



Empowering Early Childhood Educators: Using Islamic Heroes to Instill Heroic Values in Early Childhood

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Abstract

Few studies have investigated educators' roles in instilling heroic values in early childhood through Islamic heroes. Educators play a crucial role in shaping early childhood's understanding of heroism, primarily through Islamic heroes, because early childhood commonly has misconceptions about heroes. They often struggle to articulate these ideas and frequently associate heroism with fictional characters from storybooks, movies, or fairy tales. The purpose of this research is to explore the role of educators in professional development in learning and teaching early childhood, which is connected with moral lessons about heroic values using Islamic heroes. This study used a qualitative method with interviews and documentation. Participants were seven early childhood educators from seven different schools. The data analysis technique used Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The results show that educators often have misconceptions about the meaning of heroes and heroism, particularly regarding Islamic heroes. The selection of teaching materials indicates limitations in educators' ability to explore Islamic heroes and appreciate the richness of Islamic heroism. The material presented emphasizes aspects of religious practice and sainthood rather than describing and instilling heroic values. The implementation strategy includes lesson plans and teaching materials (selecting Islamic figures, the content of narratives, and Islamic hero's storytelling techniques) focusing more on history, religiosity, and worship aspects of Wali Songo and Prophets of Islam. Educators should create learning activities with storytelling according to the age of children; new concepts should be introduced with brief explanations, a variety of media should be used to visualize stories, and storytelling should keep children focused.

Keywords: early childhood, educators, empowering, heroic values

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A. Introduction

Professional competence is one of the most critical competencies for an early childhood educator. The professional competence of an educator of early childhood education includes teacher being able to analyze the development of students according to their developmental stages, manage programs of learning and teaching, prepare materials, source learning, and creative activities to improve the quality of learning in early childhood (Utami & Hasanah, 2020). The children's generation is currently categorized into the alpha generation (internet generation, net generation, platinum generation, and gadget native). Early childhood from Generation Alpha grew up with smartphones and fully integrated into social media. The characteristics of the childhood generation include having high energy, a creative mind, multi-tasking, self-centered focus, selfishness, and lack of relationships in interaction (Zarra, 2017)

Surprisingly, many children in Indonesia now look up to sports and entertainment figures (such as cartoon or film actors/actresses, Korean idols, and singers) as their heroes. Furthermore, public figures who are seen as heroic are increasingly judged based on their image, physical attributes (beauty, handsomeness, slimness, muscularity, and strength), material wealth (richness, assets, money, and cars), and popularity (fame and being favored), rather than qualities like courage, integrity, and compassion. Views of children about hero figures are too narrow and have more self-centered needs (fulfilling one's own/individual needs). The previous cohort generation of millennials and Gen Z are often associated with hedonistic tendencies and a tendency to seek immediate gratification from accomplishments. Therefore, it is crucial to instill the character values of heroes (Febriani et al., 2022). For example, children admire cartoon and film animation characters who are talented in fighting and killing evil enemies, feared by opponents, and always the winner. Other characters they admire are characters in cartoons that emphasize characters who have special objects that can always be relied on to help others; for example, in a cartoon character, Ruby will rely on her baggage to change instantly into all kinds of professions, such as doctors, gardeners, restaurant keepers, chefs, and others to help people around them. All of these hero figures are still their imagination/fantasy shadows, not something real, and even if they learned about real heroes in history, social science, and civic education, it is more about academic demands (only cognitive). It has not yet touched the emotional side (feelings) of children. Correspondingly, they still tend to understand heroes as politicians, elite, and military leaders. The status of a hero is often explained more in terms of power (strength, authority) than the type of risk they experienced, even though the risk is not only the risk of injury, disability, or death but also the consequences of their own family's safety, financial problems (financial difficulties), loss of social status, loss of trust (distrust), possible health problems, arrest, detention without trial, social ostracization, torture, expulsion, isolation, and restrictions on movement in life (Franco et al., 2011).

