



Challenges in Interpreting *Birrul Walidain* Values in Children's Literature in Indonesia

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Abstract. Children's literature in Indonesia is still identical with an educational medium that shapes children's characters through the teachings of values and ethics, including religious ethics. A teaching which encourages a person to do good to their parents, *Birrul Walidain*, is a dominant value in Islamic children's literature published in the late 2000s. This qualitative research benefits from the concepts of Shier's parent-children relationship, the concept of narrative perspective. From most of the researched Islamic children's literature, it can be concluded that the implementations of *Birrul Walidain* values are based on parent-children relationships in which parents are positioned as figures who are omniscient, respected, and obeyed by the child characters. The interaction between the two is often one-sided and static. From the point of view aspect, the majority of children's literature is still dominated by adult's perspective that is imposed to child characters. Such imposition was revealed through the analysis of the dictions used in the story. To conclude, the interpretation of *Birrul Walidain* concepts in Indonesian Islamic children's literature still displays signs of normalizing gender roles. For instance, the Father is depicted as the family's mentor and protector while the Mother focuses on domestic works such as doing chores and nurturing children.

Keywords: *Birrul Walidain* · Islamic children's literature · Parent-children relation · Point of view

1 Introduction

Character building is one of the main goals of early education. Through character building, a child is expected to grow with traits that are considered ideal according to the perspective of adults. In Indonesia, character building is in fact considered as the state's responsibility that is regulated by the Law. Among the regulations, an example would be the Republic of Indonesia's Presidential Instruction (*Inpres*) No. 1 Year 2010 about 13-character building and a manual on character-based education issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2011 [1]. The program is implemented through the teaching of ideal characters in schools as formal institutions and other supporting facilities, among others children's literature.

Until early 2000s, children's literature is still identified as a media of value propagation in Indonesia. According to Purbani [2], this perception results in a one-dimensional

identity of children's literature, which is commonly understood as a type of reading promoting ideal values without addressing social issues experienced by children. Children's literature reflects the ideology of its writers, who are mostly adults. Through their works, writers expect their readers to internalize and apply the good deeds exemplified by the child characters. Adults' perspective of an ideal child character is embodied not only through its characterization, but also the moral of the story.

The moral of a story is not only derived from social norms, but also from religious teachings. The tendency of religious moral to be embedded in stories can be found in various readings, including but not limited to Islamic children's literature in Indonesia. Grounded on religious teachings, Islamic values such as obedience to Allah SWT and belief in the prophets are considered mandatory in Islamic children's literature. In terms of visual aspects, Islamic children's literature often presents women wearing hijab, men wearing *peci*, or *masjid* as the setting. Meanwhile, in terms of the content, the readings' themes tend to revolve around an ideal relation between parents and children. In the context of Islamic teachings, parents-children relation is a part of *Birrul Walidain*, a teaching that it is a mandatory of children to respect and obey their parents or other older people [3]. On the contrary, parents or older characters are expected to appreciate and love younger ones, thus creating a balanced, two-way relationship.

Interpretations of *Birrul Walidain* values imply dilemmas in children's literature. The presence of parents in the story, particularly a father and a mother, is concrete evidence of *Birrul Walidain* values. On one hand, the existence of moral values such as *Birrul Walidain* is still needed, considering the function of children's literature as a medium of values dissemination. On the other hand, these ideal values are understood by an adult's perspective and conveyed through the story's intrinsic elements such as characters and point of views that appear to represent children's perspectives. How these ideal values are communicated is the underlying cause of the preachy tone commonly found in children's literature's intrinsic elements which remain static from the beginning to the end of the story.

Research on Islamic values and their relevance to Islamic children's literature have been conducted by Janson [4] as well as Bunanta and Farida [5]. Janson's research explores the function of Islamic children literature as the medium of non-formal Islamic teachings in Muslim diaspora communities in Western countries. While Janson examines the functional aspects of Islamic children's literature and their social implications, Bunanta and Farida [5] focus on intrinsic elements, particularly Islamic values in Indonesian Islamic children's literature published by Mizan. Although the two studies differ from one another, both imply a condition where Islamic children's literature is used as an effective medium of Islamic values dissemination among Muslim societies.

