

## THE EXISTENCE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to answer the focus of the research on the stated research objectives, namely to determine the methods and learning strategies applied by Islamic Religious Education teachers in improving students' religious understanding at SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan. What influences the success of Islamic Religious Education learning in improving students' religious understanding at SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan. The Existence of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan. In answering the problems in this study, the researcher used qualitative research. With the method of collecting data observation, interviews and documentation. Furthermore, the data obtained were analyzed by data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions. using Miles and Huberman Data Types. The results of this study indicate that A. Methods and Learning Strategies Applied by Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan, namely 1. Lecture Method; 2. Discussion Method; 3. Question and Answer Method. B. What Influences the Success of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan, namely 1. Quality of Teacher Teaching; 2. Student Motivation and Interest; 3. Curriculum and Teaching Materials; 4. Parental Support. The Existence of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan, namely 1. Creed Islamic Religious Education learning contributes to strengthening students' creed, deepening their belief in Islamic teachings and strengthening their faith; 2. Worship This learning helps students understand and carry out worship properly, including prayer, fasting, and other religious obligations; 3. Morals Religious education in this school also has an impact on the formation of students' morals, such as honesty, politeness, and social concern in accordance with Islamic teachings.

**Keywords:** Students, Religiousness, Learning

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia is an integral part of the national education system that aims to form human beings who have faith, piety, and noble character. In the midst of the increasingly strong currents of globalization, the role of religious education is becoming increasingly crucial, especially in facing the challenges of social and cultural changes that can affect the moral and spiritual values of students. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education in schools is not only a transfer of knowledge, but also a means of internalizing religious values that are able to guide students in their daily lives (Indah, 2024).

SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe, as one of the formal educational institutions in South Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, has a great responsibility in organizing quality religious education. This school strives to carry out its mandate to provide religious education that is not only theoretical, but also applicative, so that students can develop a deep understanding of religion and be able to apply it in various aspects of life. However, like other schools, SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan also faces various challenges in an effort to improve students' religious understanding (Syifaun, 2023).

One of the main challenges in learning Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe is the variability of students' religious understanding. Family backgrounds, social

environment, and access to different sources of religious knowledge cause students' level of religious understanding to be uneven. Some students may have a strong understanding due to the influence of a religious family environment, while others may be less exposed to religious teachings in depth, requiring a special approach in learning. This condition requires teachers to have creativity and high pedagogical skills in designing and implementing learning strategies that suit the needs of students (Fajran, 2023).

The learning methods used in Islamic Religious Education are also a key factor in improving students' religious understanding. Teachers as facilitators in the teaching and learning process must be able to adopt various interactive and innovative learning methods, so that students not only memorize religious concepts, but also understand the essence and values contained in them. However, the implementation of effective learning methods is often faced with obstacles such as limited facilities and infrastructure, a dense curriculum load, and a lack of time available for in-depth learning activities (Salmiati Salmiati, 2023).

In addition, the quality and competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers also greatly affect the learning outcomes of students. Teachers who have a deep understanding of the teaching material and are able to convey it in an interesting and relevant method will be more effective in improving students' religious understanding. However, not all teachers have the opportunity to develop their competencies through continuous training or workshops. This can have an impact on the stagnation of the teaching methods used, so that learning becomes less dynamic and is unable to attract students' interest optimally (Kholilur Rahman, 2023).

Another challenge is how schools can integrate religious values in school life as a whole, not just limited to Islamic Religious Education lesson hours. Habituation in religious practices, such as congregational prayers, Qur'an reading, and other religious activities, needs to be supported by all parties in the school, including school principals, teachers of other subjects, and education staff. Good collaboration between all elements of the school in creating a religious environment will strengthen the internalization of religious values in students (Asmaun Sahlan, 2012).

