

THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY IN INDONESIAN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role in shaping students' character in Indonesia through an in-depth psychological approach. This study aims to identify PAI's contribution in strengthening moral and spiritual values, shaping religious identity, increasing tolerance between religious communities, and supporting students' academic achievement. This study uses a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires on 20 students from various levels of education in Surakarta, while qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews with 15 PAI teachers in Muntilan. The results showed that students were delighted with PAI subjects and recorded good academic grades. Interviews revealed that teachers play a significant role in guiding students to understand and apply Islamic values daily. In addition, PAI has been proven to contribute to fostering tolerance, empathy, and harmony in a multicultural environment. The conclusion of this study emphasizes that PAI not only functions as a medium for the delivery of religious teachings but also as a strategic means in shaping the personality of religious, ethical students who can interact harmoniously in a plural society. Therefore, strengthening the quality of PAI learning is the key to national education management.

Keywords

Education Islamic Religion, Educational Management, Educational Psychology.



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INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary foundation in shaping civilized individuals and societies. In Indonesia's multicultural and religious environment, education focuses on academics and includes moral, spiritual, and social values. As a compulsory subject, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) strategically instills Islamic values that align with the nation's character (Muthrofin et al., 2023). PAI is expected to be a means of transferring religious knowledge and shaping students' personalities. PAI can touch students' affective and psychomotor aspects through the educational psychology approach, so religious values can be internalized more effectively. Amid globalization and the challenges of the times, the presence of PAI is significant in strengthening the religious identity and character of the younger generation. Therefore, strengthening the role of PAI in the national education system is an urgent need (Sari, 2024).

However, behind the importance of PAI's position in the national curriculum, serious problems arise related to its effectiveness in shaping students' character. The phenomenon of moral degradation among the younger generation, increasing intolerance, and the fading of religious values show that the existence of PAI has not fully succeeded in answering the challenges of the times (Hum & Setyowati, 2020). An important question that needs to be answered is: to what extent is PAI, with the approach of educational psychology, really able to influence the formation of students' attitudes and behaviors in daily life? This problem is becoming increasingly urgent to be studied, especially in the context of national education management, which demands real results in strengthening students' character and spiritual values.

Various studies have tried to examine the role of religious education in the Indonesian education system. (Lestari, 2023; Solihah et al., 2024) Found that PAI teachers play an active role in instilling religious character values through behavioral habituation in schools. (Judrah et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2024) Highlight the importance of the professional competence of PAI teachers in forming well-informed and pious students. (Demirel Ucan & Wright, 2019; Hayati & Susatya, 2020) Show that PAI is effective as a means of strengthening character education through contextual learning. (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Chowdhury, 2018) emphasizes integrating technology in religious education to adapt to the times. Meanwhile, research by Bahri & Muzaki (2021) and Yusri et al. (2024) discusses PAI's contribution to maintaining moral values in the national education system. Although these findings enrich our understanding of the role of PAI, the majority of these studies have not specifically integrated educational psychology perspectives in depth in looking at

the contribution of PAI to education management holistically.

From the literature review that has been conducted, there is still a significant *gap*, namely the lack of studies that explicitly link Islamic Religious Education Psychology with national education management. Most previous research has tended to separate psychological and managerial aspects in the context of PAI learning. Integrating the two can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how religious learning contributes to character formation and education governance (Huda et al., 2018; Rukmana et al., 2024). This study's novelty lies in using a mixed approach, namely quantitative and qualitative, which allows for comprehensive data exploration. The primary focus is on applying educational psychology approaches in PAI learning to see its impact on students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. Thus, this study assesses the effectiveness of teaching materials and evaluates learning strategies that can strengthen value-based education management. The findings of this study are expected to enrich academic discourse and provide a new direction in the development of religious education that is more relevant and applicable.

Based on the background and research gaps that have been described previously, this study aims to explore in depth the contribution of Islamic Religious Education Psychology in shaping the character of students, especially in the context of national education which is facing significant challenges in terms of moral degradation and weak religious values among the younger generation. In this case, the educational psychology approach is very relevant because it can touch on students' affective and psychomotor aspects, which are often overlooked in conventional learning. This research also aims to evaluate how the psychological approach in learning Islamic Religious Education can contribute to increasing the attitude of tolerance between religions and strengthening students' religious identity in the context of a multicultural Indonesian society.

