

# Teacher Knowledge in The Application of Spiritual Knowledge in Early Childhood Education Classes

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## Abstract

Spiritual knowledge is the most important basis of the Islamic education system. The perfection of faith is also part of the focus of Islamic education, which emphasizes spirituality and spirituality as the basis for the formation of a value system and morality. The purpose of this study is to investigate the abilities of teachers to apply spiritual knowledge to children in private kindergartens. This study uses a quantitative approach using a questionnaire survey collected using a Likert scale questionnaire. The research sample consisted of 120 private kindergarten teachers in Kulim, Kedah. The results of the study show that the average level of spirituality of teachers is 3.37. A teacher's knowledge of managing children's spirituality is very important in determining the success and effectiveness of the lessons the teacher gives to the students. This research may also have good implications for teachers, especially private kindergarten teachers, who apply spiritual knowledge to children. In short, it can be stated that the most important role in shaping the personality of children in very private kindergartens is played by the knowledge and will of the teachers.

**Keywords:** Teacher Readiness, Spiritual Knowledge, Teacher Skills, Children, Private Kindergarten

## Introduction

In Islamic education, spiritual understanding is the most crucial component. In Islamic studies, the primary goal is to develop admirable morals, piety, and excellent behaviour (pious), all of which can contribute to a person's favourable perception (Al-Attas, 2018). According to Hardaker & Sabki (2012), the emphasis of Islamic education on spirituality and spirituality as the foundation for the development of moral systems and values is also included in the perfection of religion. Islamic spirituality in addition to broadening students' insight into Islam, as well as understanding and practicing it in life, so that it can support achieving the objectives of Islamic Religious Education in Kindergarten, and children can get good results in Islamic Education itself.

Syamila & Che Zarina (2020) propose that social and religious tolerance in Islam is contingent upon the imperfections inherent in spiritual knowledge and religious appreciation. In actuality, spiritual education is crucial to comprehending the Islamic faith's historical development. Islam places a strong emphasis on moral education in order to raise well-rounded kids. Teachers play an equally significant role in character development as parents

do. Therefore, Islamic or spiritual studies emphasize the appreciation of talents and information to give birth to pious children or individuals (Jasmi & Faiz, 2012).

The good character of our children is important to ensure the harmony and stability of the country in the future. From the point of view of Islam, according to Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah, the development and progress of a country does not mean only physical development, but also includes spiritual and moral aspects. Desa (2018) has argued, the wisdom and sophistication of modern technology alone does not indicate the civilization of a race or nation. Therefore, noble morals and high faith in Allah SWT should be inculcated in these children from the very beginning. The practice of pure values must be done by teachers with great spiritual knowledge, but at the same time, the foundations of Islamic education allow it to become a daily practice. According to Norafidah (2017), that character development occurs naturally through the application of Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. Education based on Islamic philosophy and principles has shown the success of human civilization in general and Islamic civilization in particular (Suibi, 2015).

Few realize the importance of supporting children who are developing mentally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and physically as a whole. This matter concerns teachers, parents, the Ministry of Education, the Royal Malaysian Police, the Ministry of Religion, the media, academics and the entire community who are responsible for the implementation of Amar Makruf and Nahi Munkar to curb the moral decay of children. explained by (Tunggak et al., 2015). Because of such things, education and morality cannot be separated, because with the help of Islamic education, one can understand and live the true meaning of morality. Teachers are the most important people and they must have good knowledge to understand the morals of Islam.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the level of knowledge of teachers in the application of spiritual knowledge to children in private kindergartens. The researcher decided to find out to what extent the teacher's skills and knowledge apply this spiritual knowledge to children, so that teachers in private kindergartens can be prepared to apply this spiritual knowledge to children well. As we can see, today's children have an increasingly unsatisfactory attitude and discipline. Therefore, this study can also help private kindergarten teachers to see their level of knowledge in the application of spiritual knowledge.

