

Imagology-Based Ulama Narratives in the Development of Children's Storybooks on Islamic Economics

Firza Agung Prakoso ^{1*}, Tristan Rokhmawan ¹, Reviandy Azhar Ramdhani ¹ Ahmad Faqih Abdillah ¹, Dahliana Kamener ²

¹ Universitas PGRI Wiranegara, Indonesia

² University Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia

 firzaagungprakoso@gmail.com*

Abstract

The city of Pasuruan possesses a rich heritage of local ulama narratives preserved in the collective memory of the community that reflect the practice of Islamic economics in everyday life. Nevertheless, these narratives have not yet been systematically utilized as literacy media for children. This study aims to examine the representation of Islamic economic imagology in the narratives of local ulama in Pasuruan, to develop these narratives into illustrated children's storybooks, and to analyze the acceptability of the books as Islamic economic literacy media for children. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using narrative and imagological analysis, followed by the development of an illustrated storybook product. The acceptability test was conducted through questionnaires administered to children as the primary readers, supported by evaluations from parents, teachers, and learning facilitators. The findings indicate that local ulama narratives construct exemplary images of role models who represent Islamic economic values in a contextual and grounded manner. The imagological approach allows ulama to be presented as inspirational figures closely connected to children's realities, enabling Islamic economic values to be internalized through storytelling experiences. The developed illustrated storybooks demonstrate a high level of acceptability in terms of content comprehension, language, illustration, and value messaging. This study contributes to the development of a narrative-based model of Islamic economic literacy for children through the integration of imagology, storytelling, and local wisdom as an alternative, engaging, and educational value-learning approach.

Keywords: Islamic Economics, Ulama Narratives Children's Storybooks, Local Wisdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received

January 12, 2026

Revised

March 29, 2026

Accepted

April 30, 2026

Published by

Website

ISSN

Copyright



CV. Creative Tugu Pena

<https://attractivejournal.com/index.php/bpr/>

2775-2305

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INTRODUCTION

Strengthening Islamic economic literacy in children from an early age is an important foundation for character formation and the development of fundamental life values. At the early stages of growth, children are in a psychological condition that is highly receptive to learning processes that are imaginative, contextual, and oriented toward role modeling. Therefore, the use of narrative media such as stories, characters, and visual illustrations becomes an effective means of bridging children's understanding of abstract concepts, making them more concrete and easier to comprehend. However, in educational practice, the teachings of Islamic economics covering principles such as halal and haram, honesty, trustworthiness, justice, and blessing are still often delivered through

normative and theoretical approaches. As a result, their delivery tends to be less aligned with children's learning characteristics and the realities of their daily experiences (Ernayani et al., 2024; Irlina, 2023; Istianah & Nugroho, 2024; Pandia et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, the City of Pasuruan possesses a rich cultural heritage in the form of narratives about ulama that are deeply embedded in the collective memory of the community and passed down from generation to generation. These narratives not only contain religious and spiritual values but also reflect concrete practices of Islamic economics, such as ethical trade, the rejection of *maisir* (gambling), responsibility in work, and social concern through acts of sharing. Unfortunately, this wealth of local ulama narratives has not been widely studied academically nor systematically utilized as a medium for Islamic economic literacy for children (Afnani, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2019; Rokhmawan et al., 2020, 2024; Syawaludin, 2020).

Within this framework, the imagological approach is considered an appropriate strategy to present the learning of Islamic economic values in a way that aligns with the world of children. Imagology is understood as a process of constructing the image of a figure that functions as both a representation of values and a role model. Through this approach, ulama are not merely positioned as historical figures or religious symbols, but are presented as living characters who are close to children's daily experiences and easy to emulate through contextual narratives and visualizations. Thus, Islamic economic values are not taught dogmatically but are internalized through children's emotional and imaginative engagement with the stories.

This study is built upon the integration of four main theoretical foundations, namely Islamic economic literacy for children, narrative-based learning, the imagological approach, and the utilization of local wisdom. Islamic economic literacy for children is understood as an effort to shape economic character while instilling fundamental values such as honesty, trustworthiness, justice, and social responsibility from an early age (Hassan et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2022). Previous studies indicate that these values are more easily accepted by children when delivered through narrative approaches. Through storytelling, children are able to access abstract concepts via imagination, symbolic experience, and emotional engagement with story characters (Herman et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2023).

In this context, imagology functions as an approach that emphasizes the consistent construction of exemplary figures. Thus, ulama are not merely positioned as religious figures, but are presented as personifications of Islamic economic values that are closely related to children's daily realities (Leerssen et al., 2021; Syukron et al., 2025). Furthermore, the use of local ulama narratives as part of local wisdom strengthens the relevance of learning, as Islamic economic values are conveyed contextually in accordance with the social environment in which children grow and interact (Widodo et al., 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2023).

Islamic economic literacy can be defined as an individual's ability to recognize, evaluate, and apply Islamic economic principles in everyday life. These principles include honesty, trustworthiness, justice, social responsibility, as well as an understanding of *halal* and *haram* concepts and the notion of *barakah* (blessing). In the context of children's education, Islamic economic literacy is not oriented toward mastering formal economic theories, but rather emphasizes character formation and the internalization of moral values from an early age (Asnita et al., 2024). Recent findings suggest that introducing Islamic economic values to children is more effective when conducted through contextual and experiential approaches rather than purely normative or conceptual methods (Suyanto et al., 2023). Children tend to interpret economic values as part of social and moral practices encountered in their daily lives. Therefore, the development of Islamic economic literacy must be aligned with children's cognitive and affective development stages. Recent studies also highlight the importance of integrating economic education

with character education, where spiritual, moral, and social dimensions are viewed as inseparable (Maidugu et al., 2024).

Storytelling or narrative-based learning is widely recognized as an effective method in early childhood education, as it integrates cognitive, emotional, and moral aspects simultaneously. Contemporary research emphasizes that narratives have the power to shape readers' ways of thinking and behavior through processes of identification with characters and storylines (Rana, 2024). Narrative-based learning provides children with opportunities to understand abstract values through concrete experiences presented in stories. The presence of exemplary characters enables children to internalize values naturally without feeling instructed, making the learning process both enjoyable and meaningful (Banner & Cannon, 2017). In Islamic education, storytelling has proven effective in instilling moral and spiritual values, as it presents examples of behavior aligned with religious teachings in a simple and accessible form (Faizin & Helandri, 2023). In addition, illustrated storybooks play a strategic role in enhancing children's literacy and value comprehension, as visual elements help connect textual narratives with real-life experiences (Nurhayati et al., 2022).

