

# Character Education Based on the Stories of the Prophets in Islamic Early Childhood Education: Analysis of Pedagogical Strategies and Implementation Factors

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## ABSTRACT

Character education in early childhood is a critical foundation for personality development. In Islamic early childhood education, the stories of prophets and messengers are believed to be authentic sources of moral values. This academic paper, based on a literature review, aims to analyse the application of character education based on the stories of prophets in Islamic early childhood education, focusing on the conceptualization of stories as a pedagogical medium, effective delivery strategies, and factors that support and hinder its implementation. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a thematic synthesis method of relevant literature. The results show that the stories of the prophets serve as a source of values and a powerful narrative medium for building children's Islamic identity and moral development. Effective pedagogical strategies must be interactive and child-centered, such as interactive storytelling, role-playing, and thematic approaches. Sustainable implementation is greatly influenced by factors such as teacher capacity, institutional leadership, parental support, and the availability of resources and evaluation systems. This paper concludes that the success of this approach requires a mature integration of the richness of Islamic heritage with the principles of modern early childhood pedagogy, supported by systematic institutional management and collaboration with all stakeholders.

## INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is globally recognized as a critical foundation for human development. During this period, children experience rapid growth in various aspects, including cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and moral. The learning process in PAUD not only aims to prepare basic academic skills but also to shape personalities and life values that will serve as guidelines throughout life. Within the framework of Indonesia's national education system, PAUD is positioned as a vital educational service for building the character of the nation (Hazizah & Ariyanti, 2019). Attention to character education at this stage has grown stronger in line with concerns about moral degradation and identity crises affecting the younger generation (Suarningsih, 2024). In addition, the massive development of digital technology also presents new challenges for the character-building process of early childhood, especially in relation to

excessive use of gadgets. Therefore, the involvement of parents and the educational environment is very important in guiding the wise use of technology and preventing potential gadget addiction in children (Masfufah & Darmawan, 2023).

In Muslim communities, Islamic early childhood education centers (PAUD Islam) provide an answer to the need for education that harmonizes children's development with Islamic values. These institutions not only adopt the general PAUD curriculum, but also integrate elements of Islam into all their learning activities. Character education in Islamic PAUD is considered to have a broader dimension because it not only refers to universal virtues, such as honesty and responsibility, but also connects them to the concept of morals in Islam. Noble morals (akhlakul karimah) are a central goal, which is believed to shape Muslims who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually good.

One of the main sources of values and role

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models in Islam is the stories of the prophets and messengers. The narratives of their lives, as recorded in the Qur'an and hadith, are full of lessons about determination, honesty, patience, justice, leadership, and compassion. These stories are not merely historical accounts, but are believed to contain wisdom and guidance for all ages (Mujib, 2024). For young children, the stories of the prophets offer a wealth of teaching material because they are presented in the form of captivating narratives, full of moral conflicts, and ending with clear messages of virtue. The stories of the honest Prophet Yusuf, the obedient Prophet Ibrahim, or the compassionate Prophet Muhammad can serve as examples of ideal behavior that are easy for children to understand.

Therefore, the application of character education based on the stories of the prophets in Islamic early childhood education is an interesting practice to study. This approach has the potential to be an effective and contextual method for Muslim children to learn about their religion while instilling moral values. A conducive school environment and a positive learning culture can help children develop good character and personality (Dena & Darmawan, 2024). However, its implementation is not as easy as reading a story. It requires appropriate pedagogical strategies, the selection of stories that are suitable for the stage of development, and the ability of teachers to process narratives into meaningful learning experiences. This study will explore the potential, challenges, and implementation strategies of this character education approach.

Although the stories of the prophets are recognized as a rich source of values, their application in Islamic early childhood education often faces methodological obstacles. Many teachers tend to use a conventional approach, namely one-way storytelling, without involving children in the process of understanding and reflecting on the moral values contained therein. As a result, this activity can become passive and fail to have a strong impact on the internalization of values. Children may only remember the plot superficially without understanding the deeper moral lessons. The challenge is to transform the storytelling from mere entertainment or a time filler into an active learning session that stimulates critical thinking and empathy in children (Mansur, 2011).

The second issue relates to the selection and adaptation of stories about the Prophet for early childhood. Not all stories in the Qur'an and Sirah Nabawiyah are suitable to be told directly to children aged 3-6 years. Some narratives contain elements of violent conflict, punishment, or abstract and complex

theological concepts. Teachers need special skills to filter, simplify, and present these stories without losing their core moral messages while still being appropriate for children's psychological development. Without adequate understanding of child development psychology and basic interpretation, teachers risk conveying stories that actually cause fear or misunderstanding about the nature of Allah and the prophets.