## **Literature Review**

### **Spiritual development according to Al-Ghazali**

Al-Ghazali emphasises the cultivation of "*faith*" (mu'adhaḍah) and "*heart*" (riyadah) as the primary goals of spiritual development. Mujahada an-naḥs is a sincere attempt to combat lust or the feeding of it. Maintaining a pure and healthy heart is the best defence against lust. By doing this, heart illness (amrad al-qulub) and other associated issues can also be avoided.

Based on Ghazali's theories, (Azmi, 2010) highlighted the significance of the teacher's viewpoint in improving Islamic education. Experienced educators ought to focus more on learning, education, and life experience. This is so because the narrative presents Allah S.W.T as the object of a very evident manifestation and test of faith. This is consistent with the findings of (Jodi & Manor, 2016), who said that it is essential to comprehend Islamic Shari'a in order to be able to implement it correctly, and that hiring kindergarten instructors who support it is crucial to the development of Islam. In daily life, people may be protected from a false foundation of life due to ignorance and foolishness.

Imam Al-Ghazali says that educators who have an influence on kids should be morally and etiologically upright in addition to being informed. Teachers need to be kind and patient,

especially those who work directly with students in the classroom. This issue is significant because it affects how well the teaching and learning sessions go and how well the learning objectives are met.

Imam Al-Ghazali's spiritual growth is a process of raising one's standard of living. Change of mind is second in Imam Al-Ghazali's hierarchy of priorities: affairs of the heart. From a shift in perspective, it encompasses ideas and emotions to actions. In terms of the heart, mind, emotions, and behaviour, change is defined as a shift from bad to good. The heart issue is highlighted in Al-Ghazali's writings in Tazkiyah Al-Nafi, Riyadh Al-Nafi, and Mujahadah Al-Nafi. It symbolises "*spirit and quote*" The heart and mind are then impacted. Thoughts are influenced by emotions, including sadness, disappointment, and other feelings that emerge from behaviour. We are socially bound by our behaviour, after all.

### **Teacher knowledge in applying spiritual knowledge in early childhood education classes**

According to Jantan & Piawi (2017), the qualification of teachers is an important factor in shaping children and personality. This shows that teachers have the best role in shaping children and personality by controlling children and discipline. In kindergarten, teachers bring 35 - 40 children from different backgrounds to the classroom. In general, parents should help teachers balance the academic and personal excellence of their children. It was also supported by (Noor et al., 2014) said that teachers are also a source of information and knowledge for kindergarten children because teachers are considered experts in the subjects they teach. Every teacher must complete teaching training at the relevant educational institution or university. The purpose of information management, especially spiritual information management, is to provide children with correct and accurate information that can be used in daily worship. In addition, Faiz & Jasmi (2012) said that according to the study, teachers are the main source of traditional morality for children other than parents. Spiritual knowledge emphasizes the importance of cultivating skills and piety. Teacher enthusiasm has a great impact on the success of learning and teaching in the classroom, as stated by (Habibah et al., 2014).

Teachers should also be very involved in supporting kids, particularly with their academics. Lubis (2010) agrees, stating that when there is coherence and harmony between the curriculum and the exchange of suitable tactics, approaches, methods, and techniques, the educational process is successful and accomplishes its objectives. As a result, it is critical that educators continue their education and are ready to use suitable and successful teaching strategies. In order for intellectual knowledge to fulfil its intended purpose and stay relevant, it is also necessary to consider the ways in which the times and present development are changing.

Teachers also help kids accept or adjust to changes in their lives by offering them support and direction. The degree to which the objectives set forth and carried out are achieved defines the quality of education. The country's goal and mission must be kept, and the education system can only guarantee this with everyone's participation. It follows that ignorance and the desire of educators to apply instruction via the use of creative strategies and engaging materials whether traditional or multimedia are the main causes of many barriers to learning and teaching.

According to Ismail and Jasmin (2016), spiritual knowledge received indirectly in kindergarten is capable of forming children's morality and needs to be emphasized from childhood and can be recognised as adults through a better way of living. According to (Jasmi, 2017), spiritual education must be prioritised from an early age because maturity is seen as

coming too late and bringing with it a host of challenges. It is intimately tied to the development of morally upright Muslim youngsters.

