



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Development of Illustrated Storybook Media to Promote Religious Values in Early Childhood Education: A Study among Children Aged 4–5 Years



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## ABSTRACT

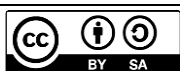
**Introduction:** Early childhood is a crucial stage for the formation of religious and moral values; however, the limited availability of engaging and developmentally appropriate learning media often constrains the effectiveness of value internalization. Illustrated storybooks are considered a promising medium as they combine visual and narrative elements that can attract children’s attention and facilitate meaningful learning experiences.

**Objectives:** This study aims to develop illustrated storybook media and to evaluate its validity, practicality, and effectiveness in promoting religious values among children aged 4–5 years.

**Methods:** This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design using the 4-D model, which includes define, design, develop, and disseminate stages. Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The developed media were validated by experts in material, language, and design. Furthermore, small-scale and large-scale trials were conducted to assess the practicality and effectiveness of the media based on children’s responses and learning outcomes.

**Results:** The findings indicate that the illustrated storybook media achieved a high level of validity, with material expert validation reaching 91.42% (very valid), language validation 87.5% (valid), and design validation 83.3% (valid). In terms of effectiveness, the media demonstrated strong performance, with trial results showing 90% effectiveness and children’s responses exceeding 85%, categorized as very effective. These results suggest that the developed media is valid, practical, and effective in facilitating the internalization of religious values.

**Conclusions:** Illustrated storybook media is an effective and innovative learning tool for promoting religious values in early childhood education. The integration of visually engaging and narrative-based learning resources can enhance children’s engagement and support the development of moral and religious understanding.



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## A. Introduction

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping children's holistic development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and moral dimensions. Among these domains, the development of religious and moral values is fundamental, as it forms the basis of children's character and behavior in later life. Early exposure to religious values enables children to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior and supports the development of positive attitudes and ethical awareness. However, in many early childhood education settings, the process of instilling religious values remains less effective due to the limited use of engaging and developmentally appropriate learning media.

From a developmental perspective, children aged 4–5 years are in a critical period often referred to as the “golden age,” during which stimulation plays a significant role in optimizing their potential (Suyadi & Ulfa, 2013). At this stage, children tend to learn more effectively through concrete, visual, and interactive experiences rather than abstract instruction (Baharuddin & Wahyuni, 2015). Therefore, the use of appropriate learning media becomes essential in facilitating meaningful learning experiences. Research has shown that the integration of suitable instructional media can significantly enhance children's engagement, comprehension, and learning outcomes (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015; OECD, 2017).

One of the most effective approaches in early childhood learning is the use of story-based methods, particularly through illustrated storybooks. Storytelling is widely recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool that allows children to internalize values through narratives and characters (Pyle et al., 2017). Illustrated storybooks, in particular, provide both visual and textual stimuli that support children's imagination, language development, and moral understanding (Whitebread et al., 2017). The presence of images in storybooks helps children to interpret stories more easily and enhances their ability to connect with the content, making the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful.

Recent studies highlight the importance of integrating visual and narrative elements in early childhood education. Learning through stories and images has been found to improve children's comprehension and engagement while also supporting the development of moral reasoning and emotional understanding (Zosh et al., 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2016). Furthermore, the use of illustrated learning media has been shown to stimulate children's interest and motivation, which are key factors in effective learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). These findings indicate that illustrated storybooks can serve as an effective medium for promoting value-based education in early childhood.

Despite these advantages, the availability of well-designed illustrated storybook media specifically aimed at promoting religious values remains limited. In many educational settings, teachers still rely on conventional teaching methods that are less interactive and less engaging for children. In addition, existing studies often focus on general literacy development rather than specifically addressing the role of illustrated storybooks in facilitating the internalization of religious values. This indicates a gap in the literature regarding the development and evaluation of innovative learning media that integrate storytelling and value-based education.

Moreover, the effectiveness of learning media is not only determined by its content but also by its design, validity, and practicality. Learning media must be systematically developed and evaluated to ensure that it meets educational standards and is suitable for children's developmental characteristics. Research and Development (R&D) approaches provide a structured framework for designing and validating educational products, ensuring their effectiveness in real learning contexts (Borg & Gall, 2003).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to develop illustrated storybook media and to evaluate its validity, practicality, and effectiveness in promoting religious values among children

aged 4–5 years. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of innovative learning media and provide empirical evidence to support the integration of story-based approaches in early childhood education.

## B. Methods

This study employed a classroom action research design to examine the effectiveness of creative dance activities in enhancing kinesthetic intelligence among early childhood learners. Classroom action research was selected as it allows a cyclical and reflective process consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, enabling continuous improvement of teaching strategies and learning outcomes.