At this time, the condition of children is still confused when distinguishing between artists, movie stars, champions, and famous people, as what a hero is and what qualities an individual can call a hero. As children grow up, they often choose peers as heroes, typically someone similar to or close to a band singer or a great sports figure. Factors that shape how children think are mostly determined by the environment in which they grow up. Watching cartoons is one of the daily habits of our children, and research has shown that the average child with TV facilities and

satellite connections at home watches approximately 18.000 hours of television from kindergarten until they graduate high school (Habib & Soliman, 2015). We can imagine what the hero characters in children's cartoons are like today and their impact on the way children think and behave.

In 1969, Klapp suggested that the media tends to present heroes often in the form of pseudo-heroes. This leads to the effects of pseudo-heroism, a celebrity culture, and negative role models, which raise serious concerns for parents, educators, government officials, researchers, and society (Kinsella et al., 2015). Children will admire and worship inappropriate, unworthy, or not deserved heroes. Description story about heroes emphasizes character with the appearance of an adult male soldier engaged in war. Soldiers are frequently identified as heroes. So Islamic heroism is largely characterized by military leaders, commanders, and generals (Putra, 2022).

Previous research titled Evaluation of Indonesia Hero Stories Featured in Children's Literature, which investigated three Indonesian Hero Story Books, suggests only one book's potential as a valuable resource for teaching national heroes (Parlindungan et al., 2024). Studies about hero stories in children's literature have been growing, and previous research has shown how educators have misconceptions about heroism and students fail to understand what it means to be a hero. It could impact educators' teaching practices, and their students fail to recognize real heroes. Correspondingly, Educators in Islamic education must guide, teach, and educate effectively and wholeheartedly (Tabroni et al., 2021). Educators' storytelling about pseudo-heroes from folklore includes stories of heroes as mythical or legendary figures rather than islamic history, which is rich with individuals who exemplify character strength such as bravery, empathy, honesty, and perseverance. Myths are sacred stories, while legends represent a more secular retelling of actual events (Abdeen, 2019). Individuals often turn to myths in religious life to reinforce their faith in the divine (Devi & Roibin, 2023). However, it may threaten the tawhid of early childhood in Islam. Educators should choose exemplary stories about islamic heroes to instill heroic values since early childhood. Early childhood educators can play a significant role in instilling heroic values in early childhood by using islamic heroes.

Based on background information on the problem, the purpose of this research was to explore the role of educators in professional development in learning and teaching early childhood connected with the moral lessons about heroic values using Islamic heroes, consisting of lesson plans, barriers in implementation strategy, media, source learning, and teaching materials, and time to introduce islamic heroes and heroic values.

B. Literature Review

1. Islamic Heroes and Virtues

The connection of heroism with character strength is focal in research on positive psychology (Stenstrom & Curtis, 2012) and this is supported by research by White & O'Brien (1999) that indicates that children as young as 5 or 6 years old have developed basic classifications and exemplars of heroes (Stenstrom & Curtis, 2012). Furthermore, recent reviews of heroism research have highlighted limited published work directly investigating the concept of heroism (Franco et al., 2011). Additionally, the lack of attention from Islamic scholars to heroism is notable. Islamic heroism (Ar. abtal al-Islāmī) is predominantly characterized by

figures from warfare, such as commanders and generals (Putra, 2022). Meanwhile, scholars like Franco define heroism as individuals who fight for their community's ideals and selflessly accept physical danger or social sacrifice (Putra, 2022).

The evolution of Islamic literature from its early origins to the modern era encompasses significant developments in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature, including forms such as *ghazal*, *qasida*, and *mathnawi*, as well as the promotion of literary prose known as *adab* (Doğan, 2023). A notable characteristic of Islamic literature is its common experience of responding to the growing influence of the West and the pressures of modernization during the 19th century. The spirit in writing literature will not be separated from the socio-cultural background, philosophy *zeitgeist* such as poetry about mystics which explain spiritual experiences and popular tales “1001 Nights”.

The lives and biographies of these prominent figures in Islam warrant thorough study, as they can inspire the same spirit of courage and sacrifice for the cause of our great religion in our hearts. Furthermore, previous research concluded that heroism in Islam is recognized in two ways and grounded in the teachings and spiritual guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as the acceptance and recognition of the Muslim community (Putra, 2022). Previous research has shown all of ten teachers believe that stories from the Holy Qur'an are essential, and they incorporate them into their lessons across various subjects (Mustafeh, 2011).