The current problem facing Malaysian spiritual education is to change the educational system such that it places greater emphasis on knowledge and skill comprehension, development, practice, evaluation, and assessment. The application of this education results in youngsters who, upon learning, appreciating, and doing it, believe in knowledge and who possess identity, knowledge, and balanced moral bravery as authentic Muslims (Noh, 2018).

It is a reality that children must be taught and guided in the application of spiritual ideals from a young age. Komariah (2011) explains this, saying that in order to foster excellent values like communication, attire, friendship, and quality, this procedure needs to be carried out right away. In addition to being the parental responsibility, this calls for the collaboration of kindergartens, the community, and other parties. According to (Masuwai, 2018), from the perspective of educational institutions, instructors are crucial in modelling and promoting moral behaviour in all classroom settings.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design and Study Approach**

This study is a quantitative study that uses a survey method and uses a questionnaire in Google Forms. In the context of this study, a survey was conducted to examine the readiness of teachers in applying spiritual knowledge to children in private kindergartens. Therefore, the survey method was chosen as the appropriate research method to achieve the objectives of this study.

### **Population, Location and Study Sample**

To determine the sample size for this study, refer to the sampling size table constructed by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Through the table, the total population of private kindergarten teachers in Kulim, Kedah is 150 people. Therefore, the sample size required to represent private kindergarten teachers in Kulim, Kedah is a total of 108 teachers. In this study, a total of 120 samples were taken.

Where 94.2% are female teachers and only 5.8% of the total respondents consisting of 8 male teachers who have filled out this questionnaire. In terms of education level, the highest 50.0% of respondents have a Diploma qualification in the field of Early Childhood Education, and the lowest is a Master's qualification in the field of Early Childhood Education.

This matter was researched that many private kindergarten teachers have qualifications at the Diploma level only because the requirement for private kindergartens is at least at the Diploma Education level to educate children in private kindergartens. In addition, a total of 14 respondents which is equivalent to 10.1% are still at the certificate or spm level which only qualifies them to educate in nursery. However, this is because there is a shortage of teachers in some kindergartens which causes employers to hire them to work in private kindergartens.

In terms of teaching experience, it is the most at 1 to 3 years which is a total of 77 teachers equal to 55.8% compared to 7 to 10 years is at the least level which is a total of 9 respondents which is equal to only 6.5%. This is because many private kindergarten teachers come in and out of kindergarten very often and cause many private kindergarten teachers are still new to teaching children.

Table 4.1

*Frequency and demographic percentage of respondents*

Item		Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	8	5.8
	Female	130	94.2
<b>Level of studies</b>	Certificate/SPM	14	10.1
	Diploma	69	50.0
	Bachelor	47	34.1
	Masters	8	5.8
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	1- 3 Years	77	55.8
	4-6 Years	12	8.7
	7-10 Years	9	6.5
	10 Years and above	39	28.3

### Survey Instrument

This survey instrument is adapted from (Lee Jia Rou's, 2022) study titled The Relationship between Teacher Skills, Knowledge and Skills in Online Education. From the modified survey instrument, this survey is divided into several parts namely Section A, Section B and Section C.

This study has three parts which is part A which represents the first building in the study which consists of three groups of respondents namely gender, educational level and teaching experience in the field of early childhood education.

Part B, which represents the second building of the questionnaire, is to measure the level of spiritual knowledge of teachers, which consists of 11 items. Section C represents the third construct with a 9-item questionnaire that measures the ability of teachers to apply intellectual knowledge in the classroom.

Likert scales are used in research, especially in social sciences and education. According to the given survey instructions, the respondents should choose 1 - 4 based on the statements made on the Likert scale, which is Strongly Disagree (1) Strongly Agree (4). In addition, the main tool in the study is a questionnaire.

Table 1.2

*Likert Scale*

Numbers	Meaning
1	Strongly Disagree (SD)
2	Do Not Agree (DNA)
3	Agree (A)
4	Strongly Agree (SA)

### Data Collection Procedure

The process of data collection is most important in research. These studies are collected through several processes or stages before they acquire validity and reliability. The earlier

process is to determine the name of the study to be conducted and to obtain agreement with the supervisor.

