



Digital Learning Media in Early Childhood Islamic Education: A State Kindergarten Case

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ABSTRACT

Digital media have become a routine part of teaching Islamic values in early childhood settings, yet little research examines what actually produces the observed changes in children's behavior. This study investigates the implementation of digital learning media in early childhood Islamic education at TK Negeri Pembina Kute Panang, how such media support value internalization, and what constrains their use. A qualitative case study design was employed over six weeks, involving four teachers, the principal, fifteen children aged five to six, and two parents, with data collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The findings show that behavioral change did not arise from the viewing itself but from post-viewing activities that required children to produce something, such as role-play, drawing, or card-making. Children imitated actions they had enacted rather than actions they had merely watched. The study further found that resource scarcity pushed teachers toward more post-viewing activity, so that the shortage of technology functioned as a productive constraint. The most consequential difficulty was the scarcity of culturally relevant content, which teachers addressed through re-voicing and the insertion of local examples.

Keywords: Digital Learning Media, Early Childhood Education, Islamic Religious Education, Value Internalization, Post-Viewing Activity

ABSTRAK

Media digital telah menjadi bagian rutin pembelajaran nilai-nilai Islam di lembaga pendidikan anak usia dini, namun sedikit penelitian yang menelaah apa sebenarnya yang menghasilkan perubahan perilaku anak. Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan media pembelajaran digital dalam pendidikan Islam anak usia dini di TK Negeri Pembina Kute Panang, cara media tersebut menopang penanaman nilai, serta kendala penerapannya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus selama enam minggu, melibatkan empat guru, kepala sekolah, lima belas anak usia lima sampai enam tahun, dan dua orang tua, dengan teknik observasi, wawancara, dan telaah dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perubahan perilaku tidak muncul dari tayangan itu sendiri melainkan dari kegiatan pascatayang yang mengharuskan anak menghasilkan sesuatu, seperti bermain peran, menggambar, atau membuat kartu. Anak menirukan tindakan yang telah mereka perankan, bukan yang sekadar mereka tonton. Ditemukan pula bahwa keterbatasan sarana justru mendorong guru memperbanyak kegiatan pascatayang, sehingga kekurangan teknologi berfungsi sebagai penekan yang produktif. Kendala yang paling menentukan adalah kelangkaan konten yang relevan secara budaya, yang direspons guru melalui penyuaian ulang dan penyisipan contoh lokal.

Kata Kunci: Media Pembelajaran Digital, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Penanaman Nilai, Kegiatan Pascatayang

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I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education for children aged five and six aims at something that cannot be examined: the formation of disposition. At this stage instruction concerns manners, elementary worship, and moral conduct, and its success is judged not by what children can say but by how they behave when no one is directing them. This makes the choice of instructional means unusually consequential, because a method that reliably produces recitation may produce nothing else.

Digital media have become the dominant answer in Indonesian early childhood settings (Ramadani et al., 2025; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Animated Islamic stories, educational applications, projected slides with recorded recitation, and interactive games are now routine in kindergartens, and Indonesian research has documented their effect on children's attention, engagement, and comprehension of religious material (Nurhayati et al., 2024; Lubis & Siregar, 2024). Studies of digital storytelling in particular report strengthened moral learning (Naimah, 2025; Nurhayati, 2025), and reviews of the sector consistently identify teacher digital competence and infrastructure as the conditions on which success depends (Padmawati & Pihung, 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2024).

The literature has, however, tended to attribute observed effects to the medium and to treat what surrounds it as context. A typical study reports that children who learned with animated stories showed improved moral understanding, identifies teacher competence as a moderating factor, and recommends training and equipment (Mayasari, 2025; Renawati, 2025). The inference that the animation produced the effect is rarely tested against the alternative that something the teacher did afterwards produced it, and the two are not easily separated in practice because animation and follow-up activity almost always occur together. The distinction nonetheless matters a great deal for practice, since one implies investment in content and devices and the other implies investment in the design of what follows them.