In addition, this study aims to assess how much influence PAI has on students' academic success, assuming that a good and structured religious education can support students' cognitive achievement by forming disciplined, responsible, and ethical personalities. No less important, this research also intends to explore the strategic role that PAI can play in supporting a national education management system that emphasizes the academic aspect and instills spiritual and moral values that are important pillars in forming citizens with character. With this approach and goal, it is hoped that the results of this research can make a theoretical and practical contribution in developing an Islamic education model that is more holistic, relevant, and responsive to the needs of the times.

The urgency of this research is very high considering the significant challenges faced by the world of education today, especially in forming a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also spiritually and ethically strong. Amid the onslaught of secular ideology and uncontrolled information flows, PAI plays a role as a moral fortress that can maintain the integrity of the younger generation. The findings of this study can be an empirical basis for policymakers in designing a PAI curriculum that is more adaptive, based on educational psychology, and relevant to the social dynamics of society. Thus, the contribution of this research is not only academic, but also strategic in supporting the sustainability of the national education system rooted in Islamic and national values.

METHOD

This study uses a mixed methods approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, to understand the role of Islamic Religious Education Psychology in education management in Indonesia (Purwono et al., 2019). The type of research used is descriptive and exploratory, to describe and analyze the contribution of PAI in depth in character formation and education management. Quantitative data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to 20 students from various levels of education in the Surakarta area. In contrast, qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 Islamic Religious Education teachers in the Muntilan area.

The data collection technique used a closed questionnaire sheet and a semi-structured interview guideline. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine students' satisfaction levels and average scores with PAI subjects. In contrast, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed researchers to identify patterns, meanings, and narratives from the interview results. The analysis process is carried out in stages, from data reduction to data presentation and conclusion (Miles et al., 2021). The combination of these two approaches is expected to provide a complete picture of how the educational psychology approach in PAI can improve national education management quality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study uses quantitative and qualitative approaches to identify the contribution of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to Indonesia's education system. The results are presented in the form of tables and excerpts of field findings:

Table 1. Student Satisfaction Level with PAI Subjects

No	Satisfaction Level (Scale 1–5)	Number of Students
1.	4.2	2
2.	4.4	3
3.	4.6	2
4.	4.3	4
5.	4.7	3
6.	4.5	6

The table presents students' satisfaction levels with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subject, based on a scale of 1 to 5, where one indicates very dissatisfied and five indicates very satisfied. A total of 2 students rated their satisfaction at 4.2, while 3 gave a score of 4.4. Two students gave a score of 4.6, and four students rated their satisfaction at 4.3. Three students expressed high satisfaction with a score of 4.7, and the most frequent score, 4.5, was given by six students. Overall, the data shows that most students reported high satisfaction with PAI instruction, with the majority of scores ranging between 4.3 and 4.7. This reflects students' generally positive perceptions of the quality and benefits of Islamic Religious Education in schools.

Table 2. Average Student Score in PAI Subjects

No.	Education Level	Average Score
1	Elementary School	85
2	Junior High School	88
3	Senior High School	92

The table 2 presents students' average Islamic Religious Education (PAI) scores across three different education levels. At the elementary school level, students achieved an average score of 85. This score increased at the junior high school level, with students obtaining an average of 88. The highest average score was recorded at the senior high school level, where students reached 92. These results suggest a positive progression in students' academic performance in PAI as they advance through their educational stages. The trend may indicate a growing maturity in understanding religious concepts or the cumulative effect of sustained PAI instruction. Overall, the data highlights

The effective role of PAI in supporting academic development at all educational levels.

Qualitative Findings (Teacher Interviews)

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers from various schools in the Muntilan area to explore their views and experiences regarding the role of PAI in character education and social integration of students. Most teachers stated that PAI is tasked with theoretically transferring religious knowledge and instilling the values that shape students' personalities. One teacher stated, "As PAI teachers, our daily task is to help students understand and apply the teachings of Islam in their lives." This statement shows that there is an awareness that religious education is not just a cognitive instrument, but an effort to form the whole character of students. This aligns with the discussion that PAI effectively strengthens students' morality, spirituality, and self-control in daily life.