Islamic heroes and their virtues can provide a rich source of inspiration to instill heroic values in early childhood education. The real hero is not simply a celebrity or a well-known individual rather, they embody values through self-sacrificing actions that benefit others and the community. Leaders in Islamic education can shape the mindset of early childhood by fostering positive attitudes and enhancing their understanding of religion (Masruroh & Fauzi, 2023). Therefore, stories about heroes should be selected from various backgrounds of culture and religion in different parts of the world. For example, background within the context of the Minangkabau tribe includes notable heroes such as Bung Hatta, Moh Natsir, and Buya Hamka, among others (Febriani et al., 2022). One history in Islam shows that numerous individual leaders' efforts prosper and thrive through sacrifices and selflessness. Prosperity and growth are achieved through sacrifice and selflessness. For example, figures such as Salahuddin Ayyubi, a generous hero, Abu Bakar As Siddiq, Umar Bin Khattab, Abu Thalhaf, a generous host; Siti Khadijah, Fatimatuz Az-Zahra, Muhammad al-Fatih, Ayesha, Nusaybah bint Ka'ab, Lubna, Al-Malika al-Hurra Arwa al-Sulayhi, and Nisaibah exemplify these qualities. Islamic heroes help, protect, save, make the world better, and sacrifice to do what others don't.

A person can be considered a saint if they (1) fulfill their duties through self-control in situations where others might act on their inclinations or self-interest, (2) carry out their responsibilities effortlessly while others prioritize their own interests, or (3) greatly exceed their duties through self-control or minimal effort. Conversely, a person may be regarded as a hero if they (1) fulfill their duties through self-control in circumstances where others act out of fear or self-preservation, (2) meet their obligations effortlessly when others are paralyzed by fear, or (3) significantly surpass their duties by managing their fear (Respass, 2017). Individuals can embody both heroic and saintly qualities, but they must

effectively overcome the challenges posed by fear and self-interest. While heroes and saints confront different obstacles, their goals may or may not align (Respass, 2017). Islamic heroes are not just only about saints, but they have heroic values. All this time view of educators focuses more on talking about saints rather than talking about heroes. And then storytelling more focus on activities to develop moral and religion values. Moreover, research on the stories in the Qur'an and their connection to Islamic education is currently limited primarily to the narratives of Prophet Adam and Prophet Yusuf (Sinaga et al., 2020). Therefore, there is a need to further develop heroism narratives from the perspective of Qur'anic stories.

2. Empowering Early Childhood Educators to Instill Heroic Values

The psychology of a hero is defined by their motivations for action, their level of bravery, and the strength of their convictions or devotion. Three key elements explain why heroes are often viewed as mentally superior to the average person. First, a hero has exceptional moral character, exhibiting traits such as bravery, resolve, and integrity, which enable them to confront extraordinary circumstances where fear or self-preservation might hinder action (Respass, 2017). Second, heroes serve as moral symbols, protecting innocent individuals and providing moral goals for society. They personify ideals that are often difficult to articulate, and some heroes are seen as agents of social justice, working to improve the circumstances of the disadvantaged (Kinsella et al., 2015). Finally, heroes instill hope, offer support, educate us about right and wrong, and validate our moral beliefs (moral modeling). They rescue us in times of trouble, uplift us when we are down, and deliver justice (protecting) (Kinsella et al., 2015).

Phenomenon and discourse about heroism may significantly shape the human concept of well-being from this moment, such as in clinical settings, heroes have proven to be valuable resources for metaphorical identity mapping (Kinsella, 2012). During this process, individuals explore their personal identity by drawing inspiration from the traits and values they associate with their heroes (e.g., goals, values) (Kinsella, 2012). Islamic heroes have a special place in moral education. Early childhood is a critical period of development. One of the important things in developing early childhood self-identity is that child form their behavior and life values by looking at heroes and role models as guides.

Educators can play a significant role by introducing students to historical heroes, including individuals from various professions, people of color, and women of all races. Educators have a substantial impact by presenting students with a diverse selection of historical heroes, including individuals from various professions, people of color, and women of all ethnicities (Anderson & Cavallaro, 2002). Educators can play a significant role in instilling heroic values in early childhood by using Islamic heroes.

