

Development of a Montessori-Based Hijaiyah Letter Learning Module in TPQ Education West Papua

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Abstract

This study developed the effectiveness of a Montessori-based Hijaiyah learning module at Al-Islami Quran Education Garden (TPQ), Fakfak District, West Papua, Indonesia. The study addressed the limitations of traditional rote-based instruction by introducing a child-centred approach emphasizing sensory learning and learner independence. A quasi-experimental design employing a one-group pretest–post-test model was conducted over six months through ten class meetings. The population comprised 244 TPQ students, and then 32 participants were selected using purposive sampling. The research involved three stages: module development, expert validation, and field testing. Data were collected through Hijaiyah literacy tests measuring letter recognition and pronunciation, a multimedia expert validation questionnaire consisting of 16 Likert-scale items, and semi-structured interviews with six students, two teachers, and one institutional leader. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings revealed a substantial improvement in students' learning outcomes, with mean scores increasing from 61.8 on the pretest to 80.2 on the post-test. Expert validation yielded a 95.33% feasibility score, indicating excellent instructional quality and alignment with Montessori principles. Qualitative findings demonstrated enhanced student engagement, motivation, and learning independence. The study concludes that the Montessori-based module is an effective and feasible innovation for improving Hijaiyah literacy in TPQ settings.

Keywords: *Montessori Method, Hijaiyah Letters, Early Literacy, TPQ Education, Learning Module*

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a critical stage for developing foundational literacy, including the ability to recognize symbols, connect them with sounds, and use them meaningfully in learning contexts (Umar et al., 2021: 101). In Islamic education, this foundational stage includes learning to read the Quran, which begins with mastery of Hijaiyah letters (Anisa, 2023: 85 - 95). Hijaiyah literacy is therefore not only a technical prerequisite for Quran reading, but also an entry point to religious understanding and



spiritual formation. Because of this central role, the effectiveness of early Hijaiyah instruction deserves serious pedagogical attention. (Tang et al., 2018: 27).

Existing studies have established several important points. First, research has shown the importance of early literacy stimulation in shaping children's later learning readiness (Umar et al., 2021: 109). Second, studies in Quranic education have emphasized that mastery of Hijaiyah letters is the basic competency required before children can proceed to fluent Quran reading (Anisa, 2023: 259); and (Iai et al., 2021: 266-267). Third, previous research on TPQ learning practices has identified the continued dominance of conventional teaching methods, especially repetition, drilling, and memorization, in introducing Hijaiyah letters (Tang et al., 2018: 27); and (Ahmad Amir Aziz & Miftahul Huda, 2024: 982-983). These studies are useful in explaining the importance of Hijaiyah learning and documenting common instructional practices in Quranic education.

However, previous research also shows clear limitations. Conventional TPQ-based instruction often emphasizes short-term recall rather than conceptual recognition of letter forms, phonetic distinctions, and application in reading practice. As a result, many students still struggle to differentiate visually similar letters, identify sound variations, and transfer memorized knowledge into actual reading performance (Rahanyamtel, 2024: 85).

This indicates that much of the existing literature has focused more on describing the importance of Hijaiyah learning or reporting ongoing instructional problems than on testing pedagogical solutions that are developmentally appropriate for young children.

One alternative frequently discussed in early childhood education is the Montessori method. Montessori-based learning emphasizes child-centered instruction, sensory exploration, self-directed activity, and concrete learning materials, all of which are considered effective for early literacy development (Sulaeman, 2019: 7). Studies have also suggested that multisensory learning can strengthen children's attention, retention, and comprehension (Naumi et al., 2025: 28-29). Yet the existing literature on Montessori learning has largely developed in general early childhood or secular literacy contexts, not in Quranic learning environments. In other words, although Montessori principles are pedagogically relevant to Hijaiyah instruction, their application in TPQ settings remains underexplored.

This is where the research gap becomes more specific. Studies on TPQ learning have mostly examined traditional methods and student learning difficulties, while studies on Montessori education have mostly discussed general literacy benefits without focusing on early Quranic literacy. Research that integrates Montessori principles into a structured Hijaiyah learning module for TPQ students is still very limited (Assegaf et al., 2025: 64-70).

