



# Teaching Reading And Counting In Salah: Experiences Of Muslim Caregivers Of Down Syndrome Children In Selangor

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## Abstract

Children born with Down Syndrome face difficulty in reciting daily prayers as they are born with cognitive disabilities which affect the process of acquiring reading and counting skills. Although in Islam, these children are not required to perform Salah, the strong cultural family norms among Malay Muslims in Malaysia create an expectation of them to participate in Salah as part of their daily routines. This study examines the experiences in teaching Down Syndrome children how to read and count in Salah among Muslim family caregivers in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. The study also investigates best practices to facilitate a Down Syndrome child to perform daily religious prayers that involves the skills of reading and counting. Case study method is deployed to examine responses from three informants who voluntarily participated in this study. The study uses non-probability sampling to acquire accurate and realistic conceptions from caregivers who are actively working with their respective Down Syndrome children. Findings from the study revealed a high tendency among caregivers to use repetition in the learning process, and to create an environment where the Down Syndrome children can imitate the actions done and words spoken when performing the Salah. The use of rewards is also found to be useful and effective to motivate and encourage Down Syndrome children to learn to cognitive tasks for Salah.

**Keywords:** cognitive based skills; experience and methods to assist; Down Syndrome children; reading; counting.

## 1. Introduction

*Narrated by 'Abdullah bin 'Umar: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying: "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock...a man is a shepherd in charge of the inhabitants of his household and he is responsible for his flock; a woman is a shepherdess in charge of her husband's house and children and she is responsible for them...So each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock."*  
[Sunan Abi Dawud]

Salah in Islam, is one of its daily religious tasks performed by Muslims. Salah stands as one of the pillars in Islam, and it is unique in that it consists of specific movements and recitations in the prayers that requires the skill of counting and reading. In Salah, from the beginning of the prayers, one recites the Niyah (intention) in the heart, followed by the act of raising the hand to ears and simultaneously articulate the phrase "Allahu Akbar", which means Allah (God) is Great. Throughout the prayers, there are actions which are performed with particular orations of Quranic verses, that require repetition. An example of such actions is performed at the "rukoo" position, where "Subhana Rabbiyal Adhim" (translated, it means: How Perfect is my Lord, the Supreme, is repeated three times. In Islam, it is crucial to understand the meaning of each recitation because it guides towards deep meditation during prayers. To add to the five compulsory prayers to be completed in a day, in Islam, Muslims are encouraged to make du'a or to recite brief prayers for self-supplication in order

to always be in ease and peace (Qur'an 2:186, 40:60). Islam accentuates the responsibility to Allah is an obligation that should be fulfilled and Salah is one of the responsibilities bestowed onto mankind, and it leads to the cultivation of good deeds, such as good relationships with living things, calmness in one's soul and so forth.

This study is necessitated by lack of research how Down Syndrome children who are born with cognitive delays to engage in cognitive tasks for religious purposes. The study focuses specifically on how Down Syndrome children from Malay Muslim families in Malaysia acquire the skills of reading and counting and apply the skills in the performing their personal daily religious tasks, the Salah.

To understand the complexity of learning a cognitive input by Down Syndrome children, it is necessary to visit the characteristics of Down Syndrome patients. A study by Bittles and Glasson [1] describes Down Syndrome as linked with moderate to severe levels of learning disability even though those with a mosaic karyotype are able to display higher levels of intellectual function. The learning disability will affect one's development in acquiring any cognitive based skills like reading, counting and many more. On the other hand, the learning disability could be improved by assisting the Down Syndrome children with learning strategy that suits one's capability.