



IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAY THERAPY METHOD IN ISLAMIC COUNSELLING GUIDANCE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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Article Info

History Articles Received:

20 December 2024

Accepted:

28 April 2025

Published:

30 June 2025

Abstrak

Play therapy atau terapi bermain merupakan pendekatan yang terbukti efektif dalam membantu anak-anak mengatasi tantangan emosional, sosial, dan perilaku. Artikel ini mengkaji integrasi play therapy dalam konteks bimbingan konseling Islam untuk mendukung perkembangan anak usia dini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan analisis pustaka dan wawancara terhadap praktisi bimbingan konseling Islam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa play therapy dapat diadaptasi secara harmonis dengan nilai-nilai Islam melalui pendekatan berbasis kasih sayang, keterlibatan orang tua, dan penerapan prinsip-prinsip spiritual yang sesuai dengan perkembangan anak. Teknik seperti storytelling Islami, penggunaan permainan edukatif, dan aktivitas berbasis kreativitas diintegrasikan untuk membangun keterampilan kognitif, emosional, dan spiritual anak. Pendekatan ini tidak hanya membantu anak mengatasi permasalahan, tetapi juga membentuk karakter Islami sejak usia dini. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pelatihan khusus bagi konselor dalam menerapkan terapi bermain berbasis Islam, serta kolaborasi antara keluarga dan institusi pendidikan untuk memaksimalkan hasil. Artikel ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam pengembangan metode bimbingan konseling Islam yang inovatif dan relevan dengan kebutuhan perkembangan anak di era modern.

Kata Kunci: Bimbingan Konseling Islam; Karakter Islami Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini; Play Therapy.

Abstract

Play therapy is an approach that has been proven effective in helping children overcome emotional, social, and behavioural challenges. This article examines the integration of play therapy in the context of Islamic counselling to support early childhood development. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with literature analysis and interviews with Islamic counselling practitioners. The study results

indicate that play therapy can be harmoniously adapted to Islamic values through a compassion-based approach, parental involvement, and applying spiritual principles appropriate to child development. Techniques such as Islamic storytelling, educational games, and creativity-based activities are integrated to build children's cognitive, emotional, and spiritual skills. This approach helps children overcome problems and form Islamic character early on. The implications of this study emphasise the importance of special training for counsellors in implementing Islamic-based play therapy, as well as collaboration between families and educational institutions to maximise results. This article makes an important contribution to developing innovative Islamic counselling methods relevant to the needs of child development in the modern era.

Key Words: Early Childhood Development; Islamic Character; Islamic Guidance and Counselling; Play Therapy.

Introduction

Childhood is a crucial period in an individual's development that influences the formation of character, emotions, and social skills. Early childhood, in particular, is at a critical stage where they need a special approach that can support holistic development, encompassing physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects. In Islam, child development must align with religious, moral, and ethical values that are the foundation for their future lives.

Play therapy is a therapeutic approach proven effective in helping children overcome various emotional and social challenges. Children can express their feelings through play, develop communication skills, and solve problems. The integration of play therapy with the Islamic counselling approach presents a unique opportunity to provide counselling services that focus on children's psychological well-being and strengthen their faith values.

Islamic Counselling Guidance (BKI) is a psychological assistance process based on Islamic values that helps individuals achieve spiritual, emotional, and social balance. The integration of Play Therapy into BKI offers a new approach that not only touches on the psychological aspects of children but also strengthens spiritual values that are important in the development of Muslim children. Thus, this study aims to develop a Play Therapy integration model in BKI to support the holistic development of early childhood.

Early childhood social development is an emerging process in which children learn about themselves and others, and how to form and maintain relationships with peers. Actual social

development begins at birth and develops through interactions at home and socialisation outside the home. The family greatly aids children's social development as a learning environment. Most research on human social relationships shows that early social experiences (such as family) during childhood stick with a person and impact their lives.