On the other hand, the influence of information technology and social media also provides its own challenges in learning Islamic Religious Education. Students in this digital era are more likely to get information from the internet and social media which is often not verified to be true. This requires more effort from teachers to guide students in filtering information and understanding religious teachings correctly based on authentic sources. Thus, religious learning in schools must be able to compete with various other sources of information accessed by students, both from print and digital media (Lailatu Rohmah, 2011). This research is expected to provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of the learning that has been carried out, identify the obstacles faced, and provide constructive recommendations for improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning in the school. Thus, the results of this research can be a reference for the development of learning strategies that are more effective and relevant to the needs of students in this modern era.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research, which is data collected in the form of words, images, not numbers. According to Bogdan and Taylor, as cited by Lexy J. Moleong, qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken

words from people and observed behaviors (Lexy J Moleong, 2026). Meanwhile, descriptive research is a form of research aimed at describing or describing existing phenomena, both natural and man-made phenomena. The purpose of descriptive research is to make a systematic, factual, and accurate assessment of the facts and nature of a particular population or area. This research is used to find out how the Existence of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Improving the Religious Understanding of Students at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe.

The research approach is a well-rounded strategy that guides the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation in research. Each approach has different characteristics, advantages, and weaknesses, so the selection must be adjusted to the research objectives, research questions, and the type of data to be collected (Muh Fitrah, 2018). The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the in-depth aspects of PAI learning methods, strategies, and existence as well as the factors that influence them. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, researchers can gain comprehensive insights into how PAI learning is applied and accepted, as well as its impact on students' religious understanding at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe.

The subject of this study includes all parties who are directly or indirectly involved in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe. The researcher will collect data from teachers, students, parents, principals, and related documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existence and effectiveness of PAI learning in improving students' religious understanding. The research informants in this study included teachers, students, parents, principals, administrative staff, and related documents. Each informant provided important insights into various aspects of PAI learning, which will help in evaluating the existence and effectiveness of the program and its impact on the religious understanding of students at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe. The data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and documentation. The validity of data is the equivalent of the concepts of validity (validity) and reliability (realism) according to the quantitative research version and adjusted to the guidance of knowledge, criteria, and paradigms themselves". The validity of data is the degree of trust or notability of the results of a research. According to the validity of data in qualitative research, a realistic is pluralistic and dynamic, so nothing is as consistent and repetitive as it used to be. Data validity can be achieved by using the data collection process with data triangulation techniques (Abd Hadi, 2021). According to Sugiyono, data triangulation is a data collection technique that combines various existing data and sources. Data triangulation is a technique for checking data from various sources in various ways and at various times (Eko Haryono, 2023). So there is source triangulation, triangulation of data collection techniques and time triangulation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Lecture Method

The results of the study show that the lecture method is still one of the main approaches used by PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe. This method was chosen because of its ability to convey complex religious material in a systematic and in-depth manner. However, the results of the study also indicate that the lecture method often faces challenges in maintaining student engagement during learning. In response to this challenge, teachers at the school developed interactive strategies

in the lecture method, such as asking questions and opening question and answer sessions (Rildwiani, 2023).

This strategy is in line with the view of constructivist learning theory which emphasizes the importance of students' active involvement in the learning process. By directly involving students, the lecture method that was initially one-way can be changed to be more interactive, thereby increasing student understanding and engagement. The results of this study support the previous finding that interaction in learning can increase the effectiveness of lecture methods, especially in the context of material that requires in-depth explanations such as Islamic Religious Education (Ayu, 2024).

### Discussion Method

The discussion method applied at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe has proven to be effective in encouraging student involvement and improving their understanding of PAI materials. The results show that group discussions provide opportunities for students to interact, share views, and learn from the perspective of their peers. Balanced group division and clear guidance from teachers are key factors in the success of this method (Abdul, 2024).

Group discussions allow students to develop critical and analytical thinking skills, which are essential in understanding abstract religious concepts. In addition, this method is also in accordance with the principle of collaborative learning, where students learn through cooperation and social interaction. The results of this study support the social learning theory that underlines that effective learning occurs when students interact with others in a learning community (Almaydza, 2024).