In addition, evaluating the results of character education based on the stories of the prophets remains a complex challenge. Character traits and moral values are abstract and not as easy to measure as cognitive abilities. Children's discipline in learning and independence in applying moral values also need to be taken into account in the evaluation process (Maharani & Darmawan, 2024). Most Islamic early childhood education centers do not yet have systematic instruments to assess the extent to which the values of the prophets have been internalized by children. Assessments are often subjective and based only on observations of visible behavior at school, while character building is a long process that is also greatly influenced by the family environment. The gap between the instilling of values at school and practices at home can reduce the overall effectiveness of character education efforts (Lickona, 2004). Character education at school requires consistent role modelling and habituation so that moral values can be instilled properly (Aliyah & Masnawati, 2022).

This study is important because character education at an early age determines the quality of future Muslim generations. Examining effective strategies for instilling values through the stories of the prophets means investing in the formation of a positive and strong Islamic identity from an early age. In a situation where children are also exposed to inappropriate values from digital media and diverse social environments, this approach based on Islamic exemplary stories can serve as a counterbalance and a strong moral foundation. A comprehensive understanding of best practices in applying this method will directly benefit the improvement of learning quality in Islamic early childhood education.

This study can bridge early childhood education with classical Islamic knowledge. With systematic analysis, the stories of the prophets are no longer viewed as merely dogmatic material, but as a rich pedagogical resource for children's moral development. The findings of this study can provide a clear framework for educators, institution managers, and Islamic early childhood education curriculum developers. Ultimately, this research is

expected to contribute to the development of an authentic early childhood character education model, based on authentic religious sources and in line with modern child development principles.

This study aims to examine how the stories of the prophets and messengers can be conceptualized as a primary source and medium in early childhood character education in Islamic early childhood education settings. This study is aimed at understanding the potential of narratives of prophets as a means of instilling moral and spiritual values that are in line with the principles of early childhood development. In addition, this study aims to identify and analyses pedagogical strategies that are considered effective in conveying and internalizing the moral values contained in the stories of the prophets, while still paying attention to the cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics of children in the early stages of development. This study also aims to explore various supporting and inhibiting factors faced by teachers and Islamic early childhood education institutions in implementing prophet-based character education in a sustainable and measurable manner, so that relevant recommendations can be formulated to strengthen character education practices in Islamic early childhood education institutions.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study utilizes a qualitative literature review approach. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for the objective of developing a comprehensive conceptual and practical understanding of the application of character education based on the stories of the prophets in Islamic early childhood education. Qualitative literature studies enable researchers to explore, interpret, and synthesize various findings, theoretical arguments, and perspectives contained in existing bodies of knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). With this approach, the research does not focus on testing hypotheses or statistical generalizations, but rather on exploring the meanings, principles, and patterns that emerge from various written sources related to the topic of study.

The main analysis method applied is thematic synthesis. This method provides a systematic framework for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) found in a collection of qualitative research literature. The thematic synthesis procedure involves three key stages as outlined by Thomas and Harden (2008). First, line-by-line coding of the substantive findings or discussions from each piece of literature included in the study. Second, grouping

closely related codes to form descriptive themes that remain close to the original data. Third, developing analytical themes that go beyond the descriptive findings of the primary studies to generate new interpretations and answer the research questions of this study.

This method was applied gradually and reflectively to ensure academic rigor. Literature was collected through searches in scientific databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and Portal Garuda using the following keyword combinations: "Islamic Early Childhood Education Character", "Stories of the Prophet for Early Childhood", "Storytelling of the Prophet", and "Early Childhood Morals". The main inclusion criteria were publications that were directly relevant to the topic and were in the form of journal articles, books, or theses. Each piece of literature was read critically, and quotations or key ideas related to the problem formulation were noted and coded. The analysis process was conducted iteratively by continuously comparing and contrasting findings from various sources. Bowen's (2009) qualitative document analysis framework was used as a reference to maintain transparency and accuracy during the coding and theme formation process, so that the resulting synthesis was credible and contributed to new understanding.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Conceptualization of the Stories of the Prophets and Messengers Can Be Conceptualized as the Main Source and Medium for Character Education for Early Childhood in Islamic Early Childhood Education Environments**

