

Integration of Moral Values in Scientific Learning in Early Childhood Islamic Education

Maisyarah

STAI Al Mujtama, Pamekasan, Indonesia¹²

Email correspondence: meysarah1505@stai-almujtama.ac.id

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Abstract:

Early childhood education is an important foundation in the formation of children's character and cognitive competence. The integration of moral values in scientific learning is an urgent need in the modern era which is characterized by the rapid development of science and technology but often ignores the spiritual and ethical dimensions. This article explores how early childhood Islamic education can integrate moral values into approaches to scientific learning that include observing, questioning, gathering information, reasoning, and communicating. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with literature analysis of various scientific sources related to character education, scientific learning, and Islamic values. The results of the study show that the integration of moral values in scientific learning can be carried out through holistic curriculum design, the selection of contextual learning methods, and the example of educators who practice Islamic values. Scientific learning integrated with Islamic moral values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and compassion has been proven to develop not only children's cognitive abilities but also strong moral character. The practical implications of this study provide guidance for Islamic educators and educational institutions in designing learning that balances the intellectual and spiritual development of early childhood.

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Introduction

Early childhood education has a strategic role in forming the foundation of personality, character, and basic competencies that will influence children's future development. The early age period, which includes the age range of zero to six years, is the golden age when a child's brain development reaches its peak with a very high rate of information absorption. During this time, children have an extraordinary ability to absorb the values, knowledge, and skills taught through various learning experiences (Sujiono, 2021). Therefore, the education provided in this phase must be designed holistically and integratively in order to optimize all aspects of child development, both cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

In the context of Islamic education, the formation of moral character is the main goal that cannot be separated from the learning process. Islamic moral values derived from the



Quran and Hadith are the fundamental foundation in forming a Muslim person who has noble character, piety, and high integrity. Islamic education does not only emphasize the mastery of science, but further than that is the formation of character that reflects Islamic values in every aspect of life (Tafsir, 2020). The concepts of adab, morality, and ihsan are important pillars that must be instilled from an early age so that children grow up to be individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually noble.

On the other hand, the development of modern education demands a more systematic, structured, and scientific-based approach to learning. Scientific learning adopted in the Indonesian education curriculum emphasizes the process of critical, analytical, and creative thinking through the stages of observing, questioning, gathering information, reasoning, and communicating learning results. This approach is based on the understanding that children are active learners who build their own knowledge through direct experience and exploration of the surrounding environment (Daryanto, 2019). Scientific learning provides children with the opportunity to develop curiosity, observation skills, questioning skills, and problem-solving skills which are important competencies in the 21st century.

However, the challenge that arises is how to integrate Islamic moral values into scientific learning without diminishing the essence of each component. There are concerns that learning that focuses too much on cognitive aspects and scientific skills will neglect the formation of children's moral and spiritual character. On the other hand, learning that emphasizes too much on moral aspects without the support of systematic methods can result in superficial and non-applicative understanding in real life (Marzuki, 2022). Therefore, a learning model is needed that is able to balance the development of scientific competence with the cultivation of Islamic moral values in a harmonious and integrated manner.

Various studies have shown that the integration of moral values in learning can increase the effectiveness of character education while strengthening the understanding of scientific concepts. When children learn about natural phenomena through observation and experimentation, they can also be taught to be grateful for God's creation, preserve the environment, and develop a caring attitude towards other living beings. Scientific learning associated with the values of faith and piety can form deep spiritual awareness while developing the ability to think rationally and logically (Nata, 2021). Thus, this integration not only results in children who are intellectually intelligent but also have balanced spiritual and emotional intelligence.

This article aims to explore in depth how the process of integrating Islamic moral values can be carried out in scientific learning in early childhood education. This study will analyze the theoretical foundations, principles of integration, implementation strategies, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced in integrating these two important dimensions. It is hoped that through this study, a comprehensive understanding of effective learning models in developing early childhood can be obtained that not only excels in cognitive aspects but also has a strong moral character in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings.

Theoretical Foundations of Integration of Moral Values and Scientific Learning

1. The Concept of Moral Values in Islamic Education

Moral values from an Islamic perspective are a set of principles and standards of behavior that originate from the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH which govern human relations with Allah, fellow humans, and the universe. These values include the dimensions of faith, worship, morals, and muamalah that form the character of a perfect Muslim. In the context of early childhood education, the cultivation of Islamic moral values is a top priority because this period is the most effective period to form a personality foundation that will last until adulthood (Mansur, 2020). Children at an early age have a holy nature and easily accept the values of goodness that are taught through habituation, example, and direct experience.

