

Beyond Memorization: An Islamic Religious Education Learning Model for the Internalization of Character Values

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has an important role in shaping students' character through the cultivation of Islamic values in educational settings. However, the learning process is still often centered on memorization and theoretical understanding, so the values taught are not always reflected in students' daily attitudes and behavior. This article discusses the concept of beyond memorization as a learning approach that emphasizes not only knowledge acquisition, but also understanding, appreciation, and the practical application of character values in everyday life. The study uses a literature review method by examining journals, books, and other scientific sources related to PAI learning models and the internalization of character values. The findings reveal that contextual, cooperative, problem-based, and multidisciplinary learning models can make the learning process more meaningful and relevant to students' real-life experiences. Character values are instilled through teachers' role models, habituation, advice, the creation of a religious school culture, and continuous interaction between teachers and students. Through this approach, PAI learning functions not merely as a medium for delivering religious knowledge, but also as a means of developing religious character, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and social awareness in facing the challenges of modern society.

Keywords: PAI, character, value internalization, learning, beyond memorization

Abstrak

Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) mempunyai peranan penting dalam membentuk karakter peserta didik melalui penanaman nilai-nilai keislaman di lingkungan pendidikan. Akan tetapi,

proses pembelajaran PAI selama ini masih sering menitikberatkan pada hafalan materi dan penguasaan teori, sehingga nilai-nilai yang dipelajari belum sepenuhnya tercermin dalam sikap maupun perilaku sehari-hari peserta didik. Tulisan ini membahas konsep beyond hafalan sebagai pendekatan pembelajaran yang tidak hanya menekankan aspek pengetahuan, tetapi juga pemahaman, penghayatan, dan penerapan nilai karakter dalam kehidupan nyata. Penelitian dilakukan dengan metode studi literatur melalui pengkajian berbagai jurnal, buku, dan sumber ilmiah yang berkaitan dengan model pembelajaran PAI serta internalisasi nilai karakter. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan model pembelajaran kontekstual, kooperatif, berbasis masalah, dan multidisipliner mampu membuat pembelajaran lebih bermakna dan dekat dengan pengalaman hidup peserta didik. Penanaman nilai karakter dilakukan melalui keteladanan guru, pembiasaan, pemberian nasihat, penciptaan budaya religius di sekolah, serta interaksi yang berkelanjutan antara pendidik dan peserta didik. Dengan pendekatan tersebut, pembelajaran PAI tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai sarana penyampaian ilmu agama, tetapi juga menjadi media pembentukan karakter religius, disiplin, tanggung jawab, toleransi, dan kepedulian sosial peserta didik dalam menghadapi perkembangan zaman.

Kata Kunci: PAI, karakter, internalisasi nilai, pembelajaran, beyond hafalan

A. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a significant role in shaping students' character. Through PAI learning, students not only learn to understand Islamic teachings theoretically but are also guided to apply Islamic values in their daily lives. Therefore, PAI learning cannot simply emphasize the delivery of material; it must also be directed toward fostering good attitudes, behavior, and morals.¹

In reality, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in schools still largely emphasizes memorization and mastery of theory. Students are often required to understand the material textually, but are not fully accustomed to internalizing and applying these values in real life. As a result, religious education sometimes stops at the knowledge aspect without significantly influencing the development of students' character.²

The increasingly rapid development of the times also brings new challenges in the world of education.³ Technological advances, changes in social patterns, and the influence of the social environment can influence students' attitudes and behavior.⁴ Phenomena such as declining discipline, a lack of responsibility, low social awareness, and even intolerance are common problems in educational settings. Therefore, a contextual and transformative

¹ B Prasetya, S Saifuddin, "Internalization of Character Education in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Al-Ta'dib*, 2020

² Sundari, RH Rambe, IR Putri., "Integration of Character Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning in the Digitalization Era at State Elementary Schools," *TA'DIBAN: Journal of Islamic Education*, 2024

³ Shiddiqi, A. W., & Kibtiyah, A. (2025). Strengthening Character Education through Islamic Education Learning Strategies Based on Islamic Boarding Schools. *Journal of Islamic Education and Islamic Boarding Schools*, 5(2), 95–105.