Research on heroes and heroism is expanding, but the lack of clear definitions poses a significant challenge (Kinsella et al., 2017). The survey concluded that 34% of the named heroes were fictional heroes (Goethals & Allison, 2012). Educators must be able to determine exemplary stories about Islamic heroes. Educators have true conceptions about heroes to achieve meaningful learning for students. In addition, teachers play a crucial role in conveying values that help children understand moral and immoral acts (Tabroni et al., 2021). Educators utilize teaching materials as a means to motivate and

serve as role models during the learning process, employing various methods such as (Maesaroh et al., 2022) exemplary method (the method involves teachers providing positive examples to students while delivering lessons), story method (this approach conveys advice or messages to students through various stories that contain positive values), and advice method (the advice method is an educational approach based on verbal communication, serving as a catalyst for interaction between educators and students).

There are three factors to consider when engaging in storytelling for moral education in kindergarten. First, most of the early childhood unable to read independently, so the educator typically reads the stories aloud. Second, early childhood may be unfamiliar with the language, vocabulary, and narrative structures. Three, their cognitive development may still be in progress, making it difficult for them to grasp the underlying messages often embedded in the stories (Rahiem et al., 2020).

3. The Real Meaning of Hero and Heroism

Few researchers, however, have explored why individuals have or seek out heroes (Goethals & Allison, 2012). A person who embodies the prototypical characteristics of a hero, such as bravery, sacrifice, conviction, risk-taking, and moral integrity for a noble cause, is likely to fulfill psychological and social functions for those who encounter them (Kinsella et al., 2015). The etymology of the word 'hero' (from the Greek 'heros') suggests that heroes protect others (E. L. Kinsella et al., 2015a). Research indicates that some heroes are described as enhancing positive feelings about oneself and others (inspiring, motivating, boosting morale) and modeling moral behavior (providing morals and values, reminding people of the good in the world). Other heroes are seen as protecting individuals, either physically (e.g., saving lives) or emotionally (e.g., helping people in situations of distress or despair when they are on the verge of giving up") (Kinsella et al., 2015).

Gash and Conway (1997) asked 700 children in Ireland and the USA to identify the characteristics of heroes. Participants named their heroes and described their attributes, which included being active, beautiful, brilliant, intelligent, brave, caring, confident, well-dressed, famous, friendly, humorous, good-hearted, gentle, attractive, helpful, honest, important, kind, loving, loyal, wealthy, skilled, strong, and warrior (Kinsella et al., 2012). Research by Sullivan and Venter (2010) asked US college students to identify a hero and provide descriptive words to explain their choice (Kinsella et al., 2012). Participants described their heroes using characteristics such as intelligent, loving, religious, caring, talented, hardworking, motivated, role model, and creative. This research indicated that religiosity emerged as a significant indicator of heroism, despite many heroes not being affiliated with any religion. A hero is defined as a person who knowingly and voluntarily acts for the good of one or more individuals at significant risk to themselves, without being motivated by reward (Franco et al., 2011). Heroes were rated highest on bravery, moral integrity, willingness to sacrifice, altruism, compassion, selflessness, and protectiveness. Leaders were described as powerful, strong, fearless, demonstrating conviction, displaying leadership, proactive, determined, intelligent, inspiring, and willing to take risks (Kinsella, 2012). Furthermore, heroes serve functions that include protecting individuals from physical or psychological threats, uplifting and enriching the lives of others, and promoting morals and ethics. That is why a hero is not the

same as the average leader or role model. Sometimes, the term hero is used interchangeably with other types of influential individuals, such as leaders and role models.

This study utilizes a conceptual framework for heroism alongside a foundational model of heroic action (Franco et al., 2011). Heroism is integral to the mindset required for undertaking heroic actions. The essential elements of heroism are 1) actions that are voluntary and intentional; 2) actions carried out in support of individuals or communities in need; 3) actions that entail some form of personal cost or risk, which may be physical, social, or related to quality of life; and 4) actions performed without the expectation of reward or compensation. Research identifies twelve distinct subtypes of heroism and the contexts that prompt such actions (Franco et al., 2011). Among these are martial and civil heroism, the two categories involving physical risk, as well as ten variations of social heroism, each linked to specific initiating and defining situations (Franco et al., 2011).