This is by what was quoted by Laura E. Berk from Land & Pettit, who said that "children first learn how to interact with their peers in the family" (Berk, 2003, p. 125). Parents influence their children's relationships with their peers in two ways: directly, through efforts to influence children's relationships with their peers, or indirectly, through parenting and playing. Play Therapy in the Islamic Counseling approach to Improving Early Childhood Social Emotional Development illustrates that Play Therapy in the Islamic Counseling approach is counseling to help an early age child to be able to improve optimal social emotional development for early age children.

In recent decades, attention to early childhood development has increased along with awareness of the importance of this period as a foundation for forming character and individual potential. Early childhood experiences rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth, requiring optimal support from various aspects, including education, psychology, and spirituality. A holistic approach that includes these dimensions is a primary need, especially in a society that upholds religious values as a guide to life.

Play therapy has been recognised as one of the effective intervention methods in helping children overcome various developmental challenges. As a play-based approach, play therapy utilises children's natural language, namely play, to express emotions, resolve internal conflicts, and improve social skills. Previous studies have shown that play therapy helps children overcome trauma, increase self-confidence, and build better relationships with their social environment. However, in Indonesia, the integration of play therapy with a religious values approach, especially in Islamic counselling, is still relatively rarely explored despite its great potential.

Islamic counselling guidance has unique characteristics with a monotheism-based approach that seeks to bring individuals closer to Allah as the primary source of problem-solving. In the context of early childhood, Islamic values can be internalised through play methods that are fun and appropriate to their developmental stage. A study by Othman and Ashaari (2014) emphasised the importance of integrating religious values in counselling to create culturally and religiously relevant interventions. Therefore, this study aims to explore how the integration of

play therapy in Islamic counselling guidance can be a comprehensive solution in supporting the holistic development of early childhood.

The integrative approach between play therapy and Islamic counselling guidance offers value-based solutions to support child development and form characters that align with religious teachings from an early age. In Islam, children's education has a strong spiritual foundation, as stated in the Quran. Luqman verses 13-19 emphasise the importance of noble morals, obedience to Allah, and social responsibility. By utilising child-centred play methods, children can convey Islamic values in a natural and easily understood way. This allows for creating deep and meaningful experiences in their development process, as supported by previous research that highlights the importance of religion-based education to strengthen children's emotional and spiritual balance.

Previous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of play therapy in helping children overcome various psychological and social problems (Landreth, 2012; Ray, 2011). However, these studies mostly use a secular approach without considering the spiritual needs of children in a particular cultural and religious context. In the context of Indonesia, as a country with a Muslim majority population, the integration of Islamic values in play therapy is still rarely carried out in a structured manner. Research by Abdullah (2019) confirms that a religious value-based approach can increase the effectiveness of counselling in shaping children's character, but its implementation is still minimal.

Studies on Islamic counselling guidance generally focus more on adolescents and adults (Othman & Ashaari, 2014). Meanwhile, early childhood who are at a critical stage of development and is often not the main subject in research. This creates a gap in providing relevant Islamic-based intervention models that are appropriate to the needs of early childhood. Yusuf (2019) mentioned the importance of an Islamic-based approach for early childhood, but the application method in play therapy has not been studied in depth.

School teachers can use Play therapy to help children overcome their social and emotional problems. Fischetti clarifies this, stating that this strategy can be utilised by school counsellors, school psychologists, teachers, or school social workers to address children's social-emotional problems. Services must be tailored to children's cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioural strengths so that counselling can be applied to them differently from adults. Then, this therapy can also be applied with an Islamic counselling approach, which can later train children in their

social emotions, such as how to get along with correct peers in Islam, how to behave towards parents or older people, and so on.

