

# Islamic Religious Education in Montessori Preschool

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**Abstract.** This research is based on the importance of developing Islamic Montessori model for religious education learning in Montessori Preschool. The aim of this research is to analyze Islamic religious Education in Montessori Preschool. This article is a preliminary research and development study that orchestrates ADDIE model which consists of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. For this preliminary research and development stage, this research focuses on need and context analysis, literature review, and conceptual theory development. The result of need and context analysis showed that most teachers tend to use conventional model in the learning process. Thus, students have never been involved in Islamic religious education learning activity using the Islamic Montessori model. To strengthen the research findings, the researchers decided to conduct a field research at the Kalyca Azzahra Montessori Preschool. The field research suggested that Islamic religious education is oriented towards the end result without being accompanied by a clear lesson plan process. Moreover, the teachers were not provided with a guidance book according to Islamic Montessori model.

**Keywords:** Islamic Montessori, Islamic Religious Education, Preschool

## 1 Introduction

Currently, the development of educational institutions for early childhood, which is often referred to as preschool, is also accompanied by the emergence of various learning methods, one of them is Montessori. In Indonesia, the development of this method is quite significant, although no definite data supports this assumption, many parents choose to send their children to preschool educational institutions that apply this method in their learning [1]. This interest has resulted in many schools joining and using the Montessori label in their educational institutions without fully understanding how this method should actually be applied in teaching and learning activities. On the other hand, Islamic Montessori Preschool then incorporates religious education into learning so that it can be accepted by Muslim community who are looking for Islamic schools for their children.

Montessori designs its basic curriculum to be used appropriately and effectively in a structured environment. Children in the structured environment are free to explore and choose materials that will be used in their activities. In its application, Montessori uses teaching aids known as Montessori apparatus and is a unique characteristic of the Montessori method that is not owned by other schools [2]. Montessori also has something different from other learning models in providing a learning environment for children [3]. The learning environment is mandatory and is also the main capital to apply the Montessori method. The commonly used term for this learning environment is called "Prepared Environment" [4]. It is Maria Montessori's concept which presumes that learning environment can be designed to facilitate

maximum independent learning and exploration by children. It includes four characteristics namely physical environment, aesthetic environment, intellectual environment and social and emotional environment [5]. The prepared environment gives each child the freedom to fully develop their unique potential according to their development [6]. The material ranges are from concrete to abstract, which is adapted to the age and ability of each child in five areas namely exercises of practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language and literacy, and cultural studies[7]. The materials provided are arranged in learning modules according to the area and are taught by an educator who has been previously trained [8]. Another uniqueness of the Montessori method is that students are the center of learning. This is believed by Montessori because a child is a master of the actions and exercises he does [9]. The teacher himself in a Montessori class is known as the Director or Directress who acts as a facilitator, observer of children's development and the work they do and prepares the learning environment before the child starts his work. Based on the conditions described above, researchers are interested in conducting preliminary research on Islamic studies conducted at Montessori Preschool. This research can be used as a reference to develop Islamic Montessori model for Religious area in Montessori Preschool.

## **2 Literature Review**

Previous research are descriptions of similar research that has been done previously related to Montessori. The previous studies is used by researchers to compile and elaborate concepts, theories or models that are tested to position the research being conducted. The first research is a study conducted by Shamiemah Jasiem entitled "Montessori and Religious Education in Western Cape Preschools" [10]. The study was conducted in four Montessori preschools with different religious approaches; Christianity, Islam, Judaism and non-denominational in the Western Cape region, South Africa. Each preschool follows the guidelines and decides what values to focus on in religious education, according to the adhered beliefs. This study found that the Montessori method can be applied to teach religious practices, while the problem of learning about faith and God's love need to be investigated further, especially in terms of its delivery which tends to be done through a lecture strategy. Second, the journal article written by Aprilian Ria Adisti, "The Combination of Islamic Concepts with the Montessori Method in Building Children's Character" [11]. This study describes the combination of Islamic concepts and Montessori methods and finds that there are five conformities in Montessori education and Islamic education, namely the principle of freedom and the arrangement of the Montessori environment (physical environment and aesthetic environment). This previous study was used by the researcher to compile and elaborate the concepts, theories or models being tested to position the research being carried out. The researcher decided to fill the gap that had not been done by previous researchers to further examine the integration and harmony of Montessori education with Islamic education, in terms of environmental management for children's social and emotional development.

