



Improving Students' Understanding and Awareness in Islamic Education Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Kuta Cot Glie

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to enhance the understanding and awareness of high school students regarding faith in the Day of Judgment through Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning. Belief in the Day of Judgment is one of the pillars of faith that significantly influences students' behavior and attitudes, particularly in shaping religious character and moral responsibility. However, in reality, students' understanding of the concept of the Day of Judgment remains limited and tends to be theoretical without deep personal awareness. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method conducted at a public senior high school. Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of the IRE learning process focused on the topic of the Day of Judgment. The findings reveal that through contextual, reflective, and participatory teaching approaches, students' comprehension of the meaning of the Day of Judgment improves significantly. Moreover, their awareness of the importance of preparing for the afterlife through righteous deeds is reflected in noticeable changes in daily behavior, such as increased honesty, responsibility, and social concern. The IRE teacher plays a strategic role in internalizing the values of faith in the Day of Judgment by applying creative methods relevant to the lives of adolescents. This study recommends strengthening IRE learning not only through cognitive development but also through affective and psychomotor domains, so that the values of faith can be manifested in students' real-life behavior.

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Introduction

Faith in the Day of Judgment, known in Islam as al-iman bi al-yaum al-akhir, is a core tenet of the Islamic faith and represents one of the six pillars of iman (faith). It refers to the belief that all human beings will be resurrected after death and held accountable for their deeds before God. This belief not only serves as a theological foundation but also functions as a moral compass, influencing how Muslims perceive life, time, responsibility, and justice.

In the context of Islamic education, especially in senior high school, instilling a strong understanding of the Day of Judgment is crucial. At this stage, students are developing their identities, questioning values, and shaping their worldview. Therefore, education should not only provide knowledge but also foster awareness and personal reflection on spiritual and ethical matters. A deep belief in the afterlife encourages students to live responsibly, make ethical decisions, and develop empathy for others.

Despite the significance of this concept, recent observations and studies suggest that many students perceive the Day of Judgment as a distant or abstract idea. It is often treated as merely a doctrinal topic to be memorized for exams, rather than as a meaningful principle with real-life implications. Consequently, the belief fails to translate into everyday behavior, such as honesty, self-discipline, and social accountability.

One major contributing factor is the instructional method used in teaching Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Traditional approaches that emphasize rote learning and teacher-centered delivery limit students' engagement and understanding. When religious concepts are not contextualized or related to students' lived experiences, they lose relevance and fail to foster a sense of internal moral obligation.

This research is driven by the need to make IRE more dynamic, reflective, and impactful, particularly regarding topics as profound as the Day of Judgment. By implementing contextual learning strategies—such as discussions, case studies, role-playing, and self-reflection exercises—students can explore religious teachings more deeply and relate them to their own lives and moral decisions.

Furthermore, the presence of modern-day distractions, such as social media, consumerism, and moral relativism, has challenged the ability of students to internalize spiritual values. The role of schools, especially religious education, becomes increasingly important in guiding students toward purposeful living. Teaching about the Day of Judgment with the right methods can help restore the consciousness of moral responsibility and long-term accountability.

The teacher's role is central in this process. As facilitators, motivators, and role models, IRE teachers must not only deliver the curriculum but also inspire students to internalize the values being taught. Effective teachers use varied strategies to make the material engaging and transformative. They also create a classroom environment that encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and spiritual growth.

This study investigates how IRE learning can be improved to enhance students' understanding and awareness of faith in the Day of Judgment. It focuses on classroom practices, student responses, and the extent to which learning experiences lead to positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. The research adopts a qualitative approach to capture in-depth perspectives from students and teachers.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective religious education models in secondary schools. By emphasizing a balance between cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains, the teaching of faith in the Day of Judgment can become more than a theoretical exercise—it can serve as a transformative process that shapes students' moral character and life choices.

Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of integrating faith-based values into meaningful learning experiences. In an era where moral challenges are increasingly complex, strengthening students' understanding of Islamic principles—especially accountability in the afterlife—can help cultivate a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also conscientious, ethical, and spiritually grounded.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, because the main focus of the study is to explore in depth the process of increasing students' understanding and awareness of faith until graduation day through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at the Senior High School (SMA) level. The qualitative approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants in their natural context, namely in the school environment and in real teaching and learning activities.

