

DEVELOPING A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE READING MODULE FOR FIRST-GRADE ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: August 2024 Revised: September 2024 Published: October 2024	<i>Reading instruction plays a fundamental role in shaping students' academic success, particularly in culturally diverse contexts. In Islamic educational institutions, there is a critical need for materials that resonate with students' cultural and religious backgrounds. This study aimed to develop a culturally responsive reading instructional module tailored to the specific needs of first-grade students at an Islamic Junior High School in Mataram, Indonesia. Grounded in constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of contextual relevance in education, the study integrates Islamic cultural and religious themes to foster student engagement and improve reading comprehension. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, involving surveys, interviews, and pre- and post-assessments. The study included 60 first-grade students and their teachers. The results demonstrated significant improvements in students' reading comprehension and engagement. The mean test scores increased notably, and students expressed higher levels of enjoyment with the culturally aligned materials. These findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural and religious content into instructional materials, creating more inclusive and effective educational experiences. The study offers practical insights for educators in similar settings, highlighting the potential of culturally responsive pedagogy to bridge the gap between students' home and school environments, while also fostering a deeper appreciation of their cultural heritage. This contribution provides valuable guidance for the future development of culturally tailored educational strategies in Islamic contexts.</i>
Keywords Reading Instruction, Students' Needs, Islamic Junior High School, Mataram, Educational Module, Literacy Development;	
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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success across various disciplines, particularly during the early years of education when foundational literacy skills are established. Effective reading instruction encompasses more than teaching students to decode text; it involves fostering a love for reading and equipping students with the ability to critically engage with diverse texts. This multifaceted approach is essential for developing proficient readers who can navigate complex information and think critically about what they read. Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on developing instructional methods that go beyond traditional approaches, ensuring that reading education is both engaging and effective (McKinnon, 2017; Snow et al., 2021; Batini et al., 2021).

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) has gained recognition as an effective approach for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in culturally diverse settings. CRP seeks to create meaningful educational experiences by integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and validation among learners (Mehta, 2024; Azis et al., 2024). In non-Western educational environments,

such as Islamic junior high schools, CRP is especially critical. Islamic schools serve students whose cultural and religious identities are deeply intertwined, and instructional materials that reflect these dimensions can positively impact student motivation, comprehension, and academic performance. By bridging the gap between students' home and school environments, CRP helps foster a more inclusive and engaging learning experience, which is crucial for developing well-rounded learners (Purnamasari & Wahyuni, 2024; Laluna et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on CRP, much of the literature has focused on Western educational contexts, with limited attention paid to non-Western settings, particularly Islamic educational institutions. Prior research has largely concentrated on higher education or secondary school levels, leaving a gap in understanding how CRP can be effectively adapted for younger students in primary and junior high schools (Rahman, 2024; Khalik et al., 2024). Moreover, existing studies often overlook the unique cultural and religious dimensions inherent in Islamic schools, which necessitate instructional materials that are sensitive to Islamic values and traditions (Ali et al., 2023; Mantan, 2023; Nurhayani et al., 2024). This lack of research on applying CRP to Islamic educational contexts, especially at the junior high school level, highlights the need for further investigation to develop effective pedagogical strategies tailored to these settings.

Grounded in constructivist learning theory, this study emphasizes the importance of contextual relevance in education. The constructivist theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through their interactions with their environment and that learning is more effective when students can relate the material to their personal experiences (Masbur, 2024). In the context of Islamic education, incorporating Islamic cultural and religious themes into instructional materials can facilitate deeper engagement and comprehension by making the learning experience more relevant to students' lived realities (Nielsen et al., 2021; Mannella et al., 2021). This theoretical framework provides a strong foundation for exploring how culturally responsive reading modules can enhance student learning in non-Western, religiously oriented educational settings.

