

Spiritual and mental harmonization: religious education through the lens of psychology

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ABSTRACT

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This research offers a new, holistic, and multidisciplinary perspective on Islamic Religious Education by combining spiritual and psychological paradigms. The study adopts a literature review method, which involves several stages: identifying sources, selecting and filtering relevant literature, collecting information, and analyzing and synthesizing data. The findings show that effective Islamic Religious Education should integrate the spiritual, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learners. By considering students' psychology, interests, motivations, and talents, religious education can serve as a powerful tool for building mental and spiritual well-being. Educators, as spiritual guides, play a vital role in creating meaningful connections between religious teachings and students' daily lives. Students with spiritual awareness and a positive attitude are believed to experience beneficial effects on other aspects of their personal lives. The implications of these findings suggest that when students' psychological development, interests, motivations, and talents are balanced with spirituality, spiritual and mental harmony can become a source of happiness, serenity, and life's meaning.

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1. Introduction

From a psychological perspective, religion is considered a human response to God as the creator of the universe or as an Absolute Truth. One of the functions of religion is to realize the nature of human existence in this world. In the book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). William James emphasized that religion involves intense and subjective religious experiences, which do not always have to conform to the formal doctrines of religion. James saw religion as a source of emotional and spiritual strength that helps humans find the meaning of life, feel inner peace, and provide solutions to existential crises. In addition, religion provides a sense of security and tranquility for those who practice it, but also provides punishment for those who disobey it. In addition, a person's religious feelings can be a measure of the extent to which he is obedient in carrying out religious teachings (Aprillia et al., 2023). Psychology studies various aspects of the human psyche that include thought (cognition), feeling (emotion), and will (conation). These three main aspects are seen through human attitudes and behaviors (Ahya & Dharmawan, 2023; Masduki & Warsah, 2020). However, sometimes the apparent activity is a combination of several aspects. For this reason, psychologists have added another category, mixed symptoms. Mixed symptoms include things like intelligence and fatigue that are influenced by suggestion.

Later developments revealed that these mental symptoms were not the same in people of different ages. This fact encouraged psychologists to develop branches of psychology that could be used to study human mental symptoms at certain age levels. From this, branches of psychology such as child psychology, adolescent psychology, and parent psychology emerged. (Kurniawati & Dwistia, 2022). Religion, etymologically, comes from the Latin word *religio*, which can mean religious obligations or bonds. This meaning refers to an important aspect of spiritual and social life that shapes the relationship between humans and God. In the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, James Martineau defines religion as the belief in an ever living God, a divine soul and will that governs the universe and has a moral relationship with humans. For Martineau, religion reflects a direct and transcendental relationship between human beings and a higher power, which demands ethical responsibility from humanity (Mofid, 2020). This approach places religion as a universal source of ethics that guides human behavior in accordance with God's will. On the other hand, in the scientific approach, (Rozalina, 2021) argues that religion cannot be categorized as a science. According to him, religion is more of a set of rules that include ways of life, beliefs, and behavior. In Sigmund Freud's view, religion is an illusion, in his book entitled *The Future an Illusion*, Freud argues that belief in God is not because God is something that exists, but it is merely an obsession of our subconscious as humans who long for a father figure. In this context, in Freud's view, God and religion are illusions. (Riza, 2021)

In the teachings of Islam, there are a number of rules that regulate aspects of individual behavior and beliefs (Bauto, 2016). Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a fundamental role in shaping the moral, character, and spiritual dimensions of learners. As a component of the educational curriculum, PAI materials must be carefully designed and adapted to the students' cognitive, emotional, and social developmental stages to ensure the effectiveness of the learning and understanding process. The review of PAI materials based on learner development aims to ensure that the materials delivered are in accordance with the level of understanding, mindset, and psychological needs of students at each level of education (Hendro, 2023). The theory of cognitive development proposed by Jean Piaget and the theory of moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg provide an important basis in understanding the thinking patterns and moral understanding of children at different age stages. For example, children who are at the concrete operational stage (around 7-12 years old) tend to understand religious concepts more easily through concrete examples and practical activities, while adolescents who are at the formal operational stage (12 years old and above) begin to develop the ability to think abstractly and can understand more complex moral values, such as the principles of justice and universal compassion in Islamic teachings.