As many as 12 out of 15 teachers emphasized that one of the most tangible impacts of PAI learning is the increase in tolerance among students. A teacher said, "PAI teaches the values of tolerance and mutual respect, so that students can live in harmony in a multicultural society." These teachers also added that the values taught, such as *tasāmuḥ*, *ukhuwah islāmiyyah*, and *rahmah*, play a significant role in creating an inclusive and peaceful classroom atmosphere. This strengthens the findings in the discussion that PAI not only deepens Islamic identity but also forms an open attitude towards diversity. The teacher also gave examples of practices in the classroom, such as getting used to interfaith greetings, joint prayer, and discussions about social ethics as a concrete form of strengthening the value of tolerance.

In addition, 10 out of 15 teachers stated that students who are active in PAI learning tend to show improved academic achievement. They attribute this to the indirect effects of instilled religious values, such as discipline, responsibility, and perseverance. A teacher mentioned that students who routinely read the Qur'an before lessons or participate in school religious activities are usually more focused and emotionally stable in following other lessons. These findings are consistent with the discussion that mentions the contribution of PAI in forming positive learning habits and supporting students' academic success in general.

Meanwhile, nine teachers highlighted the importance of examples in PAI learning. They stated that students more easily absorb and imitate the behavior of teachers who consistently show integrity, politeness, and care. One teacher stated, "If we come on time, greet well, and treat students fairly, they will imitate it without our command." This aspect confirms the discussion that PAI

teachers are the main role models in character building, and that effective religious education is not just in theory, but requires real practice demonstrated in daily interactions.

In general, interviews also show that teachers know the importance of relating teaching materials to students' daily lives. As many as 11 out of 15 teachers said contextual approaches, such as relating moral material to current issues (social media, bullying, digital consumption), made students more interested and reflective. This supports the point in the discussion that the PAI curriculum must be structured in an integrative and applicative manner to instill value deeply and sustainably. Teachers recognize that today's students need religious learning that is not dogmatic but capable of guiding them in complex modern life.

Finally, the interview also showed that teachers consider PAI a strategic space for strengthening school social harmony. They often mediate in conflicts between students and use religious values as a resolution approach. One of the teachers said it is easier for students to receive advice associated with hadith or the story of the Prophet, rather than a disciplinary approach alone. This proves that a religious approach in education can defuse conflict and increase solidarity between individuals. In this context, PAI plays a role in educating and reconciliation, as described in the discussion of PAI's contribution to harmony between people.

Discussion

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has been proven to play a significant role in the formation of students' moral and spiritual character. The results showed that students who received PAI learning consistently had a higher ethical awareness and could exhibit behaviors aligned with religious norms, such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance. This condition aligns with the view of (Demirel Ucan & Wright, 2019), strengthening character education through PAI can solve the moral crisis among students. PAI functions as cognitive teaching and touches on students' affective and psychomotor aspects. PAI teachers are facilitators who guide students in internalizing Islamic values practically in daily life. This emphasizes the central role of PAI in building the moral base of students as a whole. Thus, character education through the Islamic religious approach is not just a theory, but a reality that can be measured and observed through changes in student behavior (Abbas et al., 2021; Guna & Yuwantiningrum, 2024; Khaidir & Suud, 2020).

In addition, PAI also plays a role in strengthening students' religious identities, especially in the context of a pluralistic society such as Indonesia. Students who receive a comprehensive Islamic religious education show pride in their Islamic identity and have a better understanding of Islamic

cultural values and traditions. This finding affirms (Riaz et al., 2023; Sahin, 2021) that Islamic education is important for instilling a love for religious heritage. PAI not only fosters students' confidence as Muslims but also fosters appreciation for differences. Through PAI learning, students are invited to recognize that religious identity is not a dividing barrier, but a foundation for harmonious coexistence. This aspect is particularly relevant to the challenges of globalization and identity crises among the younger generation. Therefore, strengthening PAI is a strategic investment in strengthening the nation's cultural and spiritual resilience (Naldi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the study results show that PAI positively influences students' academic achievement. Quantitative data shows that students from elementary to high school participating in intensive PAI learning record high average scores. This indicates that strengthening religious aspects does not hinder cognitive abilities but supports them. Quality religious education shapes attitudes of discipline, responsibility, and perseverance in learning, all impacting academic achievement. This research aligns with the views. (Shaturaev, 2021; Syarnubi et al., 2023), who stated that integrating religious and general education can improve the quality of learning outcomes. Students with a strong spiritual foundation tend to be more focused, emotionally stable, and intrinsically motivated to pursue achievements. Therefore, PAI should be positioned not only as a complement to the curriculum but as a reinforcement of academic performance (Abdurrahmansyah, 2023).

