

# Islamic Values in Indonesian Religious Books for Children

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**Abstract** - During the last two decades, the numbers of religious books in Indonesia are growing and becomes a good business for many publishers whether for Muslim or Christian teaching. One of the reasons is that parents see this kind of books can be used for moral teaching and language learning due to many published bilingual Indonesian and English. This paper attempts to see what Islamic values were offered in the religious story books published by Mizan Publishing. Mizan is one of the most prominent Muslim Publishers in Indonesia. Mizan publishing established in 1983 and has started having children and young adult books division, DAR! Mizan, in 1992. This publishing house produced various formats and themes, such as stories about prophets, brave Muslim characters, stories that encourage children to become good Muslim, and books on self-help, etc. The method of the study uses content analysis approach which allows analysing the text content of religious story books and presenting the various themes related to Islamic values. The sample of the story books are taken from Murti Bunanta’s private children books library collection. This study only chooses brave Muslim female story. Those story books then are scrutinized under Islamic values, The result of this study shown that not only the religious books have rich Islamic values but they are also delivered in a friendly way. The princesses are not always having Islamic names and they are not either portrayed having perfect body or good behaviour but they can accept their deficiency and learn from their mistakes. Though these books are mainly intended for girls, they can be read by boys because of their content also appeal to boys like adventure, humour, and knowledge. Those books are also potentially to be translated into different languages with some adjustment for wider audiences.

**Keywords**---Islamic publisher, Islamic values, Islamic Morality, Morality, Brave Muslim female, religious story books

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Heft in [1], there is a growing concern in all Abraham religions, from Judaism, Christianity to Islam about transmitting religious teaching and identities to young generation to make sure that religion has the role in their life. One of media for transferring religious value is through books. Indonesia is the largest Muslim population and 42 percentage of its population are 24 old or younger with a median age of 29 years (see figure 1). This condition has a great potential books’ market for children, teenagers, and young adult [2].

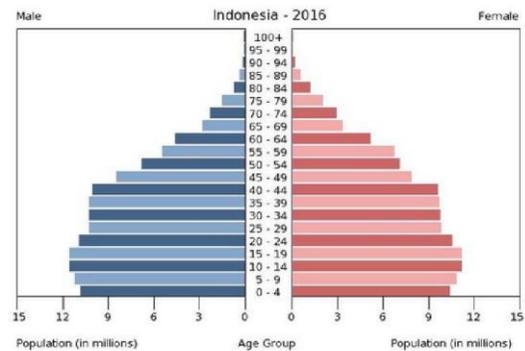


Fig. 1. Age Structure of the population in Indonesia Source: CIA World Fact Book (2016)

In the last two decades, religious books become general phenomenon in bookshops. Watson [3] observed Islamic books have special large section in all major bookshop in Indonesia, especially at all bookshops’ chain of Gramedia and Toko Gunung. According to him, Islamic publishers have flourished in Indonesia. He assumed, there are 100 Islamic publishers In Indonesia, and Mizan is one of the largest Islamic publishing houses. Mizan was established in

1983 in Bandung. Around 1990's, Mizan opened several new lines with different names and different focus of publications such as Qonita in women issue, Kalifa in science and technology, and DAR (Divisi Anak dan Remaja/Children and young adult Division) Mizan in children and young adult books.

Literature has great contribution for religious teaching or moral education. Children can learn moral education through reading good literature. The characters and events in the story give an opportunity for children to draw lesson independently such as differentiating the good and bad deeds, learning to have empathy towards others, learning to make decision to solve the problem, etc [4].

Talking about moral education in Islam relates to Islamic values. Halstead has categorized Islamic values into three dimensions: Firstly, *akhlaq* (a state of the soul) which refers to obligations and responsibilities set out in the *shari'ah* and Islamic teaching generally, including the prohibition activities; Secondly, Adab al-islam means 'the good manners adopted by Islam derived from the examples of Prophet Muhammad. It is manners and etiquette for Muslim's behaviour; and lastly, The Islamic virtues are also linked to the Prophet's example. These also are aspired from 99 names of God that are also expected to be shown in Muslims' behaviour. He assured that Islamic values in Islam are the moral values expected in the life of Muslim. Muslim's moral values derived directly from the Qur'an and the hadith (sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions). "*Personal morality for Muslims is rooted in iman (faith in God or consciousness of God in everything), islam (surrender to the divine will), taqwa (fear of God and vigilance against going astray) and ihsan (acting out of love for God and a spiritual awareness of his presence (Halstead, 2010, p. 288).*" Therefore, it is hard for Muslim to talk about morality outside the context of religion. Some of the Islamic moral values are universal like values appreciated in the west [5].

According to Abdullah [6] the concept of Ahlaq can be refers to morality in general that refers to "*a moral discourse, statement, or lesson; a doctrine or system of moral conduct; conformity to ideals of right human conduct*" However, it has impacted on reward of Hereafter. These are some Islamic moral: attitude towards non-Muslims, communal etiquettes, compassion, cooperation, forgiveness, generosity, hard-work, justice & fairness, moderation, modesty & chastity, persistence, prosperity, reconciliation, reliance, responsibility, self-defence, supplication, and trustworthiness.

Books that have Islamic values are very important for Muslim children and young adult development. Princess picture books published by Walt Disney has raised a concern of how girl learn about being a girl. A study

conducted by Dale et al [7] criticized the majority content of the princess picture books which are only concerned with finding husband and achieving perfect body so that she can be valued by others. Some Islamic publishers, including Mizan publish princess story books following the trends. Differently, this study attempts to explore Islamic values themes in religious story books, especially princess book story and brave Muslimah story.

