

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

In recent years, attention to early childhood development in Indonesia has increased, along with the awareness that this phase is a golden period that will determine the optimization of children's brain capacity both intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Spiritual education for early childhood is the main foundation in shaping their character and relationship with God. According to Novianti et al., (2025), in the framework of Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD), the introduction of Allah from the beginning is not only introducing concepts, but building the foundation of faith and positive morals.

Tawheed education for early childhood occupies a very central portion in the framework of Islamic education, learning tawheed is a mandatory and absolute learning for a Muslim. The cultivation of tawheed in early childhood forms the basis of children's beliefs and outlook on life (Haerul et al., 2023). Tawheed comes from the word *wahhada* - *yuwahhidu* - *tauhidan* which means to make something one or single. Tawheed etymologically means oneness, terminologically tawheed is believing that Allah is One, the one, and the only one who has the right to be worshipped (Nurachman et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Islam, tawheed is the core of the pillars of faith. The pillars of faith include six things, faith in Allah, angels, books, messengers, as well as *qadha* and *qadar*. Faith in Allah is the first and most important pillar of faith in Islam. According to Shaykh Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Abdullah At Tuwajjiri in Mahmud & Dewi, (2024), faith in Allah includes four things, namely faith in the existence of Allah, faith that Allah has no allies, faith in the oneness of Allah in the aspect of worship, and faith in His names and attributes. According to Handrini (2016) in Qomaria, (2024) tawheed education from an early age has the goal of fostering children's love for Allah SWT, accustoming them to fear only Him, and accustoming them to an attitude of gratitude for all the blessings given. Tawheed is seen as the basic foundation for Muslims, because the belief in tawheed is a guarantee of salvation in this world and in the hereafter.

Making tawheed the foundation of education means instilling faith in the oneness of Allah SWT from an early age through family parenting, teacher example, and a consistent

learning process, so that children grow up with a strong belief in the oneness of Allah, build personal spiritual closeness, and form a child's perspective that Allah is the only place to lean in understanding life, facing challenges, and find meaning.

In the context of Islamic teachings, instilling an understanding of tawheed in children from an early age is very important so that they have a strong belief in who creates, provides sustenance, and protects them from all dangers. Children must be convinced that only to God do they lean and ask for help, not to other creatures or objects (Novianti et al., 2025). Elkind, (1970) explained that religion can be understood by children as cognitive adaptation to answer the needs of meaning and sustainability. Elkind also explains that religion provides a solution to the cognitive adaptation dilemma that children encounter throughout their mental development, although he also explains that a person's acceptance of God's concepts and representations is influenced by many factors, such as psychological, social, cultural, and cannot be predicted with certainty. Richert & Corriveau, (2022) also assert that religious perception focuses on abstract things that cannot be touched, seen, or heard, such as unobserved entities or forces. The representation of God conveyed in teaching and stories can be affirmative and fun, so that it can be an effective and sustainable medium to introduce the concept of God's oneness to children.

According to Liriwati & Armizi, (2021) tawheed education is not enough to be introduced through cognitive explanations alone, but must be impregnated, internalized, and experienced by children in an atmosphere of love. This is in line with Luqman's advice to his son in the Qur'an Luqman verse 13,

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٣﴾

Which means: " *And (remember) when Luqman said to his son, when he was teaching him: "O my son, do not associate with Allah, indeed associating with (Allah) is indeed a great tyranny."*

That is why Surah Luqman:13 can be used as a practical reference and guideline for family and institutional education, the father's advice to the child shows that the learning of tawheed begins from the immediate environment, through example, advice, and the gradual strengthening of values so that the child can understand the oneness of Allah as

the basis of all actions and obedience. This message is also in line with human nature, where every child is born with a natural tendency to know and acknowledge the existence of the Creator. Children have the spiritual potential to understand that everything comes from God, and that it is only to Him that all forms of worship and devotion are directed. However, the social and cultural environment has a big role in shaping or even distorting this nature (Arif, 2020). By using this verse as a reference, tawheed education is not only theoretical, but also touches on the emotional and behavioral aspects of children. The example of parents and educators is the main key in shaping children's spiritual awareness, so that the values of tawheed can be embedded naturally in the process of growth and development.

According to Hartanto, (2025), at the stage of early childhood development, children tend to actively explore and understand the surrounding environment, including recognizing the concept of divinity as the source of creation and the regulator of all creation. Education in the *golden age* has a significant long-term impact on children's development. According to an article written by halodoc.com, the *golden age* is a time when a child's brain develops rapidly and forms a strong foundation for future cognitive, emotional, social, and physical abilities. Therefore, attention to the age stage of children is very important in the learning process, so it is the responsibility of educators to introduce the values of tawheed from an early age.