Fundamental moral values in Islam that need to be instilled from an early age include faith and piety to Allah SWT, honesty, trust, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, help, compassion, patience, gratitude, and tolerance. These values are not only taught as theoretical concepts but must be implemented in daily behavior through a variety of meaningful learning activities. The Prophet PBUH said that he was sent to perfect human morals, which shows that the formation of moral character is the main mission of Islamic education (Ramayulis, 2021). Therefore, every learning process in Islamic education must always be oriented towards the formation of noble morals in addition to the development of intellectual competence.

In the theory of moral development, Islamic education experts emphasize the importance of a holistic and integrative approach that does not separate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Learning moral values is not enough just with the transfer of knowledge about what is good and bad, but it must involve the process of internalizing values through emotional experiences and real practice in everyday life. Children need to be given the opportunity to feel the meaning and benefits of the moral values taught so that they have intrinsic motivation to practice them (Zainuddin, 2023). Effective learning methods in instilling moral values include habituating worship routines, the example of teachers and parents, telling exemplary stories, role-playing, and reflection on daily experiences.

2. The Essence of Scientific Learning in Early Childhood

Scientific learning is a learning approach that adopts the steps of scientific methods in the teaching and learning process with the aim of developing critical, creative, and systematic thinking skills. In the context of early childhood education, scientific learning is adapted to the characteristics of children's cognitive development that is still in the concrete pre-operational stage where they learn through sensory experiences and manipulation of real objects. The scientific approach to early childhood education is not intended to teach complex science concepts, but to develop scientific attitudes such as curiosity, observation skills, questioning skills, and the courage to try new things (Kurniasih, 2019). Children are encouraged to become small researchers who actively explore their environment and discover knowledge through hands-on experience.

The stages of scientific learning adapted for early childhood include five main steps, namely observing, questioning, gathering information, reasoning, and communicating. In the observation stage, children are invited to use all their senses in exploring objects, phenomena, or events around them. The questioning stage develops the child's ability to ask questions based on their curiosity about what has been observed. The information gathering stage involves children in various activities such as simple experiments, trying, and exploring to obtain the data or information needed. The reasoning stage invites children to process the information that has been collected through simple thinking processes such as grouping, comparing, or drawing simple conclusions. Finally, the communication stage provides opportunities for children to convey their learning results through various ways such as storytelling, drawing, or role-playing (Hosnan, 2020).

The excellence of scientific learning lies in its child-centered approach and providing an active, meaningful, and contextual learning experience. Children not only passively receive information from teachers but are directly involved in the process of knowledge construction through concrete experiences. Scientific learning also encourages the development of 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication which are very important for children's success in the future (Mulyasa, 2021). In addition, scientific learning creates a fun and challenging learning experience for children so that it can increase learning motivation and build a positive attitude towards science from an early age.

3. Integration Theory in Islamic Education

The concept of integration in Islamic education is based on the view of monotheism which unites the worldly and ukhrawi dimensions, between general science and religious science, and between reason and revelation in a harmonious unity. Integration is not just a merger or mixing of two different things, but a union that creates a synergy where each component strengthens and enriches each other. In the context of early childhood education, the integration of Islamic moral values with scientific learning means creating a learning experience where the development of cognitive abilities is always associated with the formation of moral character and spiritual awareness (Langgulung, 2022). Every scientific learning activity becomes a means to instill Islamic values and conversely, the understanding of moral values is strengthened through systematic empirical experience.

The philosophical foundation of integration in Islam can be found in the concept of science from an Islamic perspective that does not recognize the dichotomy between religious science and general science. All knowledge is essentially sourced from Allah SWT and aims to know His greatness and power. The Qur'an itself contains many verses that invite humans to observe, meditate, and study natural phenomena as signs of Allah's power. The process of observation, exploration, and experimentation in scientific learning is in line with the spirit of the Qur'an which encourages humans to use reason in understanding Allah's creation (Ahmad, 2019). Thus, scientific learning integrated with Islamic values can be a medium to get closer to Allah through a deeper understanding of the majesty of His creation.