A second gap concerns resource conditions. Studies routinely report infrastructure limitation as a barrier and recommend its removal (Ramadani et al., 2025; Utami et al., 2024). This framing assumes that the relationship between resources and outcomes is monotonic, so that more equipment produces better learning. Whether that assumption holds in early childhood settings has not been examined, and there are grounds for doubting it: a classroom with a single projector must ration screen time, and rationing may force pedagogical choices that abundance would not.

Research addressing these questions in public kindergartens outside major cities is scarce (Ramadani et al., 2025). Such institutions serve the majority of Indonesian children yet operate with resource conditions unlike those of the well-provisioned private settings where much of the research is conducted, and their experience is therefore poorly represented in the evidence base that informs national guidance.

TK Negeri Pembina Kute Panang is a state kindergarten in Central Aceh that has integrated interactive Islamic videos, animated storytelling, and mobile learning applications into its Islamic studies programme while operating with a single projector and limited connectivity. Its combination of established digital practice and constrained resources makes it suitable for examining both questions.

Three questions guide the study. What forms of digital media are used in teaching Islamic values at the school? Through what process do these media support value internalisation? And what constrains and enables their effective use?

Two frameworks inform the analysis. The constructivist account holds that children build understanding by acting on new information in the light of what they already know, rather than by receiving it, which implies that the pedagogically significant moment is the one in which the child does something with the material (Aini et al., 2024; Mayer, 2021). The sociocultural account holds that learning is mediated by tools and by more capable others, so that a video is not a source of meaning in itself but an instrument whose meaning is established through the interaction surrounding it (Kurniati et al., 2024; Toran et al., 2024). Both frameworks locate the mechanism of learning outside the medium, and both therefore predict

that variation in what follows a video will matter more than variation in the video. The study takes this prediction as its analytical starting point.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative case study design. The qualitative orientation follows from research questions concerned with process and meaning rather than with measured effect, and the case study design permits holistic examination of teachers' pedagogical strategies, children's responses, and the integration of Islamic values within a single bounded setting.

The research was conducted at TK Negeri Pembina Kute Panang, a state kindergarten in Central Aceh, Indonesia. The site was selected purposively as a public early childhood institution that has integrated digital media into its Islamic studies curriculum while operating under resource conditions typical of the sector outside major urban centers.

Participants comprised four teachers responsible for Islamic content, the principal overseeing curriculum and technology, fifteen children aged between five and six, and two parents who took part in informal discussion of their children's learning at home. Selection was purposive, ensuring that all participants were directly involved in or affected by the digital learning process.

Data were collected over six weeks using three techniques. Non-participant observation of Islamic learning sessions employing digital tools served as the primary technique, with sessions lasting thirty to forty-five minutes. Field notes recorded the media used, the teacher's facilitation, children's engagement, and the integration of moral values such as honesty, respect, and discipline; particular attention was paid to the sequence of activity before, during, and after viewing. Photographs were taken with prior permission from the school administration. Semi-structured interviews of thirty to sixty minutes were conducted with teachers, on the perceived benefits of digital media, difficulties, and strategies for aligning content with Islamic teaching; with the principal, on institutional readiness, support, and policy; and with parents, on behavioral changes observed at home. Interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and validated through member checking. Document analysis covered lesson plans, teaching materials, curriculum guides, and the digital media files themselves, establishing how lessons were designed and how they aligned with national early childhood standards and Islamic values.

Data were analyzed thematically through familiarization, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review and refinement, definition and naming, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Initial codes including teacher adaptation, child engagement, and technological constraint were generated and organized into broader themes concerning pedagogical transformation, digital moral learning, and challenges in integration. Themes were reviewed across data sources to ensure internal consistency.