⁴ Fatimah, S., Eliyanto, E., & Huda, A. N. (2022). Internalization of Religious Values through Blended Learning. *Alhamra Journal of Islamic Studies*, 169–179.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning approach is essential to internalize character values in students.

In this regard, the concept of "beyond rote" presents a solution to create more meaningful learning. This approach shifts the learning orientation from mere cognitive mastery (memorization) to understanding, experiencing, and practicing Islamic values in everyday life. Through the application of appropriate learning models, students are not only required to be active in the learning process but also to actualize religious attitudes, discipline, honesty, tolerance, and responsibility.⁵

Based on these issues, this article discusses Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning models and the process of internalizing character values in learning. This study is expected to provide insight into the importance of PAI learning, which is not only theoretical but also capable of shaping students' character in accordance with Islamic values.

B. Literature Review

1. Islamic Religious Education (IRE)

Islamic Religious Education is an effort to guide students to know, understand, and implement Islamic teachings in their daily lives. PAI learning not only aims to increase religious knowledge, but also to form good attitudes, behavior, and morals.

2. The Concept of Beyond Memorization

The concept of "beyond rote" emerged as a form of learning that emphasizes more than just memorizing material. Students are encouraged to understand the meaning of the teachings they learn and apply them to real-life situations. In this way, learning becomes more relevant to students' everyday experiences.

3. Internalization of Character Values

Internalizing character values is the process of instilling moral and religious values so that they become part of students' lives. This process can be achieved through teacher role models, fostering good behavior, providing advice, and creating a school environment that supports character development.

4. Islamic Education Learning Model

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the use of learning models is crucial to facilitate understanding and application of the material. Some frequently used models include contextual learning, group work, and problem-based learning. These models help students become more active in the learning process.

5. The Relationship between Islamic Education and Character Building

Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in character reconstruction because its material directly relates to the dynamics of students' daily lives. Consequently, learning effectiveness is no longer measured solely by theoretical mastery, but rather by

⁵Tatang Hidayat and Syahidin, "Problem-Based Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education," *Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 18, no. 1 (2022): 118.

students' ability to actualize the values of religiosity, honesty, discipline, and tolerance in their social interactions.

C. Method

This research was designed using a library research method, examining various literature relevant to the topic. The literature review focused on secondary data sources, such as reputable journal articles and scientific references covering the theme of internalizing character values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

The data collection process was carried out systematically through the stages of selection and reduction of library materials. Next, comparable data was analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify, interpret, and synthesize key conceptualizations that align with the research focus.

Through this approach, the research aims to produce a comprehensive conceptual study regarding the internalization of character values and the mechanisms for implementing them in Islamic Religious Education learning.

D. Result

This study conceptualizes the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on a beyond-memorization approach in order to strengthen students' character. The main orientation of the research centers on the mechanism of internalization of Islamic values so that it is not merely a cognitive domain, but materialized in students' daily behavior. This theoretical exploration also integrates three important determinants, namely the significance of the learning model, teacher professionalism, and the school environment ecosystem. Through a literature review method that compares journal articles, textbooks, and previous research results, this study emphasizes the urgency of PAI transformation from a textual-memorative paradigm to an applicative-contextual learning.

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the learning process is still heavily focused on mastery of material and memorization. This condition often leads to students experiencing a gap between conceptual and theoretical mastery of religious teachings and their actual behavior. The religious knowledge acquired has not been fully internalized into concrete actions. This moral gap is indicated by low levels of discipline, a weak sense of responsibility, and a fading social sensitivity within the school environment.

