

# Mother's Perspective Toward al-Quran Education for Hearing Impaired Children in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

An interview with parents of children with hearing impairment was carried out in the initial study since the coordinated effort of parents and children is essential in the education of children. Considering that this interview was appropriate for collecting qualitative-oriented data, it has been chosen as the knowledge elicitation method. In most families who have a hearing impaired child, mothers play a vital role regarding communication and family cohesion. In addition usually children spend more time with their mothers and they have a closer relationship with them; as a result particularly mothers are selected as respondents of this interview. The goal of the interview is to ask parents about the Islamic education of their hearing impaired children. Four parents have been interviewed in depth. As a results, there are four concerns expressed by the mothers which are lack of family support in education, the Malay culture with regard to disabled children, dissatisfaction toward schools and lack of technology support in schools.

Keywords: *Hearing Impaired Children, Technology, Mother's Perspective*

## INTRODUCTION

Children with "special needs" refers to children with mental or physical disabilities which make a special situation involving personalized educational programs, services and essential care requirements. Designing special education programs to serve children with special health care requires exclusive materials, equipment and techniques of teaching in accordance with the capabilities of students. Hearing impairment is a kind of disability which is focused on in this research project. Hearing impairment is a general term which refers to hearing losses of varying degrees, ranging from hard-of-hearing to total deafness. According to the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), deafness refers to the "audiological condition of not hearing". The NAD mentioned hearing impairment also comprises people with partial hearing. Conductive, sensorineural, mixed and auditory neuropathy are considered as four types of hearing loss which can be either congenital or acquired. Congenital refers to those children who are born with hearing loss, while acquired denotes that the hearing loss occurs after birth. Considering the level at which the child can hear, mild, moderate, moderately severe, severe and profound can be mentioned as degrees of hearing loss. In addition, hearing loss in children can be caused by otitis media, environmental factors or inherited disorders (Davis, Efenbein, Schum, & Bentler, 1986).

According to international statistics, around 2.5% of the world population suffers from some degree of deafness (Akach & Woodford, 2000). The Social Welfare Department Malaysia (SWDM) stated that in 2006 the community of registered hearing impaired in Malaysia included 26,500. The number had increased in comparison to previous years. Also it should be taken into account that registration is discretionary so the actual number could be more than 26,500 (Ow, Mokhtar, & Zainuddin, 2007). Hearing impaired children face many critical problems in successful reading comprehension. Considering poor vocabulary and syntax knowledge, monitoring and enhancing their comprehension is difficult, while they do not use many cognitive strategies (Kelly & Barac-Cikoja, 2007; Paul, 1998; Wauters, Bon, Tellings, & Leeuwe, 2006). So teaching these students is difficult, taking into consideration the phonological component of language and its original influence on the attainment of reading skill (Feher-Prout, 1996; Jemni & Elghoul, 2008).

### Teaching Quran for Deaf in Malaysia

Education is essential for all people as well as hearing impaired community. Educating of people with hearing impairment commenced in 1954 in Malaysia when the Federation School for the Deaf in Penang was established. Over the years, more special schools for hearing impaired students all over Malaysia were founded to fulfill their specific educational needs. In addition, these schools tried to bridge the gap between the deaf community and the hearing population by holding community education about deafness and guiding and training the parents of these children (D. E. i. Malaysia, 1991). Muslim children in Malaysia are interested in reading the holy Quran for right recitation, as praying, in their daily lives. Reciting Quran is a responsibility for every Muslim with authentic sound production and tajweed but it does not mean that hearing impaired children who are unfortunately vocally impaired should not read it. While hearing impaired children usually face difficulties in mastering Quranic recitation, their enthusiasm for reading this holy book is appreciated. Consequently, these present a challenge for educators to develop an effective learning application for enabling and encouraging deaf children to study the Quran. Considering children with hearing impairment, who have poorer or no hearing sensitivity, attention, attitude and individual motivation, parents, educators and teaching methods can play a vital role in improving recitation of the Quran.

### 2.0 Methodology

This initial phase included interviewing hearing impaired children's parents and educators. They were interviewed directly about difficulties the children encountered in learning how to read the Quran. This was done in order to get a deeper insight into the lives of hearing impaired children and their families. It also allowed them to describe what was important to them. Through the interviews they discussed their ideas, preferences, and experiences in depth; and then, they discussed some of the requirements needed for developing a learning aid courseware. The participants sent their children to the Centre of Quranic Research, University of Malaya under a special project named "Projek Rintis Fasih" or Fasih Pilot Project. This project is to teach Quran for disabled children including the deaf using the Fasih method. In this paper we will not discuss the Fasih method but instead focus on understanding the parents' feelings toward al-Quran education for the deaf in Malaysia.