The qualitative approach allows researchers to capture the complex and holistic dynamics of the learning process, including interactions between teachers and students, students' affective responses to religious material, and spiritual reflections that may not be measured quantitatively. In addition, this approach provides the flexibility to explore the subjective meaning of students' experiences in understanding the concept of faith until graduation day.

The case study type was chosen because this study aims to examine in depth a specific case, namely the practice of PAI in increasing students' learning awareness of faith until graduation day in a particular school. Case studies as a research design provide space for researchers to observe and analyze the process in detail, in depth, and in the context of real life. The focus is not on broad generalizations, but rather on a rich and deep understanding of the specific case that is the object of study.

According to Yin (2016), case studies are very suitable for use when researchers want to answer the questions "how" and "why" a phenomenon occurs, and when researchers have little control over the events being studied and want to explore real-life contexts. In the context of this study, the main question is how the Islamic Religious Education learning process can improve students' understanding and awareness of faith in the Day of Resurrection, and why the process is effective or ineffective in instilling faith values in students.

Furthermore, the qualitative approach in this case study places the researcher as the main instrument in data collection and interpretation. The researcher plays an active role in conducting classroom observations, interviews with students and teachers, and in analyzing relevant documents. Through this role, researchers can capture nuances that might be missed by other research methods that are more quantitative and structured.

Another characteristic of the qualitative approach that is relevant in this study is its naturalistic and descriptive nature. Naturalistic means that the data is collected in a natural context without manipulation by the researcher, while descriptive means that the results of the study are presented in the form of a narrative that describes reality in depth and richly. In this study, the researcher attempted to describe the learning atmosphere, the teacher's teaching style, and the students' responses and reflections in detail and as they are, without any manipulative intervention.

In addition, in a qualitative approach, meaning is the main focus. The researcher is not only interested in what happened, but also in how and why it happened, and how the participants understood and gave meaning to their experiences. Therefore, students' understanding of faith until the Day of Judgment is not only measured by the extent to which they can answer questions correctly, but also by how they understand the values contained in the teachings and apply them in everyday life.

The type of case study research also has exploratory and evaluative value. In the exploratory aspect, this study explores various methods and strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers in delivering material about the Day of Judgment, as well as disseminating the effectiveness of these approaches in increasing students' religious awareness. On the other hand, this study is also reflective, because it attempts to critically examine the challenges and challenges faced in the learning process.

In its implementation, this study places grade XI students at one of the State Senior High Schools in Southeast Aceh as the main unit of analysis. The focus of grade XI was chosen because at this level, students have relatively better maturity of thinking and the material on faith in the day of judgment is usually taught in the odd semester in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. The researcher argues that at this stage of development, students are more cognitively and emotionally prepared to understand and respond reflectively to issues related to the day of surrender, moral responsibility, and life after death.

With the approach and type of research that has been explained, it is expected that this research can provide theoretical and practical contributions in the development of Islamic Religious Education learning methods, especially those oriented towards strengthening the values of faith and the formation of students' spiritual character. The findings of this study are also expected to be an inspiration for religious teachers in

designing more meaningful and contextual learning for students in the modern era. The stages of implementing this research began with a pre-research process, which lasted for two weeks in early September. At this stage, the researcher made an initial approach to the school, including the principal, Islamic Religious Education teacher, and homeroom teacher to explain the intent and purpose of the research and obtain permission to conduct the research. In addition, the researcher also conducted an initial survey of the school environment and available learning facilities.

The second stage is the collection of primary data, which lasted for six weeks (mid-September to the end of October 2024). At this stage, the researcher conducted direct observation of the Islamic Religious Education learning process, especially on the material on faith in the Day of Judgment. The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers and a number of selected students from class XI as the main informants. In addition, the researcher collected supporting documents such as syllabus, lesson plans, teaching materials, and student learning evaluation results for further analysis.