This study aims to address these gaps by developing a culturally responsive reading instructional module tailored to the needs of first-grade students at an Islamic Junior High School in Mataram, Indonesia. The research objectives are threefold: (1) to identify the specific reading needs and preferences of first-grade students in this context, (2) to design instructional materials that incorporate Islamic cultural and religious themes, and (3) to evaluate the effectiveness of these materials in enhancing students' reading comprehension and engagement. By focusing on younger students in a non-Western educational setting, this research contributes to the limited body of knowledge on CRP in Islamic schools and provides practical insights for educators seeking to implement culturally responsive strategies in similar contexts.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of culturally responsive reading instruction in an Islamic educational setting. Furthermore, it aims to offer practical guidance for educators and curriculum developers seeking to create instructional materials that are both pedagogically sound and culturally relevant. By addressing the specific needs of first-grade students in an Islamic Junior High School, this study supports their academic development and fosters a deeper appreciation of their cultural and religious heritage. The findings are expected to underscore the importance of developing culturally sensitive instructional materials that promote equitable and effective learning experiences. This study seeks to answer the following research questions; What are the specific reading needs and preferences of first-grade students at an Islamic Junior High School in Mataram?; How can culturally responsive instructional materials, incorporating Islamic cultural and religious themes, be designed to meet these needs?; What is the impact of these culturally responsive instructional materials on students' reading comprehension and engagement?

Reading Instruction

Reading is a crucial skill that forms the foundation for academic success. Effective reading instruction goes beyond teaching students to decode text; it also involves helping them comprehend, interpret, and engage with various types of content critically. The development of reading skills is particularly vital during the early stages of education when literacy becomes the gateway to learning across disciplines (Snow et al., 2021; Govorova et al., 2023). Traditional methods of reading instruction often focus on phonics or rote learning, but recent educational advancements advocate for more holistic approaches. These methods include fostering students' engagement by integrating culturally relevant themes into reading materials, which has been shown to enhance both comprehension and motivation to read (Amani et al., 2022; Batini et al., 2021). The integration of culturally responsive teaching strategies in reading instruction is especially important for diverse educational settings, including Islamic schools.

Learning Module

The development of learning modules is central to the effective delivery of curriculum content. A well-designed instructional module provides structure, pacing, and contextual relevance, ensuring that learning objectives are met. In Islamic educational contexts, learning modules need to be sensitive to students' cultural and religious backgrounds, making education more meaningful and relevant (Nurhayani et al., 2024; Miranti et al., 2024). The ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) is frequently employed in the creation of instructional materials, as it provides a systematic framework for aligning pedagogical goals with content delivery (Zulkepli et al., 2024; Dilaines et al., 2024). The design phase of such modules should include culturally responsive elements, integrating themes and narratives that resonate with students' lived experiences, particularly in Islamic contexts (Nanak, 2024).

Students' Needs

Understanding the unique needs of students is central to developing effective instructional strategies. In Islamic Junior High Schools, where students come from religiously oriented backgrounds, it is essential to incorporate Islamic cultural and religious content into reading materials. This allows students to see their identities reflected in the curriculum, which can foster a greater sense of belonging and motivation to learn (Zumzianah et al., 2024; Ilham et al., 2024). Research has shown that when students' cultural contexts are considered in instructional design, their engagement and academic performance improve significantly (Kurniawan et al., 2024). For younger students, the inclusion of culturally familiar content in reading instruction is not only a matter of equity but also a strategy for enhancing reading comprehension and critical thinking skills (Maulida, 2022; Charles, 2023).