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design to develop and evaluate illustrated storybook media aimed at promoting religious values in early childhood education. The R&D approach was selected to systematically design, validate, and test the feasibility of the developed learning media before its implementation in real learning contexts.

The development process followed the 4-D model, which consists of four main stages: define, design, develop, and disseminate. In the define stage, a needs analysis was conducted to identify problems related to the lack of appropriate learning media for instilling religious values in early childhood. This stage also involved analyzing learners' characteristics and learning objectives. In the design stage, the initial prototype of the illustrated storybook was developed, including storyline construction, visual illustration design, and alignment with religious value indicators appropriate for children aged 4–5 years.

In the develop stage, the prototype was validated by experts in three domains: material, language, and design. Expert validation aimed to assess the quality, relevance, and appropriateness of the media. Revisions were made based on expert feedback to improve the quality of the product. Subsequently, the revised media were tested through small-scale and large-scale trials involving early childhood learners to evaluate practicality and effectiveness. The disseminate stage focused on finalizing the product for broader implementation after confirming its feasibility.

The participants of this study were early childhood learners aged 4–5 years who were involved in both small-scale and large-scale trials. The selection of participants was based on their relevance to the target users of the developed media. All participants were actively engaged in the learning activities using the illustrated storybook.

Data were collected using multiple techniques, including observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Observation was conducted to assess children's responses and engagement during the learning process. Interviews were used to gather qualitative insights from participants, while questionnaires were administered to experts and learners to evaluate the validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the media. Documentation supported the data collection process by providing additional evidence related to the implementation of the learning activities.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive analysis combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data from validation and trial results were analyzed using percentage-based criteria to determine the level of validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the developed media. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed to provide deeper insights into children's responses and learning experiences.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study by ensuring that all activities were conducted in a safe and child-friendly environment. Participation was voluntary, and the learning process was designed to prioritize children's well-being and developmental needs.

### C. Results

The results of this study are presented based on the stages of the Research and Development (R&D) process, which include expert validation and product trials to evaluate the validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the developed illustrated storybook media.

In the development stage, the initial product was evaluated by experts in three domains: material, language, and design. The purpose of expert validation was to assess the feasibility and quality of the media before implementation. The results of expert validation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Expert Validation

Aspect Evaluated	Percentage (%)	Category
Material	91.42%	Very Valid
Language	87.5%	Valid
Design	83.3%	Valid

Table 1 shows that the developed illustrated storybook media achieved a high level of validity across all evaluated aspects. The material aspect obtained the highest score (91.42%), categorized as very valid, indicating that the content of the storybook is appropriate and relevant for promoting religious values in early childhood. The language aspect achieved a score of 87.5%, categorized as valid, suggesting that the language used is understandable and suitable for children aged 4–5 years. Meanwhile, the design aspect scored 83.3%, also categorized as valid, indicating that the visual presentation and layout are appropriate and engaging for young learners.

After the validation process, revisions were made based on expert suggestions to improve the quality of the media. The revised product was then tested through small-scale and large-scale trials to evaluate its practicality and effectiveness. Table 2. Overall Achievement of Kinesthetic Development

Table 2. Results of Product Trials

Evaluation Aspect	Percentage (%)	Category
Trial Effectiveness	90%	Effective
Interview Questionnaire	89.25%	Very Effective
Large-Scale Trial	90%	Very Effective
Learner Response	85.97%	Very Effective

The results of the product trials, as shown in Table 2, indicate that the illustrated storybook media is highly effective in supporting the learning process. The effectiveness score of 90% demonstrates that the media successfully facilitates the internalization of religious values. The interview questionnaire results (89.25%) and learner responses (85.97%) further confirm that children responded positively to the media, indicating high levels of engagement and interest.

In addition, the large-scale trial results, which reached 90% in the very effective category, indicate that the developed media is not only effective in small groups but also applicable in broader learning contexts. These findings suggest that the illustrated storybook media is practical and feasible for use in early childhood education settings.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the developed illustrated storybook media meets the criteria of being valid, practical, and effective. The integration of visual and narrative elements in the media contributes to improved engagement and supports the process of instilling religious values in early childhood learners.

## D. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the developed illustrated storybook media is valid, practical, and effective for promoting religious values in early childhood education. The high validation scores across material, language, and design aspects indicate that the media meets the required educational standards and is suitable for children aged 4–5 years. This result confirms that systematic development using a Research and Development (R&D) approach ensures the quality and feasibility of instructional media before its implementation in real learning contexts.