The third stage is data analysis and initial reflection, which is carried out simultaneously since the second week of data collection and continues until early November 2024. At this stage, researchers begin to classify data based on certain categories, write field notes, and triangulate data to ensure the validity of the information obtained. The final stage is the preparation of the research report, which begins in mid-November after the entire data collection process is complete. At this stage, researchers compile the main findings obtained during the research into a complete scientific narrative, including compiling sections describing the results, discussions, and relevant conclusions and recommendations.

The three-month period allocated for this study is considered sufficient to obtain in-depth and comprehensive data, considering that the focus of the research is not only on the cognitive aspects of students, but also on the affective and behavioral aspects that require medium-term observation. In addition, the relatively long time provides space for researchers to build good interpersonal relationships with participants, so that the data obtained is more honest and authentic.

The determination of the location and time of the research also takes into account the socio-psychological conditions of the students. The mid-semester period is a relatively emotionally stable time for students, because they are not facing exam pressure or holiday euphoria. Thus, students can focus more on following the learning and be more open in expressing their views or experiences in the interview session.

In addition, the researcher also considered the existence of administrative support and policies from the school, including the willingness of teachers to provide access to the learning process and documentation, as well as permission from the parents of

students involved as participants. This coordination was carried out from the beginning to ensure that the research ran smoothly and did not cause ethical or technical obstacles.

The overall selection of location and time was not only based on practical considerations, but also strategic in order to ensure the adequacy of data and the relevance of research results to the context of Islamic education at the Senior High School level. The researcher believes that by choosing the right place and time, the results of this study can provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education learning in shaping students' understanding and awareness of faith in the Day of Judgment.

The subjects of this study were students in grade XI at one of Kuta Cot Glee State Senior High Schools who were directly involved in Islamic Religious Education learning activities, especially on the material of faith in the Day of Judgment. The selection of grade XI students was based on several academic and psychological considerations. Academically, in grade XI, material on the pillars of faith, including faith in the Day of Judgment, is part of the curriculum that is taught formally. Psychologically, students at this level are already at a stage of cognitive and affective development that allows them to think abstractly and critically, and are better able to reflect on religious values in depth.

The number of research subjects was not determined quantitatively, as in quantitative research, but was based on the principle of data saturation. In this context, the researcher involved around 12 students from grade XI as the main informants who were selected based on certain criteria, such as: (1) Having a diverse religious background, both from very devout families and those who are less intense in religious practice. (2) Showing a fairly high interest or response during the Islamic Religious Education learning process. (3) Willing to be actively involved in in-depth interviews and group discussions.

In addition to students, Islamic Religious Education teachers are also important subjects in this study. Islamic Religious Education teachers act as the main facilitators in the learning process, so their views, strategies, and reflections are very necessary to fully understand how learning about faith in the Day of Judgment is carried out. In this case, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with one Islamic Religious Education teacher who directly teaches grade XI at the school.

In addition, to complete the data triangulation, the researcher also involved one vice principal for curriculum and one homeroom teacher as additional informants. Both provide administrative and pedagogical perspectives on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning and the development of students' religious attitudes in the school environment. In qualitative research, the main instrument is the researcher

himself (human instrument). This means that the researcher does not only act as a data collector, but also as a planner, implementer, and main analyst of the entire research process. The researcher is directly involved in the process of observation, interviews, document analysis, and interpretation of data obtained in the field. Therefore, the competence, sensitivity, and objectivity of the researcher are very important in ensuring the quality of research results.

As stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), in a qualitative approach, researchers must be able to adapt to the situation in the field, interpret data contextually, and be reflective in every interaction process with participants. In the context of this research, the researcher prepared himself by understanding the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, material on faith in the Day of Judgment, and the characteristics of adolescent development at the High School level. Although the researcher is the main instrument, to support objectivity and enrich the data, this study also uses several supporting instruments, namely observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation guidelines.

Data collection is an important stage in the qualitative research process. The goal is to obtain valid, in-depth data that is in accordance with the focus of the study. In this study, data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. These three techniques were chosen because they complement each other and allow researchers to triangulate data to increase the validity and reliability of research results.