Story-based teaching methods are an effective pedagogical approach for instilling values and building emotional understanding in students. Teaching methods based on stories or narratives have a unique appeal that can help convey feelings. This method has been proven effective in explaining emotions, given the natural human tendency to be captivated by stories (Humaira & Pasaribu, 2022). The stories of the prophets and messengers in Islamic early childhood education can be conceptualized as a source of authentic and historical moral values, as well as a narrative and imaginative pedagogical medium. As a source of values, these stories do not originate solely from human philosophical constructs but are sourced from revelations whose truth is believed to be transcendental. This provides a strong foundation of legitimacy in the Islamic educational environment, where the values taught are not only considered socially good but also have a divine dimension. Each narrative of the prophets'

lives, from the perseverance of Prophet Ayyub, the honesty of Prophet Yusuf, to the social concern of Prophet Muhammad, contains a crystallization of noble moral values that are the goals of Islamic character education. This conceptualization places the stories of the prophets not as fairy tales or myths, but as real role models that can be used as behavioral references (Kartini et al., 2022). Universal values such as honesty, patience, and courage gain a deeper context and meaning because they are embodied by figures who are considered holy and close to Allah. The stories of the prophets and messengers not only serve as an interesting learning medium, but also as a strategic means of internalizing Islamic moral values based on revelation and real role models.

Psychologically, the use of narratives of the prophets' stories is in line with the cognitive and emotional development characteristics of early childhood. Psychologically, the narrative of the prophets' stories is in line with the way the minds of early childhood develop through stories and concrete examples. Children at this stage are in the pre-operational stage according to Piaget's theory, where they understand the world through symbols, imagination, and personal experiences. Stories told in lively and vivid language can create a simulation of moral experiences in children's minds. They are invited to imaginatively feel the dilemma faced by the Prophet Ibrahim, reflect on the patience of the Prophet Yunus inside the fish, or admire the surrender of the Prophet Ismail. This process facilitates the internalization of values more naturally than the normative and abstract presentation of goodness (Suyadi, 2010). Stories serve as a bridge connecting abstract values with the emotional and cognitive world of children, which is still very concrete. The stories of the prophets' function as a transformative medium that bridges abstract moral values with concrete, imaginative, and meaningful learning experiences for early childhood.

The stories of the prophets play an important role in shaping the foundations of children's Islam from an early age. Furthermore, the stories of the prophets serve as an effective medium for building Islamic identity from an early age. Through learning about the prophets, children not only learn about values, but also begin to form a map of Islamic history and spirituality. They get to know the figures who are their spiritual ancestors and understand that Islamic values have been fought for by many pious people throughout the ages. Character education in schools also needs to be supported by consistent role modelling and habits from teachers (Aliyah &

Masnawati, 2022). This introduction helps children find their place in the grand narrative of Islam, which can strengthen their sense of pride and attachment to the religion. The stories of the prophets are also often associated with universal national and humanitarian values, for example by highlighting the Prophet Muhammad's love for orphans and care for the environment, so that character education based on the stories of the prophets also becomes a vehicle for shaping good citizens and responsible human beings (Mansur, 2011). Prophetic stories not only enrich children's religious knowledge, but also instill noble values that are relevant to national life and humanity.

Prophetic stories also have pedagogical power in gradually shaping children's morality. From Lawrence Kohlberg's perspective on character education, stories of the prophets can be a powerful stimulus to trigger the development of children's moral reasoning. Although young children are generally at the pre-conventional stage (morality is based on physical consequences such as punishment and reward), well-presented stories of the prophets can begin to introduce them to the conventional stage, where morality is associated with fulfilling social expectations and maintaining good relationships. A conducive school environment and support from peers can help children develop their moral reasoning (Haqiqi & Darmawan, 2023). When children hear how the Prophet Muhammad was respected for his honesty, or how the Prophet Moses defended his oppressed people, they begin to understand that behaving well brings social recognition and contributes to social order. These stories provide material for discussion for teachers to encourage children to think about the reasons behind an action and its social consequences, which is the foundation for the development of higher moral reasoning (Busyra & Azizah, 2022). The stories of the prophets are not only a means of conveying values, but also a reflective tool for progressively fostering children's moral awareness.

In order for the stories of the prophets to truly have an impact on shaping children's characters, they need to be presented in a dynamic and enjoyable way. Pedagogically, this conceptualization requires an active and creative approach. The stories of the prophets should not be presented as rigid monologues, but should be brought to life through various methods. Techniques such as storytelling with props, role play, art, or songs and movements can be channels for conveying moral messages. For example, after hearing the story of the Prophet Muhammad's honesty, who was nicknamed Al-Amin, children can be invited to role play a situation

where they find their friend's lost belongings. Activities such as this transform stories from mere information into multi-sensory and participatory learning experiences. Teachers act as facilitators who guide children to extract values from stories and relate them to their daily lives at home and school (Hambali et al., 2022). With this approach, the stories of the prophets become an educational tool that is not only informative but also transformative in shaping children's characters.