Imagology, as an analytical approach, focuses on the construction of character images through narrative representation. In literary and educational studies, imagology views characters not merely as reflections of reality, but as symbolic constructions carrying values, ideologies, and moral messages (Leerssen, 2017). Contemporary research has further developed imagology as a relevant approach in character education, particularly in presenting exemplary figures who can serve as behavioral references for young readers (Wesseling, 2019). Through an imagological approach, characters are consistently constructed to represent specific values, allowing their image to function as a medium for indirect value internalization. In the context of Islamic economics, imagology enables the delivery of economic values through the actions and behaviors of characters rather than through theoretical explanations. This aligns with findings indicating that children are more likely to imitate characters' behavior than to understand abstract concepts directly (Hodges et al., 2018).

In Islamic society, ulama hold a significant position as moral, spiritual, and social figures. In children's narratives, ulama characters function not only as religious symbols but also as representations of life values, including Islamic economic principles. Recent studies show that the presence of religious figures in children's stories contributes to strengthening the moral and spiritual identity formation of young readers (Rashid Said Al Mushaiqri & Sulistio, 2024). Through narrative approaches, ulama can be depicted as figures closely connected to children's daily lives, such as in trading, working, or social interactions. Such representations help children understand that Islamic economic values are not merely abstract concepts but practical behaviors applicable in everyday life (Leany & Ahnan 'Azzam, 2024). Studies on narrative identity further emphasize that stories play a crucial role in helping individuals, including children, integrate cultural and religious values into their personal identity structures (McLean & Syed, 2016).

Local wisdom serves as a contextual source of values that are closely related to children's lived experiences. Recent studies demonstrate that local wisdom-based learning enhances the relevance of teaching materials, student engagement, and children's understanding of the values being taught (Amalia et al., 2022). Narratives of local ulama, which are embedded in the collective memory of communities, contain authentic moral and economic values, making them effective sources of literacy. In the context of Islamic economic literacy, utilizing local wisdom through ulama narratives enables children to learn Islamic economic values in a more grounded and socially relevant manner. This approach aligns with the principles of contextual learning, which emphasize the connection between learning materials and learners' real-life experiences (Baharun et al., 2022).

Based on this perspective, this study is directed at examining how Islamic economic values are represented through an imagological approach in the narratives of local ulama stories in the City of Pasuruan, developing these narratives into illustrated children's storybooks as a literacy medium, and analyzing the level of acceptance of imagology-based Islamic economic storybooks among children by involving parents, teachers, and facilitators as supporting parties.

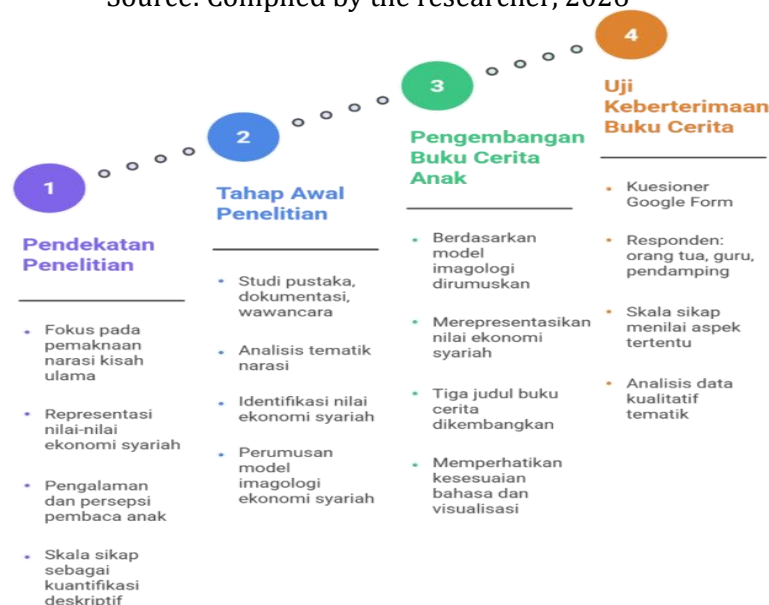
Theoretically, this study is grounded in narrative-based child education, which emphasizes the power of stories in shaping readers' ways of thinking and behavior through processes of identification with characters (Wojtyna, 2018), storytelling practices, the concept of imagology as the construction of exemplary figures (Muzakki & Irham, 2021), Islamic economic literacy in the context of children's education, and learning approaches based on local wisdom. Storytelling methods have proven effective in early childhood education, not only in developing language skills and emotional aspects but also as a means of internalizing moral and spiritual values. Islamic storytelling enables children to understand values through simple and easily followed characters and plotlines, so that stories function not merely as entertainment but also as a medium for value education.

Based on this perspective, this study aims to examine how Islamic economic values are represented through an imagological approach in the narratives of local ulama stories in the City of Pasuruan, to develop these narratives into illustrated children's storybooks as literacy media, and to analyze the level of acceptance of imagology-based Islamic economic storybooks among children by involving parents, teachers, and facilitators as supporting actors. Through the process of identification with ulama figures in the stories, children are expected to absorb economic and moral values in an inspirational, rather than merely informational, manner, in line with the concept of narrative identity which views stories as a medium for integrating cultural values into the formation of individual identity.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a narrative study design. This approach is chosen because the research focuses on the interpretation of ulama narratives, the representation of Islamic economic values, and the experiences and perceptions of child readers toward the developed storybook. The use of an attitude scale in this study is not intended as a quantitative approach, but rather as a form of descriptive quantification to clarify the quality of acceptability levels across the aspects being examined.