Survey questions were created adapted from Lee Jia Rou survey 2022. Survey questions were shared online through *Whatsapp* and *Telegram* applications. The questions were answered by a fixed sample and it took 5 - 7 minutes to answer all the questions.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Two methods of data analysis are statistical analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive or descriptive statistics is a form of statistical analysis used to evaluate a topic. This study used descriptive statistics to measure the number, duration and frequency of responses.

In addition, the Pearson test aims to test some relationship between the ability of teachers to teach children and the ability of teachers to teach children in the classroom.

The mean range and standard deviation were used as a guide when analyzing the data in this study. The average interpretation value is divided into three levels, low average is 1.00-2.99, medium 3.00-3.99 and high 4.00-5.00. The interpretation of the average reading used is in accordance with Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3

#### *Min Level Interpretation*

Min range	Level interpretation
1.00 -2 .99	Low
3.00 - 3.99	Moderate
4.00 - 5.00	High

### Findings

Based on table 1.4 below, it is revealed that the level of spiritual knowledge of teachers is moderate with a mean of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 0.390. Therefore, this study can help teachers, especially in private kindergartens, to better understand spiritual knowledge in order to successfully educate children and at the same time develop useful people.

Table 1.4

#### *Level of Teacher's Knowledge of Spiritual*

No	Item	n (%)			
		(SD)	(DNA)	(A)	(SA)
B1	I understand and know the meaning of spiritual knowledge.	0 (0)	2 (1.4)	79 (57.2)	57 (41.3)
B2	I know the goals and objectives of spiritual leadership.	0 (0)	6 (4.4)	78 (56.5)	54 (39.1)
B3	I learned spiritual knowledge from the workshops and courses I attended.	1 (0.7)	9 (6.5)	84 (60.9)	44 (31.9)
B4	I know the basics of spirituality as pillars of Islam, pillars of faith.	1 (0.7)	0	49	88
B5	I know the steps to develop good spirituality.	0 (0)	2 (1.4)	75 (54.3)	61 (44.2)



<b>B6</b>	I can distinguish between good and bad mental attitude of children.	0 (0)	0 (0)	61 (44.2)	77 (55.8)
<b>B7</b>	I know the importance of spiritual knowledge for students.	0 (0)	0 (0)	60 (43.5)	78 (56.5)
<b>B8</b>	I know ways/strategies to develop good spirituality in students.	0 (0)	3 (2.2)	79 (57.2)	56 (40.6)
<b>B9</b>	I can effectively deal with problematic mental issues from time to time.	0 (0)	9 (6.5)	90 (65.2)	38 (27.5)
<b>B10</b>	I know that positive reinforcement can promote good spirituality.	0 (0)	0 (0)	59 (42.8)	79 (57.2)
<b>B11</b>	I believe that negative reinforcement (punishment) can help spiritual control in kindergartens	16 (11.6)	31 (22.5)	59 (42.8)	32 (23.2)

Strongly Disagree (SD), Do Not Agree (DNA), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA)

### Discussions

A teacher's knowledge of managing children's spirituality plays an important role in determining the success and effectiveness of the lessons the teacher gives to the students. Good spiritual leadership can create a conducive classroom environment that promotes maximum engagement of children and also reduces the spirituality of weak children. Choosing the most appropriate method and strategy according to the level of the child's problem will significantly contribute to the return of the student's or child's attention to the classroom and the achievement of teaching and facilitation goals. The purpose of this study is to find out the availability and ability of teachers to deal with mental problems of children in the classroom. This finding shows that teachers are aware that their own knowledge is not enough to solve children's mental health problems. Therefore, kindergartens, especially teachers, must from time to time monitor the development of children's spiritual education.

