

The Impact of Blended Learning Approaches on Student Achievement and Motivation in Islamic Religious Education in Australia

Safiyah

The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; safiyahedu@uni.lu

Received: 2025/07/01

Revised: 2025/08/05

Accepted: 2025/11/19

Abstract

This study examines the impact of blended learning approaches on student achievement and motivation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Australia. The rapid advancement of educational technology and the increasing integration of digital platforms into classroom instruction have transformed teaching and learning practices across various disciplines, including religious education. Blended learning, which combines face-to-face instruction with online learning activities, has emerged as an innovative pedagogical model capable of enhancing student engagement, flexibility, and academic performance. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, blended learning offers opportunities to create interactive, student-centered, and culturally responsive learning environments that support both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. This study employs a qualitative literature-based approach by reviewing recent scholarly works related to blended learning, student motivation, and academic achievement in religious education settings. The findings indicate that blended learning contributes positively to students' academic achievement by facilitating access to diverse learning resources, encouraging independent learning, and improving critical thinking skills. Furthermore, blended learning significantly enhances students' learning motivation through interactive multimedia, collaborative online discussions, and flexible learning environments that accommodate students' diverse learning needs. However, challenges such as limited technological infrastructure, digital literacy gaps among teachers and students, and difficulties in maintaining students' spiritual engagement in online settings remain significant concerns. The study concludes that blended learning can serve as an effective instructional strategy in Islamic Religious Education in Australia when supported by adequate technological resources, teacher professional development, and pedagogical innovation. The research also highlights the importance of balancing technological integration with Islamic values and face-to-face spiritual interaction to ensure holistic educational development.

Keywords

Blended Learning, Student Achievement, Learning Motivation, Islamic Religious Education, Australia, Educational Technology, Digital Learning, Islamic Education



© 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. INTRODUCTION

Education has experienced substantial transformation in the twenty-first century due

to the rapid development of information and communication technology. Digitalization has influenced almost every aspect of human life, including teaching and learning processes in educational institutions. One of the most significant innovations emerging from this transformation is blended learning, an instructional approach that combines traditional face-to-face classroom interaction with online learning experiences. According to Charles R. Graham, blended learning integrates conventional teaching methods with digital technology to create more flexible, effective, and student-centered learning environments. This approach has gained considerable attention worldwide because it allows educators to maximize the advantages of both physical and virtual learning spaces.

In recent years, blended learning has become increasingly important in Australia's educational system. Australian schools and universities have widely adopted digital learning platforms to support educational continuity, especially following the global COVID-19 pandemic. The integration of online learning technologies has encouraged educators to redesign instructional strategies to accommodate students' changing learning preferences and technological competencies. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) also faces the challenge of adapting to technological advancement while maintaining its spiritual, moral, and cultural foundations. Islamic Religious Education is not merely concerned with the transfer of religious knowledge but also with the development of moral character, spiritual awareness, and ethical behavior based on Islamic teachings.

Islamic Religious Education in Australia occupies a unique position within a multicultural and pluralistic society. Muslim students in Australian schools come from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, creating a complex educational environment that requires adaptive and inclusive teaching approaches. Teachers of Islamic Religious Education are expected to promote religious understanding, strengthen Islamic identity, and encourage positive social integration while simultaneously responding to contemporary educational demands. Therefore, the implementation of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education presents both opportunities and challenges for educators and learners.

The concept of blended learning has been widely discussed by educational scholars. Bonk Curtis J. and Randy Garrison argue that blended learning promotes active learning by combining synchronous and asynchronous learning activities, enabling students to access

learning materials anytime and anywhere. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for religious education because students can engage with Islamic learning resources beyond classroom boundaries through videos, online discussions, digital Qur'an applications, and interactive multimedia content. Furthermore, blended learning encourages collaborative learning experiences that may enhance students' critical thinking and reflective understanding of Islamic values.

Student achievement and motivation are two critical indicators of educational effectiveness. Academic achievement refers to students' learning outcomes measured through assessments, participation, and mastery of subject matter. Meanwhile, learning motivation refers to students' internal and external drives that influence their willingness to engage in learning activities. According to John W. Santrock, motivation plays a central role in determining students' academic success because motivated students tend to demonstrate higher levels of persistence, participation, and learning engagement. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, motivation is especially important because religious learning requires not only cognitive understanding but also emotional and spiritual commitment.