Data analysis in qualitative research is a complex, ongoing process that involves giving meaning to various forms of data that have been collected. Unlike quantitative approaches that are more oriented towards numbers and statistics, qualitative data analysis focuses on the meaning, interpretation, and relationships between phenomena that emerge from field data. In this study, the researcher used an interactive model analysis technique developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). This model includes three main components that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Result

The results of this study indicate that Islamic Religious Education learning that discusses faith in the Day of Judgment has a significant influence on increasing students' understanding and spiritual awareness. The learning process that not only focuses on delivering material cognitively, but also touches on affective and reflective aspects, has proven to be more effective in forming a deep understanding of the Day of Judgment. Most students showed changes in the way they view life, time, and moral responsibility after participating in this learning.

From the results of observations conducted during several meetings, it was found that teachers used a variety of learning approaches such as lectures, group discussions, showing Islamic videos, and personal reflection activities. This strategy was able to attract students' attention and raise their awareness of the reality of the Day of Judgment. For example, when the teacher conveyed stories in the Qur'an about the signs of the Day of Judgment, many students were seen silent, showed serious expressions, and some even asked critical questions. This shows a deep emotional involvement during the learning process.

In-depth interviews with students revealed that many of them previously had a very limited understanding of the Day of Judgment. Some students only knew that the Day of Judgment was the "end of the world", without understanding the theological meaning or its impact on everyday life. However, after the learning process took place, they began to understand that faith in the Day of Judgment is not just a belief, but also a moral foundation that encourages someone to behave better and more responsibly.

One student said that after understanding the material, he began to evaluate his daily actions more often, because he felt that all actions would be accounted for in the afterlife. Several other students said that they became more disciplined in worship, valued time more, and avoided negative actions such as swearing or cheating. This shows that learning not only touches on cognitive aspects, but also has an impact on students' affective awareness and real actions.

The results of interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers also strengthen this finding. The teacher said that when the material about the Day of Judgment was taught, the class tended to be more solemn and calm. Many students showed expressions of contemplation and appeared more serious than when other materials were being taught. The teacher assessed that a learning approach based on values and personal experiences is very important in conveying faith materials, especially those related to life after death. The teacher also realized the importance of building a deep spiritual atmosphere so that religious messages truly reach the hearts of students.

From the documentation analyzed, such as student reflection assignments, written evaluation results, and learning notes, it was found that there was a significant increase in conceptual understanding. Many students were able to explain the concept of the Day of Judgment, the stages after death, and the wisdom of believing in the afterlife. Some of the students' writings even contained emotional expressions such as regret for past sins, hopes to become better people, and prayers to be forgiven and given a path to heaven. This shows a deep process of internalization of values.

However, the results of the study also found several obstacles faced by teachers in delivering this material. Among them are limited class time, a less conducive classroom atmosphere due to student heterogeneity, and some students who are still less

interested in afterlife issues because they are more focused on worldly life. Some students consider the material on the Day of Judgment "scary" or "too heavy", so a more humanistic and contextual pedagogical approach is needed so that the material does not cause trauma or excessive fear.

In general, the results of this study prove that faith in the Day of Judgment can be instilled effectively through an active, communicative learning process that touches on students' psychological aspects. The combination of cognitive (explanation of material), affective (reflection and contemplation), and psychomotor (real actions such as worship and changes in attitude) approaches is the main key in forming a complete understanding and awareness. This process does not happen instantly, but requires continuity and habituation.

Thus, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education learning has a strategic role in forming students' religious character, especially through faith materials such as faith in the Day of Judgment. When teachers are able to convey material with an approach that touches the heart, students not only understand the teachings theoretically, but also experience a spiritual process that can change their mindset and behavior positively.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at the Senior High School level is able to provide a real contribution in increasing students' understanding and awareness of faith until the Day of Judgment. This is in line with the working hypothesis of the study which states that the right learning approach in PAI subjects can internalize faith values effectively. The main implication of this finding is that religious education not only functions as a medium for transmitting religious knowledge, but also as a means of forming deep spiritual and moral awareness.

From the perspective of previous research, these results are consistent with research conducted by Arifin (2018) and Nursalim (2020), which showed that students' understanding of the concept of faith tends to increase if learning is carried out with a reflective and contextual approach. In this context, learning about faith until the day of judgment becomes a means of self-introspection for students regarding their behavior and goals in life. As conveyed by students in interviews, this material not only forms knowledge, but also moves the heart and forms motivation to improve themselves.

