

Early Al-Quran Learning Curriculum Innovation: The Effectiveness of *Hijaiyah* Letter Media in Improving Letter Recognition Skills

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INFORMASI ARTIKEL	ABSTRAK
Article History: Received: 01 April 2026 Revised: 29 Mei 2026 Accepted: 03 June 2026 Published: 27 July 2026 Kata Kunci: Inovasi Kurikulum; Pembelajaran Al-Qur'an; Sejak Dini; Media; Huruf Hijaiyah.	Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk efektivitas media huruf hijaiyah dalam meningkatkan kemampuan pengenalan huruf pada anak usia dini serta mendeskripsikan implementasi inovasi kurikulum pembelajaran Al-Qur'an di TK Aisyiyah Aek Kanopan Labuhanbatu Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis deskriptif. Subjek penelitian meliputi kepala sekolah, guru kelas, dan orang tua peserta didik. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, sedangkan analisis data menggunakan model interaktif melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan awal anak dalam mengenal huruf hijaiyah masih rendah dan cenderung bersifat hafalan. Setelah diterapkannya media huruf hijaiyah berbasis permainan yang menarik dan interaktif, terjadi peningkatan signifikan pada kemampuan anak dalam mengenali, membedakan, dan menyebutkan huruf hijaiyah secara mandiri. Selain itu, penggunaan media ini juga meningkatkan fokus, minat, dan partisipasi aktif anak dalam pembelajaran. Implementasi kurikulum inovasi didukung oleh kebijakan sekolah, pelatihan guru, serta evaluasi berkala yang berkelanjutan. Dengan demikian, media huruf hijaiyah terbukti efektif sebagai inovasi pembelajaran dalam meningkatkan kemampuan pengenalan huruf pada anak usia dini. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam pengembangan model pembelajaran Al-Qur'an yang kreatif, interaktif, dan sesuai dengan karakteristik anak usia dini.
Keywords: Curriculum Innovation; Quran Learning; Early Learning; Media; Hijaiyah Letters	ABSTRACT This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Hijaiyah letter media in improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood and describe the implementation of the innovation of the Al-Qur'an learning curriculum at Aisyiyah Kindergarten Aek Kanopan North Labuhanbatu. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type. The research subjects include the principal, class teachers, and parents of students. Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews, observation, and documentation, while data analysis used an interactive model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that children's initial ability to recognize Hijaiyah letters is still low and tends to be rote. After the implementation of the Hijaiyah letter media based on interesting and interactive games, there was a significant increase in children's ability to recognize, differentiate, and name Hijaiyah letters independently. In addition, the use of this media also increased children's focus, interest, and active participation in learning. The implementation of the innovation curriculum is supported by school policies, teacher training, and continuous periodic evaluation. Thus, the Hijaiyah letter media has proven effective as a learning innovation in improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood. This research contributes to the development of a creative, interactive Al-Qur'an learning model that is appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood. This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license. 

1. Introduction

Early childhood education is an important foundation in developing children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities, including the introduction of the hijaiyah letters as the basis for learning the Qur'an (Aziz, Ashshiddiqi, & Mahdiana, 2025). In the context of Islamic education, the introduction of the hijaiyah letters from an early age not only aims to enable children to read the Qur'an, but also serves as an initial step in instilling a love for the holy book. However, in practice, learning the hijaiyah letters at the kindergarten level still faces various obstacles, such as children's low initial ability to recognize letter shapes, limited learning methods, and a lack of interesting media that suit the characteristics of early childhood. This condition results in children tending to only memorize verbally without understanding the visual form of the letters, so that one letter is easily confused with another.

Along with the development of innovation in the Islamic education curriculum, the use of creative and interactive learning media has become a relevant solution to improve learning effectiveness (Kurniasih, 2018). Hijaiyah letter media, especially in the form of illustrated and colored cards, is considered capable of providing a strong visual stimulus for children. Based on the results of observations and interviews at Aisyiyah Kindergarten, this media not only displays the letter shapes clearly but is also designed attractively to increase children's interest and motivation to learn. Children can learn through various activities such as group play, matching letters, arranging letters, and guessing letters, all packaged in a learning-through-play atmosphere. This is in line with the characteristics of early childhood, who tend to learn concretely and through direct experience.

Previous literature reviews have shown that the use of visual learning media has a significant impact on improving children's early literacy skills. Research by Tarlam et al. (2026) shows that the Hijaiyah learning application is an effective form of digital-based learning innovation in helping young children recognize the Hijaiyah letters. An analysis of features, application structure, and user reviews found that this application provides an interactive, fun, and easy-to-use learning experience for children. The main attraction of the application lies in its attractive visual appearance, clear audio pronunciation, and a variety of educational games that can increase children's attention and engagement in the learning process. Therefore, the use of digital applications such as this is highly relevant for supporting Quran learning in the modern era (Tarlam, Mahdiyyah, & Wulandari, 2026).

Meanwhile, research by Hakim and Budiarti (2025) revealed that the Hijaiyah letter reading tree game media is effective in helping young children recognize letters and read the Qur'an at an early stage. This media not only increases children's interest in learning, but also accelerates the process of mastering the Hijaiyah letters. In addition, this game contributes to the development of children's social and cognitive abilities through interactive activities (Hakim & Budiarti, 2025). Research by Maksuroh and Agustin (2025) shows that the use of Hijaiyah letter cards is an effective medium for supporting the recognition of Hijaiyah letters in early childhood. This effectiveness is greatly influenced by attractive media design, the presence of appropriate guidance, and the implementation of routine activities. Under these conditions, Hijaiyah letter cards can help children improve their ability to recognize and remember letters more optimally (Maksuroh & Agustin, 2025).

Furthermore, research by Pelawi et al. (2025) showed that training in making Hijaiyah flashcards for PAUD teachers at the Al-Ghofari PAUD had a positive impact on improving teacher competence and creativity. After participating in the training, teachers gained a better understanding of appropriate learning media for Quranic material, were able to design and create Hijaiyah flashcards independently, and were able to apply them effectively in classroom learning activities (Pelawi, Rosmidar, Siregar, & Harahap, 2025).

Based on a review of previous research, it can be concluded that various media for learning the hijaiyah letters, whether in the form of cards, educational games, or digital applications, have proven effective in improving letter recognition skills in early childhood. However, most studies still focus on the effectiveness of media separately, whether from the aspect of the use of tools,

games, or technology, without integrating them systematically within the framework of Islamic education curriculum innovation. Therefore, this study is novel in comprehensively examining the integration of hijaiyah letter media into the innovation of the Qur'an learning curriculum, which not only emphasizes the use of media but also institutional support, teacher learning strategies, and parental involvement. This approach provides a new contribution to the development of a more holistic, contextual, and sustainable Qur'an learning model in early childhood education.

Thus, the scientific novelty of this study lies in the integration of innovative Qur'anic learning curricula with the use of contextual and applicable game-based Hijaiyah alphabet media for early childhood. This study not only examines the use of media as a learning aid but also positions it as part of a structured curriculum strategy, supported by teacher training and ongoing evaluation. This distinguishes it from previous research, which tends to separate media and curriculum aspects.

The main problem in this study is how effective the use of hijaiyah letter media is in improving the ability to recognize letters in Aisyiyah Kindergarten Aek Kanopan North Labuhanbatu, and how the implementation of the Al-Qur'an learning curriculum innovation supports the use of the media. Based on these problems, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the hijaiyah letter media in improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood, as well as describe the form of curriculum innovation applied in Al-Qur'an learning in Aisyiyah Kindergarten Aek Kanopan North Labuhanbatu.

This research is original in its comprehensive examination of the relationship between learning media, teacher strategies, institutional support, and parental involvement within a framework of Islamic education curriculum innovation. Therefore, the results are expected to contribute scientifically to the development of more effective, innovative, and appropriate Quranic learning models for early childhood.

2. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative, descriptive research approach to understand in depth the process of implementing an innovative Al-Qur'an learning curriculum that uses hijaiyah letters as a medium, and its effectiveness in improving letter recognition skills in early childhood. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on phenomena that occur naturally in educational environments and emphasizes the meanings, processes, and experiences of the research subjects.

The research was conducted at Aisyiyah Kindergarten Aek Kanopan, North Labuhanbatu, an Islamic early childhood education institution that has implemented the Hijaiyah alphabet as a medium in its learning process. The research subjects consisted of the principal, class teachers, and students' parents. The principal served as a key informant on policies and institutional support for curriculum innovation, class teachers as the primary implementers of learning, and parents as observers of children's development at home.

Data collection techniques in this study were conducted through three main methods: interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and parents to obtain in-depth information regarding the implementation of the Hijaiyah letter media, learning strategies, and children's development. Direct observations were made of the learning process in the classroom to observe the use of the Hijaiyah letter media, teacher-student interactions, and children's responses during the activities. Meanwhile, documentation was used to supplement the data in the form of notes on children's development, photographs of learning activities, and learning tools used by teachers.

The data analysis technique in this study used an interactive analysis model that includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher simplified and sorted data relevant to the research focus. Next, the data was presented in descriptive narrative form for easy understanding and analysis. The final stage was drawing

conclusions, carried out step by step based on field data, resulting in a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the hijaiyah alphabet media in learning.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from the principal, teachers, and parents, while method triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, the researcher also conducted member checks with informants to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained. By using this research method, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture can be obtained regarding the implementation of the innovation of the Al-Qur'an learning curriculum through the Hijaiyah letter media, as well as its effectiveness in improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood at Aisyiyah Kindergarten Aek Kanopan North Labuhanbatu.

3. Results and Discussion

Initial Conditions for Children's Hijaiyah Letter Recognition Ability

The results of the study show that children's initial ability to recognize the Hijaiyah letters at Aisyiyah Kindergarten is still relatively low. Based on an interview with the class teacher, Syarifah Asriani Fitri S.Pd, it was found that most of the children were not yet able to differentiate between the Hijaiyah letters that have similar shapes, such as ba, ta, and tsa. Children tend to memorize letters by singing, without fully understanding their visual forms. This is reinforced by the results of observations in class, where children were seen to be able to sing the hijaiyah letters together, but had difficulty when asked to name the letters randomly or individually.

This situation indicates that previous learning approaches were still verbalistic and failed to optimize the visual aspects and concrete experiences that are essential for young children. Theoretically, young children are at the concrete operational stage of development, so they require learning media that can be seen, touched, and played with directly. Therefore, innovations in learning are needed to accommodate these needs.

The initial condition of the ability to recognize the hijaiyah letters in early childhood is generally still at the basic stage and has not developed optimally (Anisah Yasmin, Rahman, & Indihadi, 2022). Children tend to recognize letters only through verbal memorization, such as songs or repetition together, without understanding the visual form of letters as a whole (Aziz, Napitupulu, & Khairani, 2025). As a result, many children still have difficulty distinguishing letters with similar shapes, such as ba, ta, and tsa. Furthermore, the limitations of monotonous learning methods and the lack of engaging media also contribute to low interest and focus in children's learning. This situation indicates that abstract learning that lacks direct experience is unable to accommodate the learning characteristics of early childhood, which tend to be concrete and active (Aziz, Napitupulu, & Siregar, 2025).

Therefore, learning innovations are needed that are able to bridge these needs through the use of creative, interactive, and fun media. One innovation is the use of game-based Hijaiyah letter media, such as colored letter cards, collages, letter-matching games, and group games that involve the active participation of children. This innovation needs to be integrated systematically into the curriculum, supported by teachers' competence in managing varied learning, as well as adequate school facilities. In addition, parental involvement is also an important part of strengthening learning at home. With a fun and hands-on experience-based approach, children are expected to be able to recognize the hijaiyah letters more effectively, meaningfully, and sustainably.

Implementation of Curriculum Innovation Through Hijaiyah Letter Media

The implementation of the Al-Qur'an learning curriculum innovation at Aisyiyah Aek Kanopan Kindergarten, North Labuhanbatu, was carried out through the integration of Hijaiyah letter media into daily learning activities. Based on the results of an interview with the principal, Berlianti Panjaitan S.Pd, the school provides full support for the use of innovative learning media.

This support is realized through providing facilities for hijaiyah letter cards, internal training for teachers through workshops and group discussions, and giving teachers the freedom to develop creative media such as hijaiyah trees, letter collages, and other educational games.

In practice, learning is designed to be systematic and enjoyable. Learning activities begin with an opening prayer, followed by singing the hijaiyah letters to foster an active learning atmosphere. The teacher then introduces the hijaiyah letters using colorful and illustrated cards to capture the children's attention. Children not only see but also hold and interact directly with the media.



Figure 1. Student Activities to Recognize Hijaiyah Letters Using Hijaiyah Letter Media

Various learning activities are developed to increase children's involvement, such as letter guessing, letter matching, arranging letter sequences, and collage activities. In letter matching activities, children are asked to match letter cards to the letters on the board. Furthermore, learning takes place in small groups to foster cooperation and social interaction. The use of other media, such as plastic hijaiyah letter blocks, posters, and the Iqra' method, also complements the learning process.

The implementation of the innovation of the Al-Qur'an learning curriculum through the media of the hijaiyah letters is carried out by integrating the use of media systematically in teaching and learning activities that are appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood (Hakim & Budiarti, 2025). Learning is no longer only focused on memorization methods, but is developed into an interactive process through a play-while-learning approach (Pratiwi, Melihayatri, & Eriani, 2025). Teachers utilize various forms of hijaiyah letter media such as colored cards, posters, letter blocks, as well as creative media such as hijaiyah trees and letter collages. Learning activities are designed sequentially starting from the opening with prayers and songs of the hijaiyah letters, followed by visual letter introduction, to practical activities such as matching, arranging, and guessing letters

(Fitriani, Latifah, & Tarlam, 2026). With this approach, children not only see and hear, but also touch and manipulate the media directly.

Furthermore, the implementation of this curriculum innovation is also supported by the active role of institutions and teachers in creating a conducive learning environment. Schools provide adequate learning media facilities and provide internal training for teachers to enhance their creativity in developing learning methods. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding children's learning activities in a fun and meaningful way, and periodically evaluating their development. This innovation also involves collaboration with parents so that learning can continue at home. Thus, implementing the curriculum using the Hijaiyah alphabet not only improves letter recognition skills but also fosters a holistic and sustainable learning experience in early childhood.

The Effectiveness of Hijaiyah Letter Media in Improving Children's Abilities

The research results show that the use of Hijaiyah letters is highly effective in improving letter recognition skills in early childhood. Observations showed a significant increase in children's ability to visually recognize letters and pronounce them correctly without relying on songs. Children also show increased focus, enthusiasm, and active participation in learning.



Figure 2: Class atmosphere with nuances of Hijaiyah letters

Documentation data in the form of child development records shows a gradual increase in the ability to recognize the Hijaiyah letters. Children who previously had difficulty distinguishing letters began to recognize and pronounce them correctly. This demonstrates that Hijaiyah alphabet media can strengthen children's memory through visual stimulation and direct experience, including a classroom atmosphere designed with the Hijaiyah alphabet on the walls.

The results of interviews with parents, Masniar Siagian, also strengthen these findings. Parents stated that after their children learned to use the Hijaiyah letter cards at school, their children became more interested in studying at home. Children often even ask to be tested and can answer more quickly without assistance. This shows that learning not only has an impact at school but also continues in the family environment.

The effectiveness of the Hijaiyah letter media in improving children's abilities is evident in significant changes in cognitive abilities, especially in recognizing and distinguishing letters (Tarlam et al., 2026). Visual, colorful, and tactile media help children understand letter shapes concretely, enabling them not only to memorize but also to recognize them in depth. Children find it easier to remember letters because they are directly involved in the learning process, such as holding cards, matching letters, and arranging the hijaiyah letters in order. Furthermore, the use of this media can also improve children's focus and attention, as the learning is presented in an interesting and non-monotonous manner (Aziz, Napitupulu, & Siregar, 2025).

On the other hand, the effectiveness of the Hijaiyah alphabet media is also evident in the increased interest and motivation of children in learning. The combination of learning with games like guessing the letters, collages, and group work creates a fun learning environment, making children more active and enthusiastic in participating in activities (Marjuki & Baidowi, 2023). This positive impact is not only seen in the school environment but also continues at home, where children become more independent in their learning and demonstrate a desire to review previously learned material. Thus, the Hijaiyah alphabet media is not only effective in improving letter recognition skills but also in fostering a positive attitude toward Quranic learning from an early age.

Analysis of Curriculum Innovation in Theoretical Perspective

The Qur'an is not only an inspiration but also a guide in life that must be studied properly to obtain the right guidance (Aziz & Sudiro, 2026). Learning the Qur'an is of course gradual, starting with the hijaiyah letters. Theoretically, the success of using the hijaiyah letters media in this study can be explained through a constructivist approach, where children construct their knowledge through direct experience. Concrete, visual, and manipulative media allow children to learn actively and meaningfully (Aziz, Napitupulu, & Windari, 2025). This is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood who find it easier to understand concepts through play activities.

In addition, the use of colorful and illustrated media provides a strong visual stimulus, thus helping the process of storing information in long-term memory (Fitriani et al., 2026). Learning packaged as games can also increase children's intrinsic motivation, so they learn with pleasure rather than under pressure (Hudha & Tentiasih, 2025).

From a curriculum perspective, the innovations reflect a shift from teacher-centered learning to child-centered learning. Teachers are no longer the sole source of learning, but rather facilitators who create interactive and enjoyable learning environments (Laili, 2024). This is in line with the principles of the Islamic education curriculum, which emphasizes the holistic development of children's potential.

Concrete, visual, and manipulative media provide opportunities for children to learn actively, rather than simply passively receiving information. This aligns with the cognitive developmental characteristics of early childhood, who are in the concrete operational stage, where they more easily grasp concepts through real objects and play activities (Aziz, Ashshiddiqi, et al., 2025). Thus, the use of hijaiyah letter media is a form of implementation of learning theory that is relevant and effective in improving children's understanding.

Furthermore, this curriculum innovation can also be analyzed through a *child-centered learning approach*, which places children as the primary subjects in the learning process. In this approach, teachers act as facilitators, creating a fun, interactive, and meaningful learning environment. The use of hijaiyah letters combined with educational games reflects the principle of holistic learning, which develops not only cognitive aspects but also social, emotional, and motor skills in children. Therefore, this curriculum innovation not only improves learning methods but also strengthens the Islamic educational paradigm, which emphasizes a balance between knowledge, skills, and character development from an early age.

The Role of Institutional Support and Parental Collaboration

The successful implementation of curriculum innovations is inseparable from strong institutional support. Aisyiyah Kindergarten provides support through the provision of learning facilities, teacher training, and regular evaluation of the learning program. (Aziz, Napitupulu, & Lubis, 2025). Evaluation is carried out through teacher meetings and child development reports every three months, so that child development can be monitored systematically. In addition, collaboration with parents is also an important factor in supporting successful learning. Parents play a role in strengthening learning at home, ensuring that children receive consistent learning

experiences. Research shows that parental involvement can increase children's motivation to learn and accelerate mastery of the Hijaiyah alphabet.

Although the Hijaiyah alphabet media proved effective, this study also identified several challenges in its implementation. One of the main challenges is limited learning time, requiring teachers to manage their time effectively to ensure all activities are carried out effectively. (Ifadah & Fatmawati, 2023). In addition, differences in individual abilities among children pose a challenge, requiring teachers to pay special attention to children who are still experiencing difficulties. (Rosidi & Sinuhaji, 2019). To overcome this, a differentiated learning strategy is needed, so that each child receives treatment that suits their needs. Teachers also need to continue to develop creativity in creating varied learning media and methods so that learning remains interesting and effective.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the innovative Quranic learning curriculum, using the Hijaiyah alphabet as a medium, is effective in improving letter recognition skills in early childhood. This finding addresses the research problem posed in the introduction, which states that children's low initial abilities can be addressed through interactive learning media tailored to their characteristics. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that the Hijaiyah letter media is effective in improving letter recognition skills in kindergarten children can be accepted. This research also confirms that learning success is not only determined by the media, but also by the synergy between teachers, schools, and parents in creating a conducive learning environment. The results of this study provide a significant contribution to the development of innovative Islamic education curricula, particularly in early childhood Quranic instruction. The Hijaiyah alphabet has proven to be not only a teaching aid but also a learning strategy that can improve the overall quality of learning.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the innovation of the Al-Qur'an learning curriculum through the use of Hijaiyah letter media in Aisiyah Kindergarten has proven effective in improving letter recognition skills in early childhood. This effectiveness is evident in significant changes in children's abilities, from previously only memorizing the hijaiyah letters verbally to recognizing, differentiating, and naming them visually and independently. The use of concrete, interesting, and game-based media can increase children's focus, interest, and active involvement in the learning process. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that hijaiyah letter media is effective in improving letter recognition skills in kindergarten children can be accepted.

Furthermore, this study found that the successful implementation of curriculum innovations is determined not only by the learning media, but also by institutional support, teacher competence in managing learning, and collaboration with parents. Integration of media, engaging learning strategies, and ongoing evaluation are key factors in creating effective Quranic learning that is appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that early childhood education institutions, particularly those based on Islamic education, develop and integrate more innovative Hijaiyah learning media into their curriculum. Teachers are expected to continue to improve their creativity in designing varied and enjoyable learning activities and participate in training that supports professional competency development. Furthermore, parental involvement needs to be continuously strengthened through intensive communication to ensure the learning process continues optimally at home. Further research is recommended to examine the development of digital-based media or interactive technology to expand innovation in Quranic learning for early childhood.

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