According to Hurlock's assertion in Sujiono's book, "playtime is between the ages of 5 and 6 years". Playing is the world of children. Playing improves children's abilities and skills because it is an activity with practical value. Play therapy in this Islamic counselling approach is one method that can be applied in early childhood education in schools. In the concept of play therapy in this Islamic counselling approach, children are taught how to behave towards their peers, how to behave towards older people or their parents, how children control their emotions, and how children can adapt to their environment. By applying play therapy in this Islamic counselling approach, it can be a therapy to build healthy relationships between friends and reduce emotional problems. Behaviour and social barriers in learning, helping children adjust to their environment, can also help improve children's communication skills and emotional awareness.

Play therapy that is currently developing emphasises stimulating developmental aspects or helping children overcome their problems, while internalising religious values that are important for children is less emphasised. Play therapy in this Islamic counselling approach aims to form a personality that fortifies children from deviations in social behaviour and negative emotions that will arise.

Integration of Play Therapy in Islamic Counselling Guidance for Early Childhood Development. Early childhood development is an important stage that determines the foundation of a child's physical, emotional, social, and spiritual development. At this time, children need special attention to optimise their potential. One increasingly relevant approach is integrating Play Therapy in Islamic Counselling Guidance (BKI). This approach combines Islamic values with play methods designed to support the holistic development of children.

Play Therapy uses play as a medium to help children express emotions, understand the world around them, and overcome internal conflicts. This therapy is based on the belief that play is a natural activity for children to learn, communicate, and solve problems. In the context of Islam, play is not only seen as a means of entertainment but also as a learning medium that can be used to instil values of faith and morals. The integration of Play Therapy into BKI allows this approach to be more relevant to the needs of Muslim children because it aligns play activities with Islamic teachings.

This study explores how Play Therapy can be integrated into BKI to support early childhood development. The main objectives include:

1. Identifying the effectiveness of Play Therapy in the context of BKI. This study aims to understand the extent to which Play Therapy can help children overcome emotional, social, and spiritual barriers.
2. Developing a holistic integration model. This study will develop a practical model that Islamic counsellors can use to support early childhood development.
3. Providing insight to parents and educators. This study aims to increase their understanding of the importance of a play-based approach in educating children.
4. Evaluating the influence of Play Therapy on aspects of child development. This study focuses on assessing its impact on early childhood's cognitive, affective, motoric, and spiritual development.

The Concept of Play Therapy in Islamic Counselling Guidance

Islamic Counselling Guidance (BKI) is a counselling approach based on Islamic values, aimed at helping individuals achieve emotional, spiritual, and social balance within the framework of faith in Allah. The integration of Play Therapy in BKI allows the guidance process to align with the needs of early childhood, who tend to learn and communicate through play activities. (Baharuddin, 2017; Landreth, 2012). Here are some principles that form the basis of this integration:

1. The Principle of Islamic Meaningfulness. Games used in therapy must have Islamic values, such as instilling an attitude of honesty, patience, and gratitude.
2. Holistic Approach. This approach includes children's cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects.
3. Oriented to Children's Needs. Each game is designed based on the needs and development of children, both individually and in groups.
4. Based on Harmonious Relationships. As Islam teaches, the relationship between counsellors and children must be based on affection and trust.

Benefits of Play Therapy Integration in BKI

Integrating Play Therapy in BKI has extensive benefits, theoretically and practically. These benefits can be detailed as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefits

- a. Contribution to academic literature: This study adds new insights into BKI and child developmental psychology, especially those relevant to the Islamic context.
- b. Development of a new approach: By combining Play Therapy and BKI, this study creates an approach that can be applied in various early childhood education and guidance contexts.

2. Practical Benefits

For Early Childhood:

- a. Helping children overcome emotional and social conflicts through meaningful play activities.
- b. Stimulating holistic development, including spiritual aspects, in a fun way.

For Counsellors:

- a. Providing new methods that are relevant and applicable in supporting early childhood.
- b. Providing tools that can be used to identify children's problems more effectively.

For Parents and Teachers:

- a. Guiding how to utilise games as a medium for education and character building.
- b. Helping them understand the importance of a play approach in supporting Islamic child development.