The adjustment of PAI materials to the development of students also plays an important role in the formation of morals and daily behavior. An early understanding of religion, such as an introduction to God, worship, and social values, contributes to the development of a solid religious attitude. Meanwhile, in adolescence, a deeper understanding of Islamic philosophy, ethics, and the role of religion in society enables them to develop a more mature and critical spiritual identity (Umar, 2020). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has an important role in shaping students' spirituality, morality, and character (Puspitasari et al., 2022). However, the success of PAI learning is not solely determined by the material taught, but also by the extent to which the material can be adapted to students' interests, motivation, and potential. This is as found in the research conducted by (Daswati & Fitriani, 2023). It can be concluded that creativity has a significant role in supporting students to apply religious teachings innovatively in daily life. Students with a high interest in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) tend to show greater enthusiasm in understanding various religious concepts. In addition, recognizing and developing students' talents in certain fields has the potential to provide more meaningful learning experiences and increase students' active participation in the learning process.

Not only students, the role of parents and educators is also very crucial in supporting the development of talents, interests, and motivation to learn. Through support, direction, and

encouragement provided by educators and parents, students can be more encouraged and motivated to achieve optimal learning outcomes (Mardhiah & Julike, 2022). Students with a high level of learning motivation tend to obtain more optimal learning outcomes. This shows that the greater the motivation of students, the more intensive the effort made, so that it has an impact on improving learning outcomes. Motivation has a significant relationship with interest, where interest strengthened by strong motivation can encourage students to be more enthusiastic in developing their potential. Therefore, the achievement of maximum learning outcomes can be realized if students have high interest and motivation to learn (Hamdo, 2022).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a role in helping students understand, internalize, and apply the values of Islamic teachings in everyday life. The religious learning process does not only focus on the transfer of religious knowledge, but also aims to create comfort and happiness in practicing religion. Thus, religious education is expected to be able to provide a positive and peaceful spiritual experience, so that learners can feel a closer relationship with God and gain inner peace through the implementation of religious teachings (Winda Agustian, Hamengkubowono, 2020 B.C.E.). To realize this goal, educators need to design an innovative learning model and be able to motivate students. The development of a learning model that emphasizes comfort in religion includes the preparation of materials and methods that allow students to: (a) experience a deep spiritual connection with God; (b) foster gratitude and inner satisfaction; (c) build positive social relationships; (d) develop a flexible and inclusive spirituality; and (e) apply interesting and fun learning methods. Therefore, educators or teachers not only act as teachers, but also as mentors and counselors for students. One important aspect of this role is spiritual counseling, where the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher serves as a source of support for students in dealing with various problems related to spirituality, emotions, and morality. Spiritual counseling aims to help learners find solutions to the life problems they face, especially those related to the religious and spiritual dimensions, and to assist them in strengthening their relationship with God (Ningsih et al., 2024).

2. Method

This research uses the library research method, which according to Zed (2004), involves systematic activities in collecting library data, reading and recording, and processing research materials. Data sources were obtained from academic databases, journals, and books relevant to Islamic education and psychology. The purpose of this study is to deeply analyze the role of religious education through a psychological approach, assuming that students who have a good psychological condition tend to show motivation, interest, and talent in learning PAI. In addition, the role of educators as counselors is also considered crucial in supporting students' psychological conditions, so as to create comfort in carrying out religious teachings. Primary sources are data obtained directly from the original source while secondary sources are sources related to the subject matter and collected from other sources. Data analysis is the process of examining data with the aim of finding useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. The last step is the conclusion where the conclusion is a proposition or sentence that is conveyed, which is taken from several ideas and organized by inference rules. The conclusion is also the idea reached at the end of the conversation. In addition, in the data analysis process, it is important to ensure that the data used is valid and relevant so that the conclusions drawn are not misleading. This process involves significant data sorting, the use of certain statistical methods or analysis techniques, and the interpretation of the results by considering the context of the problem. Thus, data analysis does not only stop at presenting numbers or findings, but also includes a deep understanding of the meaning of the data so as to support appropriate and effective decisions. Data analysis is not only limited to processing and presenting information, but also requires precision in validating data, choosing the right analysis method, and interpreting results critically in the context of the problem at hand. Each stage in this process is interrelated to produce conclusions that are not

only logical, but also relevant and accountable. Therefore, data analysis plays an important role as an objective basis for making accurate and strategic decisions. Fig. 1 is the stage in this research method.

