

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT IN 5-6 YEAR OLD CHILDREN THROUGH ILLUSTRATED ISLAMIC STORYBOOKS AT PAUD

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Abstract

Emotion regulation is a fundamental aspect of early childhood social-emotional development because it influences children's behavior, social interaction, adaptation, and character formation. This study aimed to improve the emotion regulation abilities of children aged 5–6 years through the use of illustrated Islamic storybooks at PAUD Anwar Galatta. The study employed Classroom Action Research using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consisted of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages implemented in two cycles. The participants were 14 children aged 5–6 years. Data were collected through observation and documentation and analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative techniques. The assessed indicators included recognizing emotions, controlling anger, accepting correction, demonstrating empathy, and calming oneself. The findings showed a consistent improvement in children's emotion regulation abilities across the research stages. At the pre-cycle stage, the average achievement was 25.00%, categorized as Not Yet Developed. Following the implementation of illustrated Islamic storybooks in Cycle I, the achievement increased to 45.36%, categorized as Beginning to Develop. After improvements were made in Cycle II through interactive storytelling, discussion, direct modeling, positive reinforcement, and role-playing activities, the achievement increased substantially to 80.71%, categorized as Developing as Expected to Very Well Developed. The results indicate that illustrated Islamic storybooks can effectively support children in recognizing and regulating emotions while internalizing Islamic values such as patience, empathy, self-control, and mutual respect. Therefore, illustrated Islamic storybooks may serve as an engaging and meaningful learning medium for strengthening emotion regulation and social-emotional development in early childhood education.

Keywords: Emotion Regulation, Early Childhood Education, Illustrated Islamic Storybooks, Classroom Action Research, Social-Emotional Development.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood kids are individuals who are in the golden age, which is a period of development that is really crucial for shaping various abilities, including social-emotional development (Apriana & Anantyasari, 2025). Between the ages of 5 and 6, children start to be able to recognize, understand, and express the various emotions they experience. The ability to manage emotions (emotion regulation) becomes one of the important skills to develop because it affects a child's ability to interact, solve conflicts, adapt to their environment, and build a positive character (Amalia & Sirait, 2025). Children who have good emotional management tend to cooperate more easily, can control their anger, show empathy, and are better prepared to follow the learning process at school. On the other hand, children who can't manage their emotions often show aggressive behavior, cry easily, have trouble waiting their turn, get frustrated easily, and struggle to build social relationships with peers and teachers (Suparti & Mulyani, 2025).

The development of emotional management in children doesn't happen naturally without the right stimulation. The family and school environment play a very big role in giving learning experiences that help children recognize the causes of their emotions, understand the consequences of each behavior, and find the right ways to express their feelings (Hafidhoh & Fatahillah, 2025). Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers are expected to create learning that not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also provides meaningful experiences for children's social-emotional development. However, in practice, there are still various problems in PAUD institutions, such as children who get easily angry when their wishes aren't met, have trouble managing disappointment, are reluctant to share with friends,

cry easily when facing difficulties, and are not yet able to express their feelings appropriately (Nusir, Cahyati, Zari, & Helena, 2025). This condition shows that children's ability to manage emotions still needs attention and systematic intervention through learning strategies that match the developmental characteristics of young children.

One learning tool that is considered effective for stimulating children's emotional development is picture storybooks. Stories give children the chance to recognize different types of emotions through the characters in the story, understand the cause-and-effect relationships of events, and learn how to solve problems in a positive way. Engaging visual illustrations help children understand the story in a more concrete way, making moral lessons easier to grasp. Besides improving language skills and literacy, reading stories aloud can also develop empathy, self-control, the ability to see things from others' perspectives, and social skills. When teachers encourage children to discuss the feelings of characters in the story, children learn to identify their own emotions as well as others', while also getting examples of appropriate behavior in handling various emotional situations.

In the context of Islamic education, using illustrated Islamic storybooks has extra value because they not only serve as a literacy medium but also as a way to instill Islamic values that are relevant to a child's character development (Ariyanto & Tanto, 2021; Pashela, Sibawaihi, Prasetyo, & Aziz, 2024). Stories about prophets, companions, and other Islamic tales that carry messages about patience (*ṣabr*), honesty (*ṣidq*), compassion (*raḥmah*), forgiving each other (*al-'afwu*), gratitude (*syukr*), and controlling anger (*kazm al-ghaiz*) can serve as concrete examples for children in managing their emotions (Aziz, Pasaribu, Wahyuni, & Murtalitas, 2021; Suminar & Lubis, 2025). Conveying those values through engaging illustrations and simple language makes the process of character internalization enjoyable, in line with the learning principles for young children that emphasize learning through play.