Differing from Janson's highlight [4] on functional aspects of Islamic children's literature and Bunanta & Farida's focus [5] on Islamic values in stories, this article specifically discusses the Islamic teaching *Birrul Walidain* that is presented in Indonesian Islamic children's literature. By applying a textual analysis, this research investigates 10 Islamic children's books published from 2007 to 2018 which have *Birrul Walidain* as the main theme. The books are *Aku Sayang Abi*, *Aku Sayang Umi*, *Nada Sayang Bunda*, *Istirahat Malam*, *Aku Sayang Ayah*, *Aku Suka berdoa*, *Kika dan Pak Kosah*, *Berkah Anak Shalihah*, *Terima Kasih Ibu*, and *Zia dan Shalat: Rajin Shalat, Yuk* [6-15].

The books are selected based on the following criteria: 1) the genre is pictured book; 2) the demography of readers ranges from kindergarten to elementary school students (6–12 years old); 3) the story is about daily activities [16]. The first stage of the analysis on *Birrul Walidain* values is an intrinsic analysis focusing on the relationship between adult (father and/or mother) and children characters reflected from their interactions and the narrative perspective of Nikolajeva [17] and Purbani [2]. The next stage is to discover the interpretation of *Birrul Walidain* values in the story and the ideological values underlying the parents-children relationship by using Shier's concept [18] of adult-children relationship.

2 Methodology

2.1 *Birrul Walidain* and Parent-Children Relation in Islam

Birrul Walidain is the ethics of doing good deeds to parents. Etymologically, the phrase *Birrul Walidain* consists of two Arabic words, namely *birr* (doing good deeds) and *al-walidain* (both parents). F'adah [3] argues that *Birrul Walidain* is a concept that is based on Islamic teaching virtue embodied in the intention, speech, and deeds. In Islamic literature, the implementation of *Birrul Walidain* is grounded on the Hadiths or sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad as recorded in several letters in Alquran, such as Al-Isra verse 23 and Lukman sura verse 14. *Birrul Walidain* is also considered as high virtue as the ethics is correlated with the relationship between human beings and God (*hablum minallah*) as doing good deeds to one's parents is equal to doing good deeds to God.

In the context of parent-children relation, *Birrul Walidain* is dynamically implemented [3] by considering the child's age and the quality of the relationship. *Birrul Walidain* is a child's expression of gratitude to his parents who have nurtured, educated, and raised him. Therefore, even when parents order the child to do something bad, while the child has the right to disobey the order, he has to maintain good attitude to his parents. Besides this, the parent-children relationship is not one-directional or one-sided as it is closely tied to other parties such as relatives, acquaintances, friends, or neighbors. Just as the relationship between human beings and God (*hablum minallah*), the ethics of *Birrul Walidain* pertains to the concept of *silaturahmi*, which is good relationship among God's creatures (*hablum minannas*). The concept signifies a two-way, mutual parent-children relationship where parents have the responsibility to nurture, educate, and raise their children while children must respect their parents as an expression of gratitude to both their parents and God. Furthermore, the Islamic concept *Birrul Walidain* can be elaborated as the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values such as the salat ritual, reciting daily prayers, and applications of good moral conduct where parents become good role models and children follow the examples that their parents have set.

2.2 Narrative Point of View in Children's Literature

The perspective of a narrator is commonly referred to as point of view. According to Nikolajeva [17], point of view is a part of a narrativity which comprises "... The

set of formal traits... Include composition (plot, temporal structure), characterization (the palette of narrative devices used by writers to reveal a character), and narrative perspective (voice and point of view)." In analyzing point of view in children's literature's narratives, narrators and focalizers become two aspects that are considered [2].