Figure 1. Research Flow
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



This study was conducted through several stages. The initial stage involved exploring narratives of ulama stories in the City of Pasuruan through literature review, documentation, and interviews with relevant sources. The collected narratives were then analyzed thematically to identify Islamic economic values manifested in characters, plot, conflict, and resolution. The results of this analysis were subsequently used to formulate an imagology-based Islamic economic model grounded in narrative, which served as the foundation for developing literacy media.

Based on this model, three illustrated children's storybooks were developed, namely *The Wise Story of Mbah Dacin*, *Romo Kiai Hamid and the Gambler*, and *Kiai Sepuh and the Jackfruit Seller*. Furthermore, an acceptability test of the storybooks was conducted by involving parents, teachers, and child facilitators through an online questionnaire. An attitude scale was employed to capture respondents' evaluative tendencies regarding text readability, visual appeal, understanding of Islamic economic content, and the appropriateness of the story content. The data were analyzed qualitatively through processes of reduction, categorization, and thematic interpretation, while the scale results functioned as supporting data to enrich the descriptive quality of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) Imagological Representation of Islamic Economics in Local Ulama Narratives

The results of the narrative analysis of local ulama stories from Pasuruan City indicate that ulama figures are represented as role models who integrate spiritual, moral, and Islamic economic values in a contextual manner. Through an imagological approach, the image of ulama is not constructed abstractly or merely normatively, but rather as everyday economic actors who practice honesty, trustworthiness, justice, and social concern. This finding is in line with the concept of imagology, which views characters as symbolic constructions that carry particular values and ideologies within narratives (Djakfar, 2017).

In the story of Mbah Dacin, for instance, the practice of honesty in weighing and trading represents the principle of justice (*al-'adl*) in Islamic economics. This principle is consistent with the words of Allah SWT in *Al-Muthaffifin* verses 1–3, which condemn fraudulent practices in measurement and trade. This value also serves as a fundamental pillar in Islamic economic theory, which positions justice and honesty as prerequisites for achieving *barakah* (blessing) in economic transactions (*muamalah*) (Rokhmawan et al., 2022). This representation reinforces the image of ulama as guardians of market ethics and as symbols of social justice in the economic life of society.

Meanwhile, the story *Romo Kiai Hamid and the Gambler* presents a persuasive and humanistic approach in addressing deviant economic practices such as *maisir* (gambling). This approach reflects the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the protection of intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). The prohibition of *maisir* is explicitly stated in *Al-Ma'idah* verse 90, which emphasizes that gambling undermines moral and social order. In this context, ulama are represented not as punitive figures, but as agents of moral transformation, aligning with contemporary Islamic economic perspectives that emphasize rehabilitative approaches and social welfare.

Furthermore, the story *Kiai Sepuh and the Jackfruit Seller* represents the values of trustworthiness (*amanah*) and awareness of *barakah* in sustenance. The simple dialogue within the narrative highlights that economic gain is not solely measured in material terms, but also in moral and spiritual dimensions. This idea is consistent with a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), narrated by Al-Tirmidhi: "Indeed, the honest and trustworthy merchant will be with the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs." This value is also emphasized in Islamic economic studies, which assert that *barakah* is a

non-material dimension distinguishing Islamic economics from conventional economic systems.

2) Development of Illustrated Children's Storybooks

The development of illustrated children's storybooks in this study represents the applicative stage of the imagology-based Islamic economic model that has been formulated. The storybooks are not positioned merely as visual literacy products, but as narrative media that integrate imagery, characters, conflict, and educational resolution to instill Islamic economic values contextually in children. Through this approach, Islamic economic values are presented as narrative experiences that are easy to understand and closely related to children's world.

Illustrated storybooks are understood as multimodal literacy media that combine text, illustrations, and storyline to build a holistic understanding of values. Multimodal learning theory emphasizes that the combination of visual and verbal elements can enhance children's comprehension and retention of information, as cognitive and affective processes occur simultaneously (Bulut-Ozsezer & Canbazoglu, 2018). Therefore, the integration of illustrations that concretely represent characters' actions helps children connect abstract values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and justice with real-life situations that they can imagine and emulate in their daily lives.

Figure 2. Illustration from Romo Kiai Hamid and the Gambler
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



The three illustrated storybooks developed Romo Kiai Hamid and the Gambler, The Wise Story of Mbah Dacin, and Kiai Sepuh and the Jackfruit Seller each represent different yet complementary aspects of Islamic economic values. This approach aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that children acquire behavior through processes of observation and imitation of models perceived as relevant and positive (Bandura et al., 2021).

In Romo Kiai Hamid and the Gambler, the narrative focuses on the importance of seeking lawful (halal) sustenance and avoiding *maisir* (gambling). The story presents an ethical-economic conflict through gambling practices that promise instant gains but ultimately undermine blessing (*barakah*) and responsibility toward the family. Through the portrayal of Romo Kiai Hamid as a wise *ulama* figure, the storyline leads to an educational resolution in the form of advice, awareness, and behavioral change in the gambler character. Thus, children are introduced to the understanding that good sustenance is not measured by its quantity, but by its permissibility and its impact on family well-being.

This representation reinforces the imagological construction of ulama as agents of moral transformation and guardians of economic ethics within society. The full text of this book can be accessed via Google Books with ID 312IEQAAQBAJ.

Figure 3. Illustration from Mbah Dacin
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026

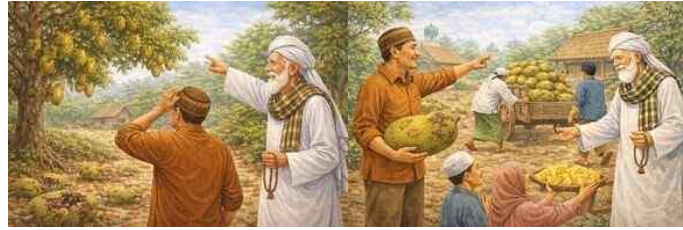


Meanwhile, *Kiai Sepuh and the Jackfruit Seller* highlights the agricultural economic context as a space for the application of Islamic economic values. In terms of narrative structure, the story development emphasizes a simple plot, moral conflicts that are close to children's daily lives, and resolutions that affirm the principles of Islamic economics. This approach is consistent with narrative theory, which states that stories with clear structures and strong characters facilitate children's processes of identification and value reflection (Herman et al., 2022).

