocabulary spontaneously and independently without relying continuously on teacher prompts.

The qualitative indicators obtained from classroom observations are presented in Table 2.

Table 4. Qualitative Indicators Obtained from Classroom Observations

Indicator	Pre-action	Cycle I	Cycle II
Children gave Islamic greetings correctly	10 children (40%)	17 children (68%)	22 children (88%)
Children said bismillah before activities	9 children (36%)	18 children (72%)	23 children (92%)
Children said alhamdulillah after activities	8 children (32%)	16 children (64%)	21 children (84%)

The data demonstrated consistent improvement across all three indicators. The proportion of children who correctly used Islamic greetings increased from 40% to 88%, representing a substantial development in habitual religious communication. Similarly, the proportion of children who used *bismillah* before activities increased from 36% to 92%, while the use of *alhamdulillah* after activities increased from 32% to 84%.

c. Data Triangulation

The findings from teacher interviews supported the observations and assessment results. The teacher reported that the thematic approach integrating language and Islamic values enabled children to understand the meaning and appropriate use of religious expressions more quickly. Children gradually became accustomed to greeting teachers and peers using Islamic greetings and were increasingly able to pronounce *kalimat thayyibah* correctly.

Field observations further indicated that children became more active in practicing religious language without direct prompts from the teacher. This finding was consistent with the oral and practical language assessments, which demonstrated progressive improvement across the pre-action stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II. Documentation of classroom activities also supported the observation that children increasingly participated enthusiastically and used religious expressions in authentic learning situations.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated that Islamic values-based language learning effectively improved children's religious vocabulary at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa. The contextual and enjoyable learning strategies contributed to three major areas of development: (1) the number of religious vocabulary items mastered by children; (2) children's ability to use religious vocabulary appropriately in everyday contexts; and (3) children's confidence, positive modeling, and spiritual engagement in using religious language.

Therefore, the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning activities made a substantial contribution to the development of children's religious vocabulary while simultaneously supporting the formation of Islamic character and communication habits from an early age.

DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of Findings

a. Implementation of Islamic Values-Based Language Learning at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa

Islamic values-based language learning at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa was implemented through an integrative thematic approach. Teachers employed various learning media and activities, including Islamic stories, religious songs, daily prayers, Islamic greetings, and routine religious practices. This approach was consistent with the view that the inculcation of Islamic values in early childhood should be conducted gradually and continuously through habituation, role modeling, and enjoyable learning experiences that correspond to children's developmental characteristics (Mutiah, 2019).

The observations indicated that teachers designed learning activities by integrating religious vocabulary into children's daily routines. For example, teachers modeled the use of *bismillah* before eating, *alhamdulillah* after completing an activity, and *assalamu'alaikum* when entering the classroom. Children were encouraged to use these expressions in meaningful contexts rather than merely memorizing them. This finding was consistent with Rohman (2022), who argued that Islamic education in early childhood should introduce fundamental values such as *tawhid*, good character, and worship through simple yet meaningful activities, including collective prayer and greetings. Embedding religious vocabulary into daily routines therefore enabled children to become familiar with language expressions that reflected Islamic values.

Teachers also utilized picture-based stories, songs, and simple games to facilitate children's acquisition of religious vocabulary. These learning activities were delivered in an enjoyable manner and were adapted to the developmental characteristics of early childhood learners. Fauzi (2021) emphasized that early childhood teachers played an important role in integrating Islamic values into learning through methods such as role-play, storytelling, singing, and consistent habituation. These strategies were reflected in the instructional practices observed at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa.

Interviews with teachers further indicated that this approach enabled children to become familiar with Islamic language naturally because the vocabulary was embedded in everyday activities. Through habituation and role modeling, children were able to recognize and imitate religious vocabulary used by teachers and peers more readily. This finding supported Hidayat (2018), who stated that the introduction of Islamic values during early childhood was intended to establish a strong spiritual and moral foundation so that children could develop faith and commendable character. Similarly, Sujiono (2020) maintained that Islamic values such as politeness and responsibility could be cultivated through systematic and continuous Islamic-themed activities, as demonstrated in the learning practices at the institution.

Overall, the implementation of Islamic values-based language learning at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa was consistent with the principles of early childhood pedagogy and with previous literature emphasizing the importance of integrating Islamic values through enjoyable, contextualized, and consistent learning experiences. The findings suggested that religious vocabulary was most effectively developed when language learning was embedded in children's authentic daily experiences.

b. Forms of Religious Vocabulary Introduced and Used in Islamic Values-Based Language Learning

The religious vocabulary introduced to children at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa included *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, *subhanallah*, *astaghfirullah*, *insya Allah*, and *assalamu'alaikum*. Children were also introduced to vocabulary derived from daily prayers, the names of prophets, and the pillars of Islam and faith through play, singing, and storytelling activities. The vocabulary was introduced progressively according to daily learning themes and reinforced through repeated use in various activities, including collective prayers, greeting teachers, and activities before and after meals.

