

Strengthening Students Character Through the Read-Aloud Technique Based on Islamic Stories

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the development of students' character through the "read aloud" technique based on Islamic stories in elementary madrasahs. The research focuses on the role of the teacher as a facilitator (scaffolding) in reading stories aloud and how this activity instills character values such as responsibility, patience, honesty, and independence in 27 students in grades 1–3. The method used was a qualitative approach with observation techniques during four read-aloud sessions using a series of Islamic character storybooks. The results of the study indicate that read-aloud activities can enhance students' focus and engagement in learning. Students were observed listening attentively, actively responding through questions and answers, and demonstrating an understanding of the story's content and moral values. The teacher's use of intonation, expression, and emphasis was proven to help students grasp the story's meaning. Additionally, asking inferential questions during and after the reading activity reinforced students' understanding, as evidenced by their ability to answer 24 questions overall in the high-performance category. This activity also enriched students' vocabulary through the introduction of new terms. The conclusion of this study indicates that the read-aloud technique based on Islamic stories is effective as a learning strategy for strengthening students' character. Consistent implementation, supported by the teacher's active role and a conducive learning environment, makes this method an innovative and practical alternative for shaping students' character from an early age.

Key words: read aloud, Islamic stories, character building, literacy

INTRODUCTION

Low literacy rates in Indonesia remain a serious, unresolved issue. Although the literacy rate reached 98.2% in 2022, the quality of reading comprehension remains low. Data from the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) highlights the poor state of literacy in Indonesia, with students' reading proficiency at just 359 points—far behind neighboring countries such as Singapore (543 points) and Vietnam (462 points). This indicates that while many people can read, understanding texts remains a major challenge. Consequently, this situation impacts not only education but also the nation's global competitiveness (Compassion, 2025). Despite these conditions in Indonesia, the Indonesian government, through the National Library of Indonesia, is actively promoting "read aloud" activities in 2024—a practice also commonly known as

“read aloud.” “Read Aloud” is designed as an activity; this initiative is a continuation of the “Quality Book Assistance” program implemented by the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, which distributed 1,000 titles to 10,000 locations across various village/neighborhood libraries and Community Reading Parks (TBM). (National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). The presence of read-aloud communities in several regions of Indonesia also serves as a bridge for strengthening literacy through collaboration with schools.

At MIS DDI Lipu Majene, as in many elementary schools in other regions, many lower-grade students are not yet able to read fluently, and they find the texts too difficult—which is why they are reluctant to read books. As a result, the books in the library serve merely as decorations, with no meaningful reading activity taking place. This was stated by the principal of MIS DDI Lipu, Mrs. Dra. Hj. Kamila, M.Pd. In addition to low literacy levels, MIS DDI Lipu faces challenges in strengthening students’ character traits such as responsibility and honesty; formal character education programs remain limited, often relying on lectures and directives, which fail to effectively engage students’ affective aspects or provide hands-on experiences. This situation highlights the limitations of methods used to foster character development from an early age in schools and madrasahs; teachers need engaging and contextually relevant approaches., which is why this study employs the “read aloud” technique—a simple yet engaging method for children, as it incorporates intonation, expression, dialogue from the book’s content, and questions drawn from the book that align with children’s daily lives; these are typically posed at the end of or following the read-aloud session.

Various studies in Indonesia have found that the read-aloud method can significantly influence reading interest and text comprehension, especially when combined with stories that are relevant to students’ daily lives. A study conducted by Risma Sari Dwi Yulianti shows that reading aloud has a significant impact on improving literacy skills by increasing reading interest, enhancing comprehension of reading materials, expanding vocabulary, and fostering students’ confidence, as well as making them more enthusiastic about participating in literacy lessons. Reading aloud can serve as an effective strategy for fostering a culture of literacy in elementary school settings, particularly by promoting active interaction between readers and listeners. (Risma Sari Dwi Yulianti, 2025).

The use of Islamic stories as an educational tool also has a positive impact on children’s character development and spiritual intelligence, as can be seen through

Research findings indicate that the book **Anak Muslim Baca Hamdalah; Kumpulan Cerita Indahnya Bersyukur** by Mulasih Tary, as a work of literature, contains Islamic character education values, including: 1) the teaching to always be grateful; 2) caring