According to Haerul et al., (2023), for parents, instilling the value of tawheed in children is not just a task, but the main foundation for children to grow up with righteous and unshakable beliefs. Teaching the concept of tawheed in early childhood is not an easy task for parents, where children may have difficulty understanding abstract concepts such as divinity and worship. Based on Jean Piaget's theory, in Mu'min, (2021) pre-operational thinking consists of two sub-stages, namely symbolic functions and intuitive thinking. In children aged 2-4 years, mentally they will begin to represent objects that are not present and need concrete representations, they will find it easier to understand concepts through visual symbols, stories, and emotional experiences rather than abstract explanations. The next sub stage is Piaget calls the age of 4-7 years as the substage of intuitive thinking, where children begin to use primitive reasoning and show high curiosity. Children at this stage feel confident in their knowledge, even though they do not have a rational

understanding of how they acquire it. This cognitive condition explains why teaching tawheed in early childhood is not an easy task.

Findings in the field obtained from interviews with teachers and parents reveal several main challenges such as the difficulty of discussing the abstract concept of tawheed so that it is easy to understand by early childhood. Frequently asked questions such as "Where is God?" are a challenge for educators and parents to provide explanations that are appropriate to the child's stage of cognitive development without causing confusion, anxiety, or misperceptions about God. In addition, not all parents have an adequate understanding of tawheed or the ability to translate the values of tawheed into the language of their children. Children tend to only understand concrete and contentible things, so without visualization or narrative that is appropriate to their stage of cognitive development, the concept of tawheed feels abstract.

Teachers also observed that children are more easily involved if the media used is not only pictures, but has interactive elements or "can be played" by children, so that children interact that allow them to learn while playing. Meanwhile, media that only use images without interactive elements, often make children bored quickly or easily distracted. Therefore, the development of tawheed educational media for early childhood needs to combine contextual illustrations with interactive play elements, concrete activities that are relevant to children's daily experiences, so that the explanation of abstract tawheed concepts can be conveyed clearly and interestingly.

From the results of observations carried out on October 21, 2025 at Kindergarten Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal IV Medaeng, the main problem that arises is the gap between the abstract concept of tawheed, namely the existence of Allah who is infinite in space, time, and senses, and the cognitive capacity of early childhood which is still in the realm of concrete thinking. An effective strategy that can bridge this gap is to use concrete media that is connected to contextual narratives that are in accordance with children's cognitive development. The media chosen in this planning is a interactive illustration books, which are picture storybooks that combine interactive activities such as pop-ups, lift-the-flap, and various other interactive features that can increase children's comprehension and interest in reading. Interactive media has also been shown to expand the scope of early literacy, build reflective thinking patterns, and open up opportunities

to explore religious and moral values through fun and non-repetitive activities. Research by Harliza & Kurniah, (2020) shows that interactive learning media has been proven to be effective in improving language and cognitive learning skills in early childhood. Through small and large group trials in the study, significant results were obtained which indicate a real improvement in the ability to listen, speak, and think logically in children after using interactive media. Indicators of development achievement in early childhood education not only require aspects of knowledge, but also character strengthening, religiosity, confidence development, and healthy social interaction. The role of parents and teachers cannot be replaced in optimizing interactive media learning. In classical and modern Islamic education theory, the family is the main space for internalizing religious and moral values through example, habituation, and emotional assistance. From the research of Harliza & Kurniah, (2020) it is emphasized that the effectiveness of media is very high when the learning process is participatory, accompanied, and full of dialogue.

The effectiveness of interactive media is increasingly relevant when it is associated with early childhood development achievements as stated in the Graduate Competency Standards in Early Childhood Education (Permendikdasmen No. 10 of 2025, Article 5). The standard emphasizes aspects of cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, and pre-reading development, all of which support children's readiness to interact with learning media that is appropriate to their developmental stage. Referring to learning needs and the level of pre-reading development according to Ghozalli, (2020), the most relevant media choice for interactive illustration books is the Pre-Reading 2 level by targeting children aged 4 – 6 years.

Various products of tawheed education books for early childhood in Indonesia, such as the Tauhid Pertamaku Series published by ZiyadBooks and similar media, show the tendency of narrative illustrations in circulation. However, although the number of tawheed-themed illustrative books is increasing, most of them are still narrative and visual only, not yet integrating interactive elements that can encourage children's independent exploration and emotional engagement. In the midst of the need for learning media that is more contextual, reflective, and responsive to the development of children's religious characters, the development of interactive illustration books is a strategic step. This kind of media can reinforce a gentle and compassionate educational approach. Innovation in the form of books that combine the functions of education, entertainment,

and literacy in a balanced manner has the potential to form a meaningful spiritual experience, as well as instilling tawheed as a source of goodness and the foundation of positive attitudes in children's daily lives.