Within the framework of child development theory, the stories of the prophets can also be interpreted as a means of contextual and meaningful learning. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory also provides a framework for understanding this conceptualization. In this theory, learning occurs through social interaction and the use of cultural tools. Stories of the prophets can be seen as a valuable cultural tool in Muslim communities. Social interaction in the classroom helps children develop confidence and courage in expressing their opinions (Rahmawati & Darmawan, 2024). Through the guidance of the teacher (as a more knowledgeable other), children are invited to understand and use the values in the story as a tool for thinking about moral issues and regulating their behavior. The process of storytelling and discussing the stories of the prophets creates a zone of proximal development in which children, with the help of the teacher, can understand moral concepts that are slightly more complex than they can understand on their own (Budiarti et al., 2022). Thus, the stories of the prophets become an interactive medium for raising children's level of moral understanding. The stories of the prophets are not only entertaining stories, but also an important bridge in gradually developing children's moral thinking capacity.

In order for the prophet-based approach to be implemented optimally, strong managerial support at the institutional level is required. The managerial implications of this conceptualization are very important for Islamic early childhood education managers. First, a curriculum policy is needed that explicitly includes the stories of the prophets as a core element in character education programmed, rather than as additional or incidental activities. Visionary leadership and a supportive organizational culture are essential to create a conducive learning environment (Al Laisty et al., 2024). The syllabus needs to be designed to sequence the introduction of prophetic stories thematically and in accordance with children's developmental levels. Second, management must allocate budgets and efforts for the development of creative teaching

materials. Investment in the creation of picture books, hand puppets of prophets, or simple animations that are ethical and interesting is necessary to support the learning process. Without adequate resources, good conceptualization will be difficult to realize in everyday classroom practice. The role of management is crucial in bridging the gap between pedagogical ideas and the reality of implementation in the classroom.

The quality of human resources is a determining factor in the successful implementation of prophet stories in character education. In addition, teacher resource management is key to success. Teachers not only need to have knowledge about the stories of the prophets, but they must also master the pedagogical competencies to convey them effectively. The professionalism and competence of teachers in choosing the right learning methods are major factors in the success of children's education (Mubasysyir & Darmawan, 2024). Continuous training and mentoring programmed on storytelling techniques, understanding children's moral development, and how to facilitate post-storytelling value discussions should be a management priority. Teacher forums for sharing experiences and good practices in conveying prophetic stories can become learning communities that enrich the abilities of all educators. Management also needs to create a simple documentation and evaluation system to record children's understanding and behavior development related to the values of the stories that have been told, so that this practice can be continuously improved. With focused and continuous teacher management, stories of the prophets can be an effective instrument in shaping children's character in a consistent and meaningful way.

In closing, it is important to reaffirm the strategic position of the stories of the prophets in early childhood character education. Ultimately, conceptualizing the stories of the prophets as the main source and medium of character education requires a paradigm shift. The stories of the prophets must be seen as a living curriculum, that is, a dynamic, meaningful, and relevant curriculum for the character formation of contemporary Muslim children. This approach combines the richness of Islamic heritage with the principles of modern early childhood education. With proper conceptualization and careful implementation, the stories of the prophets and messengers can become the heart of the character education process in Islamic early childhood education, planting the seeds of noble character that will grow and develop throughout the child's life. The stories of the prophets are not only a

narrative heritage but also a transformative foundation for a generation of Muslims with character and noble morals.

### **Pedagogical Strategies for Conveying and Internalizing Moral Values from the Stories of the Prophets to Young Children**

To achieve effectiveness in character education based on the stories of the prophets, the delivery strategy must be tailored to the developmental stage of early childhood. Effective pedagogical strategies for conveying and internalizing the moral values of prophetic stories must be based on a deep understanding of the characteristics of early childhood. Differentiated learning and teaching are important aspects of Relational Pedagogy, as the formation of positive social relationships in the classroom can only be achieved by paying attention to the different learning needs of each student (Sözeri et al., 2021). Children aged 3-6 years have limited concentration, concrete understanding, and learn optimally through direct experience and play. Therefore, the most fundamental strategy is interactive and engaging storytelling techniques. This technique goes beyond simply reading texts from books. Teachers need to deliver stories with varied facial expressions, voice intonations, and body movements to bring the characters and situations to life. The use of visual aids such as big books, hand puppets representing the prophets, or simple pictures greatly helps children understand the storyline. Most importantly, teachers must insert reflective questions during storytelling, such as "What do you think Prophet Yusuf will do next?" or "How did Prophet Ibrahim feel at that time?", to engage children cognitively and emotionally (Suyadi, 2010). This interaction transforms children from passive listeners into active participants in the narrative. The purpose of the storytelling method is for children to be able to distinguish between good and bad deeds so that they can be applied in everyday life. By storytelling, teachers can instill Islamic values in their students, such as showing the difference between good and bad deeds and the rewards for each deed (Khairiyah, 2020). Storytelling techniques tailored to children's characteristics are the main foundation for making the stories of the prophets an effective and enjoyable means of character building.