In this story, Islamic economic values are not delivered explicitly or doctrinally, but are presented implicitly through the actions and dialogue of the characters. *Kiai Sepuh* is represented as an ulama figure who advises the community to adhere to religious teachings, particularly regarding the obligation to pay agricultural zakat and to share harvest yields as an expression of gratitude. The ethical-economic conflict arises when abundant agricultural output is not accompanied by awareness of zakat, and it is resolved through advice and changes in the characters' attitudes. Through this narrative, children are introduced to the concept of wealth distribution and the importance of sharing as an integral part of *barakah* (blessing) in sustenance. The full text of this book is available on Google Play Books with ID y12IEQAAQBAJ.

Figure 4. Illustration from *Kiai Sepuh and the Jackfruit Seller*
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026





Visually and linguistically, the three storybooks were developed using communicative illustrations and simple language. The visual elements function to strengthen the representation of characters and events, enabling children to understand the story not only through text but also through pictorial representations. The language used is adjusted to children's level of comprehension without reducing the substance of the Islamic economic values conveyed. Substantively, the Islamic economic values integrated into the storybooks include honesty in trade, trustworthiness in work, the prohibition of *maisir*, and awareness of *barakah* in lawful (*halal*) sustenance. The integration of these values refers to the fundamental principles of Islamic economics, which position justice and public welfare (*maṣlahah*) as the primary objectives of economic activities (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) (Chapra, 2020; Auda et al., 2020).

This narrative approach aligns with the view that Islamic economic literacy for children should focus on the formation of economic character rather than the mastery of technical terms or abstract concepts (Hassan et al., 2021). Therefore, these illustrated children's storybooks function as effective imagological media, as they present characters as living, concrete, and easily emulated figures of Islamic economic practice. In addition, the development of these storybooks integrates local wisdom through settings, characters, and social contexts that are familiar to children's lives. Contextual learning theory emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful when material is connected to learners' experiences and social environments (Widodo et al., 2022). By presenting narratives of local ulama from the City of Pasuruan, these storybooks serve not only as media for Islamic economic literacy but also as a means of transmitting cultural values and local identity to younger generations (Prakoso & Abd Adim, 2024).

3) Acceptability of Imagology-Based Islamic Economic Illustrated Storybooks

The results of the acceptability test indicate that imagology-based Islamic economic illustrated storybooks are well received by children as the primary readers, as well as by parents and teachers as facilitators. The friendly visualization of ulama characters, storylines that are closely related to daily life, and moral messages conveyed implicitly are the main factors contributing to the high level of acceptability. This finding is consistent with the study by Nurhayati et al. (2022), which states that illustrated storybooks are effective in enhancing value comprehension because they simultaneously activate children's cognitive and affective aspects.

From the perspective of Islamic economics, this level of acceptability demonstrates that Islamic economic literacy can be developed through cultural and narrative approaches without diminishing the substance of its values. This approach aligns with the view of Chapra (2020), who argues that Islamic economic education must be grounded in values, culture, and social realities in order to shape ethical and sustainable economic behavior (Prakoso, 2022).

The analysis of the acceptability of illustrated children's storybooks in this study aims to provide an overview of how children and their facilitators respond to the narratives, character illustrations, and Islamic economic values conveyed through the stories. Acceptability is not only understood as a measure of preference but also as an indicator of the extent to which the storybooks can be understood, enjoyed, and

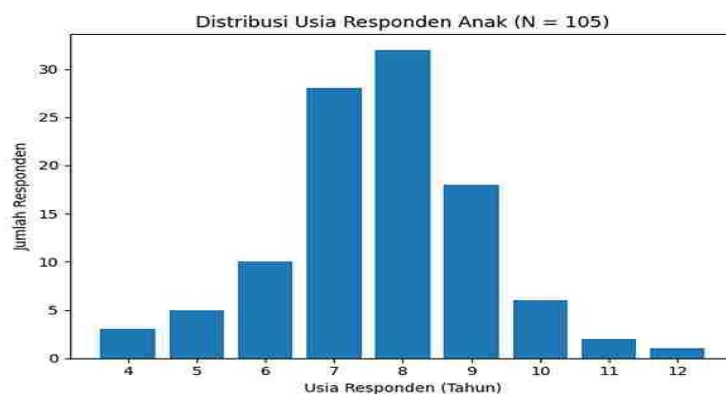
interpreted by child readers as meaningful literacy experiences. This finding is in line with user acceptance theory in educational media, which emphasizes that acceptability is influenced by ease of use, content relevance, and the level of connection to users' experiences (Churin In et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Islamic pedagogy, this acceptability can be explained through the concept of *tarbiyah bil qudwah* (education through role modeling). Islam places role modeling as a primary educational method, as emphasized in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 21, which states that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the best example (*uswatun hasanah*). In these storybooks, ulama characters are constructed as exemplary figures who practice Islamic economic values in their daily lives, making it easier for children to accept and emulate the conveyed values. This approach strengthens acceptability because values are not delivered in a didactic or prescriptive manner, but through concrete examples within the storyline.

In addition, the acceptability of the storybooks is influenced by the alignment of the conveyed values with children's *fitrah* (natural disposition). In Islamic educational perspective, children are viewed as beings endowed with an innate inclination toward goodness that must be nurtured and preserved (*hifz al-fitrah*). Narratives emphasizing honesty, trustworthiness, and social concern are consistent with this disposition, making the values more easily accepted at the affective level (Auda et al., 2020). This is also in line with Islamic economic studies that position moral values as the foundation of sustainable economic behavior (Chapra, 2020).

Evaluations provided by parents and teachers indicate that these storybooks are considered relevant as a medium for Islamic economic literacy because they are able to bridge Islamic economic concepts with language and life experiences familiar to children. This finding supports previous studies by Putri et al. (2023) and Nurhayati et al. (2022), which conclude that value-based religious illustrated storybooks achieve high levels of acceptability when narratives and visuals are designed in a contextual and simple manner.