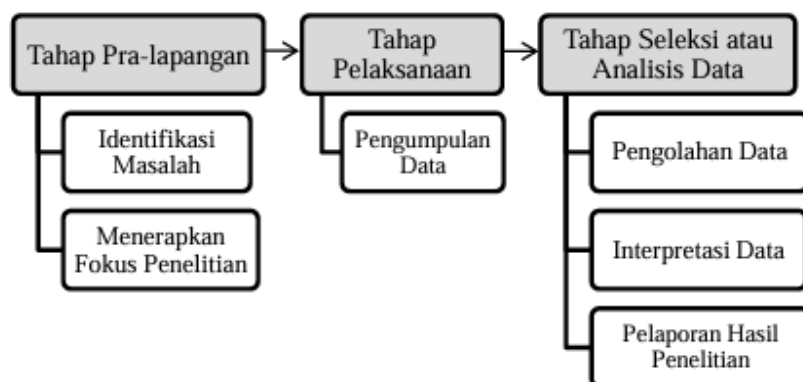
for others' hardships; 3) the teaching to respect and value others; 4) the teaching to live a healthy and clean lifestyle; 5) the teaching to always strive and pray. The values present in this children's story serve as the basis for the assertion that literary works in the form of children's stories can be used as a medium or tool to instill Islamic character education values specifically the moral teachings of the Prophet Muhammad—in children (Wakhyudi & Setyorini, 2021). Other studies have shown that the use of Islamic storybooks offers various benefits, including improving students' understanding of religious material, fostering a love of learning, and shaping character and noble moral values from an early age. However, there are also several challenges encountered in their implementation, such as limited availability of suitable books, a lack of storytelling skills among teachers, and limited class time (Aryani Nova Rosyidah, 2025) The importance of character development from an early age is also highlighted in a study by Seka Andrean and Aulia Diana Devi titled "Instilling Religious Values to Strengthen Student Character Through Aqidah Akhlak Instruction at MIN 3 Way Kanan," explaining that the research results show that the religious values instilled at MIN 3 Way Kanan include discipline, honesty, responsibility, sincerity, tolerance, mutual respect, and care for the environment through the Aqidah Akhlak subject at the MI. (Andrean & Devi, 2020)

Most existing research has focused solely on story-based character building and improving literacy through read-aloud techniques; there has been little exploration of read-aloud techniques based on Islamic stories to foster character development among elementary school students/elementary madrasah, so that the needs related to methods or approaches for character building in schools is greatly needed. This study explores the "read-aloud" technique using Islamic stories from the "Zaid and Hana Series—Good Character Series," which includes four titles: "Responsibility," "Patience," "Honesty," and "Independence," written by Dr. Avie Andriyani and illustrated by Adelenia Ami. (Avie Andriyani, 2026). This study is expected to provide tangible evidence that the "read aloud" technique based on Islamic stories can serve as an effective method for character building in elementary madrasahs, and can serve as a reference for madrasah principals and teachers to fill the research gap regarding character building through Islamic stories in the early grades (grades 1, 2, and 3)). Based on the background described above, it can be concluded that the general objective of this study is to identify one of the methods or approaches teachers use to foster character development among students at MIS DDI Lipu Majene.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the process, meaning, and impact of using the "read aloud" technique based on Islamic stories to strengthen students' character. The study focuses on a single research site at MIS DDI Lipu, located in Majene Regency. Primary data sources include the school principal, 1 teacher-reader, and 27 students from grades 1, 2, and 3. Secondary data sources consist of articles and research journals related to the study's topic. This research was conducted in two stages: 1) Observing read-aloud activities at the school, 2) Identifying character values that emerged based on the books read, namely patience, responsibility, honesty, and independence. The data collection technique used was observation (observation sheet) observing the read-aloud learning process directly and focusing on student behavior before, during, and after the activity; in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers to understand the objectives and process of read-aloud activities and with students to understand their comprehension and experiences; documentation was done using photos of the activities and notes on the results of the read-aloud activity observations. The research flow is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 1. Research Process



The researcher serves as the primary instrument by conducting inductive analysis. The data collected is analyzed in three stages, following the model by Miles and Huberman: The analysis stage consists of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 2014) is described as follows:

Figure 2. Data Analysis Phase

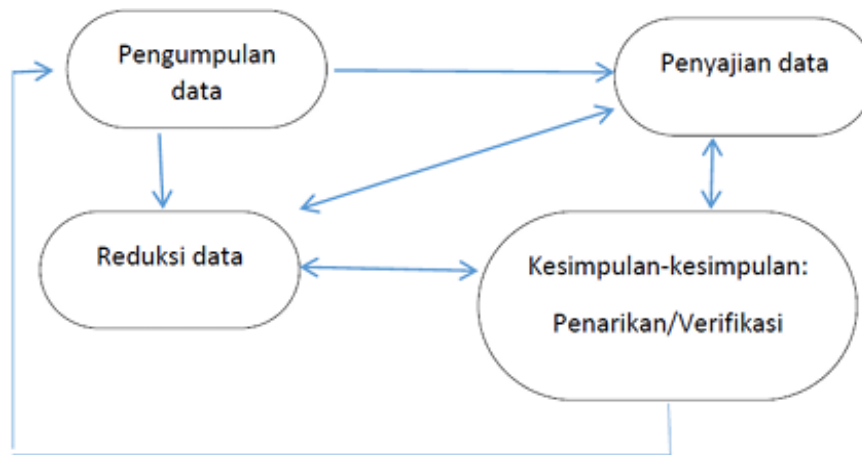


Table 1. Guidelines for Observing the *Read Aloud* Activity at MI DDI Lipu

Aspects observed	Behavioral Indicators	Description of Observation Results	Yes/No
Student Engagement	The students listened intently and with full attention		
	Students actively participate (asking and answering questions)		
The Value of Honesty	Students are inspired by the story's characters		
The Value of Patience	Students speak honestly when talking to teachers and classmates		
Value of Responsibility	Students don't give up easily when doing their homework		

The students performed
their tasks well

Self-Reliance

Students want to try
reading or presenting
in front of the class

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Read Aloud Activities at School

The practice of reading aloud in school begins by selecting books appropriate for the students' age level, conducting a brief review of the book, starting to read the book aloud, engaging in a question-and-answer dialogue, writing down difficult words, and creating at least 3 questions with both the questions and answers drawn from the book and 3 additional questions that are not directly from the book but are still related to its content. Additionally, students create book-inspired play activities based on the book's content. Read aloud is a simple reading technique performed consistently every day for 10–15 minutes per day. Jim Trelease, author of **The Read-Aloud Handbook**, states that "Reading aloud is a ritual of connection, a time when voices merge, when children and adults weave a bond through the power of story." This means that reading aloud is a ritual of connection, a time when voices come together, and when children and adults form a bond through the power of storytelling. He further explains that reading aloud is a simple activity where we set aside time to read storybooks consistently, which helps children get used to listening (listening level), willing to read, and eventually able to read (*independent reading*) (Jim Trelease, 2017). To assess the effectiveness of this initiative, literacy skills must be strengthened at home and then supported by the school environment.

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SAT preparation course in the world is to read to your children in bed when they're little. Eventually, if it's a wonderful experience for themselves, they'll start to read for themselves. The best SAT prep course (a test designed to assess high school students' readiness for college) in the world is reading to your children in bed when they're young. Eventually, if it's a wonderful experience for them, they'll start reading on their own. (Jim Trelease, 2017)

2. Identifying Emerging Character Traits

Research focusing on character building in the school environment is also evident in findings that show simple, repeated habits such as arriving on time, taking turns with classroom duties, and following school rules can instill consistent discipline in students' lives. Support from the school environment including the teacher's role as a role model, a conducive school culture, and facilities that support learning is a crucial factor in strengthening the process of character internalization. These three aspects habits, experiences, and environment interact with one another and form a comprehensive character education system. In conclusion, effective character education in fostering discipline and a sense of responsibility cannot be merely theoretical; it must be built through consistent and collaborative concrete practices within the school environment. (Zahra Nadyanda A & Ibnu Muthi, 2025) . As quoted in the Guide to Developing Projects to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile: "Indonesian students are lifelong learners who are competent, possess strong character, and behave in accordance with the values of Pancasila." This further reinforces the role of character education as a key component of the Ministry of Education and Culture's programs since 2021 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021).

The focus of this study is on strengthening students' character through a read-aloud technique based on Islamic stories, designed as a character education tool for early childhood education students, including those in elementary school. The primary focus is on teaching responsibility, patience, honesty, and independence. This study emphasizes how read-aloud activities conducted by teachers based on Islamic stories can instill good character values in students, thereby serving as one method for character building in schools/madrasahs. The subjects involved in this study were 27 students in grades 1, 2, and 3 at a Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, categorized as early readers aged 6–8 years (B-1), 7–9 years (B-2), and 8–10 years (B-3). Readers at these levels require scaffolding, and children are able to read texts consisting of words/phrases with combinations of letter sounds, clauses, and simple sentences. Teachers act as scaffolding in read-aloud activities. Teachers not only read the story aloud but also use specific intonation, expressions, and emphasis to help students understand the story's content and the moral values contained within it.

The author's findings from this study revealed that of the 27 students who participated in the read-aloud activity four times, using four books with different titles from the Good Character Series, it was found that the students listened attentively, actively responded (by asking and answering questions), and the majority of students were more focused on listening to the story. This technique captured the students' attention when the teacher read with intonation, expression, and emphasis, thereby helping students understand the plot, so that they could name the characters and objects in the book. It was observed that the teacher engaged in dialogue during the reading process. Following the read-aloud session, the teacher posed three questions with answers derived from the book and three additional questions whose content was not directly from the book but was related to the students' daily lives. The following is an overview of the research findings regarding the implementation of the read-aloud process at the school:

Tabel 2. The Implementation Process of Story-Based Read-Aloud Activities Based on Islamic Stories

Activity Phase	Teacher Activities	Student Responses
Pra read aloud	Preparing the book, setting the mood, giving an introduction	The students are ready and focused as they listen to the story
During read-aloud sessions (Interaction during reading)	Reading with intonation, expression, and emphasis Ask a question	The students are ready and focused as they listen to the story The students enthusiastically answered the teacher's questions.
Pasca read aloud	Ask 3 questions based on the text and 3 contextual questions.	Students can answer the questions well.
Vocabulary building	Explaining the meanings and examples of new words found in the storybook	Students learn new vocabulary and understand the meanings of those words.