Islamic Education

Islamic education seeks to develop individuals who are not only well-versed in religious teachings but also proficient in secular knowledge, promoting holistic growth rooted in Islamic principles. In this context, culturally responsive pedagogy plays a crucial role by connecting students' religious identities with their academic endeavors, fostering both spiritual and intellectual advancement (Rai, 2023). Studies suggest that instructional materials in Islamic schools should incorporate Islamic narratives to enrich the learning process (Patricia, 2022). However, there is a significant research gap concerning culturally responsive teaching within Islamic educational institutions, especially at the junior high school level, as most existing research has primarily focused on Western settings (Beemsterboer, 2022; Zaini, 2022). This

underscores the need for further exploration into how Islamic schools can effectively apply culturally responsive strategies to support diverse student populations and promote social integration (Groeninck, 2021). Addressing this gap could foster more inclusive educational practices that honor and celebrate religious diversity. The literature underscores the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in Islamic educational contexts. By integrating students' cultural and religious backgrounds into instructional materials, particularly in reading instruction, educators can create more engaging and effective learning experiences. The development of culturally responsive learning modules, aligned with students' needs and grounded in Islamic values, is essential for enhancing both academic and spiritual outcomes in Islamic Junior High Schools. This study aims to contribute to this body of research by developing and evaluating a culturally responsive reading module designed for first-grade students in an Islamic Junior High School in Mataram.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to develop and evaluate a culturally responsive reading instructional module for first-grade students at an Islamic Junior High School in Mataram. A mixed-methods approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the module's effectiveness by capturing both quantitative and qualitative data. The study utilized the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) to systematically create and assess the instructional materials, ensuring they were both pedagogically sound and culturally relevant (Patel, 2017; Shorten, 2018; Speer et al., 2022; Kopec et al., 2022).

Justification for Mixed-Methods Approach

The mixed-methods approach was deemed the most appropriate for this research because it allowed the study to explore both the measurable outcomes of the instructional module and the experiential aspects of student engagement (Adhikari & Timsina, 2024). The quantitative data, collected through pre-and post-tests, provided objective measures of students' reading comprehension before and after using the module, allowing for a clear evaluation of its effectiveness. Meanwhile, the qualitative data gathered through interviews and classroom observations, offered deeper insights into how students and teachers perceived and interacted with the culturally responsive materials.

By using a mixed-methods approach, the study was able to capture the full spectrum of the module's impact. While the quantitative results provided statistical evidence of learning improvements, the qualitative data highlighted the students' and teachers' lived experiences with the culturally responsive content, offering a richer understanding of how cultural relevance influenced engagement and comprehension (Ye, 2024; Zabtaa, 2023).

Research Participants

The study involved 60 first-grade students from an Islamic Junior High School in Mataram, Indonesia, selected to represent a diverse sample in terms of reading proficiency, socioeconomic status, and linguistic background. The participants were chosen to ensure that the study could evaluate the effectiveness of a culturally responsive reading module across a broad range of abilities and demographic factors. Students were categorized into three reading proficiency levels—below-average, average, and above-average—based on initial reading assessments conducted at the start of the academic year. This categorization allowed the study to assess how the reading module supported students with varying literacy levels, ensuring that the instructional materials were tested with learners of different capabilities.

The study also accounted for the socioeconomic and linguistic diversity of the participants. Students came from various economic backgrounds, and some spoke regional languages or dialects at home. This diversity enabled the researchers to explore how the culturally responsive module catered to students with different language proficiencies and economic circumstances, reflecting the realities of many Indonesian classrooms and emphasizing the need for inclusive, equitable instructional materials.

Research Instrument

The study employed a variety of instruments to gather comprehensive data on the effectiveness of the culturally responsive reading module. These instruments included pre-and post-tests, surveys, teacher observations, and semi-structured interviews, all aimed at providing a holistic understanding of the intervention's impact on students' reading comprehension, engagement, and perceptions of the material. The pre-and post-tests served as a quantitative measure of the changes in students' reading comprehension before and after the implementation of the culturally responsive reading module. These tests provided a baseline and a post-intervention measure, allowing for an assessment of improvement. The data from these tests were analyzed using paired t-tests, a statistical method that helps determine whether the observed differences in test scores were statistically significant. This analysis allowed the researchers to quantify the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills throughout the study, ensuring that any improvements could be confidently attributed to the module.