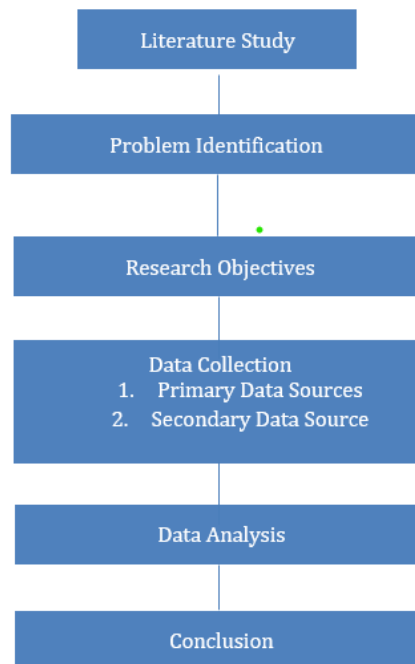


Fig. 1. Stages of research methods

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Religion Reccording of Physchology

Religion, in the view of psychologists, has a variety of interpretations related to its influence on individuals, society, and human mental and emotional development. Psychologists view religion as a complex psychological phenomenon that affects many aspects of life, including emotions, behavior, motivation and the search for meaning in life. The following are some of the main views of psychologists on religion.

- William James (1842-1910), a pioneer in the field of psychology of religion, viewed religion as a deeply personal and individual experience. In his work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), James emphasized that religion involves intense and subjective religious experiences, which do not always align with the formal doctrines of a religion. He considered religion as a source of emotional and spiritual strength that plays a role in helping humans find the meaning of life, feel inner peace, and provide solutions to existential crises William James (1842-1910), a pioneer in the field of psychology of religion, viewed religion as a deep and personal individual experience. In his work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), James emphasized that religion involves intense and subjective religious experiences, which do not always align with the formal doctrines of a religion. He considered religion as a source of emotional and spiritual strength that plays a role in helping humans find the meaning of life, feel inner peace, and provide solutions to existential crises (James, 2015).
- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the founder of psychoanalysis, had a critical view of religion. In his work *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud argued that religion is an illusion born out of humans' need for protection against frightening natural forces and fear of their powerlessness. He viewed religion as a form of collective neurosis, similar to the psychological defense mechanisms used to deal with anxiety and uncertainty in life. Freud argued that religion reflects a child's relationship with a dominant father figure,

where God is positioned as a protective father figure who provides a sense of comfort and security. However, according to Freud, religion tends to inhibit human development towards rationality and intellectual freedom (Freud, 2012).