Figure 5. Age Range of Respondents
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026

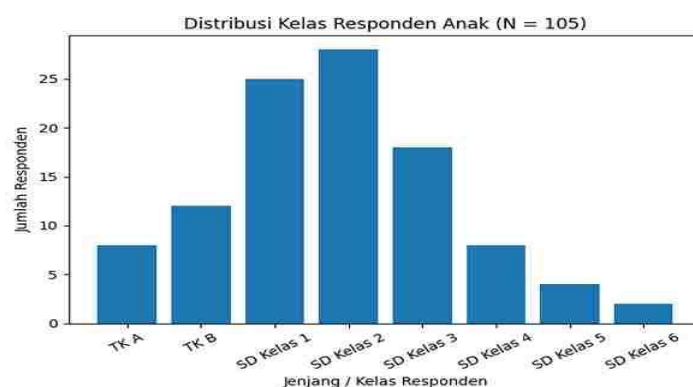


Based on the visualization in Figure 5, it can be seen that the child respondents involved in this study have a relatively wide age range. The bar chart shows that the study involved a total of 105 children aged 4–12 years. The age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the 7–9 age group, with the highest peak at age 8, followed by ages 7 and 9. In contrast, the number of respondents aged 4–6 and 10–12 is relatively smaller.

This distribution indicates that the illustrated children's storybooks developed were primarily tested on early elementary school-aged children, who are in the early concrete cognitive development stage. At this stage, children are generally able to

understand simple storylines, recognize characters, and grasp moral messages as well as economic values conveyed through narratives and illustrations. The dominance of the 7–9 age group further confirms that the developed literacy media is well aligned with the main target of the study, namely children in the early stages of developing value literacy and Islamic economic character.

Figure 6. Educational Level of Respondents
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026

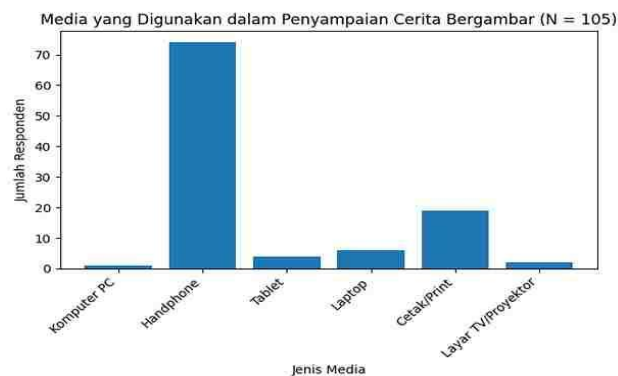


The diagram (Figure 6) shows that the respondents come from various educational levels, ranging from Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B to Grade 6 of elementary school. The class distribution indicates that the majority of respondents are in the early elementary school levels, particularly Grades 1 to 3, with the highest proportion in Grade 2, followed by Grades 1 and 3. Meanwhile, respondents from Kindergarten A and B are moderately represented, whereas upper elementary levels (Grades 4–6) show relatively lower participation.

This distribution is consistent with the age profile of respondents, which is dominated by children aged 7–9 who are typically in the early years of elementary education. At this developmental stage, children generally possess sufficient early literacy skills to follow simple storylines, recognize conflicts, and understand moral messages and Islamic economic values conveyed through narratives and illustrations. The presence of respondents from kindergarten levels also indicates that the illustrated storybooks can be understood visually and contextually by pre-literate children when accompanied by adults.

Thus, the diagram confirms that the developed literacy media is relevant for preschool to early elementary-aged children, in accordance with the objectives of the study and the characteristics of the target readers of imagology-based Islamic economic illustrated storybooks. This relevance in terms of age and educational level is further supported by questionnaire results, which show that the developed storybooks are generally well received by both children and their facilitators, including parents and teachers. The majority of respondents stated that the storylines are easy to understand and engaging. This ease of comprehension is closely related to the use of simple, coherent, and experience-based narratives. The stories are structured with clear conflicts and explicit educational resolutions, allowing children to follow the storyline without confusion or boredom.

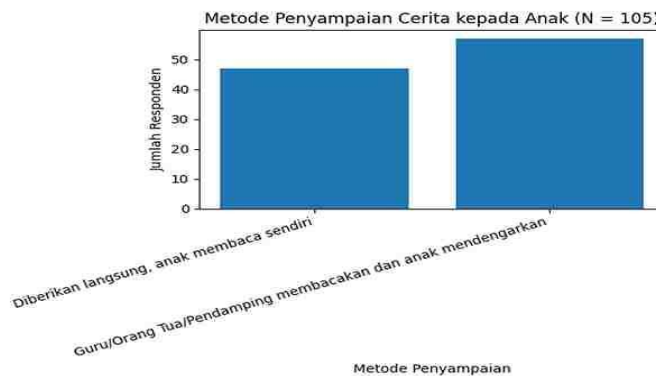
Figure 7. Media Used for Story Delivery
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



Based on the media usage diagram (Figure 7), it can be concluded that mobile phones are the most dominant medium used for delivering illustrated stories, with a total of 74 respondents. This finding indicates that practical and easily accessible personal digital devices have become the primary choice in supporting children’s literacy activities. In addition, print media is still used by a considerable number of respondents (19), suggesting that printed books remain relevant as a medium for children’s literacy, particularly in learning contexts that involve direct guidance from adults.

Meanwhile, the use of laptops, tablets, TV/projector screens, and desktop computers is relatively limited. This suggests that although larger screen-based media are available, storytelling activities for children tend to rely on flexible and easily usable media across various settings, both at home and in educational environments. Overall, these findings reinforce the conclusion that mobile-based digital media and print media serve as the main channels for supporting children’s Islamic economic literacy through illustrated storybooks.

Figure 8. Methods of Story Delivery
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



Based on the diagram of story delivery methods, it can be concluded that the read-aloud method performed by teachers, parents, or facilitators for children—is the most commonly used approach, with a total of 57 respondents. This method indicates that adult guidance continues to play a crucial role in children’s literacy activities, particularly for early childhood and early elementary school students. Meanwhile, 47 respondents reported delivering stories by directly providing books for children to read independently. This finding suggests that children’s early literacy skills have developed sufficiently to support independent reading activities, especially among elementary school-aged children.