Trustworthiness was addressed through triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking for credibility; thick description of setting, participants, and learning contexts for transferability; an audit trail comprising field notes, observation protocols, and coding decisions for dependability; and reflective journaling for confirmability. Ethical procedures included permission from the school administration, informed consent from adult participants, parental consent for children's involvement, pseudonymization, secure data storage, and the restriction of photographic material to research documentation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What the Children Imitated

Observation confirmed that teachers used digital media purposefully and systematically. Animated Islamic stories, presentation slides with recorded recitation, and interactive educational applications were integrated into daily Islamic learning sessions addressing noble character, worship practices, and everyday moral conduct, and lesson plans specified objectives, the media to be used, and the moral indicators targeted. Children's engagement during viewing was consistently high; they were more attentive with

digital media than with conventional storytelling, answered questions, repeated Islamic phrases, and responded emotionally to the narratives, a pattern consistent with earlier reports on digital religious media in kindergartens (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yumarnis et al., 2026).

The analytically significant observation, however, concerns which of the depicted behaviours subsequently appeared in the children's own conduct, because it was not all of them. Following a story about honesty in which a character returns a lost item, teachers asked what the children themselves would do if they found a friend's lost toy, and children then enacted the situation. In the days that followed, returning found objects appeared in their behaviour. Following a story about generosity, children made cards for their classmates, and expressions of gratitude and sharing followed. Following a session in which a video was shown and discussed but not enacted, the observation record shows engagement during viewing and little subsequent behavioural trace.

The pattern that emerges is that children imitated what they had performed rather than what they had watched. Viewing produced attention and emotional response; enactment produced conduct. This distinction is easily obscured because viewing and enactment ordinarily occur in the same lesson, and the whole sequence is then described as digital learning and its effects attributed to the video.

The finding is what the constructivist and sociocultural frameworks jointly predict, but it is worth stating in a stronger form than those frameworks usually receive in this literature. It is not that follow-up activity enhances the effect of the video; it is that in these data the follow-up activity carries the effect, and the video's contribution is to supply a situation vivid and shared enough for the whole class to act upon. This is a real contribution and not a trivial one, since a five-year-old cannot readily be asked to imagine a moral dilemma unaided. But it locates the video as the occasion for learning rather than as its vehicle.

The most substantial evidence for this reading comes from transfer to the home. Parents reported children practicing at home what they had learned at school, one noting that her child reminds the family to say the invocation before eating and attributes it to a video seen at school, a form of school-to-home transfer also documented where parents accompany children's digital religious learning (Damanik et al., 2023; Dasopang et al., 2022; Riskia et al., 2025). The practices reported were, in each case, ones the children had performed at school rather than merely seen, and their reproduction at home is what one would expect of an enacted routine rather than of a remembered depiction.

Scarcity as a Productive Constraint

The second finding concerns the relationship between resources and pedagogy, and it runs counter to the assumption that governs most recommendations in this field. The school possesses a single projector and limited internet access, requiring teachers to prepare content at home in advance and to schedule its use carefully. This is uniformly described in the literature, and by the teachers themselves, as a limitation.

Its pedagogical effect, however, was not uniformly limiting. Because screen time had to be rationed, viewing sessions were short and the remainder of the lesson had to be filled with something else. What filled it was the enactment, drawing, and card-making that the first finding identifies as carrying the behavioral effect. In sessions where the projector was unavailable, teachers substituted direct storytelling followed by the same activities (Naimah, 2025), and the observation record shows behavioral outcomes broadly comparable to sessions in which video was used. The scarcity that constrained the medium expanded the activity that mattered.

This does not amount to an argument for withholding resources, and the point should not be overstated. Where the projector failed unexpectedly, lessons were disrupted and teachers had to improvise, which is a genuine cost. The claim is narrower: the relationship between digital provision and learning outcomes in early childhood settings is not monotonic, and a well-equipped classroom in which video occupies most of the session may achieve less than a poorly equipped one in which it occupies little.

Recommendations that treat equipment provision as an unqualified good rest on an assumption these data do not support.

The implication for policy is that provision should be accompanied by guidance on proportion. If additional devices lead teachers to extend viewing at the expense of enactment, provision will have displaced the element that produces the outcome. Guidance specifying a maximum share of the session for screen time would protect against this, and costs nothing.