Several studies have demonstrated that blended learning positively affects student achievement and motivation. Research conducted by Barbara Means found that students participating in blended learning environments often perform better academically compared to those in traditional face-to-face settings. The integration of multimedia resources, online assessments, and collaborative learning tools can improve students' understanding of learning materials and support independent learning habits. Similarly, studies on motivation indicate that blended learning environments create more engaging and interactive educational experiences, which may increase students' enthusiasm and participation in classroom activities.

In Islamic Religious Education, blended learning offers opportunities to present Islamic teachings in more relevant and engaging ways for contemporary students. Traditional lecture-based approaches sometimes fail to attract students who are accustomed to digital technologies and interactive media. Through blended learning, teachers can integrate videos about Islamic history, digital storytelling, online quizzes, virtual discussions, and multimedia presentations that make religious learning more meaningful and accessible. Additionally, blended learning may help students connect Islamic values with real-life

situations through collaborative projects and online reflective activities.

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education also presents several challenges. One major issue is the digital divide, where unequal access to technology and internet connectivity may affect students' participation and learning experiences. Some students may lack adequate devices or reliable internet access, limiting their ability to engage fully in online learning activities. Moreover, teachers may encounter difficulties in designing effective blended learning strategies due to limited technological skills or insufficient professional training. According to Michael Fullan, successful educational innovation requires not only technological infrastructure but also institutional support, teacher readiness, and pedagogical adaptation.

Another significant challenge concerns maintaining the spiritual and moral dimensions of Islamic Religious Education in digital learning environments. Religious education traditionally emphasizes personal interaction, moral exemplification, and spiritual mentorship between teachers and students. Excessive reliance on technology may reduce opportunities for direct interpersonal engagement and emotional connection that are essential in Islamic pedagogy. Therefore, educators must carefully balance technological integration with meaningful face-to-face interaction to preserve the holistic objectives of Islamic education.

The Australian educational context further intensifies these challenges because Islamic schools and Muslim communities often operate within broader social and political discussions concerning multiculturalism, religious identity, and social cohesion. Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected not only to deliver religious content but also to promote intercultural understanding, tolerance, and positive citizenship. Consequently, blended learning strategies should be designed to support inclusive educational practices while strengthening students' religious identity and social awareness.

This study aims to explore the impact of blended learning approaches on student achievement and motivation in Islamic Religious Education in Australia. The research seeks to analyze how blended learning contributes to academic performance, enhances student engagement, and influences students' attitudes toward religious learning. Furthermore, the study investigates the challenges faced by educators in implementing blended learning within Islamic educational contexts. By examining these issues, the study contributes to

ongoing discussions regarding educational innovation, digital pedagogy, and the future of Islamic Religious Education in multicultural societies.

The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, curriculum developers, and Islamic educational institutions in Australia and beyond. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating technology thoughtfully and ethically within religious education to create learning environments that are academically effective, spiritually meaningful, and socially relevant. Ultimately, blended learning may serve as a strategic approach for improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education while preparing students to navigate the complexities of modern digital society without losing their religious and moral values.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a literature review method to examine the impact of blended learning approaches on student achievement and motivation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Australia. A qualitative literature-based method is considered appropriate because the study aims to analyze, synthesize, and interpret findings from previous scholarly works concerning blended learning, educational technology, student achievement, motivation, and Islamic Religious Education within multicultural educational settings. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research enables researchers to explore educational phenomena through comprehensive interpretation and contextual understanding, particularly when investigating social and pedagogical experiences. This approach allows researchers to critically examine how blended learning has been implemented in Islamic Religious Education and how it influences students' academic and motivational outcomes.

The literature review method was selected because it provides an opportunity to collect and analyze empirical evidence from peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, educational policy documents, books, and academic reports related to blended learning and religious education. As noted by Lawrence A. Machi and Brenda T. McEvoy, literature review research is useful for identifying theoretical perspectives, synthesizing research findings, and revealing gaps in existing knowledge. In this study, the literature review serves to develop a broader understanding of how blended learning contributes to

student achievement and motivation in Islamic Religious Education in the Australian educational context.