In addition to the quantitative data from the tests, surveys were used to capture students' engagement and perceptions of the reading materials. The surveys were designed to evaluate several key factors, including enjoyment, relevance, and motivation, with a specific focus on the cultural responsiveness of the reading module. Students were asked to rate the relatability of the reading content to their daily lives, as well as the extent to which the material reflected their cultural values and experiences. These questions were intended to measure how well the module resonated with the students' backgrounds and whether it fostered a deeper connection with the reading material. The survey results provided valuable insights into how the students perceived the module and whether it successfully addressed their cultural and personal needs, helping to gauge the subjective impact of the intervention beyond just academic performance.

Teacher observations were another critical component of the data collection process. To ensure consistency and accuracy, the observations were structured and standardized using a checklist. This checklist allowed teachers to systematically record student behavior during reading activities, focusing on indicators such as engagement levels, participation, and interactions with the material. By consistently documenting these behaviors, the observations provided qualitative data that complemented the survey and test results. Teachers noted how students responded to the culturally responsive content, how actively they engaged in discussions, and whether the material seemed to spark interest and participation. These observations helped to create a fuller picture of the intervention's impact by capturing real-time, classroom-based data on student engagement and behavior.

The final instrument employed in the study was semi-structured interviews, conducted with students to gather qualitative data on their personal experiences with the culturally responsive reading module. These interviews were designed to delve deeper into how the reading materials resonated with students' cultural and religious identities. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in the conversation, allowing students to express their thoughts and feelings openly while still addressing key themes. Interview questions encouraged students to reflect on whether the content felt relevant to their lives, how it related to their cultural backgrounds, and whether it motivated them to engage more deeply with reading. The qualitative data gathered from these interviews were then analyzed using content analysis,

which involved coding the responses to identify recurring themes. Common themes such as "cultural relevance," "engagement," and "motivation" emerged, providing a deeper understanding of how the culturally responsive module influenced students on a personal level.

By utilizing these multiple instruments—pre- and post-tests, surveys, teacher observations, and interviews—the study was able to collect a wide range of data that provided both quantitative and qualitative insights into the effectiveness of the culturally responsive reading module. Each instrument contributed to a more nuanced understanding of how the module impacted students' reading comprehension, engagement, and personal connection to the material, offering a comprehensive view of the intervention's success.

Data Analysis

The data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the culturally responsive reading module's effectiveness. The use of mixed methods was essential in capturing both the measurable learning outcomes and the nuanced student experiences within the intervention.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were gathered from pre- and post-tests to assess changes in students' reading comprehension. Paired t-tests were used to analyze the data, a common statistical method in educational research that determines whether the mean differences between two related groups—pre-test and post-test scores—are statistically significant (Damanik & Herman, 2021). The t-test was chosen due to its ability to compare students' performance before and after the intervention, allowing the study to determine if any observed improvements in reading comprehension were attributable to the culturally responsive module. The significance level was set at $p < 0.01$, indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis, thus confirming the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing comprehension skills. The rationale for using t-tests in this educational research lies in their capacity to handle small sample sizes while providing statistically robust results. This method also allows for the assessment of both the magnitude and direction of change, which is critical for understanding the impact of the reading module on student learning outcomes.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were collected through student interviews and structured teacher observations to capture the subjective experiences of participants. A qualitative content analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns that reflected the students' engagement with culturally responsive materials (Schirmer & Lockman, 2022). The coding process involved categorizing the interview data into distinct themes, including "cultural relevance," "engagement," "motivation," and "comprehension support." For instance, many students expressed that the inclusion of Islamic narratives made the reading content more relatable and enhanced their interest in the material. These themes were further analyzed to identify how students' cultural backgrounds influenced their engagement with the reading tasks. Teacher observations provided supplementary qualitative data, focusing on real-time classroom behaviors, such as active participation and enthusiasm during reading sessions. Observers noted a marked increase in student involvement when the module content resonated with their cultural and religious identities.