The use of this vocabulary was strengthened through daily practice and concrete, enjoyable learning experiences. Rohman (2022) emphasized that children's religious vocabulary could develop more effectively when teachers consistently incorporated *kalimat thayyibah* into classroom routines. In the present study, teachers also contextualized religious vocabulary through Islamic stories, enabling children to associate particular expressions with familiar situations and experiences.

In addition to storytelling and habituation, teachers' language use during everyday interactions served as an important model for children. This finding was consistent with Sujiono (2020), who explained that teachers' consistency in using polite and appropriate vocabulary in early childhood language learning provided a concrete linguistic model that could significantly influence children's language development.

Overall, religious vocabulary in the learning process was not taught solely as cognitive knowledge. Instead, it was embedded in children's everyday behaviors and interactions. Consequently, religious expressions gradually became part of children's communicative habits and contributed to the natural internalization of religious values in their daily lives.

c. Improvement in Children's Religious Vocabulary Following Islamic Values-Based Language Learning

The children's religious vocabulary demonstrated substantial improvement after they participated in Islamic values-based language learning activities. Based on observations, oral assessments, and language-practice activities, the children showed improved abilities to pronounce and use religious vocabulary both spontaneously and in the context of classroom activities and daily routines. Children who had previously been able to produce only one or two Islamic expressions demonstrated broader vocabulary use after the intervention, with some children actively using approximately five to eight religious expressions in their speech and behavior.

This development indicated that children acquired religious language through a relatively natural and contextualized process. As discussed by Tarigan and cited in Sulistiani et al. (2021), language acquisition begins at an early age through children's use of words to fulfill communicative needs. In the context of this study, children learned to associate expressions such as *bismillah* with eating or beginning an activity and *alhamdulillah* with completing an activity. Such associations enabled children to construct functional meanings rather than merely memorize isolated words.

Furthermore, vocabulary mastery influenced children's thinking and creativity in the language-learning process (Nana, 2017). As their religious vocabulary increased, the children appeared more confident, more willing to greet others, and more prepared to recite prayers aloud. This observation was consistent with Prastyo et al. (2021), who emphasized that vocabulary constituted an important linguistic component supporting children's ability to obtain information and express ideas. In the present study, children who had initially been reluctant to speak became increasingly active in verbal classroom interactions.

Nurmila and Ntelu (2023) similarly emphasized the importance of vocabulary mastery during early childhood because language enables children to communicate and interact with their surrounding environment. Such active interaction was increasingly evident as teachers consistently

encouraged the use of religious language during activities such as morning *tadarus*, prayer memorization, and greetings when arriving at and leaving school. Hidayat (2018) further explained that young children learned language through direct, concrete, and meaningful experiences rather than through abstract memorization. Therefore, the improvement observed in this study could be associated with the contextualized and developmentally appropriate instructional strategies implemented by the teachers.

These findings demonstrated that children's religious vocabulary could be effectively enhanced through Islamic values-based language learning that was enjoyable, concrete, contextualized, and consistently embedded in children's daily routines.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study demonstrated that the integration of language learning with Islamic values through thematic, contextual, and habituation-based activities contributed substantially to the development of children's religious vocabulary. The improvement was evident not only in the children's ability to recognize and pronounce religious expressions but also in their ability to use them appropriately in meaningful everyday contexts. This finding was consistent with Aziz et al. (2024), who found that Islamic songs could effectively facilitate the introduction and internalization of Islamic values among young children through repetitive, rhythmic, and easily memorized lyrics. Both studies emphasized the importance of enjoyable learning media and repeated exposure in helping children acquire Islamic expressions. However, the present study extended the findings of Aziz et al. (2024) by positioning religious vocabulary as an explicit learning outcome and evaluating its development through oral and practical language assessments. Thus, the contribution of the present study was not limited to the internalization of religious values but also demonstrated measurable changes in children's linguistic performance.

The findings also corresponded with Poku (2022), who reported that singing activities could improve children's vocabulary acquisition by creating an engaging learning environment and facilitating repeated exposure to new words. The similarity was particularly evident in the use of songs as an enjoyable instructional strategy that encouraged children to listen, imitate, repeat, and use newly introduced vocabulary. Nevertheless, the present study differed substantially in terms of the linguistic content and educational objectives. Poku (2022) primarily examined the development of children's general vocabulary, whereas the present study specifically focused on religious vocabulary, including *kalimat thayyibah*, daily prayers, Islamic greetings, and expressions such as *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, *insya Allah*, and *masya Allah*. Consequently, this study provided a more specific perspective on how vocabulary development could be integrated with religious education and character formation in an Islamic early childhood education setting.