Apart from storytelling, another pedagogical strategy that is very effective for early childhood is role-playing. The next strategy that is very suitable for children's needs is role-playing (role-playing or dramatization). Children play an active role in their

learning and knowledge formation processes, rather than being considered blank slates (Huth et al., 2021). After the story is told, children are invited to re-express the story through simple role-playing. This strategy takes advantage of young children's tendency to learn through pretend play. For example, children can play the role of the Prophet Noah inviting animals onto the ark, or play the role of the Prophet Muhammad helping his neighbors. Through this activity, children not only remember the story but also physically and emotionally experience the moral situations faced by the prophet. They practice taking the perspective of others, feeling certain emotions, and trying to act based on the values taught. This process strengthens understanding and facilitates the transfer of values from the context of the story to real behavior, because children have practiced it in a safe and enjoyable simulation. Role-playing becomes an effective bridge between moral narratives and real experiences, which deepens the internalization of values in children.

To deepen the internalization of moral values, thematic project-based learning is a highly potential alternative strategy. Thematic project-based learning can also be an effective strategy for deeper internalization of values (Faizin & Helandri, 2023). The use of appropriate learning media and varied methods can increase children's interest and motivation to learn (Laili & Darmawan, 2024). Teachers can choose one main value from a prophet's story, such as "gratitude" from the story of Prophet Sulaiman or "sharing" from the story of Prophet Muhammad, then design a series of cross-curricular activities over several days or weeks centered on that value. Activities can include art (making a collage of "God's blessings"), music (singing songs about gratitude), simple science (observing and being grateful for God's creations in the garden), and social activities (sharing food with friends). This holistic approach allows children to experience moral values from various angles and through various intelligences, so that their understanding becomes richer and more integrated. Values are no longer associated with a single moment in a story, but with a variety of interrelated sensory and intellectual experiences (Mansur, 2011). The thematic project approach makes the stories of the prophets the center of a living learning experience, touching on all aspects of children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development.

Fun and multisensory learning strategies are essential to reach the full potential of early childhood. Song and movement strategies are very

powerful pedagogical channels for early childhood. Teachers can create or adapt simple songs with lyrics that contain moral messages from the stories of the prophets. For example, a song about "The Honest Prophet" with a cheerful rhythm. Body movements that accompany songs, such as imitating acts of helping or showing expressions of patience, help children remember messages better because they involve kinesthetic memory. Music and rhythm process information in different parts of the brain than verbal processing, so this strategy can strengthen memory and make learning values more enjoyable and accessible to all children, including those with dominant kinesthetic or auditory learning styles. Repeating songs in daily routines also serves as a constant reminder of values (Hambali et al., 2022). Songs and movements are effective expressive media for instilling moral values naturally and memorably in children's daily lives.

In the digital age, the integration of visual media and technology has become an important part of learning strategies that are relevant and engaging for children. The use of simple, age-appropriate visual media and technology is also part of effective modern strategies (Mujib, 2024). For the digital native generation, the use of ethical and engaging short animated videos about the stories of the prophets can be a good starting point. Digital literacy and the use of technology in learning are important skills that educators need to master in the modern era (Rizal & Darmawan, 2024). Videos must be carefully selected or created, avoiding scenes of violence and emphasizing moral conflicts and their resolution. After watching, discussions should be facilitated immediately by the teacher to ensure that the appropriate moral message is captured. In addition, the activity of making a class-made picture book about the stories of the prophets that have been learned can be an effective strategy. Children are involved in drawing scenes, pasting pictures, or dictating simple sentences to the teacher. The process of creating this media itself increases children's sense of ownership of the story and its values, while also honing their creativity and cooperation. Technology and visual media are not only tools, but also bridges that strengthen children's involvement and understanding of the moral values in the stories of the prophets.