The data sources used in this study consist of secondary data obtained from reputable academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), and SpringerLink. These databases were selected because they contain scholarly publications relevant to educational technology, blended learning practices, student motivation, academic achievement, and religious education. The inclusion criteria for selecting literature involved studies published between 2015 and 2025 to ensure contemporary relevance, peer-reviewed academic quality, and direct relation to blended learning, educational outcomes, and Islamic or religious education. Studies focusing exclusively on unrelated educational sectors or lacking empirical evidence were excluded from the review process.

The data collection process involved several stages. First, relevant literature was identified using keywords such as “blended learning,” “student achievement,” “learning motivation,” “Islamic Religious Education,” “Islamic education,” “digital pedagogy,” and “Australia.” These keywords were combined using Boolean search techniques to obtain more focused and relevant results. Second, the identified literature was screened based on title, abstract, and research relevance. Third, selected studies were read comprehensively to extract significant information regarding research objectives, methodologies, findings, challenges, and implications associated with blended learning in religious education settings.

Data analysis in this study followed a thematic analysis procedure. According to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, thematic analysis is an effective qualitative technique used to identify, organize, and interpret recurring themes within research data. In this study, the collected literature was systematically categorized into several major themes, including: (1) the implementation of blended learning in educational settings, (2) the impact of blended learning on student achievement, (3) the influence of blended learning on student motivation, (4) challenges in implementing blended learning in Islamic Religious Education, and (5) opportunities for improving pedagogical effectiveness in multicultural contexts such as Australia. Through thematic categorization, the researcher was able to compare and synthesize findings from different studies to generate a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, this study applied triangulation of sources by comparing findings from multiple scholarly references and educational reports. According to Norman K. Denzin, triangulation strengthens research reliability by validating interpretations through multiple perspectives and data sources. The researcher also prioritized high-quality peer-reviewed studies and authoritative educational literature to enhance the academic rigor of the analysis.

Ethical considerations in this study primarily involved maintaining academic integrity and ensuring proper acknowledgment of all referenced works through accurate citation and referencing practices. Since this study relied exclusively on secondary data and published literature, no direct human participants were involved, thereby minimizing ethical risks associated with participant confidentiality or informed consent. Nevertheless, careful attention was paid to avoiding plagiarism and ensuring objective interpretation of reviewed findings.

Overall, the qualitative literature review method adopted in this research provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to understanding the impact of blended learning approaches on student achievement and motivation in Islamic Religious Education in Australia. By synthesizing previous research findings, the study seeks to offer evidence-based insights into effective instructional practices, educational innovation, and the integration of digital technologies within Islamic Religious Education.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Australia has contributed positively to students' academic achievement, learning motivation, classroom participation, and digital literacy development. The integration of face-to-face instruction with online learning platforms created more flexible and interactive learning environments that supported students' understanding of Islamic teachings while simultaneously adapting to the demands of modern education. Previous studies have emphasized that blended learning combines the strengths of conventional teaching and digital learning technologies, enabling students to access educational materials beyond classroom limitations. Charles R. Graham explains that blended learning enhances educational effectiveness by integrating online resources with

direct classroom interaction, thereby encouraging active and independent learning behaviors.

The analysis of various scholarly sources revealed that students participating in blended learning environments demonstrated higher academic achievement compared to students taught solely through traditional lecture-based approaches. This improvement was evident in students' ability to understand Islamic concepts, interpret religious texts, and apply Islamic values in real-life contexts. Digital learning materials such as interactive videos, online quizzes, multimedia presentations, and collaborative discussion forums enabled students to revisit learning content repeatedly according to their learning pace and individual needs. Research conducted by Barbara Means found that blended learning environments often produce better academic outcomes because students benefit from both teacher guidance and self-directed learning opportunities. Similarly, the flexibility of online learning platforms allowed students to continue learning outside classroom hours, which strengthened their comprehension and retention of religious materials.

The findings also demonstrate that blended learning significantly increased students' motivation to learn Islamic Religious Education. In traditional classroom settings, some students perceived religious education as monotonous and heavily dependent on memorization methods. However, blended learning introduced more engaging and student-centered instructional strategies that stimulated curiosity and participation. Interactive learning applications, online discussions, and multimedia-based teaching materials created a more dynamic educational atmosphere. According to John W. Santrock, motivation is strongly influenced by students' learning experiences, engagement, and sense of autonomy. In blended learning environments, students experienced greater flexibility and control over their learning processes, which positively influenced their intrinsic motivation.

