



Storytelling As A Medium For Prenatal Education (Munasabah Qs. An-Nahl 78)

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Abstract

This article aims to provide knowledge about the importance of stimulating the fetus in the womb in accordance with the Qur'anic verse An-Nahl 78 regarding the creation of hearing that precedes the creation of the senses of sight and heart (reason and mind). In examining the verse, the researcher used the science of munasabah to analyze the relationship and harmony between An-Nahl 78 and other verses. The results are then correlated with medical facts and scientific journals in previous studies. Using books, journals, articles, and written documents as the main materials, this study employs a qualitative method. The results show that maximizing hearing during storytelling activities while the child is in the womb can stimulate their brain development and language skills. In line with Surah An-Nahl verse 78, this activity is also a concrete action to support the government in improving literacy through the National Literacy Movement (GLN) at the smallest level, namely the family.

Keywords: Literacy; Prenatal Education Media; Surah An-Nahl 78; Storytelling

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pengetahuan tentang pentingnya stimulasi pada janin dalam kandungan sesuai dengan isyarat Al-Qur'an surat An-Nahl ayat 78 mengenai penciptaan pendengaran yang mendahului penciptaan indera mata dan hati (akal dan pikiran). Dalam mengkaji ayat, peneliti menggunakan ilmu munasabah untuk menganalisis hubungan, dan keserasian antara surat an-Nahl ayat 78 dengan ayat lainnya. Hasilnya kemudian dikorelasikan dengan fakta kedokteran dan jurnal ilmiah dalam penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya. Menggunakan buku, jurnal, artikel, dan dokumen tertulis sebagai bahan utama, maka penelitian ini masuk ke dalam metode kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa memaksimalkan pendengaran pada kegiatan mendongeng pada masa anak dalam kandungan dapat menstimulus perkembangan otak dan kemampuan berbahasa mereka. Selaras dengan surat An-Nahl ayat 78, kegiatan tersebut juga sebagai salah satu tindakan nyata mendukung pemerintah dalam meningkatkan literasi melalui GLN (Gerakan Literasi Nasional), ruang lingkup terkecil, yaitu keluarga.

Kata kunci: Literasi; Media Pendidikan Prenatal; Surah An-Nahl 78; Dongeng

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Introduction

Long time ago, literacy was marked by the ability to read, write, and count, today literacy is understood as something broader than the meaning of those three points.

Literacy manifests as the ability to understand, process, and utilize information so that a person can think critically and make the right decisions.

According to UNESCO data, Indonesia's reading literacy rate is very low, at 0.001%. This means that out of every thousand Indonesians, only one person has an interest in reading. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the reading interest level of Indonesians is 17.66% (Rina Devianty & Yustika sari, 2022).

The results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, which involved 79 countries, also showed concerning results: Indonesia ranked 74th in literacy, 73rd in mathematics, and 71st in science. Compared to other ASEAN countries, these results lag behind those of Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam (Yohana Aurelia Nay, Maria Patrisia Wau, Yohanes Vianey Sayangan, & Maria Desidaria Noge, 2024).

In response to these facts, the government has implemented various initiatives, including the National Literacy Movement (GLN), one aspect of which is the Family Literacy Movement (GLK). The family or home environment is the foundation of education. Research shows that early literacy experiences occur through interactions in the home environment during everyday activities in family life. Literacy learning at home affects children's language skills at school (Aisiah Aztry, Vismaia S. Damaianti, Yeti Mulyati, & Andoyo Sastromiharjo, 2023).

Literacy in the family can begin with reading storybooks and storytelling, not only when children can communicate verbally, but even in their mother's womb. This is because a fetus's ability to hear is already fully developed by 23-27 weeks. Parents or adults do not need to wait until their child is six months old, let alone six years old. Children can be introduced to reading from the very first days of their lives.

Several studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of storytelling for early school-age children, including a survey conducted by Kartini et al. on group B of the Miftahul Jannah Rawamerta Early Childhood Education Center in Karawang. Storytelling about the stories of the prophets has proven to be quite effective in developing children's moral values. As a result, children can behave politely and respectfully towards their parents, teachers, and friends (Kartini, Astuti Darmiyanti, & Nancy Riana, 2022).

This storytelling method is not only effective for early childhood but also effective when implemented on students at MA Nurul Akhlak Biaro-Baru. Zahrotul Mardiyah et al. in their research entitled "Implementation of the Storytelling Method

about the Exemplary Stories of the Prophet in Instilling Morals in accordance with the Qur'an and Hadith on Students Students at MA Nurul Akhlak Biaro-Baru," proved that the application of the storytelling method using the stories of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as teaching material was proven to be able to increase students' understanding of Islamic morals. The stories of the Prophet Muhammad, told engagingly, both through appropriate intonation and emotional expression, can inspire students and leave a lasting impression on their souls (Zahrotul Mardiyah, Silvi Wardani, Adeka Alpionita, Rizki Juan Pratama, & Desfi Dwi Yulinda, 2025).

This is not only true for early childhood and school-age children. A systematic review of previous research results (15 from Europe and two from Asia) also demonstrates that interactions between pregnant women and their unborn babies, in the form of maternal voices, significantly ($p < 0.05$) contribute to the formation of strong bonding attachments. (Arista Apriani, Dheny Rohmatika, Yunia Renny Andhikantias, Megayana Yessy Mareta, & Wijayanti, 2024).

Obstetrician and gynecologist Dr. David Chamberlain of Boston University, United States, presented the results of his research. He found that children who begin learning in the womb have multiple intelligence abilities by school age. A similar finding was expressed by Dr. William Lilley of the University of Auckland, New Zealand, who stated that children who receive extensive stimulation in the womb develop more quickly than those who receive little or no stimulation at all. The earlier stimulation is administered, the greater the benefits to a child's development (Intan Nuraini Haka, Sri Setiasih, & Triana Sri Hardjanti, 2022).

Regarding the importance of education during the prenatal period, Firgina Amelia Nurhusni¹ and Dadan Nugraha explained that teaching during this period can be done, among other things, by reading stories (Firgina Amelia Nurhusni & Dadan Nugraha, 2023a). Complementing this, Aridlah Sendy Robikhah stated that praying for the child's well-being, maintaining the mother's condition by providing good and halal food intake, and providing education about worship by inviting the child to participate in worship with the mother are also forms of prenatal education (Aridlah Sendy Robikhah, 2022).

Many studies have demonstrated the importance of prenatal education, but researchers have yet to find any that utilize the approach of *munasabah* verses and then correlate them with fairy tales. Therefore, this research is crucial as a guide for parents to more intensively stimulate their fetuses with sound, one of which is through storytelling. The role of listening to fairy tales for children, especially during the prenatal

and postnatal periods, is expected to raise awareness among expectant mothers and fathers about introducing their children to the world of literacy from the womb.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach. This approach was chosen because it aims to analyze the relationship between the concepts of prenatal-postnatal education, hearing development, and QS. An-Nahl: 78 descriptively and analytically. Information and data from primary sources include the Qur'an (QS. An-Nahl: 78), tafsir books, and classical literature related to child education.

Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and research related to storytelling, prenatal and postnatal education, and child developmental neuroscience. Data collection techniques include literature documentation and a literature search. Data analysis techniques include content analysis, which identifies, categorizes, and interprets key concepts about listening, child education, and storytelling (Malik Husen & Arbi, 2024). This qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the meaningful relationship between the revealed text and scientific findings.

Result and Discussion

Storytelling

Storytelling is the act of speaking with clear intonation, recounting something memorable, interesting, with special values, and a specific purpose. Kusumo Priyono Ars, or Kak Kusumo, explains, "storytelling is not merely entertainment, but has a more noble purpose, namely introducing the natural environment, good character, and encouraging children to behave positively" (Rr. Vemmi Kesuma Dewi, 2021).

The skill of storytelling is a form of art that has its own uniqueness and appeal. Through this activity, children can gain various lessons that enrich their understanding of life (Engel Bertha Halena Gena, I Made Sutama, I Putu Mas Dewantara, & Kadek Wirahyuni, 2025).

Ancestors and parents of the past created fairy tales for children to instill moral values and as a means of entertainment. Therefore, fairy tales can be a vehicle for sharpening the imagination, opening children's horizons, and stimulating children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. Fairy tales also become a medium of communication to convey moral lessons so that children can apply what they have heard in their daily lives.

Storytelling is the process of conveying messages to listeners without forcing them and encouraging broader knowledge. As exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW since ancient times, he always told his companions about the history of previous nations so that they could benefit from it. In storytelling, there is interaction between the storyteller and the listeners, which creates a reciprocal relationship between the storyteller and the listeners.

The Qur'an contains many stories covering various aspects of human life, such as the stories of the prophets, miracles, and moral and spiritual lessons. Some of the stories that are often used in teaching children include the story of the Prophet Noah and his ark, the Prophet Moses who fought Pharaoh, the Prophet Jonah who was swallowed by a whale, and the Prophet Joseph who was patient in facing trials. Each of these stories contains a profound moral message, such as patience, perseverance, sacrifice, and obedience to God, which can form the basis for character building in children from an early age (Yuliana Siregar, Rafika Sari, & Reni Anggraeni, 2025).

Potential of Hearing Senses During the Prenatal and Postnatal Periods

Pregnancy is a biological process involving the growth and development of the fetus in the mother's womb. This phase of fetal development is an important moment in human life, which requires special attention to proceed healthily (Ibrohim & Imas Kania Rahman, 2024).

Human development does not begin when a person is born into the world, but rather begins before birth, or what is more commonly referred to as the prenatal period. During the prenatal period, humans undergo significant development. The prenatal stage is the beginning and determinant of the next stages of development. (Rendi Pratama, Miftahul Cholifah, Ermis Suryana, & Abdurrahmansyah, 2023)

Based on the research results, it was concluded that the prenatal period is a crucial period, even the most crucial of all developmental periods. This is because it is during this period that fundamental factors are formed that will influence an individual's future growth and development, such as genetic traits, gender, filial order, and number of children. Prenatal conditions have a significant impact on human development (Dinda Engla Sattipa, Nabila Zahara, & Linda Yarni, 2023).

In general, prenatal comes from the word "pre", which means before, and "natal" means birth, so prenatal is the period before birth. Pregnancy or gestation is an important period in educating a child. During this period, the child inside the womb begins to

record any information and stimuli received from outside (Putri Sinta Nuriah Yusuf & Arin Khairunnisa, 2023).

Neuroscience shows that fetuses can hear from 23–27 weeks, including the intonation, rhythm, and words spoken by their parents. This confirms that hearing is the first sense to function and can be stimulated through prenatal storytelling.

According to Rene Var de Carr (Prenatal Enrichment Unit at Hua General Hospital, Bangkok), “Fetuses that are given stimulation are quicker to learn to read, imitate sounds, say their first words, smile spontaneously, respond to sounds and tones, and develop better social patterns as adults.” According to Kursinah, listening to educational stories, stories about prophets and their companions, or even fables, can stimulate the fetus in the womb. The fetus will begin to hear and recognize the words spoken by the mother or father reading the story (Firgina Amelia Nurhusni & Dadan Nugraha, 2023).

This phenomenon is in line with QS. An-Nahl verse 78, which mentions hearing (sam'a) before sight (abṣār) and heart (af'idah), shows that hearing is the first sense that functions and is important for receiving knowledge from the prenatal period.

A baby's ability to hear is already formed when they are 23-27 weeks old in the womb and develops rapidly at birth. A baby's ability to hear is part of an individual's primary information acquisition function (Rochmat et al., 2024). Early exposure to sounds and language heard in the womb is the foundation of the relationship between parents and children. Auditory discrimination develops rapidly after birth (postnatal period). Three-day-old babies can recognize sounds from what they have heard before. At one month of age, babies can distinguish between similar sounds such as “ba” and “pa” (Diane E. Papalia, 2015).

During this postnatal period, storytelling is not limited to just listening to voices, but can also be accompanied by introducing pictures in books to stimulate the child's vision. Stimuli from the auditory senses in the form of sounds are translated so that the information can be received by the brain. In the human brain, there are receptors (signal receivers). Sound stimuli are transmitted to the frontal lobe to be associated with emotions, thoughts, and past experiences. At birth, a baby's brain is 50% developed, and that capacity will continue to grow until the age of 5. Therefore, the process of continuously stimulating the auditory senses will maximize brain function (Cecep Sobar Rochmat dkk., 2024).

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Munasabah Surat An-Nahl: 78

In his work entitled *Al Burhan Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an*, Bahruddin Az Zarkasyi mentions that the word *al-munasabah* comes from *al-muqorobah*, which means closeness, and *al-musyakah*, which means similarity. For example, in the sentence *fulan A yunasib fulan B*, it means that *fulan A* has a close relationship and resembles *fulan B* (Lestari, Lestari, & Thoriquddin, 2024).

Etymologically, *munasabah* is the relationship between two or more parties, while terminologically, *munasabah* is the knowledge of the meaning contained in the sequence of statements in the Qur'an. A similar expression is also expressed by Imam As-Suyuti, who states that *munasabah* is the similarity and closeness between some verses, surahs, and sentences, resulting in a relationship or correlation between words, which may be in the form of a correlation of verse meanings, forms of thought, equality, and oppositional relationships. *Munasabah* also means reinforcement, interpretation, and substitution (Dewi Murni, 2019).

Understanding *munasabah* is very important in interpreting the Quran. Manna al-Qaththan mentions that *munasabah* has the function of revealing the power of meaning and the miraculous nature of the Quran in terms of *balaghah*. The function of *munasabah* in al-Zarkasyi's view is to combine other parts of the sentence so that there appears to be a connection between the two. Meanwhile, al-Qadhi Abu Bakar ibn al-'Arabi in Manna al-Qaththan argues that linking parts of the Quran so that they appear as one sentence and one structure makes *munasabah* a very noble science (Rudi Ahmad Suryadi, 2016).

The *munasabah* of Surah An-Nahl: 78 in this paper uses the type of *munasabah* between verses from different surahs. The focus of similarity is on the meaning of the verse.

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

“And Allah brought you forth from your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts that you might give thanks.” (QS. An-Nahl: 78)

First, Allah says, “And Allah brought you forth from your mothers' wombs knowing nothing.” At this point, the sentence is complete, after which a new sentence

begins, saying, “and He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts.” We hold this opinion because Allah created worship, hearing, sight, and hearts before Allah brought them forth from their mothers' wombs, but Allah gave them knowledge and reason after bringing them forth from their mothers' wombs (Sheikh Ahmad Muhammad Shakir & Sheikh Mahmud Muhammad Shakir, n.d.).

The above verse uses the word (السمع)/hearing in the singular form and places it before the word (الابصار)/sights, which is in the plural form, and (الافئدة)/hearts, which is also in the plural form. This word is understood by the majority of scholars to mean reason. This meaning is acceptable if what is meant is a combination of the power of thought and the power of the heart that will bind a person, so that they will not fall into error and disobedience. Thus, in its meaning, it is the potential to attain inspiration and divine light (M. Quraish Shihab, 2009).

The plural form is chosen for sight and heart because what is heard is always the same, whether by one person or many people, and from whatever direction the sound comes. This is different from what is seen. The position of one's footing and the direction of gaze give rise to differences. So too do the results of the work of the mind and heart. The human heart is sometimes happy, sometimes sad, sometimes hateful, sometimes longing, with varying degrees, even though the objects of hatred and longing are the same. The results of reasoning are also like this. They can differ; sometimes reasoning is very sharp, sometimes not. This is because everyone's thoughts are different.

The use of the words sam'a (hearing) and absar (sight), rather than udzun (ears) and 'ain (eyes), also shows that the most important thing about the potential given by Allah is not its physical form. Rather, it is how their functions enable a human being (a creature) to submit themselves to Him (Ambo Tang, 2022).