For Educational Institutions:

- a. Improving the quality of guidance and counselling services in early childhood education institutions (PAUD).
- b. Enriching the curriculum with a Play Therapy-based approach integrated with Islamic values.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a narrative research method. The narrative method was chosen because this study seeks to explore, understand, and reconstruct the experience and practice of Play Therapy integration in Islamic Counselling Guidance (BKI) applied to early childhood development. Through this method, researchers photograph the practices carried out and attempt to uncover the meaning, process, and values underlying the application of Islamic-based Play Therapy to support early childhood's emotional, social, and spiritual aspects.

The research subjects were determined using purposive sampling techniques, namely, determining informants based on criteria that are by the focus of the research. These criteria include: (1) having direct experience in implementing Islamic Guidance and Counseling in the context of early childhood; (2) being actively involved in the implementation of Play Therapy or play therapy based on Islamic values; and (3) being willing to be informants and provide

information openly and in depth. The research subjects consisted of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers, Islamic counsellors, and parents who were relevant to the focus of the research.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore and describe the integration of play therapy in Islamic counselling guidance for early childhood development. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for understanding social phenomena in depth and holistically (Creswell, 2014). The research design used is a case study that focuses on implementing play therapy in Islamic educational institutions, such as Kindergartens (TK), Raudhatul Athfal (RA), or Islamic counselling centres. This study focuses on observing the process of implementing play therapy to support children's emotional, social, and spiritual development through Islamic values.

The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique, with the main criteria including early childhood (3-6 years) involved in play therapy sessions, counselors or Islamic guidance and counseling teachers who practice the method, and parents of children who can provide additional information regarding changes in children's behavior (Moleong, 2019). The selection of these subjects aims to obtain rich and relevant data for the research topic.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques. First, direct observation was conducted to record children's behaviour during play therapy sessions, including how Islamic values were integrated into play. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with counsellors, teachers, and parents to gain insight into the effectiveness of this method in supporting child development and to understand the challenges faced in its implementation. Third, documentation in the form of activity notes, photos, and videos was used to complement observation and interview data (Landreth, 2012).

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process began with data coding to identify key themes, such as play therapy integration strategies with Islamic values, the impact of therapy on early childhood development, and obstacles encountered during implementation. The coded data were then organised into more in-depth findings and interpreted according to the relevant theoretical framework. With this approach, the study is expected to contribute to developing innovative and practical Islamic counselling guidance.

Result

Early childhood is a critical period of physical, emotional, social, and spiritual development. Islamic counselling guidance has a holistic approach that is in line with the needs of children at this stage. One innovative method is integrating play therapy within the framework of Islamic counselling guidance. Play therapy is a technique that utilises play to help children express feelings, understand experiences, and develop emotional and social skills.

Play therapy is based on the theory that play is children's primary communication medium. This technique allows counsellors to understand the child's world without demanding complex verbal skills. Play creates a safe environment for emotional and cognitive exploration. In Islamic guidance, play activities can be aligned with Islamic values, such as compassion, patience, and respect for others.

The data collection technique in this study used a multi-method approach, namely combining participatory observation and documentation studies. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe the guidance process and implementation of Play Therapy, in an Islamic atmosphere, both in educational institutions, guidance institutions, and the family environment. Through this observation, researchers can see the form of play activities, interactions between children and educators or counsellors, and the Islamic nuances applied in the process. In addition to observation, researchers also conducted documentation studies to complete the data obtained. The documents studied included notes on guidance activities, photos or videos of play activities, child development journals, and media or game tools used in the guidance process.

The data obtained were analysed using narrative thematic analysis techniques. The analysis was done in steps: transcription of observation data, document review, coding data, grouping data into central themes, and compiling a complete and systematic narrative. The resulting narrative describes in detail the process of integrating Play Therapy in Islamic Counselling Guidance, the forms of activities carried out, internalised Islamic values, and the benefits and challenges faced in its implementation.