Furthermore, the use of insufficiently varied learning methods makes the learning environment less engaging and tends to be monotonous. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning fails to fully address the character-building aspects of students. Therefore, a more contextual learning approach is needed, and the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning must be directed toward a more contextual approach so that religious doctrine does not stagnate at the cognitive level but instead transforms into social capital in students' social interactions.

E. Discussion

I. Synergy of Learning Models in Islamic Education

The application of various learning models in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has been proven to play a crucial role as an instrument for internalizing character values.⁶In the educational ecosystem, a learning model is not simply an administrative document, but rather a "lifeline" and strategic framework that serves as a GPS for educators. The accuracy of this model selection is a determining factor; if navigation is correct, students are not trapped in mere text memorization but are able to grasp the deeper meaning of each teaching.⁷Without a clear structure, religious instruction risks losing relevance and failing to engage with students' social realities. Therefore, designing a systematic learning model is a fundamental step in transforming the classroom from a mere place for transferring information into an environment where character is nurtured.

In line with these dynamics, the paradigm in viewing religion is now starting to shift towards a more inclusive direction.⁸Islam is no longer studied from a single, narrow perspective, but rather through a variety of multidimensional lenses. A historical approach explores the evolutionary roots of Islamic education, while an anthropological approach explores the uniqueness of local cultures in religious practices. Coupled with a sociological analysis that explores the dialectic of religion in social interactions, this combined perspective creates a more nuanced, contextual, and adaptive understanding of religion in response to the phenomena of modern society.⁹

In practice, each model has specific functions that complement each other. The Direct Instruction Model, for example, remains an effective "classic" method for delivering informative and normative material.¹⁰Such as the legal basis of Islamic jurisprudence or texts of evidence that require certainty of understanding. However, to hone social intelligence, the Cooperative Learning Model offers a solution through teamwork and collaboration.¹¹This model transforms the learning process from individual competition to a space of empathy, where students are invited to dissect ethical issues through inclusive discussions.

The Contextual Learning Model attempts to break down the dividing wall between abstract religious theory and the realities of life.¹²By connecting Islamic Religious Education material directly to students' daily experiences, learning becomes more meaningful and applicable. This is reinforced by the Problem-Based Learning Model, which molds students

⁶B Prasetya, S Saifuddin, "Internalization of Character Education in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Al-Ta'dib*, 2020

⁷I Sundari, RH Rambe, IR Putri., "Integration of Character Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning in the Digitalization Era at State Elementary Madrasahs," *Ta'diban: Journal of Islamic Education*, 2024

⁸Tatang Hidayat and Syahidin, "Problem-Based Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education," *Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 18, no. 1 (2022): 118.

⁹Aceng Kosasih, Cucu Surahman, and Mokh. Iman Firmansyah, "PAI Learning Model through Rational Building in Building Students' Moderate Character," *Proceedings of the PPKBK IPAI UPI* (2022): 57.

¹⁰F Fathurrahman, "Contextual teaching and learning model in Islamic religious education (PAI) subjects in vocational high schools," *Tarbawi: Journal of Islamic Education*, 2023

¹¹Dedi Kurniawan, "The Effectiveness of the Cooperative Learning Model in Islamic Education Subjects," *Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 2 (2023): 73.

¹²Abdul Rahman, "Problem-Based Learning in Islamic Religious Education," *Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 2 (2023): 91.

into problem solvers.¹³Through analysis of contemporary issues, such as Islamic economics and the environmental crisis, students are challenged to think critically and formulate independent solutions based on Islamic values, rather than simply being passive recipients of information.

As a projection of the future, the Multidisciplinary Model is the outlet for pedagogical innovation that integrates PAI with other disciplines.¹⁴such as psychology, science, and sociology. This approach is based on the principle that Islam is a comprehensive religion, and therefore should not be separated from general knowledge. Although it requires complex cross-disciplinary coordination, this model is the best strategy for eliminating the dichotomy of knowledge while equipping students with broad insights. Selecting a precise model contributes not only to cognitive success but also to the practice of Islamic values.¹⁵that is relevant to the complexities of today's world.