The present findings further supported Setiawati (2020), who demonstrated that routine religious activities could contribute to the development of religious character among young children. Both studies highlighted habituation, consistency, and teacher role modeling as essential mechanisms for introducing and reinforcing Islamic values. In the present study, these mechanisms were particularly important because children did not learn religious vocabulary exclusively through direct instruction; rather, they acquired and practiced it repeatedly through authentic classroom interactions. Teachers' consistent use of Islamic expressions during greetings, prayers, meals, learning activities, and other daily routines provided children with continuous linguistic models. This finding suggested that religious vocabulary development was closely connected to the social and behavioral environment in which language was used.

The findings also complemented the perspective of Rohman (2022), who emphasized that Islamic education in early childhood should introduce religious values through simple, meaningful,

and developmentally appropriate activities. The present study demonstrated how this principle could be operationalized through language learning. Rather than presenting religious vocabulary as isolated words to be memorized, teachers embedded the vocabulary within concrete situations that children encountered regularly. For example, *bismillah* was associated with beginning an activity, *alhamdulillah* with completing an activity or expressing gratitude, and *assalamu'alaikum* with greeting others. Such contextualization enabled children to connect linguistic forms with communicative functions and religious meanings.

The findings were also in agreement with Sujiono (2020), who stressed the importance of teacher consistency and modeling in early childhood language development. In this study, teachers functioned not only as instructors but also as linguistic and behavioral models. Their repeated and appropriate use of religious expressions provided children with opportunities to observe, imitate, and gradually use the vocabulary independently. This finding indicated that teacher modeling was particularly important for young learners because language acquisition at this developmental stage occurs through direct interaction, imitation, repetition, and meaningful experience.

Compared with previous studies, therefore, the present research offered a more integrated perspective by connecting language development, religious habituation, contextual learning, and character formation within a single instructional framework. Previous research tended to emphasize one dominant dimension, such as the effectiveness of Islamic songs in introducing religious values (Aziz et al., 2024), singing as a strategy for general vocabulary development (Poku, 2022), or religious habituation as a means of developing children's character (Setiawati, 2020). In contrast, the present study demonstrated that these dimensions could be integrated through Islamic values-based language learning. Religious vocabulary functioned simultaneously as linguistic material, a means of communication, a medium for religious value transmission, and a component of character formation.

An important contribution of this study was therefore the demonstration that religious vocabulary development could be observed through both quantitative improvement and qualitative behavioral change. The quantitative findings showed an increase in the children's average vocabulary scores from 11.2 at the pre-action stage to 16.4 in Cycle I and 21.1 in Cycle II, representing an overall increase of 88.39%. The qualitative findings further showed improvements in children's ability to greet others appropriately, use *bismillah* before activities, and say *alhamdulillah* after completing activities. These changes indicated that the intervention did not merely increase the number of religious words children could recall but also improved their ability to use those expressions appropriately in context.

Thus, the novelty of the present study lay in demonstrating that Islamic values-based language learning could function as an integrative pedagogical strategy for simultaneously developing religious vocabulary, communicative competence, and religious character in early childhood. This finding strengthened previous research by showing that religious language acquisition became more meaningful when children encountered vocabulary repeatedly in authentic, enjoyable, and socially interactive situations. The study therefore contributed to the growing understanding of Islamic early childhood education by positioning language not merely as an instructional target but also as an effective medium for transmitting, practicing, and internalizing religious values.

3. Implications of the Findings

The findings provided practical and theoretical implications for early childhood education, particularly for the development of Islamic values-based language learning. Practically, the results demonstrated that teachers could utilize everyday activities such as singing, storytelling, prayer,

greetings, and role-play as contextual and enjoyable media for introducing religious vocabulary. This approach strengthened the teacher's role as a linguistic and behavioral role model in the classroom.

Theoretically, the study contributed to the discourse on early childhood language acquisition by incorporating a spiritual and religious dimension. Language functioned not only as a means of communication but also as a medium through which cultural, moral, and religious values were transmitted. Accordingly, an integrative approach to language learning could support the development of children's character while maintaining the distinctive orientation of Islamic early childhood education.