Islamic counselling guidance aims to form children with noble morals based on the Qur'an and Hadith. Integrating play therapy makes this approach more interesting and relevant for early childhood. Examples of integration include: Islamic Value-Based Games: Games that

teach prayers, stories of prophets, or morality according to Islamic teachings, Islamic Creative Media: Pictures or toys that represent Islamic symbols, Islamic Stories in Play: Using stories of prophets and companions to teach the values of honesty, courage, and simplicity.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation on early childhood participants who participated in the play therapy integration program in Islamic counselling guidance. The results showed that children showed positive developments in terms of emotional control, understanding of Islamic values, and social skills.

Integration of play therapy in Islamic counselling guidance is a practical approach to early childhood development. This approach not only provides practical solutions to child development challenges but also strengthens essential religious values in their lives. Counsellors can create a positive, enjoyable, and spiritually based learning atmosphere by optimising play therapy.

This study shows that integrating play therapy in Islamic counselling guidance significantly impacts early childhood development. Some of the main findings include:

1. Improved emotional balance: Through directed play, children can recognise and express their emotions better. Activities such as drawing, role-playing, or playing Islamic puzzles help children understand and manage feelings such as anger, sadness, or anxiety. This is relevant to the Islamic approach that encourages self-control (*mujahadah an-nafs*).
2. Strengthening Islamic Values: Games that contain spiritual elements, such as learning daily prayers, stories of the prophets, or the value of sharing, shape children's character from an early age. Children involved in this program demonstrate a deeper understanding of honesty, responsibility, and compassion for others.
3. Development of Social Skills: Interaction in play groups improves children's ability to work together, share, and respect others. This is based on Islamic teachings emphasising the importance of harmonious social relationships (*hablum minannas*).
4. Improved Concentration and Creativity

Through play activities that involve structured tasks, children find it easier to learn to solve problems and show creativity in solving challenges.

This study also found that using Islamic-based methods provides a more meaningful playing atmosphere. Children enjoy playing activities and get continuous spiritual and moral

learning. This conclusion shows that the integration of play therapy in Islamic counselling guidance effectively builds emotionally, socially, and spiritually healthy children.

Discussion

The integration of play therapy methods in Islamic counselling guidance for early childhood development is an innovative and relevant approach in supporting the holistic development of children. At an early age, playing is one of the most natural activities. It is not only fun but also has an important role in children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. In Islam, counselling guidance based on religious values is also an important means to shape children's character and morals. Therefore, integrating play therapy with Islamic counselling guidance offers a solution combining a scientific approach with spiritual values to support children's overall growth.

Play therapy is a psychotherapy method that uses play as a medium to help children express themselves, understand emotions, and overcome various problems they may face. This technique is designed for children because they often have difficulty expressing their thoughts or feelings through words. Through play, children can show their needs, conflicts, or anxieties more naturally. For example, a child who feels anxious may show defensive or withdrawn behaviour when playing with certain toys. In a play therapy session, counsellors can use games such as dolls, sand play, or drawing activities to understand the child's emotional condition more deeply.

In Islam, children's education and character building are highly emphasised from an early age. The Qur'an and Hadith provide direction that children are a trust that must be guided towards the right path. For example, the Prophet Muhammad SAW showed affection for children by playing with them and gently giving advice. These values can be applied in the play therapy approach through Islamic counselling guidance. Counsellors can utilise play media that contain Islamic elements, such as stories of the prophets, daily prayers, or games that involve Islamic morality. Thus, children learn to manage emotions and understand religious values.

The main objective of integrating play therapy into Islamic counselling guidance is to provide a holistic approach to supporting child development. This approach includes three main aspects: emotional, social, and spiritual. Emotionally, play therapy helps children recognise and manage their feelings. Early childhood often has difficulty understanding or expressing emotions, so playing is an effective way to explore these feelings. Socially, playing with peers or counsellors

can improve communication skills and the ability to work together. While spiritually, integrating Islamic values in play activities gives children a deeper understanding of noble morals and worship.