Based on the initial observations at PAUD Anwar Galatta, there are still several children aged 5–6 who show emotional management skills that haven't developed optimally. Some children still get angry easily when fighting over toys, cry when their desires aren't met, have trouble controlling disappointment when they lose games, are impatient waiting for their turn, and can't yet express their feelings appropriately. On the other hand, the use of learning media specifically designed to develop emotional management skills is still limited. Storytelling activities conducted by teachers generally haven't made planned use of illustrated Islamic storybooks as a medium to help children recognize, understand, and manage their emotions through Islamic values. This situation shows a need for learning innovations that can provide engaging, contextual learning experiences suitable for children's developmental characteristics.

Various studies show that stimulation through literacy activities, especially reading picture storybooks, can help children recognize emotions, understand other people's perspectives, and develop emotion regulation skills from an early age. A review of previous research indicates that there are still some research gaps. First, the research (Nurvinkania & Salim, 2024; Rohali & Sitorus, 2025) Regarding picture books, they focus more on improving literacy skills, language development, or overall social-emotional development, while research specifically examining the improvement of emotion regulation in children aged 5–6 years is still relatively limited.

Second, research (Magay & Lanny, 2022; Solfiah, et al., 2025) Regarding story media in early childhood education, it generally uses conventional picture books without integrating Islamic educational values as a basis for character formation and emotional control. In fact, values such as patience (*ṣabr*), compassion (*raḥmah*), gratitude (*syukr*), honesty (*ṣidq*), and the ability to control anger are important parts of Islamic character education that are relevant to instill from an early age. Third, research (Devinta, Ernawati, & Riskiana, 2025; Rafianur, Amrullah, Awalunisah, & Fitriana, 2025) using an experimental approach or development research (Research and Development), while classroom action research that directly examines the implementation of illustrated Islamic storybooks in improving children's emotional management in daily learning processes is still very limited, especially in Islamic-based early childhood education institutions.

Based on these gaps, this study offers several novelties. First, it uses illustrated Islamic storybooks as a learning medium, which not only helps improve children's literacy skills but also serves as a systematic way to develop emotional management skills through activities like reading, discussion, reflection, and practicing positive behavior. Second, this study integrates Islamic educational values into the emotional management process so that children not only learn to recognize and control their emotions but also understand that these behaviors are part of cultivating good character according to

Islamic teachings. Third, this research is carried out through a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, which is able to show gradual changes in children's behavior through each cycle of the learning actions. Fourth, this study was conducted in the context of PAUD Anwar Galatta, providing empirical evidence on the implementation of learning based on Islamic picture storybooks in Islamic early childhood education institutions, which has been relatively rare in previous research. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of theory regarding the relationship between story literacy, Islamic character education, and emotion management in early childhood. Practically, the results of this study can serve as an alternative learning strategy for PAUD teachers to develop children's social-emotional skills through engaging media that match their developmental stage, while also reinforcing the internalization of Islamic values in everyday life.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the research design to improve children's emotion regulation through a systematic process of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Classroom Action Research was selected because it provides a practical and reflective approach that enables teachers and researchers to identify classroom problems, implement appropriate instructional interventions, and continuously evaluate and refine the effectiveness of these interventions based on learners' responses and classroom realities (Arikunto, 2021). In the present study, the intervention consisted of integrating illustrated Islamic storybooks into classroom learning activities to enhance the emotion regulation abilities of children aged 5–6 years.

The study was conducted at PAUD Anwar Galatta, located in Aek Buru Selatan Village, Bilah Barat District, Labuhanbatu Regency, Indonesia. The participants consisted of 14 children aged 5–6 years, including 10 girls and 4 boys. The participants were selected based on preliminary classroom observations, which indicated that many children experienced difficulties in regulating their emotions, particularly in recognizing and expressing emotions appropriately, controlling anger, accepting feedback from teachers, demonstrating empathy toward peers, and calming themselves after experiencing disappointment or frustration. The research commenced on May 18, 2026.

The research procedures followed the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model of Classroom Action Research, which comprises four interconnected stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). This model was adopted because it offers a systematic cyclical framework for improving instructional practices through continuous evaluation and refinement. The four stages were implemented sequentially in two action cycles, with the reflection results from each cycle serving as the basis for revising and improving the instructional strategies in the subsequent cycle. Such a cyclical process ensured that the intervention was continuously adapted to the developmental needs of the children while maximizing the effectiveness of illustrated Islamic storybooks in enhancing their emotion regulation abilities.