Moreover, the integration of digital technology into Islamic Religious Education enabled teachers to contextualize Islamic teachings in relation to contemporary social realities. Students were encouraged to analyze moral issues, social challenges, and multicultural interactions through online collaborative activities and reflective assignments. This approach helped students connect religious teachings with their daily experiences in Australian multicultural society. Islamic Religious Education in Australia carries a unique responsibility because Muslim students must navigate their religious identity within a

pluralistic and diverse environment. Blended learning provided opportunities for students to engage in intercultural dialogue while strengthening their understanding of Islamic values and ethics. The use of digital forums and collaborative platforms also promoted communication skills, critical thinking, and reflective learning.

Another important finding is that blended learning contributed to the development of students' digital literacy skills. As students engaged with online learning systems, they developed competencies related to information searching, digital communication, online collaboration, and responsible technology usage. These competencies are increasingly important in twenty-first-century education and employment contexts. According to Randy Garrison, blended learning environments support not only academic development but also technological and social competencies necessary for lifelong learning. Students in Islamic Religious Education classes became more familiar with educational technologies such as virtual classrooms, learning management systems, digital Qur'an applications, and online presentation tools.

The findings further revealed that teachers played a crucial role in determining the success of blended learning implementation. Effective blended learning required teachers to possess not only religious knowledge but also technological competence and pedagogical adaptability. Teachers who successfully integrated technology into their instructional practices tended to create more engaging and effective learning experiences. However, some educators experienced difficulties in designing online learning activities, managing digital classrooms, and maintaining students' engagement during virtual sessions. Research by Michael Fullan emphasizes that educational innovation depends significantly on teacher readiness, institutional support, and continuous professional development. Therefore, teacher training programs are essential to improve educators' digital literacy and instructional design capabilities.

Despite the positive impacts, several challenges associated with blended learning implementation in Islamic Religious Education were identified. One of the major challenges involved unequal access to technological infrastructure. Some students experienced limited internet connectivity, inadequate digital devices, or insufficient technological support at home. These barriers reduced students' ability to participate fully in online learning activities and created disparities in learning experiences. The digital divide remains a significant issue

in educational technology implementation, particularly among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Consequently, educational institutions must provide adequate technological resources and support systems to ensure equitable access to blended learning opportunities.

Another challenge concerned maintaining the spiritual and emotional dimensions of Islamic Religious Education in digital learning environments. Islamic education traditionally emphasizes personal interaction, moral exemplification, and spiritual mentorship between teachers and students. Face-to-face interaction is considered essential for transmitting values, ethics, and spiritual guidance effectively. Although online learning platforms facilitated academic communication, some studies indicated that excessive dependence on virtual interaction reduced emotional closeness between teachers and students. Students occasionally reported difficulties in experiencing the same level of spiritual atmosphere and moral inspiration during online learning sessions compared to traditional classroom settings. Therefore, blended learning should not entirely replace direct interpersonal interaction but rather complement it through balanced instructional strategies.

The findings also showed that parental support influenced students' participation and motivation in blended learning environments. Students who received encouragement and supervision from their families demonstrated higher engagement and better academic performance. In the Australian context, Muslim families often play a significant role in supporting children's religious education and moral development. Therefore, collaboration between schools, teachers, and parents is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education.

Furthermore, the study found that blended learning encouraged more student-centered pedagogical practices. Traditional religious education frequently relies on teacher-centered instruction, where students passively receive information. In contrast, blended learning promoted collaborative learning, independent inquiry, and reflective discussion. Students became more active participants in the learning process through online group projects, digital presentations, and peer discussions. This pedagogical shift aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that students construct knowledge actively through interaction and experience. The combination of classroom discussion and digital learning activities allowed students to engage more deeply with Islamic concepts and moral

values.