Table 1 Twelve Subtypes of Heroism and the Situations that Elicit Heroic Action

Risk type	Heroic subtype	Definition/situation
Physical Peril heroes	Military and other duty-bound physical risk figures	Individuals in military or emergency response professions often face repeated exposure to high-risk situations. Heroic actions in these contexts should go beyond the standard expectations of their duties.
	Civil figures–nonduty bound physical risk figures	Civilians who try to rescue others from physical danger or life-threatening situations often do so at the risk of their own lives.
Social Sacrifice heroes	Religious heroes	A commitment to lifelong religious service that embodies the highest principles or forges new paths in spirituality.
	Politico-religious heroes	Religious leaders who engage in politics to drive broader change, or politicians whose strong spiritual beliefs shape their political actions.
	Martyrs heroes	Religious or political figures who intentionally place their lives at risk to advocate for a cause or to draw attention to social injustices.
	Political or military leader heroes	Typically, they guide a nation or group during challenging times, such as wars or disasters. Their role is to unify the nation, offer a shared vision, and embody the essential qualities for the group's survival.
	Adventurer/explorer/discoverer heroes	Individuals who explore uncharted geographical regions or utilize innovative and untested transportation methods.
	Scientific (discovery) figures	Individuals who investigate unexplored fields of science, employ innovative and untested research methods, or uncover new scientific knowledge are considered beneficial to humanity.

Good samaritan figures	Individuals who are the first to offer assistance to those in need, even in situations that present significant obstacles to altruism. Their actions may or may not involve immediate physical risk.
Odds beater/underdog figures	Individuals who have triumphed over challenges or difficult circumstances and succeeded despite these obstacles, serving as a social and moral example for others.
Bureaucracy figures	Employees in large organizations engaged in contentious debates within their agency or between agencies. This often involves upholding their principles despite significant pressure to conform or comply with higher authorities.
Whistleblowers heroes	Individuals who recognize illegal or unethical practices within an organization and report these activities publicly to drive change do so without any expectation of reward.

C. Method

This study used a qualitative method with interviews and documentation. Participants were seven early childhood educators from 7 different schools. The purpose of this research was to explore the roles of educators in professional development to learning and teaching early childhood connected with the moral lessons about heroic values using Islamic heroes, consisting of the lesson plan, barriers in implementation strategy, media, source of learning, and teaching materials, and time to introduce islamic heroes and heroic values. This research collected data through interviews and documentation techniques. The data collected was processed into verbatim transcripts such as interview notes. The interview process was carried out with semi-structured questions. The data analysis technique used Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, which includes reading and re-reading the transcripts, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and finishing the final report.

Table 2. Participants

Participants	Teaching Experience	School	Type of kindergarten
NP	7 years	TK Dharma Wanita Persatuan Gending	Private school
LS	5 years	TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 04 Surabaya	Islamic Private school
SK	7 years	KB Hidayatul Islamiyah Gresik	
NK	5 years	TK Nur Hidayah Kedungdadi Lamongan	Islamic Private school
NW	5 years	TK. Insan Qur'ani Surabaya	Islamic Private school
RD	4 years	TK Mardi Putra 1 Lamongan	Private school
DO	6 years	KB Ragawangi Lamongan	Private schoo

D. Findings

Based on the interview results, educators develop activities to instill heroic values in early childhood education through:

1. Understanding the description of a hero from the kids' point of view

The early childhood identified their heroes and described their criteria for someone to be a hero, e.g., someone who goes to war, someone who has superpowers like the ability to fly, or the strength to defeat monsters. A hero is someone who is brave and can face anyone, and a hero can be someone who contributes something important to society. Heroes are often the favorite characters of fairy tales and films, for example Superman, Snow White, or Spiderman. Heroes are also knights or robots who fight crime, e.g., Ultraman. Children at an early age often describe a hero as a person who fights crime, like what they see on television; a hero is also strong, good, and can possibly fly.