During the planning stage, the researchers prepared lesson plans, illustrated Islamic storybooks, learning media, observation sheets, and assessment instruments related to children's emotion regulation. The action stage involved implementing storytelling activities using illustrated Islamic storybooks designed to introduce positive emotional responses and Islamic moral values. Throughout the implementation, the researchers conducted observations to document children's emotional behaviors, participation, and responses to the learning activities. Finally, the reflection stage was carried out by analyzing the strengths and limitations of each cycle, evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention, and identifying necessary improvements to be incorporated into the following cycle. This continuous process of planning, action, observation, and reflection enabled the learning strategy to be progressively refined, thereby facilitating sustainable improvements in children's emotion regulation abilities. The overall research procedure based on the Kemmis and McTaggart Classroom Action Research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

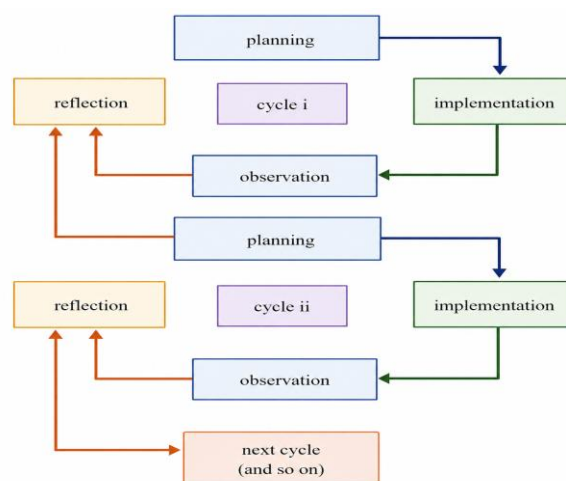


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Cycle Based on the Kemmis and McTaggart Model

In Cycle I, the planning stage involved preparing the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Harian / RPPH*), determining the learning theme, preparing illustrated Islamic storybooks, developing observation sheets, and preparing documentation materials. The action stage was conducted through opening, core, and closing activities. The teacher introduced basic emotions, such as anger, sadness, and happiness, and then read illustrated Islamic storybooks interactively. Children were invited to observe the illustrations, identify the emotions of the characters, discuss the causes of these emotions, and understand Islamic values such as patience, anger management, empathy, and mutual respect. Children were also given opportunities to express their emotional experiences in simple ways. Illustrated storybooks were selected because visual and narrative media can help children understand emotional experiences concretely and connect moral messages with situations they encounter in daily life (Arsyad, 2017).

The observation stage was conducted directly during learning activities using an observation sheet designed to assess children's emotion regulation abilities. Observations were carried out by the researcher and the classroom teacher as a collaborator to obtain more objective data. The reflection stage involved analyzing the observation results, identifying learning constraints, and determining the improvements required for the next cycle. The results of the Cycle I reflection were used as the basis for planning Cycle II.

In Cycle II, the intervention was improved through the use of more varied illustrated Islamic storybooks, more interactive discussion activities, direct modeling of emotion regulation strategies, and the addition of simple role-playing activities. Role-playing was used to provide children with direct experiences in responding to emotional situations, such as anger, disappointment, or conflict with peers. Learning activities in this cycle focused on strengthening children's abilities to recognize emotions, control anger, accept correction, show empathy, and calm themselves. This approach is consistent with the characteristics of early childhood learners, who learn more effectively through concrete experiences, social interaction, play, and enjoyable activities (Santrock, 2013; Suyadi, 2014).

The research instrument was an observation sheet developed to assess children's emotion regulation abilities. The observed indicators included the ability to identify emotions, control anger, accept correction, demonstrate empathy, and calm oneself. Assessment was conducted using four developmental categories: Not Yet Developed (*Belum Berkembang / BB*), Beginning to Develop (*Mulai Berkembang / MB*), Developing as Expected (*Berkembang Sesuai Harapan / BSH*), and Very Well Developed (*Berkembang Sangat Baik / BSB*). These indicators were developed with reference to the concept of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995).

Table 1. Observation Instrument Grid for Children's Emotion Regulation Ability

Emotion Regulation Indicator	Not Yet Developed (BB)	Beginning to Develop (MB)	Developing as Expected (BSH)	Very Well Developed (BSB)
Identifying one's emotions	The child is unable to identify their emotions even with teacher assistance.	The child begins to identify emotions but remains limited and requires assistance.	The child can identify emotions with teacher guidance.	The child can independently and accurately identify emotions.
Controlling anger	The child displays excessive anger, such as hitting or crying, and is unable to regulate it.	The child begins to control anger but frequently requires reminders.	The child can control anger with teacher guidance.	The child can independently and consistently control anger.
Accepting correction	The child displays excessive emotional reactions when corrected.	The child begins to accept correction but still requires guidance.	The child accepts correction and begins to calm down with guidance.	The child accepts correction calmly without guidance.
Demonstrating empathy	The child has not yet shown concern for peers.	The child begins to demonstrate empathy but still requires guidance.	The child demonstrates empathy with minimal guidance.	The child demonstrates empathy independently and consistently.
Calming oneself	The child is unable to calm themselves when emotions arise.	The child begins to calm themselves but still needs teacher assistance.	The child can calm themselves with guidance.	The child can calm themselves independently.