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that the success of the read-aloud technique in this study is attributable to the systematic implementation of its stages.

Tabel 3. Character Development Indicators Derived from Storybooks

Character Values	Character Values	Findings
Responsibility	Performing duties well	The students completed the bookish play assignment well, within the allotted time.
Patience	Wait your turn and don't disturb others	The students remained calm when asked to line up to use supplies such as glue during a bookish play activity following a read-aloud session.
	Students don't give up easily when doing their homework	Complete the bookish play activity: glue the separate pictures.
Honesty	Answer the question based on your own understanding	The students answered the questions without cheating or whispering to their classmates
Independent	Answering questions without relying on friends	Students are able to answer the teacher's questions on their own

The research data presented in Table 3 are the results of the researcher's observations regarding the forms of character building that emerged during read-aloud activities conducted at MIS DDI Lipu Majene. These findings demonstrate that this technique serves as one of the methods teachers use in schools to foster character development through Islamic children's storybooks, specifically the Good Character series, which includes four titles: Responsibility, Patience, Honesty, and Independence, authored by dr. Avie Andriyani. Read-aloud is a simple technique that influences students' increased focus on listening to the story, supported by the expressions the teacher displays while reading aloud, resulting in improved student focus and comprehension of the story being read. The questions posed by the teacher after reading aloud were also correctly answered by the students in turn. Another study

supporting these findings regarding character-building efforts in schools is the research conducted by Nurul Aisah Lailatuz Zuhriyah, which explains that the storytelling method not only enhances students' imagination, but also instills character values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect for parents. Storytelling allows students to understand life values in a contextual and enjoyable way, and fosters emotional engagement in the learning process. Although there are challenges such as differences in student interests and a limited supply of locally relevant stories, teachers are able to address these with creative and adaptive approaches. Thus, the storytelling method using folk tales has proven effective as a means of character education at the elementary school level (Zuhriyah & Fradana, 2025) The findings of this study underscore the important role of schools as a foundation for building students' character.

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In line with this explanation, an opinion piece written by Nanang Qosim, M.Ed., titled "Strengthening National Character Through Home and School" and published in

the Mata Bania newspaper, highlights the fact that humans are beings endowed with multiple intelligences that are often overlooked, and that schools shape students in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains yet these aspects are frequently neglected. Schools, teachers, and students are flocking to organize tutoring sessions to pass exams in subjects that have already been predetermined (Qasim, 2022) In the author's view, schools should not focus solely on cognitive development but also instill positive character traits that become an integral part of students' identities well into adulthood. Given issues like this, teachers need to consider finding innovative methods or approaches to foster character development from an early age.

This study serves as an effective solution for character building. In addition to the research, children's story literacy initiatives were also implemented through community service activities, one of which was a community service article published in the Depati Journal, explaining that the objective of these activities was to enhance soft skills, particularly in terms of appreciation for children's literature. The results of the activity indicate that: First, some children still struggle with reading, particularly with compound sentences. Second, picture books help children understand complex sentences and story content during independent reading sessions. Third, children are able to appreciate children's literature through picture books. Fourth, independent reading has become a mandatory activity before the regular learning program at the Hope Central Surabaya shelter. (Trihastutie, 2023) Studies on children's literacy play a significant role in various fields not only in education, for the purpose of improving literacy, but also in character development from an early age.

CONCLUSION

The strengthening of students' character through read-aloud techniques based on Islamic stories has been achieved and aligns with the research findings and discussion. Read-aloud activities conducted consistently, with the active support of teachers acting as scaffolding, have proven effective in fostering character values such as responsibility, patience, honesty, and independence in students. This is evident from the increased focus, active engagement, and students' ability to understand and respond to the story content, including answering inferential questions effectively. Thus, there is a strong alignment between the initial research expectations and the empirical findings in the field. Furthermore, these research results open opportunities for further development, both in terms of the variety of Islamic story media used and the integration of digital technology to expand the reach and appeal of read-aloud activities. Future studies could focus on measuring the long term impact on students' character development, as well as applying this method to different educational levels or more diverse school contexts. With these expectations, the Islamic story-based read-aloud technique has the potential

to become a sustainable and adaptive character education model in elementary education settings, particularly in Majene Regency.

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