### 3 Theoretical Basis

#### 3.1 Islamic Religious Education for Preschool

Children at the aged of 4 to 6 years are part of early childhood which is terminologically referred to as preschool students [12]. Early childhood is a child who is in a unique growth and development process. They have certain pattern of growth and development, either in their intelligence, spiritual, social-emotional, or language and communication [13]. The preschool period is a vital period, where religious control, knowledge of good and bad things, spiritual conscience, moral, and social awareness of a child begins to form [14]. Islamic Religious Education is an effort to foster and nurture students to understand Islamic teachings as a whole. Therefore, it is important to understand its goals which will ultimately be practiced and made as a way of life [15]. Abdullah Nashih Ulwan said that the most important responsibility and concern for Islam is the responsibility of educators towards children who are entitled to receive direction, teaching, and education from them. Educators referred to parents and teachers in formal and non-formal schools [16]. Nasyih Ulwan argues that children are like white clean paper that are free from any scratches [17]. It is educators who educate children and shape their personalities according to what is taught, exemplified, and accustomed to them [18]. As educators for children, parents and teachers must know what aspects of education must be considered.

In Islamic teachings there are three basic things that should be given in the early childhood namely: *aqidah*, worship, and morality [19]. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia In the *Raudhatul Athfal* curriculum stated that, there are 6 development aspects of Islamic teaching: 1) Al Qur'an, 2) Hadith, 3) Faith, 4) Worship, 5) Morals, funds, 6) Islamic stories [20]. Meanwhile, Nashih Ulwan explained that there are 7 aspects that must be introduced to children, including Faith education, Moral education, Physical education, Intellectual education, Psychological education, Social education, and the concept of sexual education [21]. The concept of learning Islamic Religious Education for early childhood is in the form of habituation of religious and moral values [22]. In the Indonesian Ministry of Education's regulation number 137 of 2014, it is stated that the Standards of Children Development Achievement Levels (STPPA), known as the minimum criteria regarding children's development qualifications for religious and moral values, and core competencies, incorporate knowing the adhered religion, ways of worshiping, honest behaviour, helping others, being polite, respectful, sportsmanship, maintaining personal and environmental hygiene, religious holidays, how to live a healthy life, and respecting (being tolerant toward) other religions [23]. There are four educational methods that can be applied for children in this context, namely education by example, education by habit, education by advice, and education by giving attention [21].

#### 3.2 Islamic Montessori

Islamic Montessori involves general Montessori education through Islamic values and thoughts [24]. A learning approach that uses the entire Montessori area with a focus on aspects of the spiritual development of Islam in every activity, instilling values, and fostering an understanding of faith in every activity undertaken by children is important in applying the Islamic Montessori method [25]. Islamic Montessori is the use of Montessori learning to bring children closer to the Creator, Allah *Subhanahu wa ta'ala*, in their learning process [26]. Montessori education and Islamic education are two different things. Islamic education comes

from the Creator, Allah *Subhanahuwata'ala*, which is derived from the al-Qur'an and As Sunnah. While Montessori education is purely human thought which is the result of research and personal observations of Maria Montessori, the first female doctor in Italy, [27]. Islamic education is a guidance or conscious leadership by educators on the physical and spiritual development of students towards the formation of their true personality (*Insan Kamil*) [28]. Montessori education is to assist children in acquiring the social skills and self-confidence needed to fulfill their own potential [29]. This is achieved by building interest, cultivating enthusiasm, and providing activities that are tailored to individual needs. To integrate Montessori education and Islamic education, it is necessary to rearrange the Montessori model into something new so that the model becomes an Islamic Montessori model that will help a child become a good Muslim and a noble-hearted human being [30]. Montessori schools can be owned or operated independently, privately or by government, or religiously based institutions [31]. Some of the Montessori schools decided to adapt Montessori principles and techniques for teaching religion to suit their immediate beliefs [32]. Those who successfully integrate religious and Montessori education focus on encouraging religious learning through hands-on experience and children's active participation in learning[33].