Gradually, hearing developed, and sounds from near and far could be heard. Then sight developed, enabling the baby to distinguish different colors and see the face of its mother, who was breastfeeding. Hearing and sight were guided by the development of the heart, namely feelings and thoughts. Gradually, as they grew older and more mature, they became people of good character, polite, well-mannered, capable of carrying out their duties, namely the responsibilities entrusted to them by Allah, becoming full members of humanity, “So that you may be grateful” (Prof. Dr. Hamka, 1983).

As in Surah An-Nahl : 78, the word “hearing” is also mentioned before “sight” in Surah Al-Insan:2 :

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا ۖ بَصِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

“Indeed, We created man from a mixture of fluids. We intended to test him (with commands and prohibitions) so that he might hear and see.” (QS. Al-Insan: 2)

Because the birth of man is ultimately intended as the guardian of Allah's trust, he is gifted with hearing and sight that enable him to listen and witness the greatness, power, and magnitude of Allah's blessings. Man is gifted with hearing and reason as proof of Allah's power. The specific mention of hearing and sight in this verse means that these two senses are the most functional in observing Allah's creation, leading humans to believe in His Oneness (Tafsir kemenag, 2021).

In Surah al-Mu'minun: 78, Allah says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۗ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

“It is He who has created for you hearing, sight, and conscience, but very few of you are grateful.” (QS. Al-Mu'minun: 78)

This verse explains that Allah has bestowed upon humans hearing, sight, and conscience. If humans were to pay attention and reflect on these gifts from Allah, they would surely recognize how great and miraculous Allah's blessings are, how meticulous and delicate His creations are. The ear, which appears to be very simple in form, can capture a wide variety of different sounds. The sounds of animals, birds, sounds that occur in the surrounding nature, such as the roaring of the wind, the rumbling of thunder, and the various sounds produced by human civilization, such as the sounds of vehicles and machines, the sounds of music, and melodious sounds.

The ears can distinguish these sounds one by one so that humans can determine their attitude towards what they hear. The eyes can capture light and the shape of things, can distinguish various colors, can see the beauty of nature, and can investigate what is useful and what is dangerous. Then the heart can feel and appreciate various feelings, examine every event, and conclude it to determine the attitude towards it. If humans truly make the best use of these three blessings, they will surely reap many benefits, and ultimately, they will conclude that the giver of these blessings and gifts is the All-Knowing, All-Powerful over all things, He is worthy of praise and gratitude for all His gifts (Qur'an NU Online, t.t.).

In the letter As-Sajdah: 9, the mention of hearing over sight and heart is as follows :

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ ۚ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۗ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

“Then He perfected it and breathed His spirit into it, and He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts, but very few of you are grateful.” (QS. As-Sajdah:9)

In the above surah, As-Sajdah, it is narrated that after Allah SWT breathed His spirit into the fetus, Allah then created hearing, sight, and the heart. With the hearing (ears) that Allah has given, humans can use them to hear the truth, with their sight (eyes) so that humans can see the signs of Allah SWT's greatness and power, and with their hearts so that humans can think and believe in Allah (Sitorus & Sahputra, 2023).

Conclusion

Prenatal and postnatal education are equally important as parents strive to maximize a child's development. Storytelling has been proven effective as prenatal and postnatal auditory stimulation, as stated in Surah An-Nahl: 78, which emphasizes hearing as the first sense given by God to acquire knowledge and foster gratitude. Therefore, storytelling activities from the prenatal period not only build emotional closeness but also stimulate optimal brain, language, and intellectual development in infants.

This study has limitations due to its conceptual nature and literature-based nature, which means it does not directly involve empirical testing of storytelling practices during the prenatal period. Therefore, further research is recommended, including empirical studies using experimental or field approaches with pregnant women to test the effectiveness of storytelling as prenatal stimulation. Furthermore, interdisciplinary studies integrating the perspectives of tafsir, Islamic education, and developmental neuroscience are needed to produce a more applicable and scientifically tested prenatal education model.

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