2. Paradigm Construction in Islamic Education

In the discourse of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), patterns or paradigms are not merely static theoretical frameworks, but rather cognitive instruments that determine the direction of educational navigation as a whole.¹⁶This paradigm serves as a strategic lens for educators to more precisely capture the nature and purpose of education, ensuring that the value transformation process in the classroom remains relevant. Accurately understanding this pattern is a fundamental variable, determining the effectiveness of the instructional design implemented. With a solid paradigm and proper understanding, teachers can develop learning that is not only effective in delivering material but also adapts to the diverse needs and challenges faced by today's learners.

To obtain a holistic understanding, PAI adopts a historical approach that functions as a collective memory in recording the evolution of Islamic educational thought from time to time.¹⁷Through historical exploration, educators are encouraged to critically analyze how Islamic education adapts to the dynamics of the times and the varying cultural contexts of each period. This approach provides valuable perspective on successful patterns of the past and serves as a warning against repeating similar mistakes. Furthermore, this historical awareness fosters intellectual identity and pride in the contributions of Islamic civilization to the development of global science.

¹³Bayanuddin Nasution, "Learning Methods and Teaching Techniques in Islamic Religious Education," *Educational Treasures* 17, no. 1 (2023): 70.

¹⁴Rizki Maulana, "Transformation of Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 4, no. 1 (2023): 42.

¹⁵Nur Azizah, "The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Character Building for Students," *Journal of Islamic Education* 10, no. 1 (2023): 19.

¹⁶Siti Nabila, "School Religious Culture in the Formation of Student Character," *Journal of Character Education* 12, no. 1 (2022): 73.

¹⁷Irodati, F. (2022). Achievement of Internalization of Religious Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning. PAI JOURNAL: Journal of Islamic Religious Education Studies, 1(1), 45-55.

Apart from historical aspects, the anthropological approach plays a crucial role in portraying religion in concrete cultural realities.¹⁸ Given that religion never exists in a vacuum, this approach recognizes that religious practices are always in dialogue with the socio-cultural context in which they exist. Especially in pluralistic Indonesia, the anthropological dimension helps educators understand that the diversity of religious practices is a richness of cultural expression that must be appreciated. With this perspective, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum can be designed to be more "down-to-earth," maintaining the substance of universal Islamic teachings while respecting local wisdom, so that religious material feels more organic and relevant to students' lives.

Complementing this perspective, the sociological approach positions Islamic Religious Education as a social process that is closely intertwined with the dynamics of wider society.¹⁹ Its primary focus is on the reciprocal relationship between religion and social structures, including how issues such as stratification, conflict, and global change influence students' experiences of religiosity. Through sociological analysis, religious education is no longer viewed as an isolated entity, but rather as an element that must respond to the challenges of modernity.²⁰ This understanding is very important for educators in designing learning that is able to address students' social anxieties and connect Islamic teachings with real phenomena around them.

The integration of these various paradigms ultimately has a transformative impact on classroom learning practices. Educators are now required to possess the intellectual flexibility to view religious phenomena from various disciplines while ensuring that the curriculum is designed contextually. Learning should no longer be confined to the cognitive level but must also extend to the realm of internalizing applicable values.²¹ By implementing the right patterns, PAI is expected to be able to form a generation of Muslims who have high spiritual integrity, sharp intellectual intelligence, and the capacity to make positive contributions to the welfare of the nation and state.

3. The Mechanism of Internalizing Character Values in Islamic Education Discourse

Internalization of character values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not merely a cognitive transfer process, but rather a systemic effort to instill moral values, ethics, and religiosity into the personality structure of students.²² The primary focus of this process is to ensure that these values remain not merely theoretical but are manifested in everyday

¹⁸Miftakhul Muthoharoh, "Internalization of Character Education Values through Islamic Religious Education Learning in Schools," *Tabyin: Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 2 (2022): 28.