The high material validation score suggests that the content of the storybook is appropriate for conveying religious values in a way that is understandable and meaningful for young children. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing that value-based education in early childhood must be delivered through contextually relevant and developmentally appropriate content (Nucci & Narvaez, 2014). Similarly, Lickona (2015) highlights that moral and religious values are more effectively internalized when they are presented through concrete and relatable experiences rather than abstract instruction.

The language and design validation results further indicate that the integration of simple language and attractive visual elements plays a crucial role in enhancing children's comprehension and engagement. Illustrated storybooks provide dual channels of learning through visual and textual representation, which supports children's understanding and retention of information (Mayer, 2014). In addition, visual storytelling has been shown to improve children's attention and motivation, making learning more engaging and effective (Sargeant, 2015).

The effectiveness results obtained from both small-scale and large-scale trials demonstrate that the developed media successfully facilitates the internalization of religious values. Children's positive responses and high engagement levels indicate that the media is not only effective in delivering content but also in creating meaningful learning experiences. This finding supports previous studies indicating that story-based learning is an effective approach for promoting moral and social development in early childhood (Isbell et al., 2015; Nicolopoulou, 2018).

Furthermore, the use of illustrated storybooks enables children to learn through narrative structures, which are naturally aligned with how children process information and construct meaning. Narrative-based learning allows children to connect with characters and situations, facilitating emotional and moral understanding (Bruner, 1996; Hsin & Wu, 2019). This explains why the developed media was able to enhance children's engagement and support the internalization of religious values effectively.

The practicality of the developed media is also reflected in its ease of use and adaptability in classroom settings. Teachers were able to implement the media effectively without significant difficulty, indicating that the product is user-friendly and suitable for real educational contexts. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that the success of instructional media is highly dependent on its practicality and usability in classroom implementation (Branch, 2018; Reeves & Reeves, 2015).

Moreover, the results of this study highlight the importance of integrating visual, narrative, and value-based elements in learning media. Previous research has shown that multimedia and story-based learning environments enhance children's cognitive and affective development (Clark & Mayer, 2016). In addition, interactive and engaging learning materials have been found to significantly improve children's motivation and learning outcomes (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

The findings also reinforce the significance of using a structured development model such as the 4-D model in designing educational products. The systematic process of defining needs, designing prototypes, developing and validating products, and disseminating results ensures that the final product meets educational standards and addresses real learning needs. This supports previous

studies emphasizing that R&D-based approaches are effective in producing high-quality and evidence-based learning media (Plomp & Nieveen, 2013; Richey & Klein, 2014).

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that illustrated storybook media is an effective tool for promoting religious values in early childhood education. The combination of visual storytelling, developmentally appropriate content, and systematic design contributes significantly to children's engagement and learning outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of developing innovative and child-centered learning media to support value-based education in early childhood settings.

## **E. Conclusion**

This study concludes that the developed illustrated storybook media is valid, practical, and effective for promoting religious values in early childhood learners. The high validation results across material, language, and design aspects indicate that the media meets the required educational standards and is appropriate for children aged 4–5 years. In addition, the findings from both small-scale and large-scale trials demonstrate that the media effectively supports the learning process and facilitates the internalization of religious values.

The results also highlight that the effectiveness of illustrated storybook media is strongly influenced by its design, content relevance, and the integration of visual and narrative elements. When learning media are developed systematically and tailored to children's developmental characteristics, they can enhance engagement, comprehension, and value formation. This confirms that story-based and visually supported learning approaches play a significant role in early childhood education.

Overall, the use of illustrated storybook media represents an innovative and meaningful strategy for integrating religious value education into early childhood learning. The combination of engaging storytelling and visual representation contributes significantly to improving children's learning experiences and supporting their moral and religious development.

## **F. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. First, teachers are encouraged to utilize illustrated storybook media as part of daily learning activities to promote religious values in early childhood education. The media should be used interactively, allowing children to actively participate, ask questions, and engage with the story content.

Second, early childhood education institutions should support the development and use of innovative learning media by providing adequate resources and training for teachers. Enhancing teachers' competencies in designing and implementing story-based learning strategies is essential for optimizing educational outcomes.

Third, curriculum developers and policymakers are recommended to integrate illustrated storybook-based learning approaches into early childhood education curricula. Providing flexibility in curriculum implementation will enable educators to incorporate creative and meaningful learning experiences more effectively.

Finally, future research is encouraged to explore the application of illustrated storybook media in different educational contexts and to examine its impact on other developmental domains, such as language skills, creativity, and social-emotional development. Further studies using

diverse research designs are needed to strengthen the evidence base for story-based learning in early childhood education.

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