Data were collected through observation and documentation. Observation was used to obtain data on the development of children's emotion regulation abilities during the learning process. Documentation, including photographs of learning activities, field notes, and learning records, was used to support and strengthen the observation data. The data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative techniques. Descriptive quantitative analysis was used to calculate the percentage of individual and classical mastery in each cycle. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis was used to describe the learning process, children's responses, implementation constraints, and reflection results.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Explanation:

P = individual completion percentage

F = number of indicators successfully achieved by the child

N = total number of indicators assessed

Where *P* represents the individual mastery percentage, *F* represents the number of indicators achieved, and *N* represents the total number of indicators. Classical mastery was calculated by dividing the number of children who achieved mastery by the total number of children and multiplying the result by 100%.

Table 2. Criteria for the Percentage of Children's Emotion Regulation Mastery

Percentage	Criterion	Developmental Category
85%–100%	Very High	Very Well Developed (BSB)
75%–<85%	High	Developing as Expected (BSH)
50%–<75%	Moderate	Beginning to Develop (MB)
0%–<50%	Low	Not Yet Developed (BB)

The study was considered successful if at least 80% of the children reached the Very Well Developed (BSB) category in emotion regulation ability. The success of the intervention was determined by improvements in the children's observation results from Cycle I to Cycle II. Data trustworthiness was ensured through member checking and triangulation. Member checking was conducted by confirming the observation results and the researcher's interpretations with the classroom teacher as a collaborator. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observations, documentation, field notes, and reflection results in each cycle. These strategies were used to enhance

the credibility of the data and ensure that the findings reflected the actual learning conditions in the classroom (Creswell, 2018).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Results

This classroom action research was conducted to improve the emotion regulation abilities of children aged 5–6 years through the use of illustrated Islamic storybooks at PAUD Anwar Galatta. The observed emotion regulation abilities included five indicators: children's ability to recognize their emotions, control anger, accept correction, demonstrate empathy, and calm themselves. The study was conducted through a pre-cycle stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II. Each cycle consisted of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection.

Initial Condition of Children's Emotion Regulation Ability at the Pre-Cycle Stage

The pre-cycle stage was conducted to obtain an initial overview of children's emotion regulation abilities before the implementation of illustrated Islamic storybooks. Observations were carried out directly during learning activities. The findings showed that most children still experienced difficulties in recognizing and regulating their emotions. Some children became easily angry when their wishes were not fulfilled, cried when they encountered difficulties in completing tasks, had difficulty accepting directions or correction, showed limited concern for their peers, and were unable to calm themselves when facing situations that did not meet their expectations.

Table 1. Pre-Cycle Observation Results of Children's Emotion Regulation Ability

No.	Child's Name	1	2	3	4	5	Total Score	Percentage	Category
1	Aira	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
2	Aisyah	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
3	Alila	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
4	Allysa	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
5	Al-Faqih	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
6	Azkiya	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
7	Habib	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
8	Gendis	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
9	Nadhifa	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
10	Khansa	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
11	Sultan	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
12	M. Adrra	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
13	Tiara	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
14	Aira Ritonga	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB

Note: Indicator (1) recognizing emotions; (2) controlling anger; (3) accepting correction; (4) demonstrating empathy; and (5) calming oneself.

Based on Table 1, the total score obtained by the children during the pre-cycle stage was 70 out of a maximum possible score of 280. The percentage of children's emotion regulation ability was calculated using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = percentage of individual mastery

F = total score obtained

N = maximum possible score

$$P = \frac{70}{280} \times 100\% = 25\%$$

Nilai rata-rata anak pada tahap prasiklus adalah:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{70}{14} = 5$$

Where $\bar{X}$ represents the mean score, 70 is the total score obtained by all children, and 14 is the total number of children.

The results indicate that the children's emotion regulation ability was in the *Not Yet Developed* (*Belum Berkembang* / BB) category. Therefore, a learning intervention was needed to provide more targeted stimulation and help children recognize, express, and regulate their emotions positively.

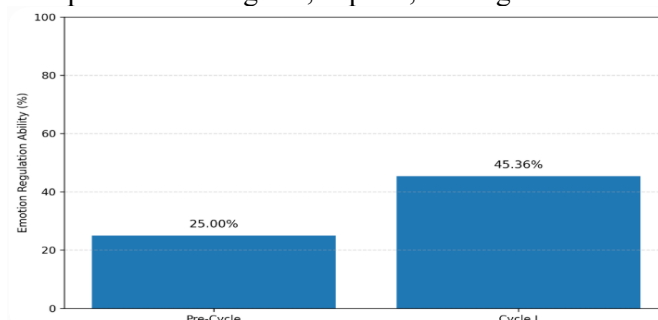


Figure 2. Improvement in Children's Emotion Regulation Ability from Pre-Cycle to Cycle I

Results of Cycle I Implementation

In Cycle I, the learning intervention was implemented through the use of illustrated Islamic storybooks containing values of patience, anger management, affection, and concern for others. The teacher read the stories interactively, invited the children to observe the illustrations, identify the characters' emotions, and discuss appropriate behaviors when facing emotional situations. The children were also given opportunities to relate the story content to simple experiences they had encountered.