¹⁹Sutrisno et al., "Internalization of Tasamuh Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Education Journal* 8, no. 1 (2022): 95.

²⁰Putri Salsabila, "The Role of Internalization of Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Journal of Education and Da'wah* 4, no. 1 (2023): 66.

²¹Umi Hasanah, "Strengthening Character Education through Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Al-Murabbi Journal* 7, no. 1 (2022): 45.

²²Sholihah, U., Sa'dullah, A., & Mustofha, I. (2022). Internalization of Aswaja Values in Islamic Education Learning for Generation Z: A Case Study of Al Ma'arif Islamic High School, Singosari. *Vicratina: Religious Scientific Journal*, 7(3), 97–106.

behavior. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a central role in shaping students' integrity, as its material directly touches on the foundations of faith, procedures for worship, the nobility of morals, and ethics in social interactions. This lengthy process involves a profound transformation of values, where the learning materials serve as a gateway to solid character formation.

Methodologically, the internalization of character values moves through three interconnected stages of psychological evolution.²³The first stage is value transformation, where educators transmit knowledge about important values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility through the learning process and delivery of materials. After that, the process develops into the value interaction stage, which is characterized by communication and an exchange of understanding between teachers and students, and reciprocal interaction between teachers and students through discussion spaces, collective worship practices, and providing real-life examples. The culmination is the value transinternalization stage, the phase in which these values have become firmly embedded emotionally and spiritually within students.²⁴thus giving birth to consistent behavioral patterns without the need for external coercion.

The effectiveness of this internalization is highly dependent on the diversity of educational instruments applied by Islamic Education teachers in the school environment.²⁵The implementation of these values is carried out through the orchestration of various methods, starting from the power of the example of educators who become central figures for students, to the habituation of structured religious activities.²⁶In addition, providing persuasive advice, using educational reward and punishment schemes, and creating a religious cultural atmosphere in schools are significant supporting factors.²⁷Research shows that a holistic approach to implementing this approach not only has implications for increasing students' personal discipline and accountability, but also significantly constructs social sensitivity and polite communication ethics in the social order.

The scope of values internalized in Islamic Religious Education covers a broad spectrum, starting from the dimensions of religiosity, honesty, to hard work and tolerance.²⁸This process should not be limited to classroom activities. The internalization process should not be confined to the classroom, but rather articulated extensively through

²³Nurul Hidayati, "The Role of School Culture in Internalizing Character Values," *Journal of Character Education* 13, no. 1 (2024): 57.

²⁴Yusuf Ramadhan, "Teacher Strategies in Instilling Moral Values in PAI Learning," *Modern Tarbiyah Journal* 5, no. 2 (2024): 84.

²⁵Anggraeni, D., & Maharani, S. (2024). Strategies for Cultivating the Character of Love for the Homeland through Islamic Education Activities at Al Khair Wal Barokah Islamic Boarding School. *Indonesian Islamic Education Journal*, 2(1), 85–94.

²⁶Handayani, D. C. R. (2022). Internalization of Character Values in Students Through Islamic Religious Education Learning at Bakti Ponorogo High School (Doctoral dissertation, IAIN Ponorogo).

²⁷Nur Mutiah et al., "Internalization of Moral Values through Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Pendas: Scientific Journal of Elementary Education* 11, no. 2 (2024): 102.

²⁸Muhammad Zainuddin, "Implementation of Character Education in Islamic Religious Education Learning in the Modern Era," *Nusantara Education Journal* 5, no. 3 (2023): 111.

extracurricular religious activities and the strengthening of a holistic school culture. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in organically integrating character dimensions into the curriculum structure. This strategic step is to equip students with a strong moral shield to anticipate value disruption in the contemporary era. Among the various pressing values, the value of *tasamuh* (tolerance) is paramount.²⁹ occupy a central position as a foundation for maintaining harmony amidst social plurality. Ultimately, the successful actualization of these values will realize the noble goal of religious education, namely to produce a generation with a balance between intellectual intelligence and spirituality.³⁰ and greatness of character.

