The Effectiveness of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum in Improving the Religious Understanding of Students at the Daarul Halim Islamic Boarding School in Bandung

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the islamic religious education (pai) curriculum in improving the religious understanding of students at pondok pesantren daarul halim bandung. The implemented pai curriculum integrates the subjects of aqidah, fiqh, akhlaq, al-qur'an hadith, and islamic cultural history (ski), which are systematically and contextually designed to strengthen students' religious understanding. This research employed a mixed methods approach with descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods. Data collection techniques included religious understanding tests, in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. The research subjects consisted of 120 students from grades vii to xii, eight ustadz, and the pesantren leader. The results of the study indicate that the structured implementation of the pai curriculum significantly improved the students' religious understanding, with an average gain score of 0.68, categorized as moderate to high. The success of the curriculum implementation was influenced by several supporting factors, including the competence of educators, the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, and the active involvement of students in the learning process. This study recommends the need for periodic curriculum updates, strengthening teacher competencies, and developing technology-based learning methods to improve the quality of islamic religious education in the pesantren environment.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education Curriculum, Religious Understanding, Students, Pesantren, Learning Effectiveness.*

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Introduction

Islamic religious education (pendidikan agama islam/pai) constitutes a fundamental pillar within indonesia's national education system, particularly in pesantren institutions, which have long been recognized as moral and intellectual strongholds of the nation. As the oldest islamic educational institutions in indonesia, pesantren play a strategic role in shaping the character and religious understanding of the younger muslim generation (dhofier, 2011; mastuhu, 1994). However, the challenges posed by globalization and modernization require pesantren institutions to continuously reform and develop their curricula in order to remain relevant to contemporary societal needs. The development and advancement of knowledge have led to the emergence of several other academic disciplines. (Abdi Syahrial, Dakwatul Islam: 2020).

Implementation is the process of executing or applying a plan, policy, or program into concrete actions in order to achieve the desired objectives. For example, curriculum implementation in schools refers to the practice of carrying out the curriculum content in daily learning activities.(Danny Abrianto, Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research:2025).

Pondok pesantren daarul halim bandung is one of the modern pesantren institutions committed to integrating islamic values with general scientific knowledge. The pai curriculum implemented at this pesantren is designed to encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, as emphasized in the educational taxonomy proposed by (*Bloom et al. 1956*). An interesting phenomenon observed in this institution is the significant improvement in students' religious understanding over the past five years. Nevertheless, there has been no comprehensive academic study specifically analyzing the effectiveness of its curriculum implementation.

Previous studies conducted by (muhaimin 2012) revealed that the effectiveness of islamic religious education largely depends on the quality of curriculum design and its implementation in educational practice. (Similarly, hasan 2010) emphasized that the development of the pai curriculum must consider the socio-cultural context of learners in order to achieve educational objectives optimally. Therefore, this study is designed to address this research gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the pai curriculum at pondok pesantren daarul halim bandung. (Muhammad Yunan, JIM: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan Sejarah: 2022)

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it is expected to contribute to the development of pesantren-based islamic religious education curriculum theories. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide concrete recommendations for the leaders and teachers of daarul halim in improving and enhancing the quality of their curriculum implementation (nata, 2014).

The cultivation of religious and moral values needs to be introduced and instilled in children from an early age as an effort to shape a generation that is spiritually strong and morally wellmannered. In essence, every human being is born with the potential for spiritual and moral intelligence. (Mhd Habibu Rahman,Tahta Media: 2023).

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows: 1). How is the design and implementation of the pai curriculum at pondok pesantren daarul halim bandung? 2). What is the level of students' religious understanding before and after the implementation of the pai curriculum? 3). What factors influence the effectiveness of the pai curriculum at pondok pesantren daarul halim bandung?