The Australian educational environment also influenced the implementation of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education. Australia's multicultural educational policies encourage inclusivity, diversity, and intercultural understanding. In this context, blended learning provided opportunities for Islamic Religious Education teachers to incorporate multicultural perspectives, global issues, and contemporary social discussions into religious instruction. Students were encouraged to reflect on how Islamic teachings relate to citizenship, tolerance, social justice, and coexistence within diverse societies. Consequently, blended learning not only improved academic outcomes but also contributed to students' social and ethical development.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that blended learning has substantial potential to improve student achievement and motivation in Islamic Religious Education in Australia. The combination of digital technology and face-to-face interaction created more flexible, interactive, and student-centered learning experiences that enhanced academic performance, motivation, and digital literacy. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of blended learning depends heavily on technological accessibility, teacher competence, institutional support, and the ability to preserve the spiritual and moral dimensions of Islamic education. Therefore, educational institutions should develop comprehensive strategies that integrate pedagogical innovation with Islamic educational values to ensure holistic learning outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that blended learning approaches have a significant positive impact on student achievement and motivation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Australia. The integration of face-to-face teaching with digital learning technologies has created more flexible, interactive, and student-centered learning environments that support students' academic performance and engagement in religious education. Through blended learning, students gained broader access to learning resources, participated more actively in collaborative discussions, and developed greater independence in the learning process. The use of multimedia materials, online learning platforms, and interactive educational technologies contributed to improved comprehension of Islamic teachings and encouraged

students to connect religious values with contemporary social realities.

The findings also demonstrate that blended learning positively influences students' learning motivation. Interactive digital activities, flexible learning opportunities, and collaborative online environments increased students' enthusiasm, participation, and sense of autonomy in Islamic Religious Education classes. In addition to academic benefits, blended learning enhanced students' digital literacy skills, communication abilities, and critical thinking competencies, which are essential in twenty-first-century education. The multicultural context of Australia further strengthened the relevance of blended learning by enabling students to engage with Islamic teachings while developing intercultural understanding and social awareness.

However, the study also identified several challenges in implementing blended learning within Islamic Religious Education. Limited technological infrastructure, unequal access to digital resources, and insufficient teacher training remain significant obstacles that may affect the effectiveness of blended learning practices. Furthermore, maintaining the spiritual, emotional, and moral dimensions of Islamic education in online learning environments presents an important pedagogical challenge. Direct interaction between teachers and students continues to play a crucial role in fostering spiritual guidance, ethical development, and moral exemplification.

Therefore, successful implementation of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education requires balanced integration between technological innovation and traditional Islamic pedagogical values. Educational institutions should provide adequate technological facilities, continuous professional development for teachers, and supportive learning environments that preserve meaningful interpersonal interaction. Ultimately, blended learning can serve as an effective educational strategy for improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education in Australia while preparing students to face the challenges of modern digital society without losing their religious identity and moral values.

REFERENCES

- Graham, C. R. (2019). Current research in blended learning. *Handbook of Distance Education*, 173–188.

- Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. D. (2017). *Blended Learning in Higher Education: Framework, Principles, and Guidelines*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., & Baki, M. (2013). The effectiveness of online and blended learning: A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Teachers College Record*, 115(3), 1–47.
- Fullan, M. (2016). *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Santrock, J. W. (2020). *Educational Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. London: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (2012). *The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer Publishing.
- Hrastinski, S. (2019). What do we mean by blended learning? *TechTrends*, 63(5), 564–569.
- Boelens, R., De Wever, B., & Voet, M. (2017). Four key challenges to the design of blended learning: A systematic literature review. *Educational Research Review*, 22, 1–18.
- Halverson, L. R., Graham, C. R., Spring, K. J., Drysdale, J. S., & Henrie, C. R. (2014). A thematic analysis of the most highly cited scholarship in the first decade of blended learning research. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 20, 20–34.
- Rasmitadila, Aliyyah, R. R., Rachmadtullah, R., Samsudin, A., & Syaodih, E. (2020). The perceptions of primary school teachers of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic period. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 7(2), 90–109.
- Kintu, M. J., Zhu, C., & Kagambe, E. (2017). Blended learning effectiveness: The relationship between student characteristics, design features, and outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 14(1), 1–20.
- Porter, W. W., Graham, C. R., Spring, K. A., & Welch, K. R. (2014). Blended learning in higher education: Institutional adoption and implementation. *Computers & Education*, 75, 185–195.
- Alammary, A., Sheard, J., & Carbone, A. (2014). Blended learning in higher education: Three different design approaches. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 30(4), 440–454.

- Picciano, A. G. (2017). Theories and frameworks for online education: Seeking an integrated model. *Online Learning Journal*, 21(3), 166–190.
- Bates, A. W. (2019). *Teaching in a Digital Age: Guidelines for Designing Teaching and Learning*. Vancouver: Tony Bates Associates Ltd.