Overall, these results highlight that literacy activities using illustrated storybooks occur through two complementary patterns: guided reading and independent reading, each adjusted to children’s developmental stages and literacy abilities.

Figure 9. Respondents’ Level of Understanding of the Illustrated Story Content
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



Based on the diagram (Figure 9) illustrating the level of ease in understanding the story content, the majority of respondents gave high ratings. A total of 61 respondents gave a score of 5 and 33 respondents gave a score of 4, indicating that the story content is perceived as easy to very easy for children to understand. Meanwhile, the number of respondents who gave low scores (1 and 2) is very limited. This finding suggests that the construction of the storyline, language use, and illustrations are well aligned with the cognitive developmental characteristics of children as the primary readers.

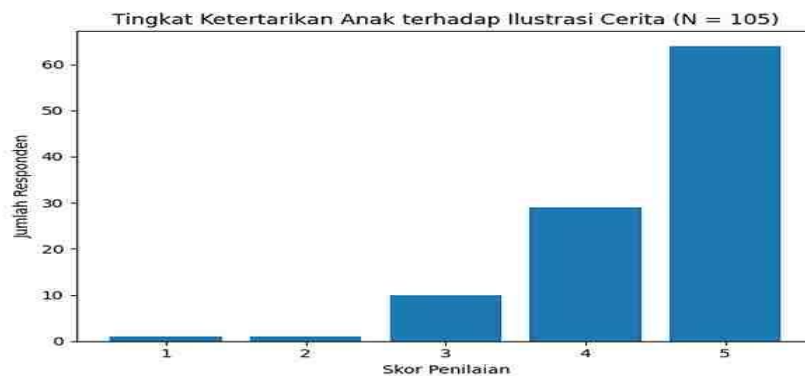
The high level of understanding indicates that the organization of the plot, the choice of language, and the presentation of messages have been carefully designed in accordance with children’s characteristics and cognitive development stages. The narrative is presented with a coherent structure, clear conflicts, and explicit, educational resolutions. Thus, children are able to follow the entire storyline without confusion or boredom while also grasping the intended value messages.

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The illustration aspect also received positive responses in supporting the understanding of the story content. Illustrations are considered helpful in enabling children to comprehend the plot and strengthen the representation of characters within the narrative. Visuals do not merely function as complements to the text but serve as a primary medium for conveying meaning, especially for children who do not yet fully rely on text-based reading skills. The presence of representative images allows children to connect the text with concrete situations, making the comprehension process more intuitive.

Overall, this analysis shows that the illustrated storybooks developed are not only easy to understand in terms of text but also successfully utilize the power of visuals as a primary medium for message delivery. The high level of understanding indicates that these books have strong readability and acceptability, and hold great potential as educational media for introducing Islamic economic values to children in a contextual and engaging manner.

Figure 10. Interest in Illustrated Storybooks
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



Based on the diagram (Figure 10) showing children's level of interest in story illustrations, the majority of respondents gave ratings in the high category. A total of 64 respondents gave a score of 5 and 29 respondents gave a score of 4, indicating that the illustrations in the storybooks are perceived as highly engaging and capable of increasing children's interest in reading. Meanwhile, the number of respondents who gave low scores (1 and 2) is very limited. This finding suggests that the visualization of characters and sequences of events in the illustrated storybooks aligns well with children's cognitive and emotional developmental characteristics.

The high level of interest indicates that illustrations function not only as aesthetic elements but also as essential components in supporting children's reading experiences. The visualization of characters, settings, and storylines is presented clearly and communicatively, allowing children to easily recognize characters and understand the situations depicted in the story. Engaging illustrations also help maintain children's focus and interest throughout the narrative, particularly for those with relatively short attention spans.

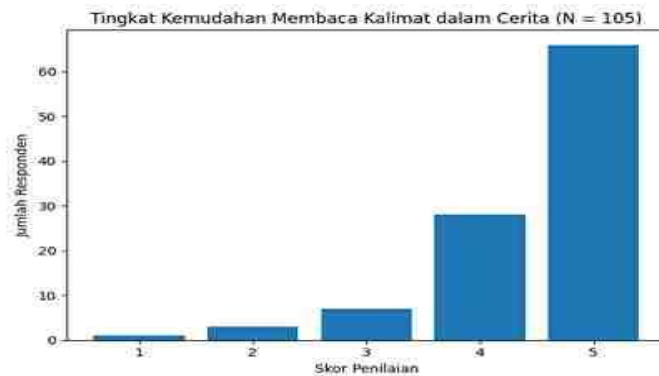
In terms of content suitability, respondents considered that both the story and illustrations are appropriate for children's age. The visual language used is not overly complex, yet remains meaningful and relevant to children's daily experiences. The selection of colors, character expressions, and situational depictions are arranged contextually, making them easy to understand without requiring excessive verbal explanation. This indicates that the illustrated storybooks successfully adapt visual forms to children's cognitive and emotional development stages.

The illustrations in these books also play a crucial role in reinforcing the educational values embedded in the narrative. Through images, moral messages and Islamic economic values presented in the stories can be conveyed more concretely and persuasively. Children do not merely read the text, but also "experience" the story through enjoyable visual representations. Thus, illustrations function as a bridge between abstract concepts and children's understanding, allowing values to be conveyed naturally within the storyline rather than in a didactic manner.

Overall, the high level of respondents' interest in the illustrations indicates that the developed illustrated storybooks have successfully integrated aesthetic appeal, educational value, and developmental appropriateness. These books effectively bridge the need for value-based learning with the characteristics of children's world without oversimplifying the substance of the content. This finding confirms that illustrations are a strategic component in enhancing the acceptability and effectiveness of children's storybooks as narrative-based educational media.

Figure 11. Respondents' Level of Understanding of the Language Used in Illustrated Stories

Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



Based on the diagram (Figure 11) showing the level of ease in reading sentences in the story, the majority of respondents gave ratings in the high category. A total of 66 respondents gave a score of 5 and 28 respondents gave a score of 4, indicating that the sentences in the story are perceived as easy to very easy for children to read. Meanwhile, the number of respondents who gave low scores (1 and 2) is very limited. This finding indicates that the choice of diction, sentence structure, and language style in the storybooks has been appropriately adjusted to children's literacy abilities, particularly at the late preschool and early elementary levels.