2. Strategies for educators to change students' views on heroes and instill heroic values

Storytelling with a Storyteller, the lesson begins with the teacher inviting children to listen to a song of *sholawat* (recite praises for the Prophet Muhammad), followed by encouraging them to participate in singing along. The storyteller then reads a storybook about figures, specifically the Prophets of Islam, while expressing emotions and mimicking actions from the book. Next, the storyteller, using puppets, interacts with the children and encourages them to reenact the story. Following this, the storyteller engages the children in games and asks them questions. Finally, the teacher delivers a sermon about the Prophets and the meaning of heroism. A Prophet may not be strong, brave, clever, or opportunistic, but works faithfully in accordance with God's will.

Showing a story video about Wali Songo (Saints of Java), the lesson begins with the teacher leading the children in prayer and singing *sholawat* (reciting praises for the Prophet Muhammad), typically sung in mosques. The teacher then asks the children to sit in a circle and watch a video about Wali Songo using a laptop. After watching the video, the children are invited to sing *sholawat* again. The teacher asks about the figures seen in the video and encourages the children to recite Al-Fatihah for the deceased Wali Songo/Saint of Java.

Field Trip to a mosque in the school's vicinity, the lesson starts with preparing the children for a walking trip to visit a mosque to understand the heroic values in spreading Islamic teachings. The teacher leads the children in singing songs and *sholawat* (reciting praises for the Prophet Muhammad) while walking around the school and visiting the mosque to learn about the legacy of heroism. The teacher asks permission from the mosque administrator to teach the children about this place of worship, asking who is prayed for in the mosque and who is worshiped there. The teacher prepares the children to thank the mosque administrators before leading them in a closing prayer.

Watching the animated cartoon video "Omar & Hana: Love for Prophet Muhammad", the session begins with a prayer before learning, followed by listening to Islamic songs while preparing to play the video on a laptop. Since it's a cartoon, the children are more interested in watching and excitedly mimic the characters' dialogues. After the video, they request to watch it again because it is short, and they are enthusiastic. The teacher asks about the characters in the film and how we can show love for Prophet Muhammad, leading the children in a prayer for him.

Learning activities using various teaching methods, the lesson begins by forming a circle and singing Islamic songs while preparing materials to read a story and arrange letter cards spelling "Abu." During this, the children play act as Abu Bakar during a pretend sword fight. The teacher then lets students choose roles in the story and perform in front of the class, distinguishing between good and evil roles. The teacher concludes the lesson with music and a prayer for the characters from the story.

Field Trip to Ampel Mosque, the lesson begins with preparing the children for an educative visit to a burial site. The group sings sholawat (reciting praises for the Prophet Muhammad) during the trip to Ampel. The teacher explains and shares the history of the mosque and the tomb of Sunan Ampel, a Wali songo (Saints of Java) who spread Islam in Indonesia. After praying for the ancestors at the tomb, the children prepare to return home. On the way back, the teacher asks who spread Islam and is buried there.

Storytelling about Abunawas, the lesson starts with the teacher telling stories about the clever Abunawas while preparing props, using a clown nose to demonstrate his humor. Since Abunawas is a comical figure, the teacher uses funny expressions to engage the children's imagination. After enjoying the comedic play and imitating Abunawas's antics, the teacher asks what they found interesting about him, the characters in the story, and why many people like Abunawas.

3. Barriers to implementation strategy

a. Storytelling with a Storyteller

The storyteller does not tailor the story to the children's age, simply reading without interaction. Continuously learning and understanding the interests and desires of the children we are storytelling to, as each child has different characteristics.

b. Showing a video story about Wali Songo (Saints of Java)

The video is too long and historical, which may not engage the children. Finding ways to make religious stories appealing to children.

c. Field Trip to a mosque in the school's vicinity

Children prefer to play around. Encouraging children to emulate the examples set by the Prophets in worship and struggle like the Wali Songo (Saint of Java).

d. Watching the animated cartoon video "Omar & Hana: Love for Prophet Muhammad"

Not all children are interested in the video. Finding new activities that capture the children's interest more effectively.

e. Learning activities using various teaching methods

Many students play independently rather than engaging in the lesson. Exploring more stories about the Prophet's companions beyond Abu Bakar.

f. Field Trip to Ampel Mosque

Children get distracted due to many visitors and vendors. Keeping the children focused on the purpose of the visit to Sunan Ampel.

g. Storytelling about Abunawas

Children only recognize the humor. Striving to tell more stories about folktales frequently.

