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Transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning through an Emotional Approach

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Emotional approach, PAI learning, Learning motivation.

Abstract

The emotional approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning enhances students' understanding and motivation. Focusing solely on cognitive aspects is often less effective in shaping students' character and morals according to Islamic values. The emotional approach enables students to internalize Islamic values more deeply by engaging their feelings and personal experiences in learning. This study employs a literature review method by analyzing various scholarly sources discussing the emotional approach in PAI learning. The findings indicate that storytelling, experiential learning, and collective worship practices can increase students' emotional engagement, making learning more meaningful. Furthermore, a positive relationship between teachers and students and a school environment that supports Islamic values contributes to students' learning motivation. Therefore, the emotional approach should be more widely implemented in PAI learning to achieve more effective and impactful Islamic education.

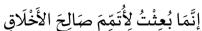
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Introduction

Moral, ethical, and justice values have eroded in the digital era and radical social change. Various problems such as conflict, injustice, and moral crises are the primary concerns. Anxiety about the future and stress pose a life challenge. This requires the urgency of having a solid and exemplary life guideline. Therefore, it must have a strong framework and examples to assist in navigating these difficulties. As the Prophet PBUH said:



Meaning: "Indeed, I have been sent (by Allah) to perfect good morals." (H.R. Bukhari & Muslim).

In the narration of Bukhari (*Kitab Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*), Ahmad, and Malik. This hadith shows that one of the main purposes of the Prophet PBUH was to perfect good morals, namely to teach and guide humankind to have good behavior and character.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a vital role in shaping the character and morals of students (Judrah et al., 2024). As part of the national education curriculum, PAI aims to provide a purely cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings and form a personality with noble character following Islamic values (Kamila, 2023). The learning approach often focuses on the cognitive aspect only without paying attention to the emotional aspects of the students (Ayyubi et al., 2024). This causes PAI learning to be less effective in shaping the character and morals of students.

The emotional approach in PAI learning is important because emotions are crucial in learning (Suriyati et al., 2024). According to Mirnawati et al. (2023), emotional intelligence contributes significantly to a person's success in life, including understanding and practicing religious teachings. In PAI learning, an emotional approach can help students feel better, internalize, and practice Islamic values daily (Rafsanjani & Razaq, 2018). This approach emphasizes how teachers can build an emotional connection with students, create a comfortable learning atmosphere, and arouse their feelings in understanding the teachings of Islam.

Previous research has shown that an emotional approach to learning significantly improves learners' motivation to learn and comprehension. Research by Muhtar et al. (2024) shows that positive emotions such as happiness, curiosity, and enthusiasm can increase learning effectiveness. Conversely, negative emotions such as anxiety and fear can hinder the understanding and internalization of the learning material. In PAI, many students feel that religious learning tends to be monotonous and less interesting because the approach used is more oriented towards memorization and theoretical understanding alone, without deep emotional involvement.

In addition, the emotional approach in PAI learning is also closely related to the concept of ta'dib, which is the process of character and moral formation following Islamic values (Anifah & Yunus, 2022). Islamic education aims to transfer knowledge and form human beings with high moral and spiritual awareness (Achmad, 2024). Therefore, learning that only focuses on the cognitive aspect without touching the emotional aspect will be difficult to achieve the primary goal of Islamic education itself. Muslim scholars and educators also emphasize the importance of methods that can touch students' hearts so that they understand Islam intellectually and practice its teachings with sincerity and awareness (Daulay & Dalimunthe, 2021).

Some studies show that PAI learning is often dominated by lecture and memorization methods, which tend to involve less of the emotional aspects of students in depth. The experiences of PAI teachers shared in various forums and publications also indicate the challenges of creating an engaging and emotionally relevant learning atmosphere for students, especially in information flows and global cultural influences. General surveys about students' interest and motivation in religious subjects sometimes show a decrease in interest as students age. This may indicate the need for a more innovative learning approach that can touch the affective dimension of students. Some teachers have tried integrating emotional elements such as inspiring storytelling, group discussions involving feelings, and self-reflection. However, in practice, there are still many PAI teachers who have difficulty applying an emotional approach in learning. Some obstacles include teachers' limited understanding of emotion-based learning strategies, the lack of training in learning methods to arouse students' emotions, and a less supportive learning environment. In addition, the evaluation system in PAI learning, which still emphasizes the cognitive aspect, is also one of the causes of the lack of attention to the emotional approach in learning (Sultani et al., 2023).

The emotional approach in PAI learning can be applied through storytelling and experiential learning. Inspirational stories from Islamic history, such as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions, can build students' emotional engagement, helping them understand and

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internalize Islamic values more deeply. In addition, the practice of collective and reflective worship can also increase emotional understanding of Islamic teachings, making learning more meaningful and memorable (Musyarrafah Sulaiman Kurdi, 2024).

In addition to learning methods, positive relationships between teachers and students and a conducive environment are important factors in implementing emotional approaches. Empathetic and communicative teachers can create a comfortable learning atmosphere and support the emotional involvement of students. Schools that instill Islamic values in daily life are also more effective in shaping students' character (Ristiantita et al., 2024). Therefore, further research is needed to identify the best strategies in implementing emotional approaches so that PAI learning is more effective and positively impacts the character and morals of students under Islamic teachings. For this reason, the author seeks to analyze the implications of the emotional approach in PAI learning.

Method

This study uses a descriptive analysis method with a qualitative approach to deeply understand the phenomenon of social media use by educators in optimizing collaborative learning in Islamic religious education. This method was chosen to describe the events that are the focus of the research without providing any intervention or special treatment to the observed phenomena (Sugiarto, 2015). Considering that the research aims to explore current phenomena through the study of previous studies, the researcher uses a literature study as a data collection strategy. This approach allows researchers to synthesize findings from various previous studies relevant to the research topic (John W. Creswell, 2018).

This study uses the literature review method to analyze the application of emotional approaches in PAI learning. The literature review examines various relevant scientific sources, including academic journals, books, and research reports that discuss the emotional aspects of Islamic religious education. The data collection process is carried out by a systematic method by (1) searching for relevant literature, which is collected through trusted academic databases such as Google Scholar, Google Books, Sinta, Garuda, Semantic Scholar, and ProQuest (Putri et al., 2024). (2) Identify keywords that are appropriate for the research topic. (3) Conduct literature selection based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, namely relevance to topicality, up-to-dateness, and (4) Credibility of sources. The data obtained were analyzed with a thematic approach to identify patterns, trends, and key findings in previous studies regarding emotional approaches in PAI learning (Utomo et al., 2024).

Research Results

Emotional Approach in PAI Learning to Students' Understanding and Motivation

Based on a literature analysis, the authors found that emotional approaches significantly affected students' understanding and motivation for learning in the context of PAI. When a teacher not only delivers material about the story of the Prophet Joseph chronologically, but also explores the emotions contained in each event. The teacher could use expressive storytelling techniques, with intonation that changed according to the sadness of the Prophet Ya'qub, the tension when Joseph faced temptation, or the happiness when they were reunited. When students feel empathