

The Influence of Qur'an Recitation on the Psychological Development of the Fetus in the Womb

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Abstract. Interdisciplinary studies between religious studies and psychology are important to understand more deeply how Quran recitation contributes to fetal development. In Islamic religious tradition, there is a practice of listening to Quran recitation to the fetus as part of the habituation of faith values from an early age. Quran recitation is believed to bring calm, instill spiritual values, and be a form of early stimulation for the spiritual development of the fetus. This study aims to examine the effect of Quran recitation on the psychological development of the fetus in the womb through a descriptive qualitative approach based on literature studies. Data were obtained from various scientific sources such as journals, Islamic psychology books, and relevant previous research. The results of the study indicate that the fetus begins to be able to respond to sound stimulation from 24 weeks of gestation, so that Quran recitation can act as spiritual stimulation that fosters calm, emotional balance, and an inner bond between the mother and fetus. Quran recitation is not only a form of worship, but also has a positive influence on the emotional and cognitive development of the fetus. The integration of Islamic values and developmental psychology is an important foundation in forming a generation that is emotionally healthy and spiritually strong from the womb.

Keywords: Cognitive Development; Emotional Balance; Fetal Psychology; Quran Recitation; Spiritual Stimulation

1. Introduction

In recent decades, attention to early childhood education has grown, even extending to the prenatal phase, or pregnancy. Early childhood education is crucial and influential. During this period, a child's brain experiences the most rapid development in their life. Between the ages of 0 and 6, children should be provided with ample stimulation to foster brain development and equip them to understand themselves and their environment (Wasis, 2022). Various studies in psychology demonstrate that fetuses are not passive creatures but have the ability to respond to various stimuli from their environment, particularly through sound. These findings reinforce the view that pregnancy is a critical period that can determine a child's future emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development.

In Islamic religious tradition, the practice of listening to the recitation of the Quran to the fetus is part of the process of instilling religious values from an early age. Quranic recitation is believed to bring peace, instill spiritual values, and serve as an early form of stimulation for the fetus' spiritual development (Rahman, 2024). This aligns with the Islamic concept of "fitrah," which states that every human being is born pure, and education is a crucial factor in maintaining and developing this fitrah. Stimulation can begin when the fetus reaches approximately 24 weeks of age, as at this stage the fetus's hearing organs are well developed and functioning optimally. Furthermore, the fetus's brain is also capable of processing sound stimuli, so this period is considered the most ideal time to provide stimulation to the fetus (Indrijati, 2017).

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Rhythmic, gentle, and emotionally charged sounds have been shown to impact the emotional stability of the fetus. Therefore, listening to Quranic recitations with their distinctive rhythm, beautiful arrangement of words, and profound spiritual messages is believed to not only have a spiritual impact but also provide positive psychological stimulation. Surah Ali Imran, verse 6, indicates that humans play a role in the development of the fetus, one of the meanings of which is educating children from the womb, known as prenatal education. However, in the context of Islamic education, prenatal education has not been a focus of in-depth study. This is evident in the minimal attention paid to this topic by experts and practitioners compared to other aspects of Islamic education (Aminullah, et al., 2023).

Interdisciplinary studies between religious studies and psychology are important for a deeper understanding of how Quranic recitation contributes to fetal development. This approach not only enriches the scientific literature but also provides a stronger foundation for Islamic-based prenatal education practices. Therefore, this paper aims to examine: (1) the religious basis for the importance of Quranic recitation for the fetus; (2) the psychological perspective on sound stimulation for fetal development; and (3) the integration of the two in an effort to build an emotionally healthy and spiritually strong generation from the womb.

2. Theoretical Study

The Koran is the main source of Islamic teachings which is believed to be a revelation from Allah SWT, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW through the intercession of the angel Gabriel. As the eternal word of God, the Qur'an is not only a guide to life for Muslims, but also contains guidance in all aspects of human life, both individual and social, worldly and hereafter (Said, et al., 2023). The Al-Qur'an is also a reassurance for the soul for human anxiety and anxiety in living life (Ariadi, 2019). One of the most basic and in-depth forms of interaction with the Al-Qur'an is through reading activities.

Reading the Koran is a form of respect for the word of Allah SWT. The Qur'an is a revelation that was revealed not only to be read physically, but also to be absorbed, understood and put into practice. In QS. Al-Baqarah verse 2 Allah says:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

It is stated that the Qur'an is a guide for those who fear Allah. Furthermore, some scholars interpret the above verse as a form of khabar (news) that, in addition to being a guide, also contains a prohibition, meaning "never doubt it" (Sayuti & Abbas, 2023). This shows that every recitation of the Qur'an has extraordinary spiritual value and guidance in human life (Qowim, 2020). Therefore, reading the Qur'an is not merely a ritual, but also a form of approaching Allah and the first step in building a deep spiritual relationship with the Creator. The command to read the Qur'an is explicitly stated in Surah Al-Muzzammil, verse 4:

أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا

"And recite the Qur'an slowly." This verse emphasizes the importance of reading the Qur'an with tartil, that is, with good, correct, and deep recitation. This command not only demonstrates that reading the Qur'an is an act of worship, but also emphasizes the need to understand its contents and moral messages. In the context of education, this command serves as the basis for reading the Qur'an not only being commanded for adults but can also be introduced from an early age, including to fetuses in the womb as part of prenatal education (Rahman, 2020).

One of the virtues of reading the Quran is its impact on peace of mind and purity of heart. In QS. Ar-Ra'd verse 28:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

It is said that "Only by remembering Allah can hearts find peace." The Quran serves as a guide for humanity and offers solutions to various problems, including psychological issues such as anxiety and emotional instability. Islam provides guidance for humans to achieve inner peace, one of which is the recommendation to read the Quran (Burhanuddin, 2020).

In the context of prenatal education, the recitation of the Qur'an that is played to the fetus is believed to provide spiritual stimulation that plays a role in shaping the character and emotional intelligence of children from an early age. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Suri & Nelliraharti (2019) that from the results of samples with several pregnant women in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, the form of communication stimulation most often given by pregnant women to the fetus is listening to the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an, followed by inviting the fetus to talk about the mother's daily activities and playing music (Suri & Nelliraharti, 2019). This spiritual education that begins in the womb is the first step in building a generation with noble morals and loves the Qur'an.

Umar bin Khattab ra. said, that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said, "Indeed, Allah SWT. elevates some people with this book (the Quran), and lowers others" (HR Muslim). The Prophet SAW was the figure who loved the Quran the most. He always read, memorized, and conveyed revelations to his people with full trust. The Prophet's love for the Quran became an example for his companions who also made reading the Quran a part of their daily lives (Anwar, et al., 2023). This example teaches the importance of making reading the Quran a part of family and children's education from an early age. Emulating the Prophet SAW also means instilling a love for the Quran in every stage of life, including from when the child is still in the womb.

In the Islamic educational tradition, learning the Quran is the primary foundation. The Quran and the Prophet's hadith implicitly indicate that the prenatal phase is not only marked by biological growth but also includes the beginning of the development of an individual's psychological aspects (Kambali, 2018). Activities such as reading, memorizing, and understanding the Quran are often the first steps in a Muslim child's educational process. This is not without reason; the Quran contains not only religious knowledge but also complex general knowledge for life (Siregar, et al., 2022).

Islamic education emphasizes not only mastery of knowledge but also character development based on the values of the Quran. Therefore, introducing Quranic recitation from the womb can be the first step in developing a child's religious habits. This aligns with the principle of Islamic education, which instills values from an early age. Pregnant women who recite the Quran not only receive the reward of worship but also provide spiritually and cognitively valuable provisions for their fetus, both in spiritual, emotional, and cognitive development.

3. Research Methods

The research method used in this article is library research with a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was used to examine and analyze various relevant scientific sources regarding the influence of Quranic recitation on the psychological development of the fetus in the womb. Data in this study were obtained from secondary literature such as scientific journals, Islamic psychology books, academic articles, previous research results, and reliable digital sources that discuss the relationship between spiritual stimulation through Quranic recitation and fetal response. Data collection techniques were carried out through a process of identification, classification, and content analysis of literature that is highly relevant to the research topic.

Data analysis was conducted by interpreting and linking findings from various sources to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological impact of Quranic recitation on the fetus. Using this method, the research is expected to provide a theoretical and

empirical overview of how reciting Quranic verses can foster calm, emotional balance, and positive stimulation for the psychological development of the fetus during pregnancy.

4. Results And Discussion

Psychological Perspectives on Sound Stimulation on Fetal Development

Child education during the prenatal period requires attention because it is during this period that early growth and development occur (Hasanah, 2020). In developmental psychology, human life is believed to begin in the womb. The process of fetal growth in the womb involves not only physical development but also neurological, emotional, and cognitive aspects (Soetjiningsih, 2018). Therefore, understanding the stages of fetal development is crucial before discussing how sound stimulation can affect it. The following are the stages of fetal development based on a health and psychology approach (Soetjiningsih, 2018):

First Trimester (0–12 weeks)

In this trimester, the formation of basic organs begins. In the fourth to fifth weeks, the central nervous system begins to develop. The heart begins beating around the sixth week. Although the hearing organs are not yet fully formed, brain development is already underway, laying the foundation for future cognitive processes.

Second Trimester (13–27 weeks)

This is where the fetus' sensory development begins to become significant. Around week 16, the ear structures begin to form. By weeks 18 to 20, the fetus can begin to respond to sounds from within the mother's body (such as heartbeats and digestive sounds). External hearing (from outside the womb) begins to develop at week 24, and by then the fetus's ears are functioning well enough to detect sound.

Third Trimester (28–40 weeks)

The fetus's auditory function matures, and responses to sounds become more specific. The fetus can react to specific sounds, such as music and the parent's voice, and can even "recognize" the mother's voice. During this period, the brain also develops rapidly, forming complex neural connections. Sound stimulation is highly beneficial for supporting cognitive and emotional development.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that 24 weeks of pregnancy and beyond is the most appropriate time to begin providing sound stimulation to the fetus. At this time, the fetus's ears are fully formed, and the brain is able to process the sounds it receives. These sounds enter through the amniotic fluid and transmit sound waves to the fetus's developing hearing organs. This process demonstrates that the sound environment around the pregnant mother directly influences the fetus's sensory stimulation. Therefore, stimulation such as talking to the fetus, reading stories or the Quran, and playing soft music is highly recommended to support brain development.

Developmental psychology believes that human development begins in the womb, even before birth. With advances in science, particularly in psychology and neurobiology, the fetus in the womb has the ability to receive, respond to, and even remember various forms of stimulation, one of which is sound stimulation. One such study was conducted by Dr. Rene Van de Carr. Dr. Van de Carr played a cassette of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony and observed that the rhythmic movements of the fetus' chest—a form of natural breathing in the womb during the third trimester—followed the rhythm of the music. When the music stopped, the breathing movements also stopped. However, when the music was turned back on, the movements reappeared, although initially out of sync. After a while, the fetus' breathing rhythm returned to the tempo of the music (Aisyah, 2018).

This sound stimulation is an important part of prenatal education, supporting a child's cognitive and emotional development from an early age. The fetus's condition in the womb is highly susceptible to environmental influences. These environmental influences can include the mother's health, habits, and positive and negative behaviors

(Lestari & Ekaningtyas, 2022). For example, the sound of a mother frequently speaking or reading aloud can be recorded in the fetus's memory and provide a calming effect when heard again after birth. This suggests that learning and memory formation can begin even before birth. This sound recognition ability provides an important foundation for prenatal education, particularly in familiarizing the fetus with positive sounds that are emotionally and spiritually beneficial.

Sound stimulation also has a significant impact on the emotional development of the fetus. A mother's soft voice, classical music, or recitation of the Quran can have a calming effect and strengthen the emotional bond between mother and child. This bond is formed because the fetus feels comfort and emotional closeness from familiar sounds. Developmental psychology confirms that emotional attachment formed during the prenatal period plays a crucial role in fostering a child's sense of security, self-confidence, and emotional balance after birth. This is in line with research conducted by Kusbandiyah & Astriani (2014) that found that the mother's voice and classical music provide a sense of comfort to the fetus who hears it, including the mother herself (Kusbandiyah & Astriani, 2014). Furthermore, regular exposure to sound has also been shown to stimulate fetal brain activity. Responses to certain sounds indicate active brain nerve activity, thus stimulating early cognitive development. Certain sound waves can trigger fetal brain wave activity, indicating that the central nervous system is beginning to function and process external information (Kambali, 2018). Thus, sound stimulation not only provides a momentary effect, but also influences the structure and function of the brain in the long term.

From a psychological perspective, sound stimulation provided to the fetus can be viewed as an early form of education, known as prenatal education (Pratama et al., 2023). This process is not merely physical preparation for the mother and fetus, but also part of the formation of the foundations of the child's behavior, intelligence, and mental health. Developmental psychology supports the concept that early experiences, including sensory experiences in the womb, have a long-term influence on individual development. Therefore, a psychological perspective emphasizes the importance of providing positive sound stimulation during pregnancy, whether in the form of verbal communication between the mother and the fetus, music, or spiritual readings such as the Quran. This is part of the educational responsibility of parents from before the child is born, as well as a tangible manifestation of concern for the child's spiritual and intellectual development from an early age.

Integration between the two in an effort to build an emotionally healthy and spiritually strong generation

Building a spiritually strong and emotionally healthy generation is both a challenge and a great hope in education, particularly Islamic education. This process cannot be achieved instantly but begins at the earliest stage of human life, namely, in the womb. In this regard, the integration of psychology and Islamic values is crucial, as both provide complementary contributions.

Developmental psychology explains that the fetus is able to perceive and respond to external stimuli, including sound, starting at 24 weeks of gestation. The senses of sight, hearing, and reason are endowed with their basic capabilities in the womb. However, these functions remain latent and will only actively develop after birth, as it is impossible for Allah SWT to create something without a fundamental purpose and function (Waluyo, 2017). The fetus's response to certain sounds indicates an early connection in the learning process and the formation of long-term memory. On the other hand, Islam positions education as a continuous process, even beginning before a child is born. In the context of prenatal education, Islam encourages parents, especially mothers, to instill the values of faith and monotheism through habitual recitation of the Quran, dhikr, and prayers during pregnancy. These activities are not only considered acts of worship but also serve as a highly effective form of spiritual stimulation for a child's spiritual development (Utama & Prasetiawati, 2020).

Sound stimulation, such as reciting the Quran to the fetus, represents a concrete integration of psychological approaches and Islamic spirituality. Psychologically, this creates a calm and positive atmosphere for both mother and fetus, increasing endorphin production, and strengthening the emotional bond between mother and child. Spiritually, this activity introduces the fetus to the words of Allah, instills a love for the Quran from an early age, and fosters a spiritual atmosphere of tranquility and blessing. Furthermore, the integration between the two is also evident in the values imparted. Psychology emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence—the ability to recognize and manage emotions—from an early age, while Islam teaches values such as patience, gratitude, and compassion, which are essential components of mental and emotional health. When these two are combined in prenatal education, individuals are formed who are not only psychologically healthy but also possess a strong moral and spiritual foundation.

A child's family and immediate environment are the primary foundations for their growth and development. This is where children first acquire experiences, values, and parenting styles that will shape their character and personality. A positive and supportive environment plays a crucial role in supporting a child's balanced physical, emotional, social, and spiritual development (Susilawati, 2020). Through a consistent spiritual and emotional approach during pregnancy, mothers can shape the foundation of their child's character long before they see the world. This can be achieved through the habit of reading the Quran, speaking positively to the fetus, providing gentle advice, and maintaining a calm and happy mental and spiritual state. Therefore, an Islamic-based prenatal education model integrated with a developmental psychology approach is needed. This model could include a program for fostering pregnant women that focuses not only on physical health but also provides a spiritual and psychological understanding of the importance of interaction with the fetus. Educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, can develop a special curriculum that educates expectant mothers about the benefits of reading the Quran for the fetus, effective communication techniques with the fetus, and positive behavioral habits during pregnancy. By implementing this approach, it is hoped that a new generation will emerge that is not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally stable and spiritually strong. The integration of knowledge and faith is key to producing balanced, harmonious individuals who are ready to face the challenges of the times while remaining steadfast in religious values.

5. Conclusion And Suggestions

Conclusion

Research shows that fetuses begin to respond to sound stimuli as early as 24 weeks of gestation, so Quranic recitation can act as spiritual stimulation that fosters calm, emotional balance, and a spiritual bond between mother and fetus. Quranic recitation is not only a form of worship but also positively influences the emotional and cognitive development of the fetus. Integrating Islamic values and developmental psychology is crucial for fostering an emotionally healthy and spiritually strong generation from the womb.

Suggestion

It is hoped that Muslim parents will get used to reading the Koran during pregnancy. Every holy verse that is read is a prayer to Allah SWT which has a positive impact on the development of the fetus. The gentle and affectionate voice that accompanies the chanting of holy verses can also be a bridge for meaningful communication, even before the child is born into the world .

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