Narrators can be distinguished into heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrator [17] [2]. Heterodiegetic narrator is not a character of the story, while homodiegetic narrator also takes part in the story as one of the characters. Such distinction results in different narratives, in which they are conveyed through telling or showing. More particularly, heterodiegetic narrator can be classified into four types. The first is the omniscient or omnipresent narrator, who knows every thought and action of the characters. Another type is the limited omniscient narrator, who can only understand a part of some character's thoughts or actions. Third, there is the dramatic narrator, who mostly shows the characters' thoughts and actions. The last is the introspective narrator, who only comprehends the thoughts and feelings of one character.

If a narrator reveals a persona that tells the story, a focalizer reveals a persona that witnesses the story, and the result of a focalizer's act is known as focalization. Focalization itself is categorized into external and internal focalizations. External focalization focuses on the narrator's perception, while internal focalization focuses on that of the characters. Purbani [2] explains that in the context of children's literature, adult writers should focalize children so that the story is told and witnessed by a child's perceptions and perspectives. In children's literature, this will impact the diction and sentence structure used by the characters, where these linguistic features may show childlike thoughts and manners.

2.3 Concept of Adult—Children Relation

In the teachings of *Birrul Walidain*, adults are positioned as the one having the responsibility over children. However, instead of being depicted as figures with different needs, children are often described as having similar needs to those of adults, with the portion of the needs discriminatorily reduced. According to Shier [18], in a patriarchy-dominated society, adult's discrimination against children is an acceptable social norm. Such imbalance of relation exists because children experience age-based discrimination. In addition, within the society, there are still stereotypes related to the distribution of rights and responsibility. Shier [18] adds that this condition weakens children's position. Adults are positioned as superior mentors who give guidance. The very elements of mentoring and guiding signify a form of adult's power and authority over children. Furthermore, Shier [18] argues that the condition in which children are demanded to respect adults while adults are obliged to protect children is a form of adultism which secures adults' superiority indicating an unbalanced adult-children relation.

The effective solution for the unbalanced adult-children relation in adultism would be equality, which is implemented through two principles. First, children are positioned as subjects who have authority over their own selves. Second, equality should be the main goal to create balance in the relation. Through the implementation of these two principles, children are not positioned as the tools or objects of adults' interests. Children and adults have equal positions because both have the agency over their own selves [18].

In relation to children's literature, Purbani [2] explains that books that are written for children rely on the position taken by adult writers in telling the story. If they think of themselves as superior beings while children are inferior, their goal will be to mold the child readers into ideal or pious children.

3 The Domination of Adults' Perspectives: Parents' Superiority in Familial Relations

3.1 Narrators: Homodiegetic vs Heterodiegetic

The research reveals that the selected books use various points of view; however, despite the varied point of view, most of the narratives imply the existence of adults' intervention which is identified through the diction used in the narration and focalization. In terms of the focalization, five out of the ten books tell their stories through homodiegetic narrator while the other five opt for the heterodiegetic narrator.

Homodiegetic narrator appears in *Aku Sayang Abi*, *Aku Sayang Umi*, *Nada Sayang Bunda*, *Aku Sayang Ayah*, and *Kika dan Pak Kosah*. In *Aku Sayang Abi*, the protagonist-narrator is a boy. From the dictions used in the beginning of the story, the homodiegetic narrator initially conveys a child's voice, particularly when "I" believes that *Abi* (Father) is a very busy man who goes to work early in the morning and comes home late at night that he rarely interacts with "I" during weekdays [6]. However, *Abi's* attention and care are shown through the habit of caressing the boy's hair and the father-son ultimate play time every Sundays when *Abi* does not go to work. Here, the boy sees *Abi* as an omnipotent figure based on his actions. Everything that *Abi* does is something that should be admired, followed, and even copied [6]. The Father becomes a perfect and ideal character whose sayings are constantly remembered [6].