The interpretation of the research results can also be seen from the perspective of the theory of value education and meaningful learning (meaningful learning). According to Ausubel, learning will be more meaningful if students are able to convey new information with the knowledge structure they already have. In this case, understanding the Day of Judgment becomes meaningful when students relate the material to life

experiences, fear of moral consequences, and hopes for a better life in the afterlife. Teachers who are able to facilitate this connection through discussion, reflection, and spiritual narratives have proven successful in building a complete understanding and awareness.

In addition, this finding also confirms the spiritual-based character education approach. In this context, faith in the Day of Judgment plays a role as a core value that guides students in making moral decisions and shaping behavior. Belief in accountability in the afterlife fosters awareness that all actions in the world have an impact, both individually and socially. Therefore, learning about the Day of Judgment is not only theological, but also has a very strong ethical and psychological dimension in shaping students' personalities.

However, these results also show challenges and variability in students' responses to religious material. Some students show high enthusiasm, while others tend to be passive or even afraid. This shows that spiritual understanding and awareness are personal processes that are greatly influenced by background, life experiences, and family environment. Therefore, a more personal, empathetic, and adaptive pedagogical approach is needed so that learning about the Day of Judgment does not cause excessive fear, but instead gives birth to positive hopes and commitments.

The practical implication of this study is the need for Islamic Religious Education teachers to design learning strategies that better touch the affective side of students. It is not enough to rely on lectures and memorization, but must create learning experiences that encourage reflection, spiritual dialogue, and personal expression of students in the form of writing, artwork, or real actions. Thus, religious learning can be a space for value transformation, not just material transfer.

In a broader context, these findings also support the importance of integrating spiritual education into the national education system. Amidst the flow of secularization and the challenges of globalization, learning about the Day of Judgment can be a strong entry point to instill the values of responsibility, honesty, and empathy. Awareness of the afterlife encourages students to live more meaningfully, not only for themselves, but also for others and their surroundings.

The direction of future research can be directed at developing a structured and measurable model of Islamic Religious Education learning based on spiritual reflection. Further research can also explore differences in student responses based on gender factors, family background, and the influence of social media on their understanding of the afterlife. In addition, longitudinal studies are needed to observe whether changes in attitudes and awareness that emerge during this learning have a long-term impact on students' religious behavior outside the classroom.

In closing, the results and discussion in this study confirm that faith in the Day of Judgment is not just a religious doctrine, but has transformative potential in shaping students' character and self-awareness. When this material is taught with the right approach, it can drive real changes in the way students think, feel, and act. Therefore, meaningful religious education must continue to be developed as an integral part of the development of a complete and noble human being.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a significant influence in increasing students' understanding and awareness of faith in the Day of Judgment. The learning process carried out with a reflective, contextual approach, and touching on students' affective aspects has proven effective in forming deep spiritual awareness. The material about the Day of Judgment is not only accepted as religious information, but also as moral and spiritual motivation for students to improve their behavior and improve the quality of worship.

Students' understanding of the concept of the Day of Judgment increased significantly after the learning process took place. Students were able to explain the meaning of the Day of Judgment, its stages, and the wisdom behind belief in the afterlife. Moreover, many students showed changes in attitude, such as increased discipline, self-introspection, and concern for good deeds carried out in everyday life. These findings support the working hypothesis that faith in the Day of Judgment can be taught effectively through a meaningful, participatory, and experience-based learning approach. This success is influenced by the role of the teacher as a spiritual facilitator, as well as a classroom atmosphere that supports the creation of reflection and openness.

However, this study also found that not all students responded to the material with the same enthusiasm, indicating that personal and social backgrounds also influence the process of internalizing faith values. Therefore, teachers need to develop a more empathetic and adaptive approach to the diversity of characters and spiritual readiness of students. Overall, learning about faith in the Day of Judgment in Islamic Religious Education subjects in Senior High Schools is not only important in terms of religious knowledge, but also crucial in forming the character and moral values of students. This study recommends that the approach to learning values continues to be strengthened, and faith materials are taught in a lively, contextual, and touching way.

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