Teachers as Adapters, and the Content Problem

The third finding concerns what teachers did with material they had not made. Three practices recurred across observations. Teachers contextualized digital material by linking it to children's own experience, asking after a video on honesty what a child would do on finding a lost toy. They converted viewing into activity by pausing for discussion, initiating role-play, and following stories with crafts or songs. And they modelled the conduct in question themselves, opening sessions with greeting, reciting short prayers before using devices, and responding patiently when equipment failed.

Teacher confidence developed over time and through collaboration. One teacher described initial nervousness about operating the projector and selecting appropriate videos, and attributed her growing confidence to training and to working alongside colleagues. The school supported this through peer mentoring and in-service workshops on digital skills and ethical media selection (Renawati, 2025; Mayasari, 2025), a response that addressed the disparity between younger teachers who adapted quickly and older colleagues who found the technical demands harder.

The most consequential difficulty, however, was not technical. Teachers reported that many available Islamic learning videos are produced abroad and depict settings, dress, and domestic arrangements unfamiliar to children in Central Aceh, a mismatch also noted in studies of locally grounded early childhood media (Ramadani et al., 2025; Yumarnis et al., 2026). Their response was adaptation: re-voicing material into Indonesian and inserting local examples during discussion so that the moral point could be relocated into a recognizable world. This is skilled work, and it is invisible in any account that treats the video as the intervention.

The content problem is also the one least amenable to school-level remedy. A kindergarten can train its teachers and can acquire a second projector; it cannot produce a corpus of culturally appropriate Islamic media for young children. That task belongs to publishers, education authorities, and Islamic educational institutions working together (Rahmawati et al., 2024; Utami et al., 2024), and until it is addressed teachers will continue to spend preparation time compensating for content that does not fit.

Two qualifications apply to the analysis. The distinction between viewing and enactment is drawn from observed sequences rather than from a design that varied them systematically, and other differences between sessions may have contributed to the behavioral patterns recorded. And behavioral change was observed over six weeks in a single setting, which is sufficient to register a shift but not to establish that it endures.

Read together, the findings describe a practice whose success rests on elements that its own conventional description leaves out. The digital media supply a shared, vivid situation that young children could not otherwise be asked to consider. The enactment that follows converts that situation into conduct. The scarcity of equipment, ordinarily counted as a deficiency, protects the proportion between the two. And the teacher's adaptation of foreign content to a local world is what makes the situation recognizable enough to be acted upon at all. Digital media in early childhood Islamic education are best understood not as a delivery mechanism for values but as a device for creating occasions, whose value depends entirely on what is done with the occasion once it exists.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of digital learning media in early childhood Islamic education at TK Negeri Pembina Kute Panang and reached three conclusions. First, the behavioral changes observed followed enactment rather than viewing: children reproduced conduct they had performed in role-play, drawing, or craft activity, while material that was viewed and discussed but not enacted left little behavioral trace. The video's contribution is to supply a shared situation vivid enough for young children to act upon, which is a genuine but different function from that of delivering values. Second, resource scarcity operated in part as a productive constraint, since rationing screen time obliged teachers to fill the remainder of the session with the enactment that carries the effect. Third, the most consequential difficulty was the scarcity of culturally relevant content, which teachers addressed through re-voicing and the insertion of local examples, at considerable cost in preparation time.

The study's contribution is to relocate the mechanism of value internalization from the medium to the activity that follows it, and to qualify the assumption that additional digital provision necessarily improves early childhood learning.

Three implications follow. Guidance for early childhood settings should specify a proportion of the session beyond which screen time should not extend, protecting the enactment phase against displacement as provision improves. Professional development should treat the design of post-viewing activity as its principal content rather than as an adjunct to training in device operation. And the production of culturally appropriate Islamic media for Indonesian children is a task for publishers and education authorities rather than for individual teachers, whose adaptation work currently substitutes for it.

The limitations of the study should be stated. It examined a single institution over six weeks, and the distinction between viewing and enactment was drawn from naturally occurring variation rather than from systematic manipulation. The observer's presence may have influenced classroom conduct. Future work should compare sessions that vary the follow-up activity while holding the media constant, and should follow children over a longer interval to establish whether enacted routines persist.

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