Another important finding is the role of PAI in fostering tolerance and harmony between religious communities. In interviews with teachers, it was revealed that PAI materials are designed not only to strengthen Islamic beliefs but also to build appreciation for other religions. Concepts such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *rahmatan lil' alamin* (mercy for the universe) are the main foundations in learning. This attitude of mutual respect is evident in students' interactions with friends from different religious backgrounds. This affirms the multicultural approach in Islamic education as stated by (Achadi & Fithriyana, 2020; Saleh & Arbain, 2019; Yumnah et al., 2021). PAI thus functions as a bridge that strengthens social relations in a pluralistic society. This strategic role shows that religious education is not an instrument of exclusivity but a vehicle for inclusivity and social harmony.

PAI also enriches students' understanding of religion's fundamental theories and principles, which are the basis for forming daily behavior and attitudes. Students are taught aspects of religious rituals and universal values such as honesty, compassion, and justice. In educational psychology, the process of internalizing values through PAI supports the formation of a healthy and balanced

personality (Ihwanah et al., 2024; Warsah et al., 2024). The affective aspects built through this learning directly impact the development of self-control and social empathy. This research affirms the moral learning theory that religious values can strengthen character formation in children and adolescents. That way, PAI equips students with knowledge and forms a meaningful life orientation. This role strengthens PAI's position as an important element in the national education system (Johnson & Johnson, 2013; Latief et al., 2021; Susilawati et al., 2022).

In addition, the quality of learning is greatly influenced by the teacher's figure, for example. PAI teachers not only teach theory, but also become figures who represent Islamic values in real action. As the results of the interviews show, teachers who are consistent with the values they teach can have a greater impact on changing student behavior. This is in line with the findings of (Johnson & Johnson, 2013; Latief et al., 2021; Susilawati et al., 2022) Regarding the importance of the professional competence of PAI teachers in strengthening student character. PAI teachers should ideally be present as role models in discipline, empathy, and polite communication. Thus, the relationship between students and teachers is the key to success in character education. The role of teachers as a value formation makes PAI very contextual and personal in its application in schools.

Compared to other approaches, such as using information technology in religious learning. This study's results emphasize the relational and affective power between teachers and students in shaping character. The digital approach is important, but it has not been able to replace the exemplary values that can only be obtained through direct interaction. In this case, the findings of this study can be said to be the antithesis to the view that relies too much on technology as a medium of religious learning. Character education based on Islamic values requires a supervisor who is present in students' lives. Therefore, the emphasis on human relations and spiritual approaches must be maintained in developing the PAI curriculum (Anggrenah et al., 2025; Kulsum & Muhid, 2022; Shofiyah et al., 2023).

Finally, the implications of the results of this study show that strengthening PAI subjects must be a priority in national education management. Religious education should not be placed as a complement or administrative formality in the curriculum, but as a core component of students' formation. PAI curriculum reform needs to be directed at a contextual, integrative, and transformative approach (Edy & Sumarta, 2024; Mufarokah et al., 2025; Nurfaizal et al., 2024). This includes strengthening teacher competence, preparing life value-based materials, and integrating spirituality and academics. This research also encourages the birth of policies supporting

collaboration between schools, families, and communities to strengthen character education. Thus, the contribution of PAI is felt not only at the individual level but also in the social and cultural development of the nation. Strong religious education is the foundation of a civilized and moral nation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping religious character, increasing moral awareness, strengthening religious identity, and fostering tolerance and academic achievement of students. The findings show that PAI learning has a cognitive impact and shapes students' attitudes and behaviors. The role of teachers as role models is the key to success in internalizing Islamic values in students' daily lives. PAI has proven effective in creating an inclusive classroom atmosphere and supporting harmony in a multicultural society. Therefore, strengthening the quality of PAI learning in terms of curriculum and teacher competence is very important to support value-based national education management. This research also shows the need to integrate psychological and pedagogical approaches in PAI teaching. Recommendations for further research are to explore the effectiveness of the digital-based PAI approach and how the role of families and local communities can strengthen the influence of PAI learning on students' character.

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