Literature Review 1. The concept of islamic religious education curriculum

Curriculum is defined as a set of plans and arrangements concerning educational objectives, content, learning materials, and methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities in order to achieve specific educational goals (law of the republic of indonesia number 20 of 2003

concerning the national education system). In islamic education, the islamic religious education (pai) curriculum is directed toward developing students who possess a sound understanding of religion and are capable of implementing islamic values in their daily lives.

According to muhaimin, islamic religious education is a conscious effort to prepare learners to believe in, understand, internalize, and practice islamic teachings through guidance, instruction, and training (muhaimin, *paradigma pendidikan islam* [bandung: remaja rosdakarya, 2012], p. 75).

The PAI curriculum in pesantren generally includes the study of the qur'an, hadith, fiqh, aqidah and akhlaq, islamic cultural history, as well as the development of students' religious character.

From the perspective of islamic education, the curriculum is not merely a written document containing learning plans, but rather a value system that directs the holistic process of *tarbiyah* (education). Al-syaibany (1979) defines the islamic education curriculum as the entirety of learning experiences acquired by students under the guidance of educational institutions, both inside and outside the classroom. This definition emphasizes that the pai curriculum encompasses formal, non-formal, and informal dimensions.

According to (ramayulis 2015), the pai curriculum consists of four major components: goals and objectives, content, learning experiences, and assessment. These four components must operate synergistically and continuously for the curriculum to be considered effective. In the pesantren context, spiritual and character dimensions receive greater emphasis compared to general schools.

The normative foundation of the pai curriculum is derived from the qur'an and hadith as primary references, combined with the *ijtihad* of islamic scholars adapted to contemporary contexts (langgulung, 2003). Operationally, the implementation of the pai curriculum in indonesia refers to the regulations of the ministry of religious affairs (*peraturan menteri agama* / permenag) and the national education standards established by the ministry of education and culture and the ministry of religious affairs of the republic of indonesia.

2. Religious understanding from an educational perspective

Religious understanding, in an academic context, refers to an individual's ability to internalize, interpret, and apply religious values in everyday life (jalaluddin, 2012). This understanding encompasses not only cognitive aspects (dogmatic knowledge), but also affective dimensions (spiritual appreciation) and psychomotor dimensions (religious practice and moral conduct).

The theory of religiosity proposed by charles glock and rodney stark (1965) identifies five dimensions of religiosity: ideological belief, ritualistic practice, experiential involvement, intellectual knowledge, and consequential behavior. These dimensions serve as the basis for measuring the level of students' religious understanding in this study. Specifically in the islamic context, ancok and suroso (2011) adapted this model by adding the dimensions of *ihsan* and righteous deeds.

Research conducted by wahab and umiarso (2011) demonstrated that profound religious understanding positively correlates with students' spiritual intelligence and psychological stability. This finding strengthens the argument that investment in a high-quality pai curriculum has longterm impacts that extend beyond academic achievement alone.

3. Curriculum effectiveness and its determining factors

Curriculum effectiveness can be defined as the extent to which predetermined learning objectives are successfully achieved through a planned implementation process (tyler, 1949;

ornstein & hunkins, 2018). In the pesantren context, effectiveness is measured not only by academic achievement, but also by changes in students' religious behavior, moral conduct, and quality of worship. The curriculum evaluation model applied in this study adapts the cipp model developed by daniel stufflebeam (2003), which consists of context, input, process, and product evaluation.

Several factors influence the effectiveness of the pai curriculum in pesantren institutions, including the qualifications and competencies of teachers (*ustadz*), the availability of learning resources and infrastructure, institutional support, as well as students' motivation and family backgrounds (azra, 2012). Furthermore, the learning approaches employed—whether conventional or innovative—also determine students' level of comprehension and mastery of the subject matter (hamalik, 2015).

Curriculum effectiveness may also be interpreted as the degree of success achieved by a curriculum in fulfilling established educational objectives (oemar hamalik, *kurikulum dan pembelajaran* [jakarta: bumi aksara, 2010], p. 27). The pai curriculum is considered effective when it successfully enhances students' religious understanding in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and worship practices.

