



Teaching Basic Qur'an and its Values to Local Children at Surau Wang Ulu Perlis, Malaysia

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 27 October 2025

Revised 12 November 2025

Accepted 28 November 2025

Keywords:

Teaching basic Qur'an

Islamic values

Local children

Surau Wang Ulu

Perlis



Abstract

This community service project aimed to strengthen Basic Qur'anic literacy and its Islamic values among children at Surau Wang Ulu, Perlis, Malaysia. The initiative combined structured Qur'an teaching sessions, value-based storytelling, and participatory activities involving students of Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia and local children. Using direct method or recitation practice to comprehend values beyond the surah. The findings highlight the surau's role as a vital institution for early religious education and character formation, while also offering a replicable model for similar communities across children Islamic values acquisition.

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Introduction

Religious education plays a pivotal role in shaping the moral compass and spiritual resilience of children, particularly in Muslim-majority societies especially in Perlis, Malaysia. The surau, a small prayer hall and community centre, has historically functioned not only as a place of worship but also as a hub for transmitting Islamic knowpaledge and values. In contemporary times, however, surau-based education faces multiple challenges: the increasing influence of digital entertainment, reduced parental involvement, and limited pedagogical innovation. These challenges often result in declining Qur'anic literacy and weakened moral awareness among children.

Surau Wang Ulu in Perlis, Malaysia, represents a microcosm of these broader issues. While the surau remains central to community life, its educational activities require revitalization to meet the needs of the younger generation. Teaching the Basic Holy Qur'an to children is not merely about memorization and recitation; it is also about embedding Qur'anic values such as honesty, compassion, respect, and responsibility into their daily lives. This project was designed as a community service initiative to strengthen Qur'anic literacy and integrate value-based education through participatory methods involving local children and students of Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia (UMAM) as educators. By situating the surau as a dynamic educational space, the project contributes

to both local empowerment and international discourse on faith-based community development.

Religious education in childhood is widely recognized as a cornerstone for moral development, identity formation, and social cohesion. In Muslim communities, the Qur'an is not only a sacred text but also a comprehensive guide for ethical living, spiritual resilience, and communal harmony. Teaching the Qur'an to children therefore extends beyond rote memorization; it involves cultivating values such as honesty, compassion, respect, and responsibility that are embedded within its verses. These values, when internalized at an early age, serve as lifelong principles guiding personal conduct and social interaction.

Globally, scholars have emphasized the importance of faith-based education in strengthening moral resilience among young learners. Studies highlight that children exposed to structured religious learning environments demonstrate higher levels of empathy, discipline, and community engagement compared to peers without such exposure. In Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, surau and small mosques have historically functioned as grassroots institutions for transmitting Islamic reformation schooling, especially in rural areas where resources may be limited.

Despite this historical significance, contemporary challenges threaten the effectiveness of surau-based education. The rapid expansion of digital entertainment, declining parental involvement, and limited pedagogical innovation often result in reduced Qur'anic literacy and weakened moral awareness among children. Furthermore, globalization and modernization have introduced competing value systems that sometimes overshadow traditional religious teachings. Addressing these challenges requires innovative approaches that blend classical methods of Qur'an teaching with modern pedagogical strategies and community participation.

Surau Wang Ulu in Perlis, Malaysia, exemplifies both the opportunities and challenges of community-based religious education. Situated in a semi-rural area, the surau remains central to community life, serving as a place of worship, social gathering, and moral instruction. However, like many similar institutions, it faces difficulties in sustaining children's interest and ensuring consistent parental support. This community service project was therefore designed to revitalize Qur'an teaching at Surau Wang Ulu by integrating structured recitation, tajwid practice, and value-based storytelling. The initiative also emphasized participatory engagement, involving parents and local educators to ensure sustainability and community ownership.

The significance of this project lies in its dual contribution: locally, it strengthens Qur'anic literacy and moral awareness among children in Perlis; globally, it offers a replicable model for faith-based community empowerment. By situating the surau as a dynamic

educational space, the project demonstrates how traditional institutions can adapt to contemporary challenges while preserving their cultural and spiritual essence. This study thus contributes to international discourse on religious education, moral development, and community-based learning, highlighting the surau's enduring relevance in nurturing holistic Islamic identity in the 21st century.

Method of Implementation

The project adopted a participatory action research approach, emphasizing collaboration between tutors and children. The implementation was structured into several phases:

1. Preparation Phase

- a. Needs assessment through discussion with surau leader and Leader of *Perhimpunan Ranting Istimewa Muhammadiyah Perlis, Malaysia* (PRIM) and tutors.
- b. Identification of challenges such as limited teaching materials, irregular attendance, and lack of structured pedagogy.
- c. Development of Qur'an recitation, tajwid practice, and value-based storytelling.



Figure 1. Discussion with Leader of PRIM

2. Teaching and Learning Activities

- a. Daily Qur'an Sessions: Children attended structured classes focusing on recitation accuracy, tajwid rules, and memorization. Teachers employed repetition, peer learning, and corrective feedback.
- b. Weekly Storytelling: Stories drawn from Qur'anic narratives (e.g., honesty of Prophet Muhammad, patience of Prophet Ayub) were shared to highlight moral lessons.
- c. Interactive Activities: Memorization competitions, group reflections, and role-play exercises were conducted to reinforce values.



Figure 2. Storytelling and recitation activity

3. Data Collection and Evaluation

- a. Observation: Tutors observe progress in fluency, memorization, and behavior.
- b. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with children captured perceptions of learning outcomes.
- c. Reflective: Tutors documented challenges, strategies, and improvements throughout the program.
- d. Analysis: Thematic coding was applied to qualitative data, focusing on literacy, values, and community participation.

Result and Discussion

The project yielded several notable outcomes:

1. Improved Qur'anic Literacy

- a. Children demonstrated significant progress in recitation fluency and tajwid accuracy.
- b. Memorization levels increased, with many participants able to recite short surahs confidently.
- c. Teachers reported greater enthusiasm and reduced anxiety among children during recitation.

2. Value Internalization

- a. Storytelling sessions effectively instilled values such as honesty, cooperation, and empathy.
- b. Role-play activities allowed children to practice values in simulated real-life scenarios.

3. Enhanced Community Engagement

- a. The surau became a vibrant hub of activity, with increased attendance during Qur'an recitation nights.

- b. Collaborative events fostered stronger bonds among families, reinforcing the surau's role as a center of moral and spiritual development.
4. Challenges and Solutions
 - a. Challenges: Limited teaching materials, occasional absenteeism, and varying literacy levels among children.
 - b. Solutions: Integration of digital Qur'an apps, flexible scheduling, and differentiated instruction tailored to individual needs.
5. Sustainability and Replicability
 - a. The participatory approach ensured community ownership, increasing the likelihood of sustainability.
 - b. The model can be replicated in other surau or small mosques across Malaysia and Southeast Asia, with adaptations to local contexts.

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