More importantly, previous studies have rarely combined instructional innovation with a systematic assessment framework capable of measuring student progress before and after intervention. Assessment in many TPQ settings remains informal, making it difficult to determine whether a teaching innovation actually improves children's learning outcomes (Dzulfian Syafrian, 2025: 44).

Thus, the main shortcoming of previous research lies in at least three areas. *First*, prior studies have not sufficiently developed a context-specific Montessori-based learning module for Hijaiyah instruction in TPQ institutions. *Second*, they have not rigorously evaluated such a module using measurable learning indicators. *Third*, they have not adequately connected quantitative learning outcomes with qualitative evidence from students' and teachers' learning experiences. This means that the field still lacks empirical evidence on how a Montessori-based approach can be adapted to Islamic early literacy learning and whether it is demonstrably effective in improving children's recognition of Hijaiyah letters (Sulaeman, 2019).

This study addresses that gap by developing and evaluating a Montessori-based Hijaiyah learning module in TPQ institutions in Fakfak District. Fakfak is an important setting because TPQs function as a primary site of early Quranic education, yet many still rely on conventional instructional approaches that do not fully accommodate children's developmental readiness and learning diversity (Syarifah, 2025: 50). By combining the Montessori method with an Assessment and Development (A&D) approach, this study does not merely propose a pedagogical alternative; it also provides a structured framework for measuring its effectiveness (James, 2009: 40-44). The use of a pretest-post-test design allows objective analysis of students' learning progress, while qualitative interviews offer deeper insight into how the module is experienced in practice (Sibanda & Donnelly, 2014: 478); and (Kartiko et al., 2026: 204).

Accordingly, the specific contribution of this research is threefold. *First*, it contributes theoretically by linking Montessori pedagogy with early Quranic literacy instruction, an area that has received limited scholarly attention. *Second*, it contributes methodologically by integrating module development with systematic assessment through pretest-post-test measurement and qualitative inquiry. *Third*, it contributes practically by offering an evidence-based instructional model for TPQ teachers seeking more effective and child-centered ways to teach Hijaiyah letters (Hidayat et al., 2024: 2; M. Andy Hermansyah, 2024: 481; (Alhamid et al., 2025: 144).

Therefore, this study is important not only because it responds to persistent instructional problems in TPQ classrooms, but also because it provides a concrete and testable solution to an under-researched problem in Islamic early childhood education (Arsyad, 2023: 443-444); (Ika & Ali, 2025: 710-711); and (Nusir et al., 2025: 28).

The integration of Montessori principles into *Hijaiyah* letter instruction offers a novel solution to the limitations of conventional methods. By using tactile materials, visual aids, and structured activities, students can develop a more concrete understanding of letter forms and sounds. This approach also supports multi-sensory learning, which has been shown to enhance memory retention and comprehension (Ika & Ali, 2025: 716-717; Nusir et al., 2025: 30; and Naumi et al., 2025: 28-29).

Despite its potential benefits, the application of Montessori-based learning in Islamic educational settings remains limited. Most TPQs have not yet adopted structured modules that align Montessori principles with Quranic literacy instruction. This gap presents an opportunity for developing a specialized learning module that integrates both pedagogical frameworks (Assegaf et al., 2025: 64-70).

In addition, assessment practices in TPQ settings are often informal and lack systematic measurement of student progress. Without proper assessment tools, it becomes difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional interventions. Therefore, incorporating an Assessment and Development (A&D) approach can provide a more structured framework for measuring learning outcomes (Dzulfian Syafrian, 2025: 44).

This study combines the Montessori method with the A&D approach to develop and evaluate a Hijaiyah learning module (Sibanda & Donnelly, 2014: 478; Kartiko et al., 2026:

204). The use of a pretest-post-test design allows for objective measurement of students' progress, while qualitative interviews provide deeper insights into the learning experience.

Based on the issues outlined above, there is a clear gap between traditional teaching practices and the need for innovative, student-centred learning approaches in TPQ education. This study aims to fill this gap by developing a Montessori-based Hijaiyah learning module and evaluating its effectiveness in improving students' early Arabic literacy skills (Hidayat et al., 2024: 2; M. Andy Hermansyah, 2024: 481; Alhamid et al., 2025: 114).