Similar tendency is shown in *Aku Sayang Ayah*. Through "I (a girl named Nisa)"s focalization, the father (*Ayah*) is depicted as a person who is constantly prepared. *Ayah* is positioned as the protector and helper whenever Nisa needs anything. However, at the same time, the father positions himself as Nisa's playmate [10]. Contrary to *Aku Sayang Abi*, this shows that the established relation between the two characters of *Aku Sayang Ayah* are fluid since the father willingly positions himself on an equal level with his daughter. Furthermore, compared to *Abi's* depiction as a flawless father figure, the character *Ayah* in *Aku Sayang Ayah* is still depicted in a humane way. For example, he forgot to bring the tent when he and Nisa went camping [10]. He is also surprised upon knowing that Nisa has a lot of broken toys that need to be fixed [10]. Ambiguous feeling was further shown when father promised to fulfill Nisa's wish to buy books while in fact he ran out of money [10]. Seemingly written for adult readers who might have gone through similar experiences, this part facilitates the perspectives of two different readers: child readers, who do not understand the difficulties faced by adults; and adult readers, who can understand how *Ayah* feels.

The depiction of adults as superior figures who protect, guard, and educate children can be found in *Aku Sayang Umi*, *Nada Sayang Bunda*, and *Kika dan Pak Kosah*. More specifically, the mother becomes an ideal figure who sets excellent example in each book. In *Aku Sayang Umi*, the protagonist-narrator "I" is illustrated as a girl who admires *Umi*,

her mother, a highly capable single parent who has to juggle two jobs: selling flowers [7] and doing people's laundry [7]. Even so, "I" highly respect *Umi* who manages to care and love her despite the hard work and tight schedule. She expresses her respect and gratitude by helping her mother which can be identified as an implementation of *Birrul Walidain*.

The ideal figure of an all-capable mother is also depicted through *Nada Sayang Bunda*'s homodiegetic narrator, another "I" character named Nada. In Nada's point of view, *Bunda* (mother) is worthy of respect because she does not only take care of her child, but she also watches over her husband (Nada's father). The mother's double role is depicted as something worthy of appreciation. However, although the story is told from a child point of view, some of the reasons she gives for respecting her mother do not genuinely come from her own experience, but secondhand memories; memories obtained from the mother. "For nine months, *Bunda* conceived me. Everywhere, her belly carried me. Since I was in her womb, *Bunda* has loved me. She always says her best prayers for me" [8]. The narrative clearly shows that Nada is repeating her mother's conviction that she loves her only child.

If the mothers in *Aku Sayang Umi* and *Nada Sayang Bunda* are positioned as ideal figures, *Kika dan Pak Kosah* depicts the mother as a religiously devoted counselor. In the beginning of the story, *Kika* is introduced by the writer through the first-person point of view, "Assalamu'alaikum ... My name is *Kika*. I'm 7 years old. *Kika* is really glad to see all of you." [12]. However, the character-narrator turned into a non-character narrator (the heterodiegetic narrator). In one of the interactions between the mother and *Kika*, *Kika* told her story with Mr. *Kosah* at her school. Instead of giving examples, the mother tells a story that is related to *Kika*'s experience. Describing the fate of two different groups in the afterlife, the story itself is the mother's interpretation of *Al-Ghasiyah*, a surah in *Alquran*. The first group is those who did good during their lifetime, while the other did bad. In the context of *Kika dan Pak Kosah*, *Kika* thought that Mr. *Kosah* is fortunate since he received a reward for his hard work at school. Meanwhile, some others did not get a reward because they have no willingness to work as hard as Mr. *Kosah* does. In this context, the mother-daughter relationship is only one-sided: the mother is an all-knowing figure, while *Kika* is inexperienced.