The principles of integration in Islamic education include the unity of knowledge sources, the unity of educational objectives, the unity of learning methods, and the unity of

evaluation. The unity of the source of knowledge means acknowledging that the Qur'an and Hadith are the primary sources that give value and meaning to all empirical knowledge gained through experience and experimentation. The unity of educational objectives emphasizes that all learning activities must be directed at the formation of kamil people who have a balance between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence. The unity of learning methods integrates various modern pedagogical approaches with the values of Islamic wisdom in the teaching and learning process. The evaluation unit emphasizes that the assessment of learning outcomes not only measures the cognitive aspects but also the moral and spiritual development of children (Muhaimin, 2020). The implementation of these principles in early childhood education requires a high level of creativity and commitment from educators to design truly holistic and meaningful learning.

Implementation Strategy for the Integration of Moral Values in Scientific Learning

1. Integrative Curriculum Design

The design of an integrative curriculum for early childhood Islamic education requires careful and comprehensive planning that accommodates both aspects of cognitive development through scientific learning and character formation through the cultivation of Islamic moral values. An effective curriculum must begin with the identification of Islamic moral values that are priorities to be instilled in early childhood, then link them to basic competencies and scientific learning indicators that are appropriate to the child's developmental stage. For example, the value of honesty can be integrated into scientific learning about measurement where children are invited to report their observations honestly without altering or manipulating the data. The value of gratitude can be associated with learning about living beings where children are invited to be grateful for Allah's blessings by caring for and caring for plants or pets (Fadlillah, 2021).

The development of integrative learning themes is the key to the successful implementation of the curriculum. These themes are chosen based on the context of children's daily lives that are close to their experiences so that learning becomes more meaningful and easy to understand. For example, the theme of water can integrate scientific learning about the properties of water, the water cycle, and the function of water for life with moral values such as gratitude for the blessings of water that Allah gives, the importance of being frugal and not wasteful in using water, and concern for others who have difficulty getting clean water. The theme of plants can teach the plant growth process through observation and experimentation while instilling the value of patience, responsibility in care, and appreciation for the natural processes of God's creation (Suyadi, 2022).

The structure of the integrative curriculum must also consider a balance between structured and unstructured activities, between indoor and outdoor learning, and between individual and group activities. Effective scientific learning in early childhood requires many opportunities for free exploration and play-while learning that provides space for children to develop their own creativity and initiative. However, structured activities are still needed to ensure that the moral values that are to be instilled can be understood and internalized properly by children. Curriculum evaluation needs to be carried out periodically to ensure

that the integration carried out is truly effective in achieving learning goals both from cognitive and moral aspects (Isjoni, 2020).

2. Integrative Learning Methods and Techniques

The implementation of the integration of moral values in scientific learning requires the selection of appropriate learning methods and techniques and in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development. Learning methods that can be used include play, storytelling, singing, tourist works, demonstrations, simple experiments, and projects. Each of these methods can be modified and enriched with the content of Islamic moral values so that the learning process not only develops the cognitive aspect but also shapes the child's character. Playing methods, for example, can be designed with games that not only train observation and exploration skills but also teach values such as honesty in the game, sportsmanship, cooperation, and mutual respect for fellow players (Moeslichatoen, 2019).

Project-based learning techniques are one of the most effective approaches in integrating scientific learning with moral values. Through the project, children engage in a complex and meaningful set of activities that involve the process of observing, questioning, gathering information, reasoning, and communicating the results of their work. For example, a project on composting from organic waste not only teaches children about the decomposition process and its benefits for the environment, but also instills the value of responsibility for environmental cleanliness, teamwork, patience in waiting for the process, and gratitude for God's sustenance. Organic gardening projects can teach children about the life cycle of plants while instilling the values of patience, perseverance, responsibility, and trust in God who provides growth (Wiyani, 2023).

Storytelling techniques using Islamic stories associated with scientific phenomena are also a powerful method in instilling moral values. The story of Prophet Noah AS can be attributed to learning about water, rain, and the importance of protecting the environment. The story of the Prophet Solomon AS who can communicate with animals can be an introduction to learning about different types of animals and the importance of loving all of God's creatures. Stories about ants storing food for the winter can teach children about animal behavior while instilling the value of hard work and good planning. The use of visual media such as pictures, videos, or hand puppets can make the story more interesting and make it easier for children to understand the concepts being taught (Sadiman, 2021).