Reliability and Validity Checks

To ensure the reliability of the qualitative data, intercoder reliability was implemented during the content analysis of the interview transcripts. Multiple researchers independently coded the data, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion to maintain consistency

in the identified themes. This process ensured that the coding was not biased by individual interpretations, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings. Observer consistency was also ensured by training teachers on a standardized observation protocol. This structured approach minimized variability in the observation data, ensuring that the results were comparable across different classrooms and observers.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The study yielded significant improvements in reading comprehension and student engagement following the implementation of the culturally responsive reading module. These improvements were reflected in both quantitative pre-and post-test data and qualitative feedback collected through student interviews and teacher observations. Below is a systematic and detailed presentation of the findings, with particular attention to differences across various student groups and aspects of the module that contributed most to the observed outcomes.

Nuanced Analysis of Findings

The quantitative analysis of the pre-and post-test scores indicated a substantial increase in students' reading comprehension. As presented in Table 1, the mean reading comprehension score increased from 65.4 (pre-test) to 78.9 (post-test), representing a 20.7% improvement, with a statistically significant p-value of less than 0.01. This result suggests that the culturally responsive reading module effectively enhanced students' comprehension skills.

Table 1 Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results				
Test Type	Mean Score (Pre-Test)	Mean Score (Post-Test)	Percentage Improvement	p-value
Reading Comprehension	65.4	78.9	20.7%	< 0.01

While the overall trend showed improvement, a more nuanced analysis revealed certain variances in how different groups responded to the module. Students were categorized based on reading proficiency levels—below-average, average, and above-average—at the beginning of the intervention. It was observed that higher-proficiency students exhibited greater gains in reading comprehension than their lower-proficiency peers. This may be attributed to the higher-proficiency students' ability to more effectively navigate the structure of culturally responsive materials. However, students in the below-average group also showed significant improvement, indicating that the module was beneficial for all proficiency levels, though additional scaffolding could potentially help lower-proficiency students achieve even greater gains.

Gender analysis revealed no significant differences in how male and female students responded to the intervention. Both groups demonstrated similar levels of improvement in reading comprehension and engagement, suggesting that the module's content, which incorporated culturally relevant themes, resonated equally across genders. An unexpected variance emerged concerning socioeconomic status. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrated greater engagement with the module compared to their peers from lower-income households. This could be due to external factors, such as access to additional educational resources or differing levels of home support for reading activities. This finding suggests that while the module is effective, it may require complementary interventions to ensure equitable engagement across socioeconomic groups.

Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

The comparison of pre-and post-test results (Table 1) demonstrates a marked improvement in students' reading comprehension. The reading module's integration of Islamic cultural and religious content was a key factor contributing to this improvement. The content's alignment with students' cultural backgrounds allowed them to draw on their prior knowledge and personal experiences, which facilitated comprehension. Furthermore, the module's structure encouraged critical thinking by linking comprehension questions directly to culturally relevant contexts. This personalized approach made the material more engaging and accessible, resulting in deeper understanding and improved retention. The following aspects of the reading module contributed most significantly to the improvements observed in reading comprehension: (1) Cultural Relevance: The module's inclusion of Islamic narratives and local folklore helped students connect the reading material with their lived experiences, making the content more relatable and meaningful. This alignment with students' cultural identities enhanced their motivation to engage with the material, thus improving comprehension, (2) Structured Comprehension Questions: The questions were designed to encourage students to reflect on the cultural and religious themes present in the reading passages, promoting higher-order thinking. This approach supported the development of critical reading skills, particularly among higher-proficiency students, (3) Engagement through Familiar Contexts: Students reported feeling more connected to the material because it reflected their cultural and religious environment. This sense of relevance motivated them to participate more actively in reading tasks, which was confirmed by the qualitative data from teacher observations.