The results of observations on October 21, 2025 at KB Kindergarten Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal IV Medaeng also show that the collection of children's reading books available is generally in the form of picture books and several interactive books with the theme of flora, fauna, and books about manners. However, no interactive media was found that specifically introduced the value of tawheed. Meanwhile, observations at bookstores and searches through e-commerce show that religious themed children's educational media is quite diverse, ranging from prayer books, prophetic stories, to *Islamic board books*. However, most of these media are still static and do not integrate interactive features such as pop-ups, lift-the-flap, or other features that can support children's engagement in reading. This condition shows that there is a gap and the need for the development of tawheed learning media that is more in line with the characteristics of early childhood. Several previous studies have shown the design of Islamic learning media with an interactive approach, but have a different focus on the theme, target age, and media used. A study conducted by Rita Yulianti, (2025) uses Augmented Reality to improve the understanding of tawheed in MTs. Nurul Islamiyah Samarinda students, then a study conducted by Akhmad et al., (2023) designed an illustrated book with the theme of the pillars of faith for early childhood, and a study by Nurmahatmi et al., (2025) who developed an interactive illustration book of morning and evening dhikr for children aged 7 – 10 years. This design has a novelty that lies in a special focus on tawheed introduction, segmentation of children aged 4 – 6 years, and using the media of physical interactive illustration books, this design consistently presents a learning experience without dependence on digital devices.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

Based on the background description, a number of main problems can be identified that are the basis of this design, as for which it can be formulated as follows:

1. Based on Piaget's theory, children aged 4-6 years are still at the stage of concrete thinking, so parents and teachers often have difficulty in translating abstract tawheed concepts to children.

2. Risk of misinterpretation in children due to abstract explanations or inappropriate use of metaphors. Children's thinking in the preoperational stage who tends to think egocentric and concrete needs to be associated with familiar symbols, actions, and routines in daily life so that the concept of tawheed can be understood correctly.
3. Based on observations made on *online* and *offline* bookstores conducted on October 3, 2025, the illustrated books on tawheed available are generally narrative and visual, but are still rarely interactive-based, such as the use of *pop-up elements*, *lift-the-flap*, or other interactive features that can actively increase children's engagement.
4. Based on interviews with kindergarten teachers and parents of children aged 4 – 6 years, illustration books that only present static images tend to make children bored quickly and easily distracted. Children at the age of 4-6 years have a short focus span if the media does not involve direct interaction, so the message to be conveyed is not optimally absorbed.

### **1.3 Problem Formulation**

Based on this description, the formulation of the problem in this design is "How to design an interactive illustration book for the introduction of tauhid for children aged 4 – 6 years?"

### **1.4 Problem Limitations**

To maintain the consistency of the direction of the research and ensure that the analysis carried out remains in-depth, directed, and in accordance with the objectives that have been formulated, this design is limited to the following aspects:

1. The media subject developed is an interactive illustration book with the theme of tawheed for early childhood, especially 4-6 years old. This media is focused on instilling the value of tawheed through pleasant visual and narrative experiences, without discussing aspects of religious education such as fiqh or morals in depth.
2. A designed form of media focuses on picture books with interactive elements such as pop-ups, lift-the-flap, or simple activities that can stimulate child engagement. Media does not include any digital format because the focus is directed entirely on the direct interaction between the child and the physical book.

3. The content of tawheed conveyed emphasizes the knowledge of Allah through the nature of the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate with an approach that is in accordance with the daily life of children. Complex concepts such as law or religious activities are not discussed in depth.
4. The aspects of child development that are considered include cognitive abilities, especially in terms of understanding the concept of tawheed and emotional responses such as curiosity, interest, and involvement of children to media content. Motor and social aspects were not the main focus of the study.
5. The long-term effectiveness of changing children's religious behavior is not the focus, but rather the child's initial involvement and basic understanding of the content and interaction with the media.

### **1.5 Purpose of Design**

The purpose of this design is to produce an interactive illustration book of tauhid for children aged 4 – 6 years who:

1. Visualizing the concept of tawheed through visual narratives and interactive activities departing from the child's concrete experience.
2. Minimize content interpretations through stories with simple and contextual language.
3. Fill the void of interactive media in the market with elements such as *pop-ups*, *lift-the-flap*, and various interactive elements that can increase child engagement.
4. Increase focus and learning engagement through fun interactions, so that the message of tawheed can be more easily understood by children.