3. The Role of Educators in Learning Integration

Educators have a central and crucial role in the successful integration of Islamic moral values with scientific learning. The first and most fundamental role is as a role model who practices Islamic moral values in every attitude and daily behavior. Early childhood learns a lot through observation and imitation of the adults around them, especially teachers who are important figures in the school environment. When teachers demonstrate honesty, responsibility, patience, compassion, and other moral values in their interactions with children and co-workers, children will naturally imitate those behaviors. This example is much more effective in instilling moral values than just verbal teaching (Majid, 2020).

The second role is as a learning facilitator who creates a learning environment conducive to scientific exploration and internalization of moral values. Teachers must be able to provide adequate learning materials and tools, design interesting and challenging activities, and provide appropriate scaffolding or support according to the individual needs of the child. In scientific learning, teachers do not give direct answers but guide children to find answers themselves through the process of inquiry and discovery. Teachers ask open-ended questions that spark children's curiosity, encourage them to observe more closely, try different possibilities, and draw conclusions based on their experiences. In the process, teachers also need to insert reflective questions that encourage children to relate their learning experiences to moral values (Sujiono, 2019).

The third role is as an evaluator who not only assesses the child's cognitive achievement but also their moral and spiritual development. Evaluation in integrative learning should be holistic and comprehensive that covers various aspects of child development. Teachers need to use a variety of authentic assessment techniques such as observation, anecdotal notes, portfolios, and documentation to gather information about the child's development as a whole. In the context of scientific learning, teachers assess children's abilities in observing, asking questions, gathering information, reasoning, and communicating. At the same time, teachers also observe whether children show expected moral behaviors such as honesty in reporting observation results, responsibility in carrying out tasks, cooperation with friends, and gratitude for the learning obtained (Arifin, 2022).

Practical Implementation in Islamic PAUD Institutions

The implementation of the integration of moral values in scientific learning in Islamic PAUD institutions requires careful planning and strong commitment from all education stakeholders. The first step that needs to be taken is to conduct an analysis of the needs and context of the institution to identify existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. Each PAUD institution has unique characteristics in terms of resources, organizational culture, and environmental conditions that need to be considered in designing an integration program. This analysis also includes the identification of priority moral values that are to be instilled based on the vision and mission of the institution and the needs of child development (Mulyasa, 2019).

A concrete example of implementation can be seen in learning about the properties of objects. In this activity, children are invited to observe various types of objects with different characteristics such as hard and soft objects, rough and fine objects, heavy and light objects. Through direct exploration by touching, lifting, and manipulating such objects, children develop a conceptual understanding of the physical properties of objects. The moral values that are integrated in this activity include patience in observing carefully, honesty in reporting the results of observations, responsibility in using and returning tools to their place, and gratitude for the diversity of God's creations that provide benefits to human life. Teachers can relate this learning to the verses of the Quran which state that Allah created everything with the right size and nature according to its function (Hasanah, 2021).

Another example is learning about plant growth which is very popular in early childhood education. Children are invited to plant mung bean seeds or other simple plants, then observe their growth process every day for several weeks. They recorded the changes that occurred, measured the height of the plant, drew the development of the plant, and discussed what they observed. Through this activity, children learn about the life cycle of plants, the basic needs of living things such as water, sunlight, and air, as well as the process of photosynthesis in simple language according to children's understanding. The moral values that are instilled are patience in waiting for the growth process that takes time, responsibility in caring for plants by watering regularly, concern for living beings, and the miracle of God's creation that makes small seeds grow into beneficial plants. Children are also taught not to damage other people's crops and share their crops with friends as a form of help-help value (Ariyanti, 2020).

Learning about weather phenomena also offers great opportunities for the integration of moral values. Children are invited to observe the changes in the weather each day, noting whether it is sunny, cloudy, rainy, or windy. They learn about different types of weather, how the weather affects daily activities, and how to maintain health in a variety of weather conditions. Simple experiments like making artificial rain or observing the formation of clouds in bottles can make learning more engaging. Integrated moral values include gratitude for the blessings of rain that God gives to nourish crops and provide water, concern for others affected by floods or droughts, and an understanding that God is in power to regulate the changes of day and night and the change of weather. Children are also taught to pray when it rains and the importance of asking Allah for protection from danger (Rahman, 2023).