- Carl Jung (1875-1961), who was a disciple of Freud but later chose a different path, viewed religion in a more positive way. Jung saw religion as an expression of the collective unconscious and archetypes that arise in the human psyche. In his work, he explained that religious symbols, such as God, demons, and heaven, reflect universal archetypes found in all cultures and religions, and have an important role in guiding human psychological development. Jung emphasized that religion and spirituality help individuals achieve individuation (full self development) by facilitating integration between the conscious and unconscious mind. For Jung, religion is an important means of healing and restoring one's psychological balance. (Jung, 2014).
- Erich Fromm (1900-1980), a humanistic and social psychologist, distinguished between authoritarian religion and humanistic religion. In his book *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), Fromm argued that authoritarian religions are those that demand absolute adherence to rules and doctrines, whereas humanistic religions are those that support individuals to develop freedom, love and self-understanding. Fromm viewed religion as a psychological need that helps people understand their existence and gives life meaning and direction. According to Fromm, healthy religions are those that strengthen people's ability to love and build relationships with others, while unhealthy religions tend to limit individual freedom.
- Gordon Allport (1897-1967), a personality psychologist, viewed religion from the standpoint of individual behavior and motivation. He distinguished between intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity is a sincere and deep religious motivation, where a person lives his or her beliefs authentically and uses them as moral guidelines in life. In contrast, extrinsic religiosity is an approach where religion is used to gain external benefits, such as social status or psychological comfort. Allport emphasized that intrinsic religiosity can be a source of positive psychological and moral strength, while extrinsic religiosity is often superficial and utilitarian.
- Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), the originator of the hierarchy of needs theory, viewed religion as one way to achieve self-actualization. In his book *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (1964), Maslow emphasized that religious experiences are often part of peak experiences, where individuals feel oneness, peace, and harmony with the world. For Maslow, religion and spirituality are important parts of human growth towards self-fulfillment and happiness. He emphasized that religion does not necessarily have to be associated with formal institutions, but can be a personal experience that brings meaning and a sense of inner peace.
- Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), an existential psychologist and founder of logotherapy, saw religion as a major source of meaning in life. In his book *Man is Search for Meaning* (1946), Frankl argued that humans have a deep need to find meaning in life, especially in the midst of suffering. Frankl believed that religious beliefs provide individuals with a higher purpose and a sense of meaning, which helps them persevere in the face of life's difficulties. Frankl viewed religion as one avenue that allows humans to find hope, strength, and purpose in the face of suffering and existential challenges (Frankl, 2000)

Psychologists offer a variety of views on religion, reflecting different approaches to its influence on human life. William James saw religion as a deep and positive emotional experience, Freud as an illusion that limits rationality, while Jung and Frankl saw religion as a means of healing and a source of meaning in life. Allport and Fromm provide views that emphasize the difference between authentic religion and religion used as a utilitarian tool. Despite their differing views, psychologists generally agree that religion affects people's behavior, emotions, and inner life in various ways. They also agree that spiritual experiences have a profound impact on the psychological well-being of individuals.

3.2. Analysis of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Materials

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a very important role in shaping the morals, character, and spirituality of students. As an integral part of the educational curriculum, PAI materials need to be designed and adapted to the cognitive, emotional, and social developmental stages of learners in order to be more effective in the process of delivery and understanding. Therefore, the analysis of PAI materials should consider the development of learners to ensure that the materials taught are appropriate for their cognitive, moral, social, and emotional growth stages. Each stage of development requires a different approach, so that religious materials can not only be understood, but also effectively applied in daily life. (Suryani & Ismail, 2020). The following is an analysis of PAI materials based on the stages of learner development:

3.2.1. Stage of Cognitive Development (Piaget)

Jean Piaget divided children's cognitive development into several stages that are closely related to children's ability to understand abstract and complex concepts, including religious concepts (Marinda, 2020).

- Pre-operational Stage (2-7 years): At this stage, children still think concretely and tend to understand religion through symbols, stories, and simple visual examples. Therefore, PAI materials delivered should be concrete, such as stories of prophets and the introduction of basic values such as kindness, honesty, and sharing. Activities such as storytelling or using pictures can help children understand religious concepts.
- Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years): At this stage, children begin to develop logical thinking skills, although they are still focused on concrete things. PAI materials can begin to include the introduction of simple religious laws and worship practices, such as prayer, fasting, and ablution, which they can learn firsthand and apply in their daily lives. At this stage, teaching methods that involve demonstration or practice can be used by teachers to facilitate students' understanding.
- Formal Operational Stage (12 years and above): At this stage, learners begin to develop abstract thinking skills. They are able to understand more complex religious concepts, such as the wisdom behind religious commands, religious philosophy, and deeper moral values. PAI materials can include discussions on Islamic ethics, the wisdom of worship, as well as discussions on deeper social issues from an Islamic perspective.