h. Media, source of learning, and teaching materials

Educators used several sources of learning, including the video about Wali Songo: The Nine Saints of Java, but the content of the video only focused on

aspects of history and religiosity, storybook about figures, specifically the Prophets of Islam and puppets, animated cartoon video "Omar & Hana: Love for Prophet Muhammad, letter cards, and preparing props using a clown nose to demonstrate the humor.

i. Time to introduce islamic heroes and heroic values

Educators only introduce islamic heroes and heroic values during islamic holidays for example only during islamic holidays, for example, Eid al-Adha, Isra Miraj, the Prophet's birthday, and about aspects of religious practice and saints.

E. Discussion

Educators can play a significant role by introducing students to historical heroes, including individuals from various professions, people of color, and men and women of all races. Educators have a significant role in instilling heroic values in early childhood by using Islamic heroes. The stories of Islamic heroes can be used to instill heroic values in early childhood.

Research on heroes and heroism is expanding, but the lack of clear definitions poses a significant challenge (Kinsella et al., 2017). Survey data shows that 34% of the people identified as heroes were fictional heroes (Goethals & Allison, 2012). There are five themes discussed in the results of interviews and documentation from the study: 1) descriptions of heroes from the kid's point of view; 2) strategies for educators to change students' views on heroes and instill heroic values; 3) barriers to implementation strategies; 4) media, sources for learning, and teaching materials; 5) time to introduce Islamic heroes and heroic values

Children at an early age commonly have misconceptions about heroes. They often struggle to articulate these ideas and frequently associate heroism with characters from storybooks, movies, or fairy tales. These hero figures exist primarily in their imaginations and fantasies, rather than as real entities. Children since an early childhood need to understand islamic education figures to instill good morals and morals in their life (Masruroh & Fauzi, 2023). Children at this age are still very vulnerable to environmental influences, so Islamic education figures play an important role in providing proper guidance and direction.

Educators play a crucial role in conveying values that help children understand moral and immoral actions (Tabroni et al., 2021). In education, educators emphasize Islamic history through civil figures who do not take physical risks on religious heroes, often focusing on cognitive demands, such as the worshipful aspects and life histories of the Wali Songo (Saints of Java) and other Islamic heroes involved in warfare. Educators should help early childhood appreciate the richness of Islamic heroism. They should emphasize that heroism in Islam often involves acts of compassion, justice, and integrity, including community service, advocacy for human rights, or efforts to promote peace. These values can inspire early childhood from all backgrounds.

Theoretically, there are twelve subtypes of heroism, including social sacrifice heroes, encompassing religious heroes. Heroic sub type a religious figures is committed to lifelong religious service who embodies the highest principles as a teacher or public exemplar of service (Franco et al., 2011). Civil figures attempt to rescue others from physical danger or life-threatening situations, often risking their own lives (Franco et al., 2011). Most Islamic literature portrays warlords as heroic

figures, emphasizing the qualities and virtues they exhibit in warfare as described in the Quran and hadith (Putra, 2022).

Educators have developed lesson plans to instill heroic actions, focusing on Islamic hero figures, particularly the Prophets of Islam (primarily Prophet Muhammad) and the Wali Songo. However, one educator used the figure of Abu Bakar Ash Shiddiq's figure in warfare, which falls under the category of physical peril heroes, especially civil figures who take non-duty-bound physical risks.

The selection of teaching materials indicates limitations in educators' ability to explore Islamic heroes and appreciate the richness of Islamic heroism. The material presented emphasizes aspects of religious practice and sainthood rather than describing and instilling the heroic values found in stories of Islamic heroes. Additionally, heroic stories inspire children to engage in positive actions (Rahiem et al., 2020). Educators in process internalizing the heroic values should can be adopted through the example of the heroes, but all this time lack of critical studies related to the development of exemplary-based Islamic educational values from heroes (Febriani et al., 2022).