Private kindergarten teachers should also try to emphasize this spiritual knowledge to children. Teachers can introduce themselves through creativity, courses and more to improve their knowledge in applying spiritual knowledge in kindergarten. Teachers may also hold meetings with parents to gain a deeper understanding of the child's family and background. This is good because the teacher can discuss spiritual knowledge according to the child's situation.

Therefore, teachers must always seek information and be prepared to practice appropriate and effective teaching techniques. Aspects of current development and changing times must also be considered so that intellectual knowledge remains relevant and realizes the set vision. This coincides with Abdul Halim and Zawawi's (2016) argument that private kindergarten teachers must prepare with noble morals.

Teachers who always practice a lifestyle of high spiritual value should have commendable morals because the appreciation, knowledge and moral values of children are now at an alarming level (Othman, 2014). A study by Sofiah Mohamed, Jasmin & Zailani (2016) also found that kindergarten teachers should always follow noble morals such as love, sincerity, advice, wisdom and correct mistakes gradually during classroom teaching and learning. and learn to practice knowledge by following the approach of those who are good role models.

Teachers are the closest "role model" in shaping morals and behavior of children through emotions expressed by (Osman, 2019). It is true that the time between the teacher

and the children is longer than at home with older children. Therefore, the behavior of teachers and children either directly or does not have an effective relationship with the moral development of children (Ahmad & Kasim, 2020).

Teachers are also responsible for the growth of competence of children, parents, society, nation, state and religion and are obliged to plan learning as best as possible. Rissanen et al (2017) recognized that different ways, depending on how the teacher and the child communicate information, can affect teachers' efforts to develop children's ethical skills. According to the research of Mohd (Yusoff, 2012), he assessed the dimensions of Islamic spiritual orientation as faith and beliefs, internal and external aspects that affect children's consideration of morality. The formation of morality must also be developed holistically with children's opportunities and natural abilities. Also, teachers should always research as much information as possible and update their knowledge to stay ahead of their students. To make the study more effective, it is necessary to increase knowledge and experience. According to (Halimi et al., 2012), knowledge refers to how a teacher defines classroom learning in terms of content, which includes approaches, strategies, techniques, classroom management, teacher interaction and teaching relevance. used teaching aids. To make the learning process more interesting and effective, private kindergarten teachers must be sensitive and skilled in diversifying learning methods, as stated by (Muhibah & Nurzuliana, 2018).

Thus, it is hoped that this study will give an opportunity to schools and educational institutions in every state to provide training or courses to private kindergarten teachers, especially youth teachers, to make them more skilled and capable in the preparation of mental application. better guys to make this information work for them.

### **Conclusions**

Spiritual education is most important for survival in these difficult times. In the self-development phase of identity formation, the formation of the spirit must be intact to act as a guide that always directs the young person to consistent discipline and right action. Children are the catalyst for the future of the country, which always leads to better changes. Precise and comprehensive investment by all parties is very important to curb the problems of children. Spiritual education are considered important for children in religious life and they are strengthened when the essence of piety and love of religion is instilled in them. Therefore, the role of these Islamic education can be considered as a builder and protector of character, a unifier and strengthener, a creator of balance and stability, and a restorer of behavior. These values of Islamic and spiritual certainly do not work well, but require the cooperation of all parties in the process of understanding, trust, implementation and practice. Therefore, this responsibility should be carried as best as possible to achieve positive results not only for the individual, but it can bring more benefits to the family, society and the whole human civilization.

Teaching spirituality to young children is challenging because spiritual learning involves an abstract concept. Meanwhile, at this age, young children are having difficulty dealing with abstract matters. Young children grasp the concept faster when involving concrete matters. Therefore, early childhood teachers must know the appropriate approach and strategies to make sure the children understand the content of spiritual learning. This research proves that it is crucial for early childhood teachers to equip themselves with content knowledge on spirituality before teaching spirituality to young children. Teachers with knowledge on spiritual learning know how and when to apply a spirituality approach to manage children with challenging behaviour. By applying spirituality in their daily lives, children will learn and



grasp spiritual concepts easier. Thus, to achieve this, institutions that provide training for early childhood teachers need to include spirituality subjects in their programs.

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