The observation results from Cycle I showed an improvement in children's emotion regulation abilities compared with the pre-cycle stage. However, some children still required guidance and assistance from the teacher, particularly in controlling anger, accepting correction, and consistently demonstrating empathy.

Table 2. Cycle I Observation Results of Children's Emotion Regulation Ability

No.	Child's Name	1	2	3	4	5	Total Score	Percentage	Category
1	Aira	2	2	2	1	2	9	45%	MB
2	Aisyah	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
3	Alila	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
4	Allysa	2	2	1	2	2	9	45%	MB
5	Al-Faqih	1	1	1	1	1	5	25%	BB
6	Azkiya	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
7	Habib	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
8	Gendis	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
9	Nadhifa	2	2	1	2	2	9	45%	MB
10	Khansa	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
11	Sultan	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
12	M. Adrra	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
13	Tiara	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB
14	Aira Ritonga	2	2	2	2	2	10	50%	MB

Based on Table 2, the total score obtained in Cycle I was 127 out of a maximum possible score of 280. The percentage of children's emotion regulation ability in Cycle I was calculated as follows:

$$P = \frac{127}{280} \times 100\% = 45.36\%$$

The mean score of children's emotion regulation ability in Cycle I was calculated as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{127}{14} = 9.07$$

These results indicate that children's emotion regulation ability increased from 25% at the pre-cycle stage to 45.36% in Cycle I. However, this achievement remained in the *Beginning to Develop* (*Mulai Berkembang* / MB) category and had not yet met the study's success criteria. The Cycle I

reflection showed that children were still less active in discussions, the teacher needed to use more engaging expressions and intonation during storytelling, and additional activities were needed to provide children with direct opportunities to practice emotion regulation strategies. Based on these reflections, improvements for Cycle II included the use of more varied and communicative stories, increased question-and-answer interactions, broader opportunities for children to express their opinions, the addition of role-playing activities, direct modeling of emotion regulation strategies, and increased positive reinforcement and appreciation for children.

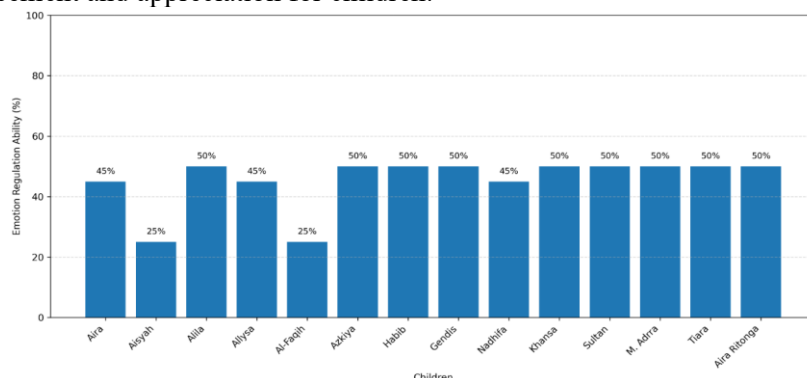


Figure 3. Children's Emotion Regulation Ability in Cycle I

Results of Cycle II Implementation

In Cycle II, the learning intervention was improved based on the reflection results from Cycle I. Illustrated Islamic storybooks were used with themes focusing on patience, anger management, accepting correction, empathy, and self-calming skills. The teacher read the stories more expressively, involved the children through question-and-answer activities, and encouraged them to discuss the emotions experienced by the characters in the stories. After the storytelling activity, the children participated in simple role-playing activities to practice controlling anger, accepting correction, demonstrating empathy, and calming themselves when facing problems.

The Cycle II observation results showed greater improvement across all emotion regulation indicators. The children began to identify and name their emotions, control anger, accept correction more positively, demonstrate concern for their peers, and calm themselves when facing problems.

Table 3. Cycle II Observation Results of Children's Emotion Regulation Ability

No.	Child's Name	1	2	3	4	5	Total Score	Percentage	Category
1	Aira	4	4	4	3	3	18	90%	BSB
2	Aisyah	3	3	3	2	3	14	70%	BSH
3	Alila	3	4	3	4	3	17	85%	BSB
4	Allysa	4	3	4	4	3	18	90%	BSB
5	Al-Faqih	3	3	3	3	3	15	75%	BSH
6	Azkiya	3	3	4	3	3	16	80%	BSH
7	Habib	4	3	3	4	3	17	85%	BSB
8	Gendis	3	3	3	3	3	15	75%	BSH
9	Nadhifa	2	3	3	3	3	14	70%	BSH
10	Khansa	4	4	3	4	3	18	90%	BSB
11	Sultan	3	3	3	4	3	16	80%	BSH
12	M. Adrra	3	4	3	3	4	17	85%	BSB
13	Tiara	3	3	3	3	3	15	75%	BSH
14	Aira Ritonga	3	3	4	3	3	16	80%	BSH

Based on Table 3, the total score obtained in Cycle II was 226 out of a maximum possible score of 280. The percentage of children's emotion regulation ability in Cycle II was calculated as follows:

$$P = \frac{226}{280} \times 100\% = 80.71\%$$

The mean score of children's emotion regulation ability in Cycle II was calculated as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{226}{14} = 16.14$$

These results indicate that the children's emotion regulation abilities were in the *Developing as Expected* (*Berkembang Sesuai Harapan* / BSH) to *Very Well Developed* (*Berkembang Sangat Baik* / BSB) categories. The achievement percentage of 80.71% met the study's success criterion, namely that at least 80% of children should reach the BSH and BSB categories. Therefore, the intervention was concluded in Cycle II.