### 3.0 Result of Interviews with Mothers of Children with Hearing Impairment

A thorough and comprehensive study of the target users of this research is achieved through interviewing of mothers prior to meeting hearing impaired children. These interviews include the mothers' reaction when they become aware of their children's deafness, the significance of Islamic education and reading the Quran between family members as well as their concerns for the academic future of their children. In addition an interview with an expert educator who teaches hearing impaired children was conducted in this research project. Table 1 shows the background information on the interview participants.

Table 01: Four respondents of interview

Name	Age	Occupation	Name of Child	Age of Child
Mrs Ain	40	Housewife	Aqila	12
Mrs Bibah	51	Teacher	Salimah	10
Mrs Carina	55	Administrator	Aimar	11
Mrs Dalilah	45	Teacher	-	-

#### Mrs Ain

She is a 40-year-old housewife. Her daughter Aqila is 12. She believes that the hearing impairment should not affect the education of her daughter especially in the Islamic field. She sends her daughter to weekly Quran classes and she thinks that Aqila has made great progress in reciting the Quran. In addition she mentioned the Islamic education classes in schools were not very satisfying. She also mentioned that her daughter is so enthusiastic with working with computer and electronic devices but unfortunately there are few applications to support education for hearing impaired children.

#### Mrs Bibah

Bibah, who is 51 years old, lives with her family in Kuala Lumpur. She is a primary school teacher and her hearing impaired daughter, Salimah, is 10 years old. She said that it is difficult for Salimah to communicate with her sibling as they are unfamiliar with sign language. So she sometimes feels lonely at home. Bibah was dissatisfied with other families who have deaf children, while they were unaware of any special community for their children to join. She said that some

families believe that it is not essential for hearing impaired children to read the Quran and it is enough for them to just join the school classes. Because she is not familiar with teaching Quran to the deaf she cannot help her daughter in this field. Until she found this institute she was so satisfied with the current teaching method. She sends her daughter twice a week to this institute and she believes that it has a great impact on her.

#### Mrs Carina

She is a 55-year-old executive administrator who lives with her family in Kuala Lumpur. Her son Aimar is 11 years old and had a cochlear implant operation when he was 6 years old. According to Carina the device that he uses on his ear sometimes makes him shy and he gets anxious if the surroundings are too noisy. However this operation improves his hearing but while he gets used to not hearing, he prefers to use sign language and act like a deaf person. Mrs Carina said that Aimar is so intelligent and interested in education. They are satisfied with his schools too but unfortunately they did not use technology in school. Considering Islamic education, she is satisfied with the curriculum used in school but she believes that teachers are not so familiar with the method used in teaching the Quran. So there is not much improvement in school, but after Aimar joined the Quran classes, he made progress in his reciting of the Quran. She strongly believes that Amar should join this community because she herself does not Fasih method to assist him in learning Quran recitation.

#### Mrs Dalilah

She is an expert teacher who teaches Islamic Education to deaf children. Her degree is in special education especially for deaf students and she works as special needs teacher in a secondary school. She believes that hearing impaired children are like normal people while they are not able to hear and talk. So they cannot communicate easily with others and they are more emotional. These children have to translate all words to sign language, but it should be considered that sign language is very limited and does not cover all the words. In addition there is a limited knowledge about sign language among their families. Not all parents know sign language so it is difficult for deaf students to communicate with their families and they are closer to their teachers who know sign language very well. On the other hand, she believes that deafness affects children's education very much. Teachers should assist them more than normal children. In Malaysia, there is integration class in normal schools for deaf students and also there are 23 special schools for hearing impaired children. Some of these schools teach Islamic education but they were not familiar with the method of teaching Quran for deaf until she added this method to the curriculum. Because this method is new most teachers are not familiar with it.