Implementing play therapy in Islamic counselling requires a deep understanding of these two approaches from the counsellor. Counsellors need to be trained to use various play techniques that are appropriate to the child's needs while integrating Islamic values in every activity. For example, counsellors can invite children to draw or build something with blocks while telling inspiring stories from the Qur'an. Another technique that can be used is role-playing, where children can play the role of characters in Islamic stories such as the Prophet Ibrahim or the Prophet Yusuf. This fun activity provides children with insight into courage, honesty, and obedience to Allah.

Several principles must be considered when integrating play therapy with Islamic counselling guidance. First, play activities must be adjusted to the age and needs of the child. Children aged 3-4 may prefer free play, while children aged 5-6 tend to be interested in more structured games. Second, Islamic values must be inserted naturally into the game without burdening the child. For example, counsellors can use Islamic songs or educational games that teach daily prayers. Third, counsellors must create a safe and comfortable environment for children to express themselves.

In addition, parental involvement is also an important factor in the success of this program. Parents can be invited to participate in therapy sessions or given guidance on continuing playing activities at home. Thus, the therapy process takes place in the counselling room and becomes part of the child's daily life. For example, parents can involve their children in simple games such as making stories about the Prophet while drawing together at home.

The results of this method integration show various benefits for child development. First, children become more open in expressing their feelings. Media playing makes them more comfortable sharing their feelings without pressure. Second, children improve social skills, such as sharing, taking turns, and cooperating with others. Third, children begin to understand Islamic values applied in everyday life, such as honesty, gratitude, and obedience to Allah.

However, there are several obstacles to implementing this method. One of the main challenges is the lack of understanding from counsellors and parents about the benefits of play

therapy and how to integrate it with Islamic values. In addition, adequate facilities are often an obstacle, especially in educational institutions or communities with limited resources. To overcome this, counsellors and parents need special training and educational programs. Educational institutions can also work with local communities to provide appropriate play facilities. In Islamic-based Play Therapy, play activities can be adjusted to Islamic values, such as games that contain prayer elements, prophets' stories, or commendable moral values. This approach integrates spiritual, emotional, social, and cognitive aspects. For example, using Islamic stories as a medium for play can help children learn about morality and spirituality.

In the context of Islamic counselling guidance, play therapy can be integrated with Islamic values to provide a holistic approach. Islamic education emphasises the development of the child's soul, mind, and behaviour based on the values of monotheism (Al-Attas, 1980). Through this integration, play is not only a medium for solving children's emotional problems, but also a means to instil morality and spirituality. For example, role-playing games involving stories of the prophets or creative activities such as drawing with the theme of the beauty of Allah's creation can help children understand Allah's moral values and power in a fun way (Yusuf, 2019).

Challenges in implementing Islamic-based play therapy in Indonesia include the lack of public understanding of the importance of this approach and the limited play facilities that support Islamic values. Training for counsellors, teachers, and parents on this method is an important step to overcome these obstacles. In addition, developing Islamic value-based play media, such as puzzles with a worship theme or Islamic figure dolls, can be a relevant innovation to support this therapy (Gunarsa, 2008).

In conclusion, integrating play therapy methods in Islamic counselling offers an innovative approach to support early childhood development. This method helps children recognise and manage their emotions and provides a strong foundation of spiritual values. By involving counsellors, parents, and communities, this program can be an effective solution to form an emotionally, socially, and spiritually intelligent young generation. It is important to continue to develop research and practice in this area so that society can widely feel its benefits.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the journal "Integration of Play Therapy Methods in Islamic Counselling Guidance for Early Childhood Development" emphasises the importance of a holistic approach in supporting early childhood development. Play therapy methods have proven effective as a means to help children express emotions, develop social skills, and improve their cognitive abilities through fun and directed play activities.