METHOD

This research employed a quasi-experimental design using a one-group pretest–post-test model for six months with ten class meetings to measure the effectiveness of the developed module (Anisa, 2023: 90-91; Maelan et al., 2025: 51; Juli et al., 2025: 247; and Mustakim et al., 2025: 5462-5467). The population consisted of 244 students enrolled in the Al-Islami Quran Education Garden (TPQ) in Fakfak District, West Papua, Indonesia. A sample of 32 students (approximately 15% of the population) was selected using purposive sampling, considering students' readiness and participation in the learning program (Creswell & Clark, 2011: 57).

The research procedure consisted of three main stages: (1) development of the Montessori-based learning module, (2) expert validation, and (3) field testing. The module was designed based on Montessori principles, including sensory learning, isolation of difficulty, and student independence (Creswell, 2018: 274; Sarwono, 2011: 85). Data were collected using three instruments: the academic literacy test (Hijaiyah recognition and pronunciation) administered as a pretest and a post-test, the Multimedia expert validation questionnaire, consisting of 16 Likert-scale items, and Semi-structured interviews conducted with 6 students, 2 teachers, and 1 institutional leader (Safitri Nuril, 2025: 280-283).

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean scores and percentage gain), while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis involving data reduction, coding, and interpretation. The feasibility of the module was determined using percentage criteria, where scores above 85% were categorized as highly valid (Creswell, 2018: 270); and Ipa Salma Alhamid, Indria Nur; Hasbullah, 2024: 39). To

strengthen the quantitative results, this study also used semi-structured interviews with six students, two teachers, and one institutional leader (Creswell, 2018: 232-239; and Miles, 2014: 29-30). They were interviewed using six interview questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of a Quasi-Experimental Design

The findings followed a quasi-experimental design using a one-group pretest–post-test model to measure the effectiveness of the developed module of this study are described based on the results of data analysis as follows.

Table 1. Learning Outcome Improvement (Pretest–Post-test Results)

Statistic	Pretest	Post-test
Mean Score	61.8	80.2
Minimum	55	72
Maximum	70	90
Gain		+18.4

The results show a substantial improvement in students' ability to recognize and pronounce *Hijaiyah* letters after using the Montessori-based module. The mean score increased by 18.4 points, indicating a strong positive effect of the intervention. This suggests that the module effectively enhances early Arabic literacy skills through structured, interactive learning.

Table 2. Multimedia Expert Validation Results

Aspect	Score
Total Score	64
Maximum Score	64
Feasibility Percentage	100%
Category	Highly Valid

The expert validation indicates that the module meets all criteria for multimedia quality, including usability, visual design, clarity, and alignment with Montessori principles. A perfect score reflects that the module is highly suitable for early childhood learners in TPQ settings.

Qualitative Analysis of Interview Data

The interview data from six students, two teachers, and one institutional leader were analysed through three stages: open coding, categorization, and thematic synthesis. Initially, meaningful statements were identified and assigned descriptive codes (Creswell, 2018: 232-235). Similar codes were then grouped into categories, which were subsequently synthesized into broader themes representing participants' shared experiences and perspectives regarding the Montessori-based Hijaiyah learning module.

Table 3. Coding and Categorization of Interview Data

Sample Quotations	Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
"I can touch the letters and arrange them by myself." (Student 1)	Manipulating learning materials	Hands-on learning experience	Active and Experiential Learning
"We move, choose the letters, and match them." (Student 2)	Physical engagement	Learning through activity	Active and Experiential Learning
"I like the colours and shapes of the letters." (Student 3)	Attractive visual materials	Sensory stimulation	Active and Experiential Learning
"I am doing something, not just listening." (Student 4)	Active participation	Student-centred learning	Active and Experiential Learning
"This learning is not boring." (Student 5)	Enjoyment	Positive learning atmosphere	Increased Motivation and Engagement
"I feel happy when I can do it correctly." (Student 2)	Learning satisfaction	Positive emotional response	Increased Motivation and Engagement
"I want to participate." (Student 5)	Increased participation	Learning motivation	Increased Motivation and Engagement
"Students are more active and engaged." (Teacher 1)	Higher engagement	Student participation	Increased Motivation and Engagement
"I can remember some letters faster." (Student 1)	Improved memory	Cognitive development	Enhanced Recognition and Retention
"I can still remember them at home." (Student 2)	Knowledge retention	Long-term recall	Enhanced Recognition and Retention