The heterodiegetic narrator/non-character narrator is used in the other five books: *Istirahat Malam*, *Aku Suka Berdoa*, *Berkah Anak Shalihah*, *Terima Kasih Ibu*, and *Zia dan Shalat: Rajin Shalat, Yuk*. In *Istirahat Malam*, the heterodiegetic narrator tells a dialogue between *Salman*, *Hamzah*, Father, and Mother after supper [9]. In the conversation, togetherness becomes the determining key factor of children (*Salman* & *Hamzah*)'s relationships with their parents (Father & Mother). However, the interaction between the characters seems to be cold and one-directional because the father becomes the source of knowledge for all the questions the children ask.

The theme of togetherness as the key to a harmonious parent-children relationship is also apparent in *Berkah Anak Shalihah*. In the book, the character *Tasya* is depicted as a diligent girl who helps her family in their small restaurant (*warung makan*). Conflict appears when *Tasya* is invited to her friend (*Alindi*)'s birthday party [13]. She actually wants to come, but her guilt for having to leave her family in handling the restaurant which at the time is packed with customers refrains her from going and help her parents

instead. At the end of the story, Alindi visits Tasya and bringing her presents and orders food from Tasya's *warung* [13]. In this story, the narrator emphasizes the virtue of prioritizing parents and family by giving a reward to the good deed of the protagonist.

In *Aku Suka Berdoa*, *Terima Kasih Ibu*, and *Zia dan Shalat: Rajin Shalat Yuk*, the mothers are depicted as counselors and reminders. *Terima Kasih Ibu* illustrates a single mother. Her child, Zaki, is portrayed as religiously devoted as he frequently performs salat ritual [14]; however, Zaki did not obey her mother, who instructed him to take an umbrella with him [14]. The narrator shows the consequence of Zaki's disobedience to his mother: The rain pours, and Zaki is drenched when he arrives at school, and this makes him unable to take the exam. This shows that obedience to one's parents is the key of *Birrul Walidain*. More particularly, defying a parent's good order will lead to negative consequences to a child.

In *Aku Suka Berdoa* and *Zia dan Shalat: Rajin Shalat Yuk*, the mothers are depicted as reminders of good deeds to their children. In the first story, the mother constantly reminds Alif to pray and work hard to get the bicycle of his dream. The narrator then shows Alif's efforts in saving money [11]. Eventually, Alif's persistence is rewarded when his father bought him a new bicycle. In this context, both prayers as a form of spiritual obedience and parents' approval will result in something good for children. Similar thesis also occurs in *Rajin Shalat Yuk*. Initially reluctant in performing salat, Zia suddenly realizes the urgency of the religious ritual once her mother reminds her after she has just witnessed one of her friends losing his mother who passed away.

3.2 Focalizers: Adults Voice in Children Character

The ten books have various narrators as well as focalizers. With homodiegetic character-narrators who tell the story through the first-person point of view, some books have internal focalizers who convey the characters' perceptions. Meanwhile, stories with heterodiegetic, non-character narrators have external focalizers who focus on the narrator's perception. Despite their differences, the books still imply the voice of adults operating in the voice of either the child characters or the narrators.

In *Aku Sayang Umi*, adult intervention can be identified on many occasions, one of which would be the statement, "Our food is simple, but it is special when we enjoy it together." The sentence is not something that a child would say. Other than that, the child focalizer-character in the story has the ability to speak in similes, particularly in describing Umi as "the most effective medicine" [7]. Adult's choice of words also appears in *Nada Sayang Bunda*. Focalizer-character seems to be a child, who tells the story as the "I" narrator. Nonetheless, the diction seems to reveal the perception of a child's perspective beyond the story. The section where she says, "It is time for me to be born into the world. Mother has put her life at stake, enduring the pain so that I could safely be born", [8] shows that the depicted memory is not of a child, but of a mother. With metaphors, her choice of words also shows adult characteristics, as seen in the phrase "put her life at stake".