#### 4 Research Methods

Preliminary research of this study is the stage of ADDIES's model [34]. The detail procedure of activities carried out on this research is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Preliminary Research Stage

Stage	Research Analysis	Activity Description
Analysis	Need and Context Analysis	The initial investigation of the need for the Islamic Montessori model through preliminary research, Literature study and field study
	Theoretical and concept analysis	Analyzing the learning model that is used previously; Analyzing the objectives and contents of Preschool education on Islamic Religious Education subject
	Design of theoretical and conceptual framework	Design a conceptual and theoretical framework for the Islamic Montessori model for Preschool

Qualitative data consists of questionnaire results, discussions, observations and semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers at Kalyca Azzahra Islamic Montessori Preschool. Interviews were conducted to find out the implementation of Islamic Montessori Learning Model for Islamic studies and also the needs and expectations of the implementation of Islamic studies in accordance with the Islamic Montessori learning model. Qualitative data analysis in this study includes data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusion [35], and the application of the Scientific Software ATLAS.ti tool. Technically, as the data were collected, and reduced, the researcher performs coding in order to make separations. The process is continuously carried out after field work until the report is complete. The following is a coding chart for Islamic religious education using the Islamic Montessori model. Qualitative data were also obtained when the researcher observed learning in the classroom and saw students' responses to religious learning given by the classroom teacher.

## **5 Result and Discussions**

### **5.1 Need and Context Analysis**

At this stage of the analysis, the researchers conducted preliminary research before the Islamic Montessori model was developed to find out how Montessori Preschools implement Islamic Religious Education. Researchers distributed questionnaires to teachers working in Montessori Preschools. About 50 questionnaires were distributed around Jakarta, South Tangerang and Depok areas. The results of the preliminary research showed that almost half (52%) of the sample stated that they did not have an area of religious education known as the prepared environment. Furthermore, 65% of the respondents stated that the area of religious education was not equipped with teaching media like other Montessori areas. Likewise, 50% of the sample stated that they did not have a teachers' guidebook in the area of religious education, while the remaining 50% had a guidebook. Interestingly, when they were asked whether the guidebook met the criteria of the Montessori model, 83.8% of the sample said that the guidebook did not meet the criteria for the model.

Following that, Researchers conducted intensive research at Kalyca Azzahra Islamic Montessori Preschool located in Depok, West Java. The field study was carried out from January to March 2020 to obtain an initial picture regarding the existing conditions associated with; a) the learning process of Islamic Religious Education at Islamic Montessori Preschool, b) learning models applied in Islamic religious education, c) to know more about the curriculum used by the preschool, including the lesson plan process, learning implementation, and evaluation, d) the potential possessed by educational institutions, both self-potential and environmental potential. This research used Qualitative data analysis where data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing using ATLAS Scientific Software tool. As data collection proceeds, the data were then reduced, coded in order to make separations. The process is continuously carried out after field work, until the report is complete. The researchers created big themes in accordance with the interview results. The researchers then categorized the question variables so that when the interview was conducted they were able to dig deeper information. The category are (a) The process of planning Islamic religious education learning, (b) The process

of implementing Islamic religious education learning, (c) Learning contents and teaching media, (d) Delivery methods and interaction processes in learning, and, (e) Evaluation of the learning process. The researcher placed data units on how the respondents define the setting or topic being asked under each code. From the interview results, needs analysis of the development of Islamic Montessori learning models, observations, and document analysis, it can be concluded that there are various problems in the research site, as described in the table below:

**Table 2.** The Results of the Interpretation of Islamic Religious Education at Kalyca Azzahra Islamic Montessori Preschool