Muhammad Aṭīyyah al-Ibrāshī identified three approaches to teaching morals. The first is direct education, which involves learning, guidance, advice, and discussing the consequences of good and bad actions. The second is indirect education, which utilizes wisdom, stories, and poetry. Educators often tell stories about pseudo-heroes from folklore, focusing on mythical or legendary figures rather than the rich history of Islamic figures who exemplify virtues and morality essential for being good Muslims, such as courage, compassion, honesty, and perseverance. This effort aims to prevent children from imitating pseudo-heroes. Instilling religious values should begin in early childhood before children develop logical thinking and the ability to understand abstract concepts and discern right from wrong. During this period, children will require support from those around them, such as parents and educators, to understand various concepts, including the development of moral values (Hidayati, 2019).

The data from this research highlights significant findings. Educators need to select exemplary stories about Islamic heroes, engage in discussions, and present stories from various cultures to help early childhood appreciate the richness of Islamic heroism. Furthermore, educators often have misconceptions about the definition of heroes and heroism, particularly regarding Islamic heroes. These misconceptions include the belief that Islamic heroes are solely historical figures from the Arab world, that heroism is only about warfare, and that Islamic heroism is only relevant to Muslims (Putra, 2022). Educators should discuss Islamic heroism through these figures, emphasizing that their struggles benefit all backgrounds, not just Muslims. Educators need to deepen their understanding to revisit the true meaning of heroes and heroism.

Educators have tried to convey the real meaning of heroes and heroism through various media, such as videos about the Wali Songo: The Nine Saints of Java. However, the video content focuses primarily on historical and religious aspects, with storybooks about figures like the Prophets of Islam and puppet shows, as well as animated cartoon videos like "Omar & Hana: Love for Prophet Muhammad." They also use letter cards and props, like clown noses, to demonstrate humor. Learning about these topics is often scheduled around Islamic holidays, such as Eid al-Adha, Isra Miraj, and the Prophet's birthday. The failure of educators to instill heroic values in early childhood is due to several obstacles, including a storyteller not tailoring the

story to the children's age, simply reading without interaction, overly lengthy and historical videos that may not engage early childhood, and many students opting to play independently rather than engage in lessons, distractions from visitors and vendors also hinder attention, with children recognizing humor more than the story's content.

Moving forward, educators face several challenges in instilling heroic values using Islamic heroes. First, they must continue to learn and understand the interests and desires of children, tailoring Islamic stories to their age and building good interactions during storytelling. Second, they should choose stories about Islamic heroes that capture children's interest and enrich the narrative by focusing on heroic aspects rather than just warfare, worship, religious practices, or historical figures from Arab cultures, and they should emphasize that Islamic heroism is relevant to all, not just Muslims. Third, educators must develop lesson plans using Islamic heroes that help children appreciate the richness of Islamic heroism by modeling the behaviors of the Prophets and the Wali Songo, laying the foundation for a compassionate, sacrificial, and empathetic society. Fourth, educators should explore more in-depth stories of heroism from Islamic figures beyond just the Prophets, such as the companions of the Prophet and the Wali Songo. Fifth, they should seek well-known stories about Islamic heroes beyond folk tales. For example, previous research found female heroes such as Khadijah, Nusaybah binti Ka'ab, Cut Nyak Dien (Hidayati, 2019). Sixth, educators should develop learning activities using Islamic heroes with effective teaching techniques to engage early childhood in the learning process for optimal outcomes. For instance, storytelling should not be overly complex, should match the children's age, and should avoid lengthy narratives. New concepts or words should be introduced with brief explanations, and various media, such as picture books, puppets, and concrete objects, should be used to visualize the story while conveying positive messages. Additionally, opportunities for early childhood to move during interactive storytelling should be provided to maintain their focus.

F. Conclusion

The results of this study imply that educators should enhance their understanding of heroes and heroism due to educators often have misconceptions about the meaning of heroes and heroism, particularly regarding Islamic heroes. Educators should also create learning activities with storytelling according to the age of children; new concepts should be introduced with brief explanations, a variety of media should be used to visualize stories, and children should be given opportunities for movement during storytelling to keep children focused. Educators can develop interactive lesson plans incorporating various teaching methods and media to engage young learners effectively, ensuring that storytelling is dynamic and interactive. Educators should also promote cultural diversity, include stories from various cultures, not just those rooted in Arab history, to highlight the universal aspects of heroism and its relevance to all backgrounds. Finally, educators must emphasize the emotional dimensions of heroism, helping children connect with the moral lessons presented in the stories.

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