A consciously designed learning environment can be a powerful medium for instilling moral values in children. Effective pedagogical strategies also include creating a learning environment that reflects the values of the prophet's stories (environment as the third teacher). Classrooms can be designed with

learning corners inspired by the stories. For example, an "Honesty Corner" with a picture of the Prophet Muhammad Al-Amin, or a "Compassion Corner" with a picture of the baby Prophet Moses in the Nile River. This physical arrangement of the environment serves as a constant visual reminder of the values being learned. In addition, teachers can deliberately create social situations in the classroom that allow children to practice these values. For example, after learning about the generosity of the Prophet Ibrahim, the teacher can organize a cake-sharing activity where children have to share food with their friends. A social environment that supports real-life practice is key to internalization, because values only become meaningful when they are lived out in daily interactions (Lickona, 2004). A physical and social classroom environment designed based on the values of the prophets' stories can be an important catalyst in the comprehensive character development of children.

To ensure that the values of the prophet's stories are truly understood and internalized, strategies that encourage children to think reflectively are needed. Reflection and discussion strategies based on open-ended questioning should accompany all of the above activities. After storytelling, role-playing, or singing songs, teachers need to invite children to reflect on what they have learned. Children's discipline in learning and independence in understanding moral values need to be trained consistently (Maharani & Darmawan, 2024). Questions such as "Why should we imitate the Prophet Muhammad's attitude of helping others?" or "What would happen if the Prophet Yusuf lied?" encourage children to think about cause and effect and connect values with consequences. These brief and simple discussions help children articulate their understanding, clarify meanings, and begin to build their own moral reasoning frameworks. Teachers should avoid giving long moral lectures, but rather act as discussion guides who help children find their own answers and meanings from the stories they have experienced (Suyadi, 2010). Children are not only recipients of values, but also active participants in the process of contextual and meaningful moral construction.

In order for the values of the prophets' stories to be truly instilled in children, the delivery strategy must be consistent and comprehensive. The application of these strategies must be integrated and repeated (repetition with variation). A value cannot be taught through a single activity (Fitriana & Suhendro, 2022). The value of patience, for example, can be introduced through the story of Prophet

Ayyub, then repeated through songs about patience, practiced in situations such as queuing for toys, and reflected upon when there are conflicts between friends. Repetition with variation in methods prevents boredom and strengthens children's memory and understanding. The role of the teacher as a model is also the most powerful pedagogical strategy. Children will more easily internalize the value of honesty if they see their teacher always telling the truth, or the value of patience if their teacher remains calm in the face of difficulties. The teacher's example brings the abstract values of the prophet's stories to life, making them real and imitable in everyday life at the early childhood education center. With consistent application and real examples, the values of the prophet's stories will become part of the children's character, not just temporary knowledge.

The success of implementing narrative-based pedagogical strategies heavily depends on the managerial readiness of educational institutions. The managerial implications of these diverse strategies demand comprehensive institutional preparedness. Islamic early childhood education management needs to develop operational curriculum guidelines that not only list narrative themes but also recommend variations in pedagogical strategies for each theme. Teacher training should focus on mastering these techniques, supplemented with micro-teaching practices and feedback. In addition, management must provide adequate resources, both in the form of physical teaching aids, storybooks, and access to quality digital content. The schedule also needs to allow sufficient space for exploratory and project-based activities, not just rigidly structured activities. The evaluation of the success of this strategy must also be carried out through observation of children's behavioral development and portfolios of their work, rather than written tests. With visionary and responsive management, Islamic PAUD institutions can create a learning ecosystem that supports the growth of noble character through the stories of the prophets.

### **Supporting and Hindering Factors in Implementing Character Education Based on the Stories of the Prophets**

The success of character education based on the stories of the prophets is largely determined by the quality and readiness of individual teachers as the main implementers in the field. The implementation of character education based on the stories of the prophets in Islamic early childhood education faces various interrelated supporting and inhibiting

factors, starting at the individual teacher level. The main supporting factor lies in the commitment and intrinsic motivation of teachers. Many educators in Islamic early childhood education have a strong spiritual drive to convey Islamic values to the next generation (Endarwati, 2023). The belief that this activity is part of worship (dakwah) can be a source of energy that drives their creativity and perseverance in preparing and presenting the stories of the prophets in an interesting way. In addition, teachers' religious knowledge background, although varied, generally provides a basic foundation for understanding the narrative of the prophet's story before conveying it to children. Teachers who personally internalize and practice the values of the prophet's example will also be more authentic and effective in becoming role models for their students (Suyadi, 2010). This personal commitment is an invaluable asset that underpins all implementation efforts. Strengthening the capacity and spirituality of teachers is a strategic step in ensuring the sustainability and success of character education based on the stories of the prophets in Islamic early childhood education.