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Lesson Plan process	Lesson Plan includes objectives, activities, and materials. The evaluation of Islamic studies is not carried out properly because there is no teaching guide for Religious Education in the Islamic Montessori Model. Teachers do not do lesson plan and only rely on the availability of kindergarten Islamic religious education package books purchased from bookstores.
Learning Implementation Process	Kalyca Azzahra Islamic Montessori Preschool applies the principle of combining ages in one class according to Montessori which is known as vertical grouping class. But it does not apply the principle of freedom in the implementation of learning. The learning process is carried out conventionally where the teacher becomes the center of learning and dominates the class. Learning activities are carried out in the indoor playroom because there is no Islamic Studies area. Moreover, the knowledge of the educators about the Islamic Montessori Model in the area of religious education is limited. Islamic Studies activities rely heavily on textbooks purchased and equipped with worksheets as a companion.
Learning contents and teaching media	Learning contents were obtained from Islamic studies Package Books for Kindergarten, its purchased at bookstores. The material revolves around the pillars of faith, the pillars of Islam and the cultivation of good behavior towards children. The package book comes with a Student Worksheet. Montessori apparatus for Religious Education is very limited so that religious education learning is not equipped with sufficient teaching media.
Methods and Learning Interaction	The learning method is given through lectures and then followed by giving written assignments in the form of student worksheets. The intensity of the demonstration/practice method on students is rarely carried out. Both Indonesian and English are used as the language of instruction.
Evaluation and Assessment of Learning Outcomes	Evaluation of student learning outcomes is carried out through an ability test which is carried out two weeks before progress report distribution. There are no assessment indicators. Reporting on learning outcomes is

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carried out in two types, the first is oral report which is submitted every three months and the second is written report which is carried out every semester.

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From the table above, it can be concluded that the Islamic religious education learning process at Kalyca Azzahra Islamic Montessori Preschool does not optimally incorporate the criteria of a Montessori Preschool.

- 1) The application of the learning model in the implementation of teaching and learning activities is still monotonous and conventional. Islamic religious education learning activities are still carried out through lectures, which are more unilateral and are not involving students to interact with each other. From the results of interviews conducted with the Preschool Principals and teachers, it was revealed that in general they really want to improve their attitudes, knowledge and skills, especially in the process of better learning outcomes. However, many factors have caused the failure, including the unavailability of Islamic religious education guidance book for teachers in the Islamic Montessori Model.
- 2) Lack of special designs in learning activities that can involve students in the learning process. The results of the analysis on the actual conditions of the learning model carried out, as well as the results of the needs analysis of the development of learning models, showed that it is necessary to design an Islamic Montessori model that can improve student learning outcomes. The development of Islamic Montessori model is expected to be implemented effectively and efficiently.
- 3) The learning process of Islamic studies is not running optimally for students, due to teachers' lack of knowledge on Islamic Montessori knowledge and the unavailability of a religious area (prepared environment) in the Islamic Montessori model.

To strengthen what has been obtained during class observations, the researchers then analyzed the learning documents of Islamic religious education. It was found that learning process were carried out without conducting analysis of learning needs. As the result, the carried out learning did not reach the intended target because students who took part in learning did not necessarily match their needs and potential in accordance with the principles of learning the Montessori model. Teachers also do not have a learning guide book that supports Montessori characteristics. Based on the conditions, researchers interested in exploring and developing Islamic Montessori models for the area of Islamic religious education for preschool children, as well as a guidebook for implementing Islamic Montessori in religious area for preschool.

## **5.2 Theoretical and conceptual analysis**

The design of theoretical and conceptual framework are based on the needs and context analysis, in terms of analyzing theories and concepts related to the model. The theories that support the Islamic Montessori model in Preschool Islamic religious education learning are developed, including Montessori theory, Islamic Education theory, cognitiveistic learning theory, behavioristic learning theory and learning theories relevant to the Islamic Montessori model for Preschool Islamic religious education learning.

## 6 Conclusion

The learning process of Islamic religious education has not been implemented optimally at Kalyca Azzahra Islamic Montessori Preschool. Islamic religious education was oriented towards the end result without doing the lesson plan process. The teachers also did not formulate the learning objectives specifically and there was no availability for learning achievement criteria. The teachers delivered material in the learning process using conventional learning methods such as Islamic studies activities and mostly carried out through lecture method. The teachers still dominated the class activities. Students still had difficulties in expressing their wants when the teachers asked questions. Students were involved in class activities at a minimum level, they felt bored and sometimes were distracted. Educators rarely used demonstration or practical methods in learning. The results of this study will be used by researchers to conduct further research to develop the Islamic Montessori models for religious area for preschoolers.

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