To better visualize the percentage improvement in reading comprehension from the pre-test to the post-test, a graph could be provided. While a specific graph is not included here, the percentage increase of 20.7% indicates the significant impact of the intervention.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data gathered from student interviews and teacher observations further support the quantitative results. Students consistently reported that the module's content, which included Islamic cultural references, made the reading material more engaging and relatable. Teachers observed increased participation, especially when students encountered familiar cultural themes in the reading passages. Recurring themes identified through qualitative content analysis included "cultural relevance," "motivation," and "engagement."

Overall, the study demonstrates that the culturally responsive reading module significantly enhanced reading comprehension and engagement, particularly effective for students with higher reading proficiency. Variances in engagement across socioeconomic groups suggest that additional support may be needed to ensure equitable participation. These findings underscore the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in promoting deeper learning and more meaningful student engagement.

In conclusion, the results of the study show that the culturally responsive reading module had a significant positive impact on students' reading comprehension and engagement. The integration of culturally relevant content played a crucial role in improving students' ability to connect with and understand the material. While all students benefited from the module, higher-proficiency students and those from more affluent backgrounds showed greater gains in comprehension and engagement, respectively. The findings suggest that culturally responsive teaching is a powerful tool for enhancing literacy, though it may require additional adjustments to fully support lower-proficiency and lower-income students.

Discussion

The study on the effectiveness of the culturally responsive reading module in improving EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' reading skills in senior high schools reveals its

impact across several dimensions, including academic performance, student engagement, cultural relevance, and motivation. These findings offer a comprehensive understanding of how culturally responsive pedagogy can enhance language learning, particularly within Islamic educational contexts.

The primary indicator of the module's success is the measurable improvement in students' reading comprehension, as evidenced by pre-and post-test results. The data showed significant gains in reading skills for students exposed to culturally responsive materials. This improvement aligns with previous research that suggests students perform better when they can relate new information to their own cultural experiences (Bateer et al., 2019; Schirmer & Lockman, 2022). By tailoring reading materials to reflect students' cultural backgrounds, the module provided a bridge between learners' prior knowledge and new content, making the learning process more accessible. The culturally familiar content allowed students to engage more deeply with the material, facilitating a better understanding of the texts and boosting their academic performance.

In addition to academic performance, the culturally responsive module played a crucial role in enhancing student engagement. Surveys administered during the study revealed that students found the culturally relevant texts more enjoyable and relatable, which increased their participation in reading activities. Teacher observations further supported this finding, noting higher levels of student interaction with the material when it reflected their own cultural experiences and values. This increased engagement is vital in language learning, as active participation and practice are essential for developing language proficiency. When students see themselves in the learning materials, they are more likely to take an active role in their education, leading to better learning outcomes. The ability of the module to make reading more relevant to students' lives created a learning environment where students felt more connected to the material, fostering improved reading comprehension and academic success.

One of the module's core strengths is its focus on integrating cultural relevance into the reading materials. By incorporating texts that resonate with students' cultural and religious identities, the module made reading activities more meaningful for EFL learners. This sense of cultural connection heightened students' intrinsic motivation to engage with the material, as they perceived the content not only as educational but also as personally significant. Interviews with students revealed that the culturally responsive module encouraged them to reflect on their own identities and experiences, making the learning process feel less abstract and more relevant to their daily lives. This personal connection is crucial in language learning, as it fosters a deeper commitment to the material and motivates students to persist in their efforts, even when faced with challenges. The cultural relevance of the module, therefore, contributed significantly to students' motivation and engagement, which in turn enhanced their reading skills.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified challenges, particularly to students' digital literacy and their ability to use technology for learning effectively. Some students, especially those with limited exposure to digital tools, struggled to navigate the technology required to access and engage with the reading module. This limitation may have hindered their ability to fully benefit from the culturally responsive content. The findings suggest that future implementations of the module should include additional support to improve students' digital literacy, ensuring that all learners, regardless of their familiarity with technology, can make the most of the educational materials provided. Addressing these challenges would help to ensure that the benefits of the module are accessible to all students, regardless of their prior experience with digital learning tools.