3.2.2. Moral Development (Kohlberg)

Lawrence Kohlberg develop theories about children is moral development that are also relevant for analyzing PAI materials (Ibda, 2023).

- Pre-conventional Stage (0-9 years): At this stage, children tend to understand morality based on consequences in the form of rewards and punishments. Therefore, in PAI materials, it is important to provide a simple understanding of the concepts of "good" and "bad" in Islam, such as reward and sin. Prophetic stories and examples from the Qur'an can be used to teach good values.
- Conventional Stage (10-15 years): Children at this stage begin to understand social norms and try to comply with religious rules with the aim of being accepted by their environment or group. PAI materials at this stage can emphasize the importance of worship as a social and moral obligation in the lives of Muslims. Emphasis on social obligations, such as zakat and congregational prayer, can be introduced in greater depth.
- Post-conventional Stage (15 years and above): At this stage, learners begin to develop an understanding of morality based on universal ethical principles that may go beyond the rules set by religious or social authorities. PAI materials at this level may include more in-depth discussions on the nature of worship, the purpose of life, the concept of destiny, and social responsibility as a morally and spiritually mature Muslim.

3.2.3. Social-Emotional (Erikson)

According to Erik Erikson, children's social and emotional development greatly influences the way they accept and practice religious teachings (Yenti, 2021).

- The Trust vs. Distrust Stage (0-1 years): Although children do not formally receive religious teachings at this stage, positive experiences gained from family affection can form the basis of a child's belief in God as a figure who provides protection.
- Initiative vs Guilt Stage (3-6 years): At this stage, children begin to take the initiative to learn and try new things. PAI materials at this stage can be designed to encourage children to recognize God through simple activities such as prayers, prophet stories, and fun religious activities.
- Industry vs Inferiority Stage (7-12 years): At this stage, children tend to want to feel successful and recognized. PAI materials can emphasize the importance of achievement in learning religion, such as memorizing short surahs or practical skills in worship.
- Identity vs Role Confusion Stage (13-18 years): During adolescence, children begin to search for self-identity, including religious identity. PAI needs to help them understand Islam as part of their identity, with materials that address ethics, social responsibility, and the purpose of life according to Islamic teachings.

3.3. Analysis of PAI Materials from the Perspective of Participants' Interests, Motivations and Talents

Learner development is strongly influenced by individual interest, motivation, and talent. Each learner has a different tendency to respond to religious learning, so PAI materials need to be customized to stimulate their interest and motivate them optimally (Hamid, 2021). To increase interest in learning, PAI materials need to be presented with an interesting approach, relevant to students' lives, and linked to issues they face daily. Motivation to learn religion can be enhanced through learning methods that involve active participation, such as discussions, debates or charity activities. In addition, providing an understanding of the practical benefits of religious teachings in everyday life can strengthen learners' motivation. Learners with particular talents, such as in art or communication, can be empowered through religious learning that involves art, drama or creative projects, which allow them to express their understanding of religion. Developing talents and interests is very important, and teachers have a major role as guides and facilitators in this process. Teachers are key in helping students achieve learning goals through guidance, direction and a positive attitude. Teachers also need to pay attention to violations committed by students, because if ignored, students can feel free to break the rules, which ultimately disrupts the learning process (Ammam et al., 2021). According to Dr. Howard Gardner, the originator of the theory of multiple intelligences, each individual has a different type of intelligence. Therefore, teachers must be able to recognize and develop the unique potential of each student based on their intelligence. The role of the teacher is not only to convey information, but also to help students develop as a whole. In this role, teachers educate, shape character, and nurture students' talents and interests so that they can reach their full potential (Harahap & Afrinaldi, 2024).

3.4. PAI Model for Religious Comfort

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Model for Religious Happiness is an educational concept that not only focuses on understanding the normative aspects of religion, such as sharia laws, but also pays attention to how religious education can support the psychological and spiritual well-being of learners. The purpose of this concept is for learners to feel happy and comfortable in practicing religious teachings, so that Islam can become a positive and meaningful integral part of their lives. The following are some PAI learning models designed to provide comfort in religion for learners.