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Understanding of the story language is also closely related to its integration with illustrations. The illustration aspect received positive responses as it helps children interpret the meaning of sentences and strengthens the representation of characters and events in the narrative. Visuals function as support for the text, especially for children in the early literacy stage, where reading comprehension often relies on visual context. With representative illustrations, children are able to associate words and sentences with concrete situations depicted in the images.

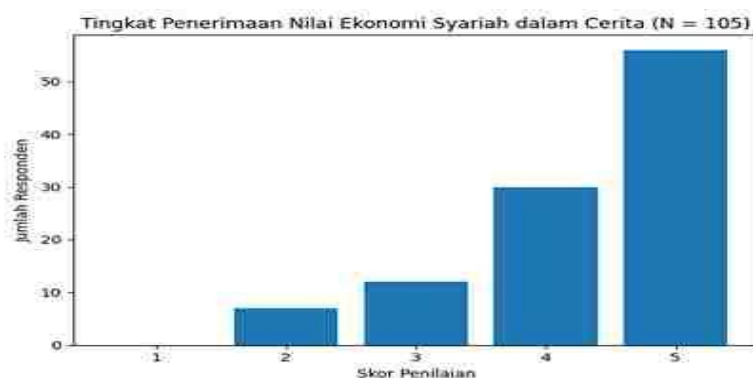
The combination of simple language and communicative illustrations allows the presentation of conflicts and story resolutions to unfold more naturally. Ethical and economic conflicts in the stories are not conveyed through complex verbal explanations, but through brief dialogue and visual scenes that are easy to understand. Educational narrative resolutions are also delivered in straightforward language, enabling children to grasp moral messages and Islamic economic values without feeling instructed.

Overall, this analysis shows that the language used in the illustrated storybooks has a high level of readability and comprehensibility. Language functions not only as a storytelling tool but also as an effective learning medium when supported by appropriate illustrations. Thus, the developed illustrated storybooks are able to provide an enjoyable and meaningful reading experience while contributing to the contextual internalization of Islamic economic values in accordance with children's developmental stages. Overall, this analysis shows that the language used in the illustrated storybooks has a high level of readability and comprehensibility. Language functions not only as a storytelling tool but

also as an effective learning medium when supported by appropriate illustrations. Thus, the developed illustrated storybooks are able to provide an enjoyable and meaningful reading experience while contributing to the contextual internalization of Islamic economic values in accordance with children's developmental stages.

Figure 12. Respondents' Level of Understanding of Islamic Economic Messages (Values) in Illustrated Stories

Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



Based on the diagram showing the level of acceptance of Islamic economic values in illustrated stories (Figure 12), the majority of respondents gave ratings in the high category. A total of 56 respondents gave a score of 5 and 30 respondents gave a score of 4, indicating that the Islamic economic values conveyed through the stories are very well received by children as the primary readers. No respondents gave a score of 1, while scores of 2 and 3 are relatively limited. This finding indicates that the delivery of Islamic economic values through narrative and visual approaches is effective in helping children understand and accept values implicitly without creating a didactic impression (Muhammad Ridwan et al., 2024).

The strong acceptance of Islamic economic values shows that the messages are delivered in a way that aligns with children's world. Values such as honesty in earning a livelihood, the importance of sharing, humility, and the blessings derived from good behavior are communicated through the storyline and characters' actions rather than through abstract normative explanations. Through this narrative approach, children are able to perceive Islamic economic values as part of their daily lives, rather than as concepts detached from their real experiences (Ramdhani et al., 2023).

The illustration component also received positive responses in supporting the understanding of Islamic economic messages. Illustrations are considered helpful in enabling children to understand the story content while reinforcing the depiction of characters in the narrative. Visuals do not merely function as complements to the text but serve as the primary medium for conveying meaning, particularly for children who do not yet fully rely on text-based reading skills. Through illustrations, ethical-economic conflicts and educational narrative resolutions can be understood more concretely, allowing Islamic economic values to be conveyed through enjoyable and memorable visual experiences (Azhar Ramdhani et al., 2023).

However, qualitative survey results obtained from the suggestion section indicate that some respondents believe that Islamic economic messages still need to be clarified and simplified, particularly for younger children and those in early elementary grades. Some respondents noted that children still require guidance from parents or

teachers to understand more abstract terms or expressions, such as metaphors or certain economic symbols. This suggests that although the messages are generally well received, the depth of children’s understanding remains highly influenced by the mode of presentation and the context of adult facilitation (Ramdhani & Tristan Rokhmawan, 2021).

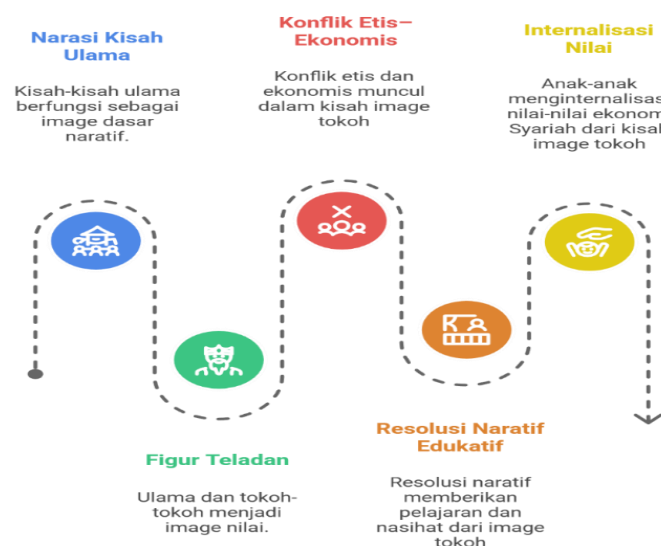
In addition, several respondents emphasized the importance of narrative consistency and clear page layout to prevent value messages from appearing fragmented or confusing. When the storyline is easy to follow and supported by adequate illustrations, Islamic economic messages become easier for children to understand and apply in their daily lives. Thus, understanding of Islamic economic values is not determined solely by the substance of the values themselves, but also by visual aspects, language use, story structure, and the overall reading experience encountered by children.