### **1.6 Benefits of the Design**

The design of this interactive illustration book for the introduction of tawheed is expected to provide a number of benefits as follows:

1. Providing educational media that can bridge the abstract concept of tawheed with the cognitive capacity of early childhood who are still thinking concretely.
2. Assisting parents or teachers in conveying the value of tawheed with media that is appropriate to the child's developmental stage.
3. Increase children's involvement through interactive features, so that tawheed learning is not only passive but can also be two-way.

4. Fostering children's emotional closeness to the concept of tawheed, especially the recognition of Allah as the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate through a fun approach.

## 1.7 Design Framework

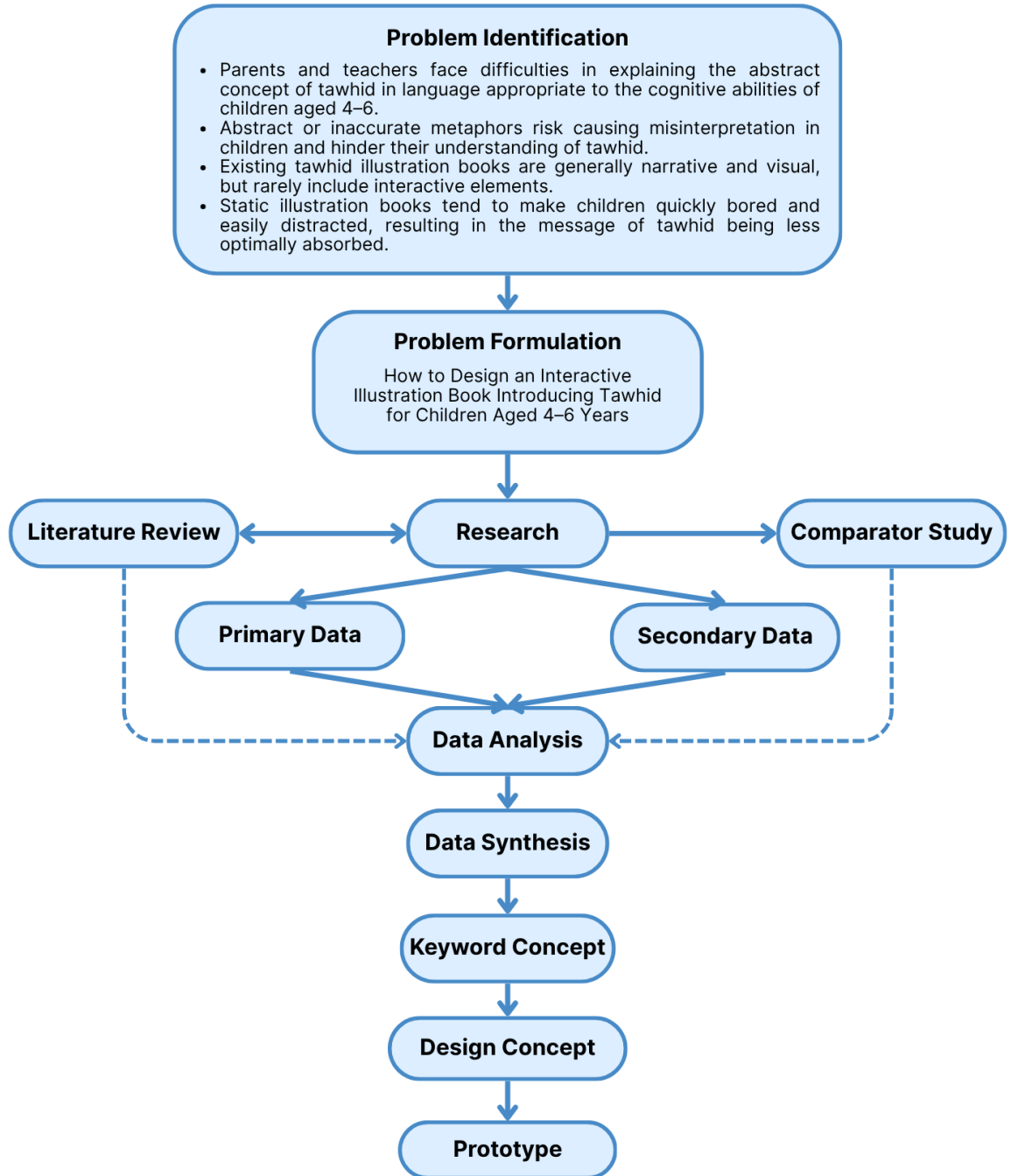


Figure 1. 1 Design Scheme

(Source : Personal Documents, 2025)