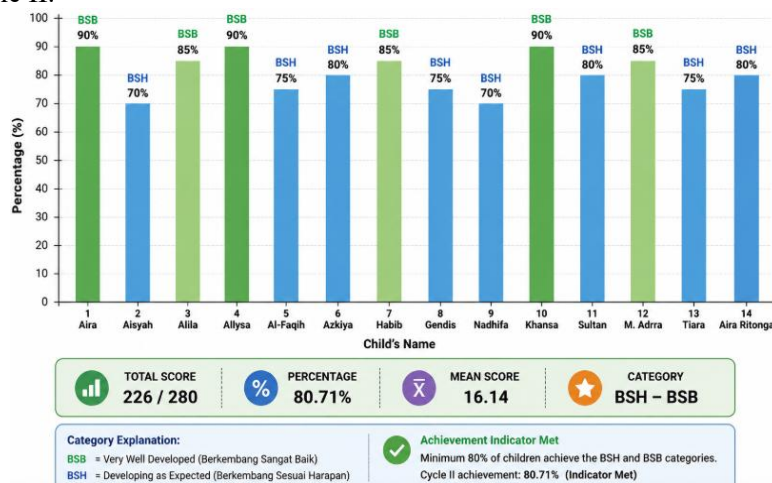


Figure 4. Children's Emotion Regulation Ability in Cycle II

Comparison of Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II Results

Table 4. Comparison of Children's Emotion Regulation Ability Across the Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II Stages

Stage	Total Score	Percentage	Mean Score	Category
Pre-Cycle	70	25.00%	5.00	BB
Cycle I	127	45.36%	9.07	MB
Cycle II	226	80.71%	16.14	BSH-BSB

Based on Table 4, children's emotion regulation ability showed consistent improvement at each stage of the study. At the pre-cycle stage, the percentage of children's emotion regulation ability was only 25.00%, which fell within the *Not Yet Developed* category. After the intervention was implemented in Cycle I, the percentage increased to 45.36%, which was categorized as *Beginning to Develop*. A greater improvement occurred in Cycle II, reaching 80.71%, which fell within the *Developing as Expected* to *Very Well Developed* categories.

This improvement indicates that the use of illustrated Islamic storybooks combined with discussion, question-and-answer activities, direct modeling, and role-playing can help children understand different forms of emotions and practice ways to regulate them in simple situations. Children not only received moral messages through the stories but also had opportunities to identify the emotions of story characters, relate the stories to their personal experiences, and practice more appropriate emotional responses through role-playing activities.

Overall, the findings indicate that illustrated Islamic storybooks can improve the emotion regulation abilities of children aged 5–6 years at PAUD Anwar Galatta. The success of the intervention was demonstrated by the achievement of 80.71% in Cycle II, which exceeded the study's success criterion of 80%. Therefore, illustrated Islamic storybooks can be used as an alternative learning medium to support children's social-emotional development, particularly in the area of emotion regulation.

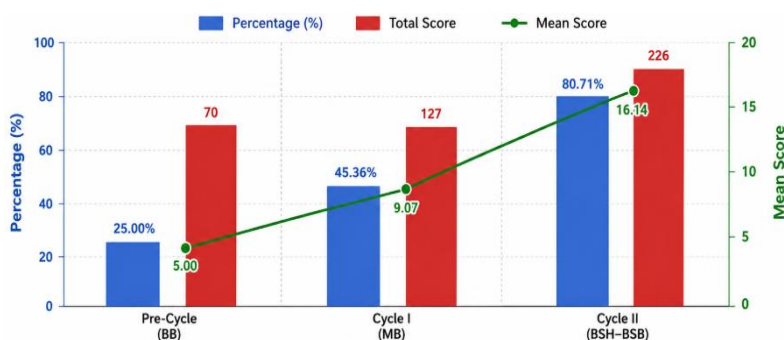


Figure 5. Comparison of Children's Emotion Regulation Ability Across the Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II Stages

Discussion

The findings of this classroom action research indicate that the use of illustrated Islamic storybooks significantly improved the emotion regulation abilities of children aged 5–6 years at PAUD Anwar Galatta. The improvement was demonstrated by the consistent increase in children's achievement across the three stages of the study. Before the intervention, the children's average emotion regulation ability was only 25.00%, indicating that most participants had not yet developed the ability to recognize emotions, control anger, accept correction, demonstrate empathy, and calm themselves appropriately. After the implementation of the first cycle, the achievement increased to 45.36%, and following the refinement of instructional strategies in Cycle II, it reached 80.71%, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of 80%. These findings demonstrate that illustrated Islamic storybooks, when combined with interactive storytelling, questioning, teacher modeling, and role-playing activities, constitute an effective instructional approach for enhancing emotion regulation among preschool children.