The findings also provided a basis for developing Islamic language-learning models that were developmentally appropriate and potentially applicable to other Islamic early childhood education institutions. The study demonstrated that religious vocabulary could be systematically introduced, practiced, assessed, reinforced, and improved through structured thematic learning activities. This perspective broadened the understanding of religious vocabulary as not merely memorized linguistic material but as a form of functional language embedded in children's daily experiences.

4. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the number of participants was limited to 25 children from a single PAUD group, particularly Group B, which limited the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of young children. Second, the use of oral and practical vocabulary assessments in early childhood was subject to variations in children's responses because their performance could be influenced by mood, classroom conditions, familiarity with the assessment situation, and other non-academic factors.

Third, the intervention was conducted over a relatively short period of three months. Therefore, the study could not fully determine the long-term effects of Islamic values-based language learning on children's religious vocabulary development. In addition, family and out-of-school environmental factors were not treated as controlled variables, although they could have influenced children's use of religious vocabulary beyond the classroom.

Despite these limitations, the findings remained relevant within the contextual scope of the study because the research primarily examined the process and outcomes of teacher-led classroom interventions rather than seeking broad statistical generalization. The combination of observation, interviews, documentation, and oral and practical assessments also provided multiple sources of evidence for interpreting changes in children's religious vocabulary.

5. Partial Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, Islamic values-based language learning at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa was found to contribute substantially to the improvement of children's religious vocabulary. Integrating religious vocabulary into daily activities such as singing, storytelling, collective prayer, greetings, role-play, and routine classroom interactions provided an effective means of simultaneously developing children's language abilities and introducing Islamic values.

The study further demonstrated that language learning embedded in meaningful spiritual experiences and implemented consistently through enjoyable activities could positively influence children's verbal development and religious character. The findings therefore provided a foundation for developing more systematic and measurable Islamic early childhood language-learning curricula, particularly those that integrate religious vocabulary with children's everyday communicative experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that Islamic values-based language learning effectively improved children's religious vocabulary at PAUD Syihabul Musthofa. The integration of religious vocabulary into thematic, contextual, and enjoyable learning activities enabled children to develop not only their ability to recognize and pronounce Islamic expressions but also their ability to use them appropriately in everyday situations. Through storytelling, singing, role-play, daily prayers, Islamic greetings, and routine classroom interactions, religious vocabulary became part of children's meaningful communicative experiences rather than merely memorized linguistic material.

The findings addressed the research objectives by demonstrating three main outcomes. First, Islamic values-based language learning was implemented systematically through continuous habituation, teacher modeling, contextual activities, and developmentally appropriate learning media. Second, the religious vocabulary introduced to children included *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah*, *assalamu'alaikum*, *wa'alaikumussalam*, *insya Allah*, *masya Allah*, daily prayers, and *Asmaul Husna*. Third, children's religious vocabulary demonstrated substantial improvement following the intervention. The average score increased from 11.2 at the pre-action stage to 16.4 in Cycle I and 21.1 in Cycle II. This represented an overall improvement of 88.39% from the pre-action stage to Cycle II. Qualitative evidence further confirmed improvements in pronunciation, contextual understanding, confidence, and spontaneous use of religious expressions.

These findings indicate that Islamic values-based language learning has implications beyond vocabulary acquisition. It can serve as an integrative pedagogical approach that simultaneously supports children's linguistic development, communicative competence, religious habituation, and character formation. The study therefore reinforces the importance of positioning teachers as linguistic and behavioral role models and of embedding religious language in authentic daily experiences. Theoretically, the findings contribute to the understanding of early childhood language acquisition by demonstrating that vocabulary development can be closely integrated with spiritual and character education. Practically, the approach provides early childhood teachers with a contextual strategy for developing religious vocabulary through activities that are familiar, enjoyable, repetitive, and meaningful to young learners.

Future research should examine the effectiveness of Islamic values-based language learning across a larger number of early childhood education institutions and with more diverse participant characteristics to strengthen the transferability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to investigate whether improvements in religious vocabulary and religious language habits are maintained over a longer period. In addition, future studies could examine the influence of family involvement and home language practices, as these factors may reinforce or shape children's use of religious vocabulary beyond the classroom. Comparative or mixed-methods research could further investigate which instructional strategies, such as storytelling, singing, role-play, or visual media, contribute most strongly to specific dimensions of religious vocabulary development.

Overall, this study demonstrates that religious vocabulary can be developed effectively when language learning is integrated with children's everyday religious experiences. A learning environment that combines contextual language practice, consistent habituation, teacher modeling, and enjoyable activities can transform religious vocabulary from memorized expressions into meaningful forms of communication and religious practice. Consequently, Islamic values-based language learning offers a promising approach for strengthening both language development and religious character in early childhood education.

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