### Q&A Method

The question and answer method applied by PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe has a positive impact on improving student understanding and encouraging active participation in learning. The results show that by asking varied questions, teachers can measure students' understanding in depth and stimulate their critical thinking. This method also allows students to clarify confusion and express their opinions, thus creating a more interactive learning environment.

However, the study also identified some challenges in the application of the question and answer method, such as difficulties in motivating students who lack confidence to participate. To address this, teachers strive to create a supportive and positive environment for students, so that they feel more comfortable participating. These findings are in line with motivation theory which states that positive support from the environment can increase students' motivation and participation in learning.

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that the lecture, discussion, and question and answer methods applied by PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe have their own advantages and challenges. To improve learning effectiveness, it is important for teachers to constantly evaluate and adapt the methods they use to the characteristics of the students and learning objectives. Professional development for teachers, such as training on interactive learning techniques, is also recommended to improve the quality of learning. In addition, this study suggests that schools continue to support teachers' efforts in integrating technology in learning, such as the use of visual and digital media in lecture methods, to increase student engagement and

understanding. Further, further research is suggested to explore the long-term impact of these learning methods on students' religious understanding and how different approaches can be effectively implemented in different contexts.

### **What Affects the Success of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe**

#### **Quality of Teacher Teaching**

The quality of teacher teaching is the dominant factor that affects the success of PAI learning. Teachers who are competent in conveying material clearly and effectively can make the subject matter easier for students to understand. In this context, teachers at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe use a variety of creative and varied teaching methods to keep students' interests high. The use of diverse methods, such as group discussions and practical activities, has been shown to increase student engagement in the learning process. In addition, the teacher's ability to manage the classroom well and create a conducive learning atmosphere greatly supports the achievement of learning goals (Ika Kartika, 2024)

#### **Student Motivation and Interest**

Students' motivation and interest in PAI lessons are also important factors that affect the success of learning. Students who have high motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, tend to be more active and enthusiastic in participating in learning. In this study, it was found that students are more motivated when the subject matter is associated with their daily lives (Azizah, 2024). Teachers who successfully connect teaching materials with students' experiences and needs are able to increase students' interest and involvement in learning. A supportive learning environment and support from parents also play a role in motivating students to study harder (Awalina, 2024).

#### **Curriculum and Teaching Materials**

The curriculum and teaching materials used at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe must be in accordance with the level of understanding and context of students' lives. A good curriculum is a curriculum that is able to answer the needs of students and is relevant to the times. Well-structured teaching materials, including the use of digital and visual media, provide a more interactive and engaging learning experience (February, 2024). The importance of periodic evaluation and adjustment of the curriculum is also expressed in this study to ensure that the curriculum remains effective and relevant to dynamic educational needs (Saidil, 2024).

#### **Parent Support**

Support from parents is an important element in the success of PAI learning. Parents who are actively involved in their children's education, either through emotional support or the provision of learning facilities, can increase students' motivation and understanding of religious teachings (Anura, 2024). In addition, parental involvement in school activities, such as parent-teacher meetings and educational seminars, can create positive synergy between schools and families, which in turn will improve the quality of student learning (Fahmi, 2024).



From the results of the analysis above, it can be concluded that the success of PAI learning at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe is influenced by four main factors: the quality of teacher teaching, student motivation and interests, curriculum and teaching materials, and parental support. All of these factors are interrelated and contribute significantly to the improvement of students' religious understanding. By paying attention to and optimizing these factors, it is hoped that PAI learning at SMP Negeri 33 Konawe Selatan can run more effectively and have a positive impact on the spiritual and intellectual development of students.