Synthesis of Discussion

This study demonstrates that the integration of local ulama narratives, the imagological approach, and illustrated children’s storybooks can serve as an effective model for Islamic economic literacy in children (see Figure 13). Ulama are represented as exemplary figures who contextualize Islamic economic values in everyday life, while storytelling functions as a medium for value internalization that aligns with children’s learning characteristics.

These findings reinforce contemporary Islamic economic studies that position moral and spiritual values as the primary foundation of economic behavior. At the same time, this research offers practical contributions to the development of Islamic economic literacy media rooted in local wisdom. By combining the exemplary role of ulama figures, the power of narrative, and the support of illustrative visuals, the developed model is not only theoretically relevant but also practically applicable within the context of value-based and contextual child education.

Figure 13. Imagology Model of Islamic Economics in Ulama Narrative Stories
Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2026



Based on the research findings, narratives of ulama stories from the City of Pasuruan form an imagology-based Islamic economic model that operates through layered stages, as illustrated in the diagram. This model positions narrative as the foundational

image, which then develops through exemplary figures, ethical-economic conflicts, and educational narrative resolutions, ultimately leading to the internalization of Islamic economic values in children. Thus, Islamic economics is not presented as a normative concept or abstract doctrine, but as a value system that is concretely brought to life through the images of characters and events within the story.

The initial stage of this model is Ulama Narratives as the Foundational Image. At this stage, ulama stories function as an imaginative space that builds narrative context while introducing children to a world of values. The narrative serves not merely as entertainment, but as a foundation for forming initial images of life practices, social relations, and economic activities grounded in Islamic teachings. This foundational image opens space for children to interpret the story as a meaningful experience.

The next stage is Exemplary Figures as Value Images, where ulama or story characters appear as central figures representing Islamic economic values. For example, Mbah Dacin is portrayed as a model trader who conducts business ethically, honestly, and responsibly, while also demonstrating social concern by allocating part of his wealth for charity. This practice represents the values of honesty, justice, and social responsibility in Islamic muamalah ethics. In another story, Kiai Sepuh is depicted as an ulama who advises the community to adhere to religious teachings in agricultural practices, particularly through the obligation to pay agricultural zakat ten percent of harvest yields and the encouragement to share as an expression of gratitude. Meanwhile, Romo Kiai Hamid is represented as an ulama who advises people to seek lawful (halal) sustenance and avoid gambling practices. Through these figures, Islamic economic values are instilled through role modeling rather than solely through conceptual explanation.

The subsequent stage is Ethical–Economic Conflict within the Narrative Image, which serves as the main driver of the storyline. These conflicts arise in the form of value oppositions such as halal–haram, honesty–fraud, and blessing–greed. In the story of Romo Kiai Hamid and the Gambler, the ethical-economic conflict is manifested through the practice of *maisir* (gambling), which promises instant gains but removes *barakah* (blessing). In the story of Kiai Sepuh and the Jackfruit Seller, conflict emerges when abundant harvests are not accompanied by awareness of zakat and sharing. These conflicts are presented through concrete events close to children’s experiences, enabling Islamic economic values to be understood through cause-and-effect relationships within the characters’ storylines.

These conflicts are then directed toward an Educational Narrative Resolution Conveyed through Image. At this stage, the story presents resolutions in the form of advice, awareness, repentance, and behavioral change in the characters. The resolution is not depicted merely as punishment, but as a learning process that emphasizes that adherence to Islamic economic values leads to peace, sufficiency, and *barakah*. This educational narrative resolution demonstrates that Islamic economics is oriented toward behavioral improvement and holistic well-being, rather than merely material gain.

The final stage of this model is the Internalization of Islamic Economic Values in Children. Through the sequence of narrative images, exemplary figures, conflicts, and resolutions, children gradually and indirectly internalize Islamic economic values. Values such as honesty, responsibility, sharing, avoiding prohibited practices, and seeking *barakah* become part of children’s understanding through the experience of reading and listening to stories. Thus, the process of value internalization occurs through imaginative and reflective mechanisms, rather than through normative and didactic instruction.

Overall, the imagology-based Islamic economic model embedded in ulama narratives confirms that stories, character images, and plot structures are strategic media for instilling Islamic economic values in children. This model demonstrates that Islamic economic literacy can be effectively developed through a contextual, educational, and child-centered narrative–imagological approach.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of local ulama narratives from the City of Pasuruan, this study concludes that the imagological approach in Islamic economics is effective in developing Islamic economic literacy media for children. Ulama narratives are able to construct images of exemplary figures that represent Islamic economic values such as honesty, trustworthiness, justice, the prohibition of unlawful practices, and awareness of barakah (blessing) in a contextual and grounded manner. The transformation of these narratives into illustrated children's storybooks demonstrates that Islamic economic values can be internalized through imaginative, narrative-based, and role model-centered reading experiences, rather than through purely normative and conceptual instruction. The results of the acceptability test indicate that the developed storybooks are well received by children, parents, and teachers in terms of content comprehension, language, illustrations, and value messages. This suggests that the books have strong potential as educational yet engaging media for Islamic economic literacy rooted in local wisdom.

Based on these findings, this study offers several recommendations for further development. First, imagology-based Islamic economic illustrated storybooks should be tested more broadly in early childhood education institutions and elementary schools as part of value learning and character education. Second, further development is recommended to enrich the story series with a wider variety of characters, economic contexts, and conflicts in order to reach a broader range of children's age groups. Third, the presentation of Islamic economic values should continue to be simplified through concrete behavioral examples, more varied illustrations, and the addition of supporting activities such as reflective questions or simple tasks to enhance learning interactivity. Through such developments, the narrative-, imagology-, and local wisdom-based Islamic economic literacy model is expected to contribute more optimally to the formation of children's economic character from an early age.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to PGRI Wiranegara University for the institutional support provided throughout this research. Appreciation is also extended to colleagues, educators, parents, and child facilitators who contributed their time and insights during the data collection and evaluation process. The authors are especially thankful to all child participants who took part in this study, as their responses and engagement were essential to the development and validation of the illustrated storybooks. Their participation has greatly contributed to the success of this research.

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