4. Instructional Mechanisms in Islamic Education

The instructional process in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a structured system oriented toward realizing the educational vision, particularly in constructing the spiritual and moral dimensions of students. Thus, indicators of learning success no longer rely solely on cognitive mastery, but rather on the manifestation of religious understanding in the form of noble morals.³¹ Procedurally, this mechanism takes place through continuous and comprehensive stages, which include strategic planning, implementation in the classroom, and integrated evaluation.

The first crucial phase begins with thorough learning planning, where educators construct instructional tools. This stage includes formulating target outcomes, selecting materials, and determining methods and media relevant to student characteristics. Precise planning is the foundation for ensuring the educational process remains focused and aligned with the desired competency standards. Without a systematic planning design, the learning process risks losing orientation and failing to meet the diverse pedagogical needs of the classroom.

The next stage is the implementation of learning, which is divided into three main phases: initial, core, and closing activities. This process begins with initial activities focused on apperception and motivation to build students' mental readiness. In core activities, educators transform the material through a variety of methods, such as discussions, religious practices, and Q&A sessions, supported by the use of educational media. This process then concludes with closing activities, which aim to synthesize or summarize the material to ensure students' understanding is well-consolidated before the session ends.

The selection of varied methods is a determining factor in the dynamics of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning to prevent stagnation in student motivation. Educators are encouraged to employ more active techniques, such as demonstrations, problem-solving, and hands-on, hands-on learning. This diversification of learning methods plays a crucial role in transforming abstract religious doctrine into a more concrete and applicable form.

²⁹ Eka Wahyuni, "Active Learning Strategies in Islamic Religious Education," *Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah* 10, no. 1 (2022): 61.

³⁰ Dian Rahmawati, "Implementation of Character Education in Islamic Religious Education Learning in Secondary Schools," *Jurnal Pendidikan Nusantara* 6, no. 2 (2022): 90.

³¹ Laila Mutmainah, "Internalization of Character Values in Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Era," *Journal of Islamic Education and Technology* 2, no. 1 (2025): 44.

Consequently, the instructional process is no longer merely a medium for knowledge transfer but rather serves as a simulation space for students to actualize religious values within the dynamics of contemporary social interactions.

As a final stage, learning evaluation is conducted to capture the results of the learning evaluation, which simultaneously encompasses three main domains: knowledge mastery, internalization of values, and actualization of skills. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), evaluation goes beyond mere numerical assessment or test scores; its primary focus lies in behavioral change, moral transformation, and consistency in students' religious practices. This entire series of mechanisms, culminating in follow-up learning, constitutes a systemic whole oriented toward producing a generation that excels not only in intellectual intelligence but also possesses a substantial depth of religious character.

Conclusion

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has now undergone a paradigm shift toward an adaptive, dynamic, and multidimensional conceptualization of education. The success of PAI no longer relies solely on textual mastery of the material, but rather on the learning model's ability to connect religious teachings with the social realities of students. The integration of various approaches such as history, sociology, and anthropology provides a broader perspective, so that religion is not viewed as a rigid entity, but rather as an adaptive and inclusive guide to life amidst changing times. The process of internalizing character values is at the core of this entire educational series, which moves systematically from the transformation stage to the trans-internalization of values. In this process, the role of structured learning mechanisms, from thorough planning to evaluation oriented toward behavioral change, is crucial for the quality of educational output. Ultimately, the synergy between appropriate pedagogical strategies and the exemplary behavior of educators is expected to produce a generation with intellectual depth and strong moral integrity, serving as a shield against the challenges of globalization.

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