### **Parents' Concerns About Their Children's Education**

Taking into account these interviews, there are some issues that most families face in educating their children. Some of these issues are discussed below:

#### ***Lack of Family Support in Education***

Conducted interviews expressed that parents of hearing impaired children cannot assist their children in education area. While most parents of normal children help their children in doing their exercises or studying at home especially in elementary school, it is difficult for parents of hearing impaired children to support their children in this field. Most if families are not familiar with sign language so communicating with their children is too difficult for them. In addition children feel distracted in learning and studying while they cannot improve their weaknesses through practicing with their parents.

#### ***The Malay Culture***

Unfortunately there are some weak points in Malay culture regarding educating of disabled children. Some people believe that children who suffer any type of disability should not receive an appropriate education specifically Islamic education. Sometimes it has been seen that families are not aware of the importance of Islamic education especially reciting the Quran even for hearing impaired children; while they believe that there is no need for hearing impaired children to receive the same education as normal children. It should be considered that these children are really enthusiastic about reading the Quran just like others and they feel so distant with Quran because they can hold, look and touch but they are unable to read and recite it. In addition, accessibility to such learning materials and teaching aids to teach hearing impaired children how to read the Quran are limited which makes the responsibility of teaching Islamic education for the special children even more difficult.

#### ***Dissatisfaction toward Schools***

According to the interview findings, there is some dissatisfaction with the schools while not all schools for the hearing impaired support teaching Islamic education. They are not familiar with the methods of teaching the Quran to the deaf and there are not many teachers who are expert in this area. Because communicating with hearing impaired

children is more difficult, teachers should be creative to teach how to recite the Quran; because the hearing impaired cannot learn as fast as normal children.

#### *Lack of Technology Support in Schools*

Although there are some special schools for hearing impaired children in Malaysia, unfortunately they do not support technology. It should be considered that the effect of technology on teaching children is significant, so schools should adapt themselves to this realization and provide facilities for hearing impaired children to improve their learnability. According to the interview with the expert educator, if children have access to the sorts of technology tools to learn how to recite the Quran and use it on a daily basis, their Quran reading will be improved significantly. As a result providing technology in this area will pave the way for teaching Islamic education for hearing impaired children.

## **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

This study consisted of interviews with three mothers of hearing impaired children and an expert teacher who had a degree in teaching Islamic education to deaf children. These interviews assisted us in achieving initial understanding of the children and their families. There are some important issues for parents about the education of their children. Interviews determined that hearing impaired children ought to have same opportunity in receiving education as normal children do especially in the Islamic education field. Lack of family support in education due to unfamiliarity of the families with sign language when communicating with their hearing impaired children was an essential issue they mentioned. The second concern was the effect of Malay culture on educational lives of these children. Unfortunately some families believe that there is no necessity for disabled children to receive the same level of education as normal children do particularly Islamic education and reciting the Quran. But the fact is that Muslim children including the hearing impaired are really enthusiastic about reading the Quran. These families are not familiar with communities which assist hearing impaired children in education. Dissatisfaction with schools is another concern that parents pointed out. They believe that it can be the method of teaching or lack of teaching aids to cater to the needs of special children.

In addition, some teachers are not well equipped with the methods of providing special education to hearing impaired children. These issues can be addressed if parents, teachers, and educators collaborate to maximize these children's potentials. Schools should assure parents that they provide the best facilities for their children and parents should ensure that they will have the maximum cooperation with schools and that they attend the suggested communities to improve their children's reading skills. Also authorities should ensure that all the teachers are qualified to teach children with special needs and that they know the latest methods of teaching children with hearing impairment. Lack of technology support in schools is another essential fact that can unfortunately be seen in schools in Malaysia. However, nowadays technology plays a vital role in educating children with disabilities, and can assist them to receive the same education as normal children do. Schools do not support technology very much. Using technological learning aids are not usual in classrooms and there are not many applications which are designed with hearing impaired children's perspectives in mind. As a result, it can be seen that facilitating schools with technological devices would help teachers in providing education for such children.

## **FUTURE WORKS**

This phase conducts experiment to gather empirical data, while the obtained data support the findings from previous phases. The effectiveness of the Numbering method and point-and-click interaction style on the developed prototype is seen in the three categories below. Further supporting of hearing impaired students such as using instructional techniques and materials can result in achieving enhancement for these readers in genuine reading of difficult texts. It also assists their reading comprehension and inspires them for being strategic and autonomous readers. Considering previous studies, using multimedia applications can also be used for supporting them. The next phase we will conduct an observation on learning behavior of hearing impaired children in class and learning performance of hearing impaired children in class for gathering usability requirements.

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