The focalizer-narrator with a child's perspective seems to briefly appear in *Aku Sayang Abi* and *Aku Sayang Ayah*. In *Aku Sayang Abi*, a child's straightforward, sincere expression can be found when the "I" character describes the father as a busy man because of going to work early in the morning and comes home late at night. Similarly,

the character Nisa (or the "I" in the latter) also shows her admiration to her father who, despite his limitations, always try his best to be there for Nisa. In the two books, children's characteristics are shown in the perception of looking at parents as if they resemble superheroes.

If the homodiegetic narrator synergizes with a character's focalization, heterodiegetic narrators convey a focalization that focuses on the narrator's perception. Through their choice of words, this style of focalization speaks out adult voices. In *Istirahat Malam*, this tendency is shown through the dialogues between the father, the mother, Salman, and Hamzah. Salman and Hamzah are depicted as deft children with their ability to answer questions from their parents, while the father and the mother are once again portrayed as all-knowing characters. Such dialogic aspect shows a relationship that is actually warm although it is limited by a conversation with a topic revolving around religious rituals.

Similar tendency can also be found in the focalizations of *Aku Suka Berdoa*, *Kika dan Pak Kosah*, and *Zia dan Shalat: Rajin Shalat Yuk*. The focalizers of the three books show their intervention through the use of particular words such as must and always in either the narration or dialogues between the characters. In the dialogue, such words are used by a mother when she tells Alif to pray so that his wish of getting a bicycle can come true (*Aku Suka Berdoa*), by another mother who gives advice to Kika through an interpretation of surah Al-Ghasyiyah (*Kika dan Pak Kosah*), and by Zia upon realizing the importance of religious practices after her mother invites her to pray together (*Zia dan Shalat: Rajin Shalat Yuk*).

Adult observers as narrators and focalizers can be identified in *Terima Kasih Ibu* and *Berkah Anak Shalihah*. In the former, the narrator shows their sympathy to the mother while in the latter, the sympathy works in the opposite direction. Both Zaki's experience of getting drenched in the rain because of disobeying his mother's instruction and Tasya's inner conflict in choosing between helping her family and going to a birthday party signify adults' complexity that is imposed on children's context.

4 Gender Roles in Child and Adult Characters

4.1 Father's Public Role, Mother's Domestic Role

The intrinsic analysis on the points of view in the ten Islamic children's picture books shows how *Birrul Walidain* values are interpreted and implemented in the story. Parents are hierarchically positioned where they have power over the children. Such positioning indicates the unbalanced and unequal relation between the two parties as both *Birrul Walidain* concepts [3] and Shier's [18] criticisms have pointed out. Furthermore, such parents-children relationship in the story also implies a form of gender role normalization. More particularly, the gender roles of men and women are fixed according to the society's polarization of sex-based stereotypes.

Gender roles can be defined as sex-based division of men and women's roles in the society [19]. The roles of a mother and a father, for instance, are closely related to nurturing children and being the family's breadwinner, respectively. Both roles are then connected to behaviors and consequences in the forms of social norms. However, it is necessary to note that gender role is a cultural construction that is influenced by a society's economic and political structures.

The ten researched children's literature show images of women who merely have domestic roles. On the other hand, men's role as protectors put them in a position above their wives. Such definitive tendency can still be found in parent characters in the ten studied books. Narrative studies, especially perspective analysis, in the previous section show the dominant role of adults in the story. Adults, especially fathers and mothers, are positioned as knowledgeable, ideal, and positive figures from the beginning to the end. On the other hand, the dominance of the role of adults also indicates the existence of clearly sex-based role polarization.

In *Aku Sayang Ayah*, *Aku Sayang Abi*, *Aku Suka Berdoa*, and *Istirahat Malam*, the father can be seen as the person whose role is to protect and become a role model for their families. *Ayah* or *Abi* (father) are depicted as guardians of their children as well as heads of the family who constantly provide. Meanwhile, the father in *Istirahat Malam* is portrayed as a religious figure from whom Salman and Hamzah can find a good role model.