Furthermore, the study highlighted that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds showed greater levels of engagement and comprehension gains compared to their peers from lower-income households. This disparity may be influenced by external factors such as access to educational resources at home, parental support, or exposure to a literacy-rich

environment. Research has shown that students from more affluent backgrounds often have access to a range of learning supports, including books, technology, and guidance from family members, which can enhance their academic performance (Stumm et al., 2022; Voisin et al., 2023). In contrast, students from lower-income families may face additional challenges that were not fully addressed by the intervention, such as limited access to reading materials or the absence of a conducive learning environment at home. To mitigate these disparities, future studies should explore strategies for providing additional support to lower-income students, such as after-school tutoring, supplementary reading resources, or partnerships with parents to foster a stronger home-based learning environment.

Another consideration is the potential variability in cultural contexts across different regions in Indonesia. The study was conducted in Mataram, but cultural and religious practices vary significantly across the country. In regions such as Lombok, Aceh, or Java, where local customs and interpretations of Islamic practices may differ, the culturally responsive module might need to be adapted to align with the specific cultural dynamics of these areas (Azra, 2019; Judijanto et al., 2024). As such, while the module proved successful in the Mataram context, its generalizability to other regions in Indonesia or other Islamic educational contexts may be limited. Future research should investigate how the module could be modified to reflect regional differences in cultural and religious practices, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective in diverse educational settings (Azka et al., 2024).

The broader implications of this study extend beyond Indonesia, offering valuable insights for Islamic educational institutions in other non-Western, Islamic-majority countries. The findings suggest that integrating culturally relevant and religiously aligned content into reading materials can enhance student engagement and comprehension in contexts where Islamic values are central to students' lives. In countries such as Malaysia, Pakistan, or Egypt, where education systems are similarly influenced by Islamic teachings, the development of culturally responsive curricula that incorporate local narratives and religious themes could promote deeper engagement and improve academic outcomes (Idris et al., 2024; Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024). The success of the culturally responsive module in Indonesia suggests that this approach could be adapted and implemented in other Islamic educational contexts to a similar effect.

In light of the study's findings, several actionable insights can be drawn for educators seeking to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in Islamic contexts. Incorporating local cultural and religious narratives into reading materials can help create a more engaging and relatable learning experience for students. Additionally, developing structured comprehension activities that align with culturally relevant content can promote critical thinking and deeper understanding. For lower-proficiency students, educators should consider providing additional scaffolding, such as vocabulary support and guided reading sessions, to help them engage more effectively with the material. Finally, addressing socioeconomic disparities by offering supplementary reading resources and support programs for lower-income students can help ensure that all learners have the opportunity to succeed (Alazmi & Bush, 2023).

The findings of this study strongly support the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy in Islamic educational contexts, demonstrating its potential to improve both reading comprehension and student engagement. However, the study's limitations—such as the challenges in measuring cultural responsiveness and the influence of external factors like socioeconomic status—suggest that further research is needed to refine and enhance the effectiveness of such educational strategies. By incorporating local cultural elements, providing targeted support for struggling learners, and addressing socioeconomic disparities, Islamic educational institutions can promote more equitable and effective learning outcomes for all students (Efrizal, 2024; Wisam, & Makki, 2024)).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the effectiveness of a culturally responsive reading module in improving both reading comprehension and engagement among students at an Islamic Junior High School in Mataram, Indonesia. By incorporating Islamic cultural and religious content, the module helped students connect with the material, enhancing their learning experience. These findings support the broader implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in Islamic educational settings and highlight its potential to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments.

The study's implications extend beyond reading instruction. Culturally responsive pedagogy can be applied across various subjects and educational contexts, particularly in non-Western and Islamic-majority regions, where aligning curriculum with students' cultural backgrounds is essential for engagement and academic success. This approach affirms the importance of developing educational materials that reflect students' identities, improving their motivation and comprehension.

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