Behind the great potential of teachers as the main agents of character education, there are pedagogical capacity challenges that cannot be ignored. However, on the other hand, the pedagogical capacity of teachers is often a significant inhibiting factor. Many Islamic PAUD teachers, especially in rural areas, may have adequate religious understanding but have not been specifically trained in creative early childhood learning methodologies (Triani et al., 2022). Access to technology and adequate professional training can help teachers develop their pedagogical skills (Arifin & Darmawan, 2021). They may find it difficult to translate meaningful stories about the prophets into play activities that are appropriate for the children's stage of development. Limitations in interactive storytelling techniques, role-play design, or moral discussion facilitation can cause the delivery of stories to be monotonous, one-sided, and less effective in internalizing values. This challenge is exacerbated if teachers do not have access to continuous and specific professional development training on this topic, trapping them in conventional and underdeveloped teaching patterns (Mansur, 2011). Improving teachers' pedagogical capacity through contextual and continuous training is an urgent need in supporting the success of character education based on prophetic stories.

In addition to individual teacher factors, the success of implementing character education based

on the stories of the prophets is also largely determined by strong institutional support. At the institutional level, the most crucial supporting factors are clear leadership and vision from administrators or school principals. When institutional leaders' priorities character education based on the stories of the prophets as part of the core programmed rather than merely a supplement, resource allocation will follow suit. Support in the form of budget allocation for the procurement of teaching aids, picture books, or other learning media is crucial to the quality of implementation. Furthermore, institutions that have a written curriculum that systematically integrates the stories of the prophets into learning themes will provide clear guidance and direction for teachers. A good curriculum structure helps ensure the sustainability of the programmed, as these activities become a planned part of the daily learning process, rather than incidental activities that depend solely on the initiative of individual teachers (Syaikhon, 2020). With visionary leadership and a structured support system, Islamic early childhood education institutions can become a fertile ecosystem for the growth of children's character through the exemplary stories of the prophets.

Despite ideal institutional support, the reality on the ground shows that there are institutional challenges that need to be addressed strategically. A common institutional obstacle is limited financial and material resources. Many Islamic PAUDs, especially those managed by communities or foundations with limited funds, find it difficult to provide interesting and high-quality teaching materials. The cost of printing good picture books, making hand puppets of prophets, or conducting teacher training is often unaffordable. The gap in access to educational resources remains a challenge in various regions (Rojak & Khayru, 2022). These limitations force teachers to rely on whatever resources are available, which can reduce the attractiveness and effectiveness of learning. In addition, the administrative burden and demands for achieving basic academic aspects (such as literacy) that are sometimes expected by parents often limit the time and energy allocated to character education activities that are process-oriented and long-term. This creates pressure on teachers to prioritize things that can be measured instantly rather than character building, which requires consistency. Policies that support the strengthening of character education are needed, including in terms of budget allocation, simplification of administrative burdens, and education.

External factors such as family and community support play an important role in the success of character education based on the stories of the prophets. Support from the family and community environment is a very influential external supporting factor. When parents understand and support the values taught at school through the stories of the prophets, and then reinforce them through practice at home, the process of internalization in children becomes much more effective. Collaboration between teachers and parents, for example through a communication book that records the values being learned or through parent-teacher meetings that discuss character building, can create continuity between the school and home environments. Conversely, if there is a gap or even a contradiction between the values taught at school and those practiced or permitted at home, children will experience confusion. School efforts can be suboptimal or even futile if they are not supported by a coherent family environment (Lickona, 2004). Pedagogical obstacles do not have one solution that fits all students. Therefore, in choosing ways to overcome learning difficulties, teachers need to consider the characteristics and personalities of each student (Dorofeeva et al., 2020). With synergy between schools, families, and an approach that is responsive to the individual needs of children, character education through the stories of the prophets can be carried out in a holistic and sustainable manner.

Amidst the tide of globalization and technological advances, character education in Islamic early childhood education faces increasingly complex external challenges. Another external inhibiting factor comes from the massive development of the media and popular culture. Young children today are exposed to a variety of digital content through gadgets, which often contain values and examples of behavior that are different from or even contrary to the examples set by the prophets. The powerful appeal of animation or digital games can make stories about the prophets, which are conveyed in traditional ways, seem less interesting. Social stereotypes and the influence of mass media can shape children's perspectives on moral values (Sajjapong et al., 2022). Teachers and institutions are challenged to innovate in presenting the stories of the Prophet so that they can compete with modern media stimulation without losing the essence and sanctity of the message. This challenge requires adaptation and creativity that may not yet be fully mastered by most Islamic early childhood education institutions. Strengthening teachers'

digital capacity and developing contextual and engaging learning media are strategic steps to bridge prophetic values with the world of today's children.