### **The Existence of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Improving the Religious Understanding of Students at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe Faith**

Faith learning at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe focuses on strengthening basic beliefs and understanding of Islamic teachings, especially the concept of tawhid, faith in the Prophet, and the Day of Judgment. The existence of faith learning in this school can be seen from the systematic approach used in delivering the material. The material of Islamic teachings is not only delivered theoretically but also integrated with the students' real practice and experience. Through lectures, discussions, and case study methods, students are introduced to the teachings of tawhid and faith in the apostles in a relevant and applicable way in daily life (Siti, 2024). Varied teaching methods such as questions and answers and interactive discussions help students in understanding and applying the concepts of faith in depth. Extracurricular activities such as recitation and joint prayer also play a role in strengthening students' understanding of the faith. Periodic evaluations are conducted to ensure student understanding and provide additional guidance if needed. With the integration of the teachings of the faith in students' daily lives, this learning not only adds theoretical knowledge but also internalizes religious beliefs in students' real actions (Muhammad, 2024).

### **Worship**

The aspects of worship in PAI learning at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe include prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj. This learning is designed to ensure that students not only understand the theory behind worship but are also able to implement it correctly. Learning to pray, for example, involves practical exercises in school that help students form correct worship habits. Likewise, learning fasting, zakat, and hajj which teaches students about the implementation procedures, conditions, and wisdom behind each worship (Zahwa, 2024). The implementation of worship learning in schools can be seen from the increase in student participation in worship activities at school, such as congregational prayers and zakat fitrah. This learning also includes supporting activities such as flash boarding schools and iftar together, which provide a deeper spiritual experience for students. With consistent guidance, students are expected to be able to make worship an integral part of their daily lives (Nadia 2024).

### **Morals**

Moral learning at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe focuses on developing students' character in accordance with Islamic values. Values such as honesty, politeness, responsibility, and concern for others are taught through theory and real examples from the stories of the prophets and companions.

This learning aims to shape students' character to be in accordance with Islamic teachings and applied in daily life (Alivia, 2024). The implementation of moral learning can be seen from changes in students' attitudes and behaviors. Teachers actively observe students' moral development and involve them in supportive activities, such as group discussions and social projects. The results of the evaluation showed an improvement in students' speaking ethics, respectful attitudes, and discipline. Moral learning is also supported by additional programs such as mentoring and character development, which reinforce the values that have been learned in class (Parulian, 2024). Overall, PAI learning at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe has a significant impact on improving students' religious understanding. With a holistic and integrated approach, students gain not only theoretical knowledge but also in-depth practical experience. The existence of this learning can be seen in the development of students' faith, worship, and morals, which contributes to the formation of better individuals with noble character.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research found in the field, the conclusions of this study are as follows:

1. Learning Methods and Strategies Applied by Islamic Religious Education Teachers (PAI) in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe; a) Lecture Method This method is used to deliver material directly by the teacher by oral means. Lectures allow teachers to provide thorough explanations of religious concepts and theories. b) Discussion Method Through discussion, students are invited to actively participate in learning. This method encourages students to share their views, ask questions, and explain their understanding of the material being taught. c) Question and Answer Method This method is used to measure students' understanding of the material that has been taught. Q&A allows students to ask questions and the teacher provides clarification and additional explanations.
2. Factors Affecting the Success of PAI Learning in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe; a) Quality of Teacher Teaching The good quality of teaching from teachers, including pedagogical skills and in-depth knowledge of teaching materials, greatly affects the effectiveness of learning. b) Students' Motivation and Interest Students' motivation and interest in religious learning play an important role in improving their understanding. Motivated students tend to be more active and serious in participating in learning. c) Curriculum and Teaching Materials Relevant curriculum and teaching materials that are in accordance with the needs of students to support the achievement of learning objectives. Structured and up-to-date materials help students understand religious concepts better. d) Parental Support Support from parents, both in the form of moral encouragement and assistance in the learning process at home, contributes to the success of students in learning religious materials.
3. The Existence of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Improving Students' Religious Understanding at SMP Negeri 33 South Konawe; a) PAI Learning Faith contributes to strengthening students' faith, deepening their belief in Islamic teachings and strengthening their faith. b) This Learning Worship helps students understand and carry out worship correctly, including prayer, fasting, and other religious obligations. c) Morals Religious education in this

school also has an impact on the formation of students' morals, such as honesty, good manners, and social concern in accordance with Islamic teachings.

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