Challenges and Solutions in Integration Implementation

The implementation of the integration of moral values in scientific learning faces various challenges that need to be identified and overcome systematically. The first challenge is the limited competence of educators in designing and implementing integrative learning. Many PAUD teachers have diverse educational backgrounds and not all have an adequate understanding of scientific learning and effective methods of instilling moral values for early childhood. Some teachers still tend to use conventional learning approaches that are teacher-centered and emphasize more on knowledge transfer than the development of thinking skills and character. To overcome these challenges, an ongoing training and mentoring program is needed for early childhood educators that includes a theoretical understanding of integrative learning, skills in designing engaging learning activities, and the ability to evaluate child development holistically (Masitoh, 2021).

The second challenge is the limitation of learning resources and facilities. Scientific learning requires a variety of tools and materials that allow children to make observations, explorations, and experiments. Not all PAUD institutions have adequate budgets to provide children's science laboratory facilities, a well-equipped library, or a large outdoor area for outdoor learning. However, this limitation can actually be overcome with creativity and innovation in utilizing materials in the surrounding environment. Many simple science

activities can be done using cheap and easily available materials such as water, soil, sand, leaves, stones, and recyclable used materials. What is more important is how teachers are able to design meaningful and challenging activities by making optimal use of available resources (Nugraha, 2022).

The third challenge is the difficulty in measuring and evaluating children's moral development objectively. In contrast to the cognitive aspect which can be measured through tests or observations of specific abilities, moral development is more internal and takes a long time to be observed in real life in daily behavior. Children may be able to answer questions about moral values correctly but not necessarily practice them in real life. To overcome these challenges, moral development evaluations need to be conducted authentically through continuous observation of children's behavior in various situations, portfolio documentation that shows character development over time, and collaboration with parents to observe children's behavior at home. Evaluations must also be formative in nature that provide feedback for learning improvement, not just to give grades or labels to children (Hurlock, 2020).

The fourth challenge is to build consistency between learning at school and education at home. Moral values will not be firmly embedded if they are only taught in school while at home children do not get the same example and habituation. A close partnership between teachers and parents is needed in educating children holistically. Schools need to organize parenting education programs regularly to provide parents with an understanding of the importance of integrating moral values in children's education, as well as provide practical guidance on how to continue learning at home. Intensive communication through liaison books, regular meetings, or digital platforms is also important to ensure continuity of education between school and home (Suwaid, 2019).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The integration of Islamic moral values in scientific learning in early childhood education is a very important necessity to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has a strong moral character. This study has shown that scientific learning with the stages of observing, questioning, gathering information, reasoning, and communicating can be an effective medium to instill Islamic moral values such as honesty, responsibility, patience, gratitude, and concern for fellow creatures created by Allah. This integration is not only theoretically possible but has also been proven to be implemented in various Islamic PAUD learning contexts with positive results in developing children's cognitive competence and moral character in a balanced manner.

The success of integration is highly dependent on several key factors, namely holistic and contextual curriculum design, selection of learning methods that are appropriate to early childhood characteristics, competence and exemplary educators, availability of adequate learning resources, and strong partnerships between schools and families. Challenges faced in implementation such as limited educator competencies, limited facilities, evaluation difficulties, and inconsistencies in homeschooling can be overcome through ongoing training

programs, creativity in the use of resources, the use of authentic evaluation methods, and the strengthening of partnership programs with parents.

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be proposed to improve the quality of the implementation of the integration of moral values in scientific learning. First, Islamic educational institutions need to develop a curriculum that explicitly integrates moral values in every theme and scientific learning activity with clear and operational guidance. Second, there is a need for a comprehensive and sustainable professional development program for early childhood education teachers that not only improves knowledge but also practical skills and moral commitment of teachers as educators. Third, the government and education stakeholders need to provide greater support in providing adequate learning facilities and resources for Islamic PAUD institutions. Fourth, it is necessary to develop a valid and reliable evaluation instrument to measure early childhood moral development objectively and comprehensively. Fifth, Islamic PAUD institutions need to strengthen partnership programs with parents through various parenting education and intensive communication activities. Finally, further research is needed to develop and test the effectiveness of various models of moral value integration in scientific learning in more specific and diverse contexts.

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