“I can remember better when I touch the letters.” (Student 4)	Multi-sensory learning	Memory reinforcement	Enhanced Recognition and Retention
“I can now recognize more letters than before.” (Student 5)	Improved letter recognition	Learning achievement	Enhanced Recognition and Retention
“I still get confused with letters that look similar.” (Student 1)	Difficulty distinguishing letters	Learning challenges	Continuing Learning Challenges
“Sometimes I still make mistakes in pronunciation.” (Student 3)	Pronunciation difficulties	Skill development needs	Continuing Learning Challenges
“I still need help from the teacher.” (Student 6)	Dependence on guidance	Need for support	Continuing Learning Challenges
“It requires more preparation time.” (Teacher 1)	Teacher workload	Implementation challenges	Institutional and Pedagogical Support Needs
“Students still need close supervision.” (Teacher 2)	Intensive facilitation	Teaching demands	Institutional and Pedagogical Support Needs
“We need proper teacher training and adequate resources.” (Institutional Leader)	Training and resources	Institutional support	Institutional and Pedagogical Support Needs

Thematic Synthesis of Findings

Analysis of the interview data generated four major themes.

Theme 1: Active and Experiential Learning

Participants consistently described the Montessori-based module as facilitating active engagement through tactile and visual learning experiences. Students appreciated the opportunity to manipulate learning materials, arrange Hijaiyah letters, and participate physically in learning activities. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, the Montessori approach encouraged learners to construct understanding through direct interaction with learning objects. Teachers similarly observed that students became more active participants rather than passive recipients of information.

Theme 2: Increased Motivation and Engagement

The interviews revealed that the Montessori-based module substantially enhanced students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning Hijaiyah letters. Students frequently characterized learning activities as enjoyable, interesting, and less monotonous than conventional methods. Teachers confirmed these observations, noting increased participation among students who had previously demonstrated limited interest in Hijaiyah instruction. The findings suggest that the integration of play-based and sensory-rich activities fostered a more positive emotional connection with learning.

Theme 3: Enhanced Recognition and Retention of Hijaiyah Letters

A recurring theme concerned improvements in students' ability to recognize and remember Hijaiyah letters. Students reported greater confidence in identifying letters and retaining learning outcomes beyond classroom sessions. The use of tactile manipulation, visual aids, and repeated practice appeared to strengthen memory retention and letter recognition. These perceptions align with the quantitative findings, which demonstrated significant improvements in post-test scores following the implementation of the Montessori-based module.

Theme 4: Continuing Learning Challenges and Support Needs

Despite the generally positive responses, participants also identified several challenges. Some students continued to struggle with distinguishing visually similar Hijaiyah letters and accurately pronouncing certain sounds. Others required ongoing teacher guidance when arranging learning materials. Teachers highlighted the increased time required for preparation and individualized facilitation, while the institutional leader emphasized the importance of teacher training, resource availability, and organizational commitment to ensure sustainable implementation. These findings indicate that although the Montessori approach enhances learning outcomes, its effectiveness depends on adequate pedagogical and institutional support.

The thematic analysis demonstrates that the Montessori-based Hijaiyah learning module positively influences students' learning experiences through four interconnected dimensions: *active and experiential learning*, *increased motivation and engagement*, *enhanced recognition and retention of Hijaiyah letters*, and *continuing support needs for effective implementation*. Students perceived the module as more enjoyable, interactive, and memorable than conventional instructional approaches, while teachers observed higher

levels of participation and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, challenges related to letter discrimination, pronunciation accuracy, teacher workload, and institutional readiness indicate that successful long-term implementation requires sustained pedagogical support, teacher professional development, and adequate learning resources. These qualitative findings complement the quantitative results, providing deeper insights into how Montessori principles contribute to improving Hijaiyah literacy among elementary-level learners.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Montessori-based Hijaiyah learning module is both effective and feasible for improving early Arabic literacy in TPQ settings. The significant increase in pretest to post-test scores indicates that the module successfully enhances students' ability to recognize and pronounce *Hijaiyah* letters. This improvement can be attributed to the integration of Montessori principles, which emphasize sensory engagement, active learning, and independence.

