



Significance of Reading and Writing in Understanding Islamic Study Subject Matter: Knowledge of Pre-School Teachers

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Abstract:

The strong ties between education and Islam can be emphasized by revisiting the first revelation in Islam. The superiority of Man above all creatures was solely due to the knowledge base. Islam stresses comprehensive education programme including education for the body, mind, and soul. Best way to educate a child is to start from the early childhood. This paper serves the purpose of ascertaining the importance of reading and writing in understanding the Islamic study subject matter. For that purpose, the teachers of early childhood from different Islamic school systems in Lahore were randomly selected. Data were collected from 100 early childhood Islamic subject teachers through a self-developed closed ended questionnaire. Data were tabulated and analyzed in the SPSS version 20.0. Means, Standard Deviations, Frequencies, Percentages, and Inferential statics like t-test, and one-way ANOVA were applied to interpret the data. Results revealed that teachers were aware about the significance of reading and writing in order to understand the Islamic subject matter and were practicing in their respective classrooms. Practical implications and recommendations made thereof, can be useful to maintain the deep roots of Islam with education, fertile.

Key words: Pre-School education, Islam and education sciences, Reading and writing.

Introduction:

Children success in school and later in life is to a great extent dependent upon their ability to read and write (NAECS/SDE, 2002). Islam claims to be a complete code of life and laid its founding principles in education. The purpose of Islamic education is not to cram the pupil's head with facts but to prepare them for a life of purity and sincerity. This total commitment to character building based on the ideals of Islamic ethics is the highest goal of Islamic education. (Al-Attas, 1979). "Read, in the

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name of the Lord” (Al-Quran, 96:1). The first revelation on the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is evident enough to express the binding of education for a Muslim child. Prophet in one of his sermons stressed the need of education in the following words. “The seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim male and Muslim female.” (Ibn Majah: hadith no. 224). There are evidences in Sahi hadith that the Prophet PBUH asked the prisoners from the Bad’r (the first war between Islam and Opponents lead by Prophet PBUH) to teach 10 Muslims to get free. This also testifies that Islam has been education friendly right from its emergence. A report published by UNICEF in 2005, also laid stressed on the emphasis of Islam on education to the children.

Reading and writing are two important tasks of literacy. Even the definition of Pakistan on literacy defines literate as the one who can read a line of a newspaper and write one’s name. Every learning starts from the reading and writing. According to Horowitz (1985) reading and writing lay base grounds for the overall conceptual learnings of a student. Reading enables you to strengthen your written expressions as well (Clay, 1993). Talking specifically of Islamic study subject matter, reading is as significant as in any other discipline. Not only relevant to the core concepts of Islam, early childhood literacy has also been acknowledged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2008) for a sustainable world. United Nations Millennium Campaign initiated in 2000 having 189 countries on board signed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There were eight (8) goals mentioned in it. Second Millennium Development Goal was solely related to education which stated that by 2015 they will have to ensure free education for all boys and girls and the target of literacy was set at 88% while in 2008/09 (Millennium Project, 2002). Pakistan has the literacy rate of 58% only which is far less than the expected. Pakistan being Islamic Republic of Pakistan has its constitution heavily based on the Islamic principles. It becomes fundamental for Pakistan to provide Islamic education right from the very beginning of a child’s education career. In 2012, Article 25A of the constitution of Pakistan 1973 stated that the state shall provide free and basic education to all school age going children through its provinces (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, 2012).

This study is significant as it has many aspects that are of research interest. Having the traces of literacy and reading and writing so deep in the Islamic history and the same being warmly acknowledged by the

whole world, this topic becomes of immediate research interest for Pakistani education system. This study takes a step forward in highlighting teachers' knowledge on the reading and writing and its significance in understanding Islamic study subject matter. Islam gives much importance to the teacher and the teaching profession as Holy Prophet took pride in declaring his good self as a teacher and preacher. In Pakistan, specifically in metro cities like Lahore, there is an increasing trend in the pre-school Islamic system of education. Therefore, this research was conducted keeping in view its significance and need in the present time. The teachers play a pertinent role in the learning of a student. Islam lays stress on the responsibilities of a teacher. It was worthy of interest to study the knowledge of teachers on the significance of reading and writing in understanding the Islamic study subject matter. Thus, this study investigated the significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter and the knowledge of pre-school Islamic school system teachers on this phenomenon.

Objectives of the Research:

For the purpose of taking teachers' perspectives on the reading and writing of children and its significance in understanding the Islamic study subject matter following objectives were made.

1. Explore the teachers' knowledge on the significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level.
2. Find the differences in the opinions of the teachers on the basis of demographic variables like: age, gender, academic qualification, and teaching experience.

In line with objectives of the research following research questions were made: do the teachers have considerable knowledge on the significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level? Is there any significant difference in the opinions of the teachers on the basis of demographic variables like: age, gender, and teaching experience?

Methodology:

A quantitative descriptive survey type design was employed in this research to get the perspectives of the early childhood teachers on the reading and writing of a child and its significance in understanding the Islamic subject matter. The teachers of Islamic school systems in Lahore were taken as the population of this study. There are various school systems that claim to provide Islamic teachings and education to the child.

Using random sampling technique, a total of 100 teachers were selected randomly, including both male and female teachers.

Instrumentation:

A self-developed close ended questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers keeping in view the literature available on Islamic study subject matter and reading and writing for early childhood students. A total of 24 items, initially, were developed segregated in the following factors: teachers' knowledge about reading and writing, use of materials to enhance students' reading and writing, content knowledge on Islamic study teaching, pedagogy strategies for reading and writing, teachers' perceptions of the importance of reading and writing skills. After going through the psychometric properties of the tool, a final 20 item questionnaire was administered having these 5 factors. For validity, expert opinion for content validity from 2 professors of Islamic study was sought. The language of the instrument was checked by an English language expert and any grammatical/ punctuation errors were rectified. A pilot study on the teachers other than that included in the sample was also conducted to check the reliability and consistency of scores.

Procedure of the study:

The questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers. The questionnaire items were measured at a 5-point scale. The scale was given weights as 5 for always, 4 for often, 3 for sometimes, 2 for rare, and 1 for never. The data were collected and entered in the Statistical Package for social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Means, standard deviations, percentages, frequencies were calculated and t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were applied to get meaningful results.

Reliability of the tool:

The factor wise reliability of the tool is as follows:

Table 1.0

Reliability for factors, total items 20.

SR#	Factor	Cronbach Alpha
1	teachers' knowledge about reading and writing	0.78
2	use of materials to enhance students' reading and writing	0.74
3	content knowledge on Islamic study teaching	0.71
4	pedagogy strategies for reading and writing	0.73
5	teachers' perceptions of the importance of	0.77

reading and writing skills

Results

Detailed analysis of the data and interpretations made are given below. Means, standard deviations, percentages, independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA were applied which can be seen as under.

Table 2.0

Demographic analysis

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-29years	54	54.0
	30-39years	35	35.0
	40-above	11	11.0
Gender	Male	41	41.0
	Female	59	59.0
Experience	1-5years	51	51.0
	6-10years	36	36.0
	11 above	15	15.0

The demographic analysis of the sample revealed that out of the 100 selected pre-school Islamic system of education teachers, 41 respondents were males while 59 were females. In age category, 54% of the sample belonged to the category of 20-29 years of age, 35% teachers were ranging from 30-39 years of age, and only 11% of teachers were in the age bracket of above 40 years. Regarding experience of teaching, 51% of the sample had experience ranging from 1-5 years, 36% reported experience of 6-10 years, and remaining 15% showed 11 and above years of teaching at pre-school levels of Islamic study subject matter.

Table 3.0

Factor wise mean score and standard deviation on the teachers' knowledge of the significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter

SR#	Factor	M	SD
1	teachers' knowledge about reading and writing	3.71	1.21
2	use of materials to enhance students' reading and writing	3.47	1.03
3	content knowledge on Islamic study teaching	4.10	0.94
4	pedagogy strategies for reading and writing	4.07	1.23
5	teachers' perceptions of the importance of reading and writing skills	4.21	0.69

The factor-wise mean score suggested that overall the teachers had considerable knowledge on the significance of reading and writing in understand Islamic study subject matter. The mean score of 3.0 and above was taken as a considerable score (Abdullah, Raza, & Akhtar, 2015). It was interpreted that all the factors were considerable and the factor ‘teachers’ perceptions of the importance of reading and writing’ was on the top with the highest mean score of 4.21. It meant that it was reported high by every subject of the study. While the lowest reported factor was ‘use of materials to enhance students reading and writing’. The mean score for this factor was 3.47 which was the lowest of all factors but it was still above the cut score. In general, all the factors were considerably reported by the respondents of the study which meant that teachers rate the reading and writing in understanding the Islamic study subject matter as highly significant.

Table 4.0

t-test on teacher’s knowledge on the significance of students reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level on the basis of gender.

Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Male	41	79.10	12.25	1.497	98	0.476
Female	59	75.03	13.90			

Applying *t*-test on the basis of gender revealed no significant mean difference in the opinion of male and female teachers. It implied that male and female teachers had same level of knowledge on the significance of students reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level on the basis of gender.

Table 5.0

One-way ANOVA on teacher’s knowledge on the significance reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level on age group.

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	65.04	2	32.52	.180	.836
Within groups	17392.61	96	181.17		
Total	174577.65	98			

The table above displayed that there was no significant difference in teacher’s knowledge on the significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level on the basis of age group $F=.180$, $p=.836$ at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance. Therefore, it was concluded that different age of teachers did not affect the knowledge of teachers on the significance of reading and writing in

understanding of Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level.

Table 6.0

One-way ANOVA on teacher's knowledge on significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level on the basis of experience.

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	p
Between group	683.56	2	341.78	1.956	.147
Within groups	16774.09	96	174.730		
Total	17457.65	98			

The above mentioned table illustrated that there was no significant difference in teacher's knowledge on the significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level on the basis of teaching experience $F=1.956$, $p=.147$ at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance. Therefore it was concluded that different experience of teachers did not affect the knowledge of teachers on the significance of reading and writing in understanding Islamic study subject matter at pre-school level.

Discussion:

The result of the study demonstrated that teachers had considerable level of knowledge on the significance of reading and writing skills and teachers also knew the importance of reading and writing skill in Islamic study subject matter. Reading and writing skills are important for the personality development of a person. The attitude of teachers showed that they have good knowledge about Islamic study. The objectives of the research were achieved. Both objectives were achieved by answering the research questions. The knowledge of the teachers on the significance of reading and writing in understanding the Islamic study subject matter was found to be considerable. The study also revealed that teachers had sound pedagogical skills in teaching Islamic study subject matter. They altered the teaching methods incorporating varied teaching strategies to keep interest in the Islamic subject matter. Lewis (1998) also stressed on the knowledge base of a teacher at early school levels. Teachers also showed that they keep in focus the individual differences of the students and mixing up the strategies was one helpful way in entertaining individual differences. This is in line with the studies of Narveaz (2002) which showed research based evidences on individual differences on reading.

The other question of addressing the differences in teachers' opinions on the basis of demographic variables revealed no significant differences with reference to gender, age, and experience. This research was a threshold in this discipline. Other research may vary with their results. This study has contributed by checking the teachers' knowledge on the core teachings of Islam i.e. reading and writing at pre-school level and its significance on understanding the concepts of Islamic study subject matter.

Recommendations:

In the light of the findings and discussion of the study, following recommendations were made by the researchers. Variety of teaching methods should be used instead of sticking with single one. Teachers must use the modern teaching reading and writing methods to fulfill the needs of children of modern times. Teaching reading and writing methods used by pre-school Islamic subject teachers should be well suited to the cultural background of children. Teachers must create reading environment before the start of reading of the Islamic study content. Teachers must use appropriate writing instructional material that conforms to the Islamic study matter.

For further inquiry, a comparative study with larger samples and representation from other conventional schools and their teaching methodologies is recommended by the researchers. A theoretical writing on the Islamic method of teaching, reading and writing for pre-school students would also enlighten the literature with the Islamic teachings and will offer a complete package for educating a child.

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