The mother's domestic role can be identified in *Aku Sayang Umi*, *Kika dan Pak Kosah*, *Nada Sayang Bunda*, and *Terima Kasih Ibu*. In *Kika dan Pak Kosah*, the mother has a role of being a religious figure who is also a counselor to Kika, who told her experience with Mr. Kosah. Similar role can be found in *Nada Sayang Bunda*. *Bunda* (the mother) is not depicted as being responsible for the well-being of not only the "I", but also the father [8]. Such portrayal implies the double burden that female characters have to carry, even in the domestic sphere.

On the other hand, mothers who have a double role can be seen in *Aku Sayang Umi* and *Terima Kasih Ibu*. With women being depicted working as a florist and a laundry labor (*Umi*) or a dress maker (*Ibu*), these stories shows that women are only allowed to have jobs that are closely related to household chores.

4.2 Men as Leader, Women as Complements

The society's perception of sex-based division of gender roles can be categorized into four contexts [20]. The first context is occupation. For example, men are considered as productive beings who generate income while women are considered as reproductive workers. Secondly, the division operates in the working space. Men are put in public spaces while women are confined in domestic spaces. The third would be status differentiation. Men has the role as the main subject or a leader, but women's role is to be objects or complements. The fourth differentiation is related to traits. Women are closely related to constructed feminine characters such as being soft, polite, and affectionate as well as whiny, cowardly, and emotional. On the other hand, men are associated with masculine characteristics such as being strong, courageous, charismatic, or rough and tough.

Such division of gender roles can also be found in *Aku Sayang Abi*, in which *Abi* is quoted by the child character, "Abi also told me to become a great and tough boy. I cannot depend on others, and I have to learn to be more independent" [6]. It shows that the conventional gender role appears to be something normal although toughness and independence can be the traits of both men and women. On the other hand, the normalization of gender roles is slightly challenged in *Berkah Anak Shalihah* which both parents work together to raise their children while running a family restaurant. This

implies that there have been some efforts in Islamic children's literature to challenge the normalization of gender roles.

5 Conclusion

As a teaching about respecting parents, *Birrul Walidain* is an ethics closely related to parents-children relationship. Ideally, this relationship works in two directions since the teaching emphasizes the aspect of *silaturahmi* (togetherness). As an ethic that is based on religion, *Birrul Walidain* is a virtue that has to be communicated to children, and this is also affirmed in the case of children's literature.

In brief, interpretations of *Birrul Walidain* have been implemented through the presence of parent characters (both mother and father) in the ten studied children's picture books. In their relation to the child characters, parents are positioned as superior, while children are portrayed as weaklings. Even so, *Aku Sayang Abi* and *Aku Sayang Ayah* also give an image of fathers who are willing to position themselves as equal peers before their children by being their playing buddies.

In terms of point of view, four books apply the homodiegetic narrator while the other six use heterodiegetic narrator. In terms of focalization, the method of homodiegetic narrator revolves around internal perceptions of a character, while heterodiegetic narrator conveys the perception of the storyteller. Although children's literatures ideally convey children's voices, such case does not happen in most of these books since the narration's vocabularies signify adult characteristics. This shows that child characters are only utilized as messengers of adults' ideas and expectations. In addition, narratives and focalizations that show characteristics of adult's voice and diction in the story also reveal the existence of gender role narration. Father is shown as a figure who acts as the head of the family inside and outside the home, while the role of mother tends to be positioned as a substitute for the role of father in the house.

The implementations of *Birrul Walidain* values also imply the affirmation of gender roles of the adult characters. The depictions of mothers as performing domestic roles while fathers as leaders and breadwinners are commonly found in most of the stories. The unequal gender-based relations between adult characters is also another issue identified in the readings. For children characters who are positioned as the one being guided, the normalization of gender roles leads to the internalization of gender roles stereotypes in the mind of the child readers: men are perceived as tough, great, and independent while women should develop feminine traits. Also, they are constructed as figures who must obey their parents. Such portrayals construct the figure of parents as people who must be followed by their children, and the construction operates in both the stories and the mind of the child readers.

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