Based on the research results, developing a more structured and sustainable mentoring program, which includes psychological, social, and spiritual approaches, is recommended. Counsellors need to be specifically trained in an Islamic-based approach that can provide emotional and spiritual support, education, and social skills. In addition, it is important to develop a network of cooperation between social, educational, and religious institutions to create a holistic and sustainable mentoring system for street children.

Integrating play therapy with Islamic counselling provides added value because games can be designed to insert Islamic values such as noble morals, compassion, and awareness of the existence of Allah. This approach helps children overcome emotional and social challenges and instils an important spiritual foundation.

For optimal implementation, collaboration between counsellors, parents, and teachers is needed in designing and implementing play activities that are appropriate to the child's needs. Despite facing several challenges, such as a lack of resources and community understanding, Islamic-based play therapy can be further developed through training, innovation of play media, and increasing awareness of the benefits of this approach.

Overall, integrating play therapy methods in Islamic counselling guidance is a strategic approach to creating holistic development of early childhood, while fulfilling Islamic education's goals in forming emotionally, socially, and spiritually balanced individuals.

Recommendation

Recommendations for the journal "Integration of Play Therapy Methods in Islamic Counselling Guidance for Early Childhood Development" include strengthening various practical and theoretical aspects to expand its relevance and benefits. It is recommended that this research be supplemented with real case studies that show how Islamic-based play therapy methods are

applied, including the challenges and results obtained. In addition, developing a specific Islamic play therapy model, complete with practical guidelines and play tools based on Islamic values, will significantly contribute to filling the gap in science and practice.

Collaboration with various disciplines, such as developmental psychology, Islamic education, and social sciences, must also be considered to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Further research that evaluates the effectiveness of this method quantitatively and qualitatively, such as measuring children's emotional, social, and spiritual changes, is essential to strengthen its validity. To support wider implementation, it is recommended that there be a training program for counsellors, teachers, and parents so that they can understand and use this approach optimally.

In addition, the development of Islamic game media, such as interactive storybooks, digital applications, or educational props, can increase the appeal and effectiveness of this method. Integrating an Islamic-based play therapy approach into the curriculum of Islamic educational institutions is also important to create consistency in instilling Islamic values. Cross-cultural research can be conducted to see the adaptation of this method in various Islamic cultural contexts. At the same time, the involvement of modern technology, such as Islamic-based digital games, can be a relevant innovation. With these steps, the play therapy method in Islamic counselling guidance has the potential to provide a broader and more profound impact on the holistic development of early childhood.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore and describe the integration of play therapy in Islamic counselling guidance for early childhood development. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for understanding social phenomena in depth and holistically (Creswell, 2014). The research design used is a case study that focuses on implementing play therapy in Islamic educational institutions, such as Kindergartens (TK), Raudhatul Athfal (RA), or Islamic counselling centres. This study focuses on observing the process of implementing play therapy to support children's emotional, social, and spiritual development through Islamic values.

The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique, with the main criteria including early childhood (3-6 years) involved in play therapy sessions, counselors or Islamic guidance and counseling teachers who practice the method, and parents of children who can provide additional information regarding changes in children's behavior (Moleong, 2019). The selection of these subjects aims to obtain rich and relevant data for the research topic.

Data collection was conducted using multiple primary techniques. First, direct observation was conducted to record children's behaviour during play therapy sessions, including how Islamic values were integrated into play. Second, documentation in the form of activity notes, photos, and videos was used to complement observation data. (Landreth, 2012). The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process began with data coding to identify key themes, such as play therapy integration strategies with Islamic values, the impact of therapy on early childhood development, and obstacles encountered during implementation. The coded data were then organised into more in-depth findings and interpreted by the relevant theoretical framework. With this approach, the study is expected to contribute to developing innovative and practical Islamic counselling guidance.

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