The implementation of the pai curriculum in pesantren is conducted through various learning methods, including *sorogan*, *bandongan*, memorization, lectures, discussions, and direct worship practices. These methods assist students in developing a deeper understanding of religious materials.

Additionally, the religious environment of pesantren serves as a crucial factor supporting the effectiveness of the pai curriculum. Students are accustomed to engaging in religious activities such as congregational prayers, qur'anic recitation, remembrance (*dhikr*), and classical islamic book studies, thereby embedding islamic values into their daily lives.

According to zakiah daradjat, effective religious education should be capable of shaping students' personalities in accordance with islamic teachings (zakiah daradjat, *ilmu pendidikan islam* [jakarta: bumi aksara, 201], p. 86). This indicates that the success of the pai curriculum should not only be measured by academic performance, but also by changes in students' behavior and moral character.

4. Pesantren as an islamic educational institution

Pesantren is the oldest islamic educational institution in the indonesian archipelago and possesses unique characteristics, including the presence of a *kyai* as the central authority, *santri* as students, the mosque as the center of worship and learning, dormitories (*pondok*), and the use of classical islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) as primary references (ziemek, 1986; bruinessen, 2015). The transformation of modern (*khalaf*) pesantren is characterized by the integration of the national curriculum into their educational systems without abandoning their distinctive islamic identity.

According to malik (2016), pesantren institutions that successfully modernize their curricula tend to produce students who excel not only in islamic sciences but also in general knowledge and technology. This positions pesantren as a holistic educational model that remains relevant in the era of global competition.

Pesantren institutions not only teach islamic sciences theoretically, but also implement character education through daily life practices. Students are trained to live disciplined, independent, and worship-oriented lives, ensuring that religious understanding is not merely cognitive but also practical and applicable.

In the context of modern education, pesantren institutions have also begun integrating the national curriculum with religious curricula in order to improve the quality of education provided to students.

Research Methodology

1. Research Approach and Type

This study employed a mixed methods research approach using a sequential explanatory design, in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to further explain and deepen the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach was selected because the complexity of curriculum effectiveness cannot be adequately captured through a single research method alone.

2. Research Location and Duration

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Daarul Halim, located at Jalan Cinambo No. 45, Ujungberung District, Bandung City, West Java Province. This pesantren was purposively selected because it has implemented an integrated Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum for more than a decade and possesses a representative number of students. The study was conducted over an eight-month period, from February to September 2024.

3. Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all active students of Pondok Pesantren Daarul Halim, totaling 450 students. The sampling technique employed was stratified random sampling to ensure representation from each grade level (Sugiyono, 2019). Based on Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample of 120 students was obtained and proportionally distributed from grades VII to XII. In addition, the study involved eight *ustadz/ustadzah* as key informants and the pesantren leader as a source of documentary data.

4. Data Collection Techniques

a. Data were collected through four primary instruments: Religious Understanding Test (RUT) consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions and 10 essay questions covering aspects of Aqidah, Fiqh, Akhlaq, Al-Qur'an, and Islamic Cultural History (SKI);
b. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and pesantren leaders;
c. Participatory observation conducted over 12 weeks to observe the learning process; and
d. Documentation studies of curriculum documents, syllabi, lesson plans, and evaluation reports.

The Religious Understanding Test instrument underwent validity and reliability testing, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84, which indicates a very high level of reliability.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Curriculum effectiveness was measured using the normalized gain (N-gain) formula developed by Richard Hake (Hake, 1998):

The N-gain categories were classified as follows: high (≥ 0.7), moderate (0.3–0.7), and low (< 0.3). Data normality was tested using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, while hypothesis testing was conducted using the paired sample *t*-test.