One of the key strengths of the developed module lies in its child-centred design. Unlike conventional rote-based methods, the Montessori approach allows students to interact directly with learning materials, facilitating deeper understanding. The concept of *learning by doing* enables students to internalize knowledge through experience rather than memorization, which aligns with constructivist learning theory.

Furthermore, the multimedia validation results reinforce the effectiveness of the module from a design perspective. Achieving a 100% feasibility score indicates that the module meets high standards in terms of usability, visual appeal, and instructional clarity. This is particularly important in early childhood education, where visual and sensory elements play a crucial role in maintaining attention and enhancing comprehension.

However, despite these strengths, several limitations were identified. First, the implementation of the Montessori-based approach requires adequate teacher training. Teachers who are unfamiliar with Montessori principles may face challenges in facilitating student-centered learning. Second, the preparation and use of learning materials can be time-consuming, which may limit scalability in resource-constrained environments.

Another important consideration is the contextual adaptation of Montessori principles to Islamic education settings. While the approach is highly effective, it must be

carefully integrated to ensure alignment with religious and cultural values. This requires collaboration between educators, curriculum developers, and institutional leaders.

The qualitative findings further highlight the module's positive impact on students' motivation and engagement. Increased enthusiasm and confidence among students indicate that the module not only improves cognitive outcomes but also enhances affective aspects of learning. This dual impact is essential for sustainable educational improvement.

For future development, several strategies can be proposed. First, professional development programs should be conducted to train teachers in Montessori-based instruction. Second, the module should be refined based on expert feedback, particularly by enhancing visual diversity and improving instructional clarity. Third, further research should be conducted with larger samples and longer intervention periods to validate the findings.

Overall, this study provides strong evidence that integrating Montessori principles into *Hijaiyah* learning modules can significantly improve early Arabic literacy. The combination of effective instructional design, validated multimedia quality, and positive user experiences makes this approach a promising innovation in TPQ education.

From the teachers' perspective, the module contributes to a more active and student-centered learning environment, encouraging participation and improving learning outcomes. However, it also demands greater instructional preparation, individualized guidance, and classroom management skills. At the institutional level, the module is viewed as innovative and aligned with modern pedagogical approaches, but its sustainability depends on teacher training, resource availability, and institutional support.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the Montessori-based module is effective and well-received, its successful implementation requires continuous support, adaptation, and capacity building to maximize its long-term impact in TPQ learning contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the Montessori-based Hijaiyah learning module represents a pedagogically sound innovation for early Arabic literacy instruction in TPQ settings. By integrating sensory-based learning, learner autonomy, and structured instructional materials, the module offers an alternative to traditional approaches that have often relied heavily on memorization and teacher-centred practices. The study contributes to the

growing body of evidence supporting the application of child-centred learning principles within Islamic education contexts.

Beyond its instructional value, the module demonstrates the potential to bridge contemporary educational theories and religious learning objectives. Its emphasis on active knowledge construction aligns with constructivist perspectives, suggesting that meaningful learning occurs when children engage directly with learning materials and develop understanding through experience. Consequently, the module may serve as a model for the development of other innovative learning resources in Qur'anic and Islamic education.

The findings also highlight the importance of creating supportive conditions for successful implementation. Effective utilization of Montessori-based learning requires institutional commitment, adequate learning resources, and continuous professional development for teachers. These factors are essential to ensure consistency, scalability, and long-term sustainability.

This study is limited by its focus on a single educational setting and a relatively small sample. Future research should examine the module's effectiveness across diverse regions, educational institutions, and age groups, while also exploring its long-term effects on literacy development and learner outcomes. Such investigations would provide broader evidence for policy formulation and curriculum innovation in Islamic educational institutions.

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