## II. METHOD

The sample of books in this study are taken from Murti Bunanta's private library. The library is one of the comprehensive collections in the area of children literature. The collection contains 33 thousand exemplars from 37 countries including the collection of religious book of Christianity and Islam. From the collection, the researchers decide to gather the religious children books that has story about Muslimah/Muslim woman/girl princess or about brave Muslimah who have great example in their life. The story must start with bismillahirrohmanirohiim. There are four books chosen for this study, each book got several titles in it. *Princess Noura Jelajah Istana Fantasi* has 26 stories, *Princess Daiyu* dan *24 Kisah Princess China* lainnya has 24 stories, *Princess Kocak* has 31 stories, *Kisah Muslimah Teladan for Kids* has 30 stories. Altogether the books comprise of 111 stories. Three books are categorized in fantasy stories; one book *Kisah Muslimah Teladan* introduces the real people in History through third eyes perspectives. Each of the stories has been coded under several categories name of princess, themes of the story, quotation and Islamic values. From this categorization, Islamic values in the story are identified.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the coding in the religious stories of the chosen books, there are Islamic values found in the story including helpfulness, generosity, giving charity, ahlaq to animal world/environment, kindness, hard work, striving, love of knowledge, sincerity, responsibility, discipline, patience, faith, brave, courage, cleanliness, keeping commitment, fair dealing, justice, modesty, cooperation, self-respect, diligent in pray, supplication and reconciliation. Some story delivered prohibited behaviour like theft, gossip, snob, greedy, conflict but at the end of story, there are always solutions for such behaviours.

Below on table 1 is examples of Islamic values accompanied by essence from the text shown in the religious book stories.

**TABLE 1**  
**SOME ISLAMIC VALUES IN RELIGIOUS BOOKS**

Islamic Values	Essence from text
Helpfulness, Generosity,	The habit of setting aside from her pocket money to give to the

Islamic Values	Essence from text
giving charity	needy people [8, p. 16]  To give away shoes for needy person [9, p. 114]  Buying flower from little children whom her grandmother is sick [8, p. 29]
<b>Ahlaq to animal world/ environment</b>	Taking care of the wounded parrot's foot until healed [8, p. 37].  Preserving the increasingly rare green turtles in the kingdom [8, p. 47].  Feeding starving wild birds with grains [8, p. 125].  Appreciate water usage [10, p. 8].
<b>Cleanliness</b>	Diligently brushing teeth so her mouth does not smell bad [10, p. 48].  Diligent washing face so that acne does not appear [10, p. 95].
<b>Love of knowledge</b>	Managed to solve the problems faced because the princess is often reading books diligently [10, p. 37].  Diligently reading book so that she is able to know about treatment [11, p. 70].  Helping a disabled child and teaching him how to read, write, and paint until the child is smart and successful [11, p. 121].
<b>Courage</b>	a Princess who has a disability because of polio and she is often underestimated, however she can prove his achievement by winning the competition to make a robot [11, p. 82].

Besides rich with Islamic values, these books are also delivered in a friendly way, there are some approaches to give knowledge through stories:

1. In the story of *Princess Noura*, almost all the names of princess are taken from Latin words of sea animal

creatures: Gracilaria/Algae, Arbacia/Sea Urchin, Holothuria/Sea Cucumber, Aurelia/Sea Jellyfish, Linckia/Sea Star, Chelonia/Green Turtle, Sepia/Cuttle Fish, Anadara/Clams, Stenopus/Crayfish, Portunus/ Crab, Loligo/ Squid, Panaeus/Windu Shrimp, Diadema/Sea Urchins, Rhinodon/Leopard Shark, Acropora/Coral Reef, Hippocampus/ Sea Horse, Amphiprion/Clownfish, Thunnus/Tuna, Sardina/ Sardine, Homarus/Lobster, Gadus/Fish Codes And Chromileptes/Grouper Rats.

2. In the story of *Princess Daiyu*, the names of princesses are all taken from Chinese names with their translation; Daiyu (black jade), Shu Fang (fair and soft), Ming Ue (moonlight), Meili (beautiful), Xingjuan (grace), Zhenzhen (purity), Gaomiao (clever and skilled), Ying (smart), Biyu (precious orchids, Xiulan (elegant orchids), Ling (understanding and compassion), Gaozhan (good-looking), Jingyi (praiseworthy), Wenling (clink of smooth jade), Hui Yin (intelligent), Haiyun (virtuous), Fefang (fragrant and aromatic), Chunhua (spring flower), Mingzhu (bright pearl), Huajin (noble moral), Fengguang (passionate fire), Meihui (beautiful wisdom), Jinxiu (glorious future), Yuan (peace).
3. In the story of *Muslimah Teladan*, Children are introduced with the names of Muslim in Islamic History through the eyes of third person and also from the perspective of animal, living creature or things such as tree, butterfly, bird, horse, swords, shirt, comb, statue, necklace, slippers, and wind.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The princess stories published by Mizan publishing house do not just follow the trend of princess stories produced by Walt Disney, but the authors are able to create fantasy stories that contain Islamic values delivered without being patronized in their content. Some of the names of princesses are taken from Latin words of sea animal creatures and Chinese language.

These stories though have been labelled as princess stories contain friendly and nonfrightening approach, humour, adventure, and knowledge. They also introduce brave Muslim woman in history such as the Muslimah story. These stories actually can be read by the boys because the variation of the contents can appeal to boys' readership and the stories do not tell only girls stuff but also about maritime animal creatures.

These books are promoted as religious books; although some contents are actually neutral, like *Princess Daiyu* and *Princess Kocak*, which cannot be labelled as religious books. However, they can reach more audiences. The books can also be recommended to be translated for children abroad with some adjustments, such as omitting the Muslims' phrases and the moral citations that refer only to Islamic values, so that they become more neutral.

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