- Contextual Learning Model, according to Johnson, is an educational approach that helps learners to understand the meaning of the subject matter by relating it to the context of everyday life, which includes their personal, social, and cultural environment. In this

model, learners need to understand the meaning of learning, the benefits obtained, their position in the process, and how to achieve it. They will realize that what they are learning has relevance and usefulness for their future lives (Mardatillah, 2023). Educators function as facilitators who help students to reflect on the values learned and apply them in everyday life. Educators must also be able to model the application of these values, so that students have concrete examples that they can follow (Meliza, 2024) Therefore, they will learn more enthusiastically and consciously.

- The Project Based Learning model is an approach that emphasizes the involvement of learners in solving real problems faced in the field. In this approach, learners act as professionals who try to solve problems that are relevant to everyday life (Mardatillah, 2023).
- Group Learning Model is a learning activity where learners work together in groups to solve learning problems through the principle of cooperation, which is a form of developing learners' social sense. This creates a comfortable and pleasant learning environment. The learning environment has a big influence on learners' happiness. Educators need to teach religion in a friendly, inclusive and loving atmosphere, where every learner feels valued and supported in their learning process. A supportive environment will increase comfort in learning religion and encourage learners to be more active in religious activities.

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) model that emphasizes the aspects of comfort and happiness in religion is a relevant approach to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also emotionally healthy and spiritually rich. By integrating spiritual values, humanist approaches, and materials that are appropriate to the context of students' lives, this model can help students feel true happiness in practicing religious teachings.

3.5. PAI Teacher as a Spiritual Counseling

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have a crucial role in providing spiritual guidance to learners, especially in facing moral dilemmas, identity crises, or emotional challenges related to personal, family, or social life. As spiritual companions, teachers can help learners to find solutions that are in accordance with Islamic teachings in overcoming these problems, such as providing advice based on the values of the Qur'an and Hadith, and helping them to reflect on their purpose in life as servants of Allah. For example, an Islamic Education teacher can provide guidance to learners who feel anxious or depressed about their future by teaching them the concept of tawakal (surrendering to Allah), and encouraging them to pray and ask for Allah's guidance in dealing with the problems they face. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers also have an important role in helping learners achieve emotional and spiritual balance by teaching them to align their feelings and actions with Islamic principles. In this case, teachers function as facilitators who support learners in developing self-awareness, self-control, and inner peace through religious teachings. As a practical example, teachers can teach the concepts of patience and sincerity when learners face difficulties or failures, and provide examples of how the Prophet Muhammad faced trials with patience and optimism. The purpose of spiritual guidance and counseling is to provide services that support the enhancement of students' abilities and develop their spiritual awareness in dealing with various problems. Students who have high spiritual awareness and positive attitudes are expected to impact and function effectively in various aspects of their personal lives (Putria & Syamsudin, 2023).

4. Conclusion

Effective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) requires an integrated and holistic approach, incorporating the spiritual, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learners. Based on the literature review, it appears that by taking into account students' psychological development, interests, motivations, and talents, PAI can be a significant tool in building mental and spiritual well-being. An approach that emphasizes comfort and happiness in religion allows religious

learning to be more than just the delivery of material; it serves as a tool to strengthen students' inner bond with religious teachings deeply. This study contributes to the development of Islamic education by offering a conceptual model that combines spiritual counseling and psychological insights in designing PAI materials, thereby enhancing both the effectiveness and emotional resonance of religious learning. This approach shows that understanding the important role of creativity, interest, talent, and intellectual ability in the learning process of PAI can open up space for learning strategies that are more varied, contextual, and relevant to students' needs. With this strategy, students not only feel more engaged and motivated in learning religion, but they are also inspired to apply religious values in their daily lives with a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding. The role of PAI teachers as spiritual mentors becomes very important in creating a meaningful relationship between religious teachings and students' daily lives. Through this guidance, religion can be understood as a source of happiness, inner peace, and the meaning of life that can accompany them in facing various life challenges. Thus, PAI not only functions as a subject, but also becomes the foundation for shaping students' character and well-being in a broader context.

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