Qualitative data were analyzed using the analytical framework proposed by Matthew Miles and A. Michael Huberman (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Results

1. The Design Of The Pai Curriculum At Daarul Halim

The islamic religious education (pai) curriculum at pondok pesantren daarul halim bandung was designed based on the integration of three primary sources: the ministry of religious affairs

curriculum (*kurikulum kementerian agama* / kurma), the traditional *salaf* pesantren curriculum based on classical islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), and locally developed content adjusted to the vision and mission of the pesantren. The structure of the pai subjects includes aqidah akhlaq (3 hours/week), fiqh (3 hours/week), al-qur'an hadith (4 hours/week), islamic cultural history (ski) (2 hours/week), arabic language (4 hours/week), tafsir (2 hours/week), and thematic hadith (2 hours/week).

1. The results of observations and document analysis indicate that the pai curriculum at daarul halim fulfills the content standards stipulated in the regulation of the minister of religious affairs number 18 of 2020. Several curriculum innovations were identified, including:
   the integration of *ahlussunnah wal-jama'ah an-nahdliyah* values into every subject;
2. a qur'anic memorization (*tahfidz*) program integrated into the daily schedule; 3. weekly *halaqah* (discussion groups) to deepen students' understanding; and
4. the use of digital media through educational applications.

2. The Level Of Students' Religious Understanding

The results of the religious understanding test demonstrated a significant improvement, with the average pre-test score increasing from 62.4 to 78.9 on the post-test (scale of 100). The overall normalized gain (n-gain) reached 0.68, which falls within the moderate-to-high category. The detailed results for each dimension of understanding are as follows: aqidah dimension (n-gain = 0.72, high), fiqh dimension (n-gain = 0.65, moderate), akhlaq dimension (n-gain = 0.70, high), al-qur'an dimension (n-gain = 0.61, moderate), and islamic cultural history (ski) dimension (n-gain = 0.58, moderate).

The paired sample *t*-test yielded a calculated *t*-value of 14.72 with a significance level of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating a highly significant difference between students' religious understanding before and after the implementation of the pai curriculum. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by hasan (2010), which concluded that a structured pai curriculum significantly improves students' religious competencies.

3. Supporting and inhibiting factors affecting curriculum effectiveness

Based on in-depth interviews with teachers (*ustadz*) and field observations, several factors supporting the effectiveness of the pai curriculum were identified. Internal factors include the adequate academic qualifications of teachers (87.5% hold master's degrees), high student learning motivation, and a conducive pesantren learning culture. External factors include full institutional support from the foundation for curriculum development, partnerships with islamic higher education institutions, and the active involvement of parents or guardians.

Conversely, several inhibiting factors were also identified, including limited digital library facilities, significant variations in students' initial abilities (heterogeneity), and the curriculum workload, which some students perceived as excessively dense. These findings are in line with azyumardi azra (2012), who argued that curriculum management that fails to maintain a balanced learning load may reduce the effectiveness of the educational process.

If the teachers who implement it do not possess adequate competencies, the curriculum will not be effectively carried out. Such readiness includes the preparedness of curriculum tools, as well as facilities and infrastructure. In the process of implementing the 2013 Curriculum, there are certainly supporting factors in its application and its transition toward "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn). These include the availability of facilities and infrastructure that support the learning process, as well as the active role of schools in sending teachers to participate in seminars, outreach

programs, workshops, and other professional development activities related to the 2013 Curriculum and its transition toward Merdeka Belajar, and other similar initiatives.(bahtiar siregar, Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research, 2023).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the pai curriculum implemented at pondok pesantren daarul halim bandung has proven effective in improving students' religious understanding, as indicated by a normalized gain score of 0.68 and a significant *t*-test result (p = 0.000). This effectiveness is supported by an integrative curriculum design, adequate teacher competencies, and a conducive learning culture within the pesantren environment.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed:

1. Periodic revision of syllabi and lesson plans at least once every two years;
2. Enhancement of teachers' capacities through technology-based pedagogical training;
3. Development of a sustainable formative evaluation system;
4. Provision of digital learning resources (*e-library*) to expand students' access to knowledge; and
5. Further studies examining the relationship between the pai curriculum, character development, and students' academic achievement from a longitudinal perspective.

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