One of the main challenges in implementing character education based on prophetic stories in Islamic early childhood education is the limited aspect of measurement and evaluation. Character education that focuses on value internalization is difficult to measure using simple quantitative tools, and many institutions still rely on subjective observations that are not systematically documented (Fajri & Zakiyah, 2022). The absence of valid and reliable instruments makes it difficult to monitor children's character development and evaluate the effectiveness of the program. As a result, institutions face challenges in conducting continuous improvements and demonstrating the impact of the program to stakeholders such as parents and donors. Therefore, developing a contextual, authentic, and practical character evaluation system is an important step to ensure the effectiveness and accountability of character education programs in Islamic early childhood education.

To understand the dynamics of implementing prophet-based character education in Islamic early childhood education, a theoretical approach can provide a comprehensive analytical framework. Kurt Lewin's Change Management Theory can be used to analyse these factors. Sustainable implementation requires a process of "unfreezing" (breaking old habits), "changing" (making changes), and "refreezing" (freezing new habits). Supporting factors such as teacher commitment, visionary leadership, and parental support play a role in facilitating the "unfreezing" process and encouraging "changing". Meanwhile, inhibiting factors such as limitations in teacher competence, resources, and evaluation systems can cause resistance to change or hinder the "refreezing" process, preventing good practices from becoming a strong organizational culture. A positive school culture and supportive environment can help children develop good character and personality (Dena & Darmawan, 2024). Successful implementation depends on the ability to strengthen supporting factors while systematically overcoming or mitigating inhibiting factors. By strategically applying Lewin's framework, Islamic early childhood education institutions can manage change in a more focused and sustainable manner.

Based on an analysis of supporting and inhibiting factors, planned managerial steps are needed to ensure the successful implementation of character education based on the stories of the prophets. The managerial implications of this

analysis require a strategic and systematic approach. First, institutional management must make teacher capacity building a key investment. This includes organizing special training that not only equips teachers with pedagogical techniques but also builds a deep understanding of children's moral development psychology. Second, there needs to be budget planning that prioritizes the development of creative teaching materials based on the stories of the prophets. Institutions can seek partnerships with communities or sponsors to support this. Third, strong partnerships with parents should be built through regular parenting programmed to ensure alignment of values between school and home. Character education in Islamic early childhood education can grow into a collective movement deeply rooted in the culture of the institution and the lives of children.

Strategic managerial steps include not only training and partnerships, but also strengthening the evaluation system and organizational culture. Fourth, and no less important, institutions need to develop a simple but meaningful monitoring and evaluation system. This system can take the form of a portfolio of child behavior observations, anecdotal teacher notes, or a periodically completed values development checklist. Data from this system should be used for regular reflection and programmed improvement. Fifth, institutional leaders need to actively create an organizational culture that values innovation in character education, appreciates teachers' achievements, and ensures that these programmed have a strong curricular and administrative foundation. By comprehensively managing supporting and inhibiting factors, the implementation of prophet-based character education can move from sporadic activities to sustainable, measurable practices that truly shape the character of the early Muslim generation. By comprehensively managing supporting and inhibiting factors, the implementation of character education based on the stories of the prophets can move from sporadic activities to sustainable, measurable practices that truly shape the morals of the early Muslim generation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review, the implementation of character education based on the stories of the prophets in Islamic early childhood education shows strong potential, although its application is relatively complex. Prophetic stories function not only as a source of authentic moral values but also as an effective narrative learning medium that aligns with

the concrete and imaginative thinking of young children. Through these stories, children can develop Islamic identity while strengthening their moral understanding. Effective implementation requires interactive, multisensory, and child-centered pedagogical strategies such as storytelling, role-playing, thematic activities, singing and movement, the use of visual media, and a reflective learning environment.

The success of this approach is influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors. Teacher commitment, institutional leadership, and parental involvement play a crucial role in ensuring sustainable implementation. However, challenges may arise from limited pedagogical competence, lack of learning resources, inconsistencies between school and home environments, and the absence of systematic evaluation mechanisms. Therefore, Islamic early childhood education institutions need to strengthen internal capacity by developing operational curricula, allocating resources for creative teaching materials, and organizing continuous professional development programs for teachers.

These findings also have broader implications for research, practice, and policy. Future studies are recommended to conduct empirical research on the effectiveness of various pedagogical strategies and to develop valid assessment instruments for measuring character development in early childhood. In practice, educators and school administrators should initiate structured curriculum planning and strengthen collaboration with parents through effective communication and parenting programs. At the policy level, government bodies and Islamic educational organizations are encouraged to provide guidelines, standardized teaching modules, and appropriate learning media based on prophetic stories to support Islamic early childhood education institutions, particularly in underserved areas.

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