The improvement observed in this study supports the theoretical perspective that emotion regulation is not an innate ability but develops progressively through repeated social interaction and guided learning experiences. (Setyaningsih & Sukiman, 2025) argues that emotional competence in early childhood emerges through intentional educational experiences in which children are encouraged to identify, understand, and appropriately express emotions within supportive environments. Similarly, (Sutandy, Christianna, & Renaningtyas, 2025) explain that emotion regulation develops through continuous interactions with adults who provide emotional coaching, behavioral guidance, and opportunities to practice adaptive emotional responses. Throughout the implementation of this study, teachers consistently guided children to recognize emotional expressions presented in the illustrated stories, discuss the causes of different emotions, and explore appropriate ways of responding to emotional situations. These structured learning experiences gradually strengthened children's emotional awareness and self-regulation.

The findings are also consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that children's cognitive and socio-emotional development occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals within meaningful social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). During the storytelling sessions, teachers functioned as facilitators who scaffolded children's understanding by asking reflective questions, encouraging emotional discussions, and modeling desirable behaviors. Such instructional scaffolding enabled children to internalize emotion regulation strategies that they later applied independently in classroom interactions. This finding reinforces previous studies suggesting that guided social interaction is fundamental to the development of children's emotional competence.

One important aspect contributing to the success of the intervention was the use of illustrated storybooks as visual learning media. Preschool children generally learn abstract concepts more effectively when information is presented through concrete visual representations. The illustrations helped children recognize facial expressions, emotional situations, and social interactions that would otherwise be difficult to understand through verbal explanations alone. (Rosnawati, Aryatie, Prasandi, Yanti, & Yunita, 2024) explains that illustrations in children's literature provide emotional cues that enable children to infer characters' feelings, intentions, and motivations more effectively. Likewise, (Sugiharti, 2024) found that exposure to children's literature significantly enhances emotional understanding and empathy because stories encourage children to interpret emotional experiences from multiple perspectives. The present findings support these conclusions, as children became increasingly

capable of identifying emotional expressions and explaining appropriate behavioral responses after participating in repeated storytelling sessions.

Another important finding concerns the role of interactive storytelling. The improvement achieved in this study cannot be attributed solely to reading storybooks but also to the active interaction that occurred throughout the learning process. During storytelling sessions, children were encouraged to identify characters' emotions, answer reflective questions, relate story events to their personal experiences, and discuss appropriate solutions to emotional conflicts. According to (Hafidz, Ma'mun, & Syifa, 2025), shared interactive book reading produces significantly greater improvements in preschool children's emotion understanding than passive listening because children actively construct emotional meaning through dialogue with adults. Their systematic review concluded that discussion-based storytelling strengthens children's ability to understand emotional causes, emotional consequences, and appropriate regulation strategies. The learning activities implemented in the present study closely reflected these principles, thereby explaining the considerable improvement in children's emotional competence across the two intervention cycles.

The substantial improvement observed during Cycle II further demonstrates the importance of continuous reflection and instructional refinement in Classroom Action Research. Reflection after Cycle I revealed that several children remained passive during discussions, experienced difficulty controlling anger, and hesitated to express their opinions. Based on these findings, the instructional strategy was modified by increasing teacher expressiveness, expanding question-and-answer activities, incorporating role-playing sessions, and providing more frequent positive reinforcement. As a result, children's emotion regulation ability increased markedly from 45.36% in Cycle I to 80.71% in Cycle II. This outcome supports (Arinah, Ihlas, Muslimin, & Roshandel, 2025), who emphasize that the cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection enables teachers to continuously improve instructional effectiveness through evidence-based modifications.

Role-playing activities also played a significant role in improving children's emotional competence. Rather than merely discussing emotions theoretically, children were given opportunities to practice emotional regulation strategies directly through simulated situations based on the stories they had heard. Such activities enabled children to rehearse adaptive behaviors, including calming themselves, accepting correction, apologizing, helping peers, and expressing disappointment appropriately. These findings align with (Bandura, 1986) Social Learning Theory, which argues that children acquire new behaviors through observation, imitation, and repeated behavioral practice. When teachers modeled appropriate emotional responses and children repeatedly practiced these responses during role-playing, adaptive emotional behaviors gradually became internalized and transferred to authentic classroom situations.

The findings also demonstrate that integrating Islamic values into storytelling provides additional educational benefits beyond conventional storybooks. The illustrated Islamic storybooks used in this study emphasized values such as patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), compassion (*rahmah*), forgiveness (*al-'afw*), honesty (*ṣidq*), and anger management (*kazm al-ghaiḥ*). These values provided children with moral frameworks for understanding why emotions should be regulated appropriately. According to (Halimatussyahidiyah, Meliani, & Suzana, 2025), effective character education occurs when moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions are developed simultaneously through meaningful educational experiences. (Aisyah & Hakim, 2025) argue that character education becomes more effective when moral values are embedded within authentic learning contexts rather than taught as isolated concepts. The present findings suggest that Islamic stories successfully integrated emotional learning with moral development, thereby strengthening both children's emotional competence and character formation.

The improvement in empathy observed during this study is consistent with previous research indicating that storybooks encourage children to understand others' emotional experiences. (Rafita & Juwita, 2025) reported that children who are frequently exposed to narrative fiction tend to develop stronger empathic abilities because stories require readers to interpret characters' emotions, intentions, and social relationships. Similarly, (Ramona & Cholimah, 2025) found that classroom activities emphasizing emotional discussion significantly improve children's empathy, prosocial behavior, and peer relationships. In the present study, children gradually became more willing to comfort classmates, share learning materials, and express concern for friends experiencing difficulties after repeatedly engaging in emotionally meaningful storytelling sessions.

The findings further reinforce Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasizes that children's development is shaped by continuous interactions between individuals and their immediate environments. The classroom environment created during this intervention provided emotional security, supportive teacher-child relationships, and repeated opportunities for positive social interaction. Such conditions enabled children to practice newly acquired emotion regulation strategies in authentic classroom contexts. Consequently, emotional learning became integrated into children's everyday social experiences rather than remaining limited to storytelling activities alone.

From an educational perspective, this study confirms that illustrated Islamic storybooks represent a highly effective instructional medium for early childhood education because they simultaneously stimulate language development, emotional competence, moral reasoning, and social interaction. Unlike conventional teacher-centered instruction, storytelling creates enjoyable learning experiences that encourage active participation, reflective thinking, and collaborative discussion. (Bunayyah, et al., 2025) emphasize that emotionally supportive classroom environments significantly contribute to children's self-regulation and long-term academic success. Therefore, integrating emotionally rich storybooks into daily classroom instruction represents a practical strategy for strengthening children's social-emotional competencies.

The present study also contributes to the existing literature by addressing several gaps identified in previous research. While earlier studies have generally examined the effects of picture books on literacy development or general social-emotional learning, relatively few have investigated the integration of Islamic illustrated storybooks as a medium for improving emotion regulation through Classroom Action Research. Furthermore, previous studies have rarely combined interactive storytelling, emotional discussion, teacher modeling, positive reinforcement, and role-playing within a single intervention. The success achieved in this study therefore extends current knowledge by demonstrating that the integration of Islamic moral values with evidence-based socio-emotional learning strategies can substantially improve preschool children's emotion regulation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of illustrated Islamic storybooks effectively enhanced the emotion regulation abilities of children aged 5–6 years at PAUD Anwar Galatta. The improvement from 25.00% during the pre-cycle stage to 80.71% in Cycle II confirms that storytelling enriched with Islamic values, interactive discussion, teacher guidance, modeling, and role-playing constitutes a comprehensive instructional approach capable of fostering emotional awareness, self-control, empathy, and adaptive emotional behavior among young children. These findings provide important theoretical and practical implications for early childhood education by demonstrating that emotion regulation can be effectively developed through integrated literacy activities that combine visual narratives, moral education, and active social interaction.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

This classroom action research concludes that illustrated Islamic storybooks can improve the emotion regulation abilities of children aged 5–6 years at PAUD Anwar Galatta. The improvement was demonstrated by the increase in children's emotion regulation achievement from 25.00% in the pre-cycle stage, to 45.36% in Cycle I, and to 80.71% in Cycle II. The final achievement met the study's success criterion, as most children reached the *Developing as Expected* and *Very Well Developed* categories. The findings indicate that illustrated Islamic storybooks, when combined with interactive storytelling, discussion, direct modeling, positive reinforcement, and role-playing, can help children recognize emotions, control anger, accept correction, demonstrate empathy, and calm themselves. Practically, this medium offers an engaging and value-based approach for integrating social-emotional learning with Islamic character education in early childhood classrooms.

Suggestions

Early childhood teachers are encouraged to use illustrated Islamic storybooks regularly as part of social-emotional learning activities. Stories should be selected according to children's developmental characteristics and should include familiar situations, such as sharing, waiting for turns, dealing with disappointment, apologizing, and resolving conflicts with peers. To strengthen learning outcomes, storytelling should be followed by discussion, questions and answers, direct examples from the teacher, and simple role-playing activities that allow children to practice appropriate emotional responses.

Schools may support this practice by providing varied, age-appropriate illustrated Islamic storybooks and encouraging teachers to integrate emotion regulation activities into daily learning routines. Future research may involve larger samples, different early childhood education settings, comparison groups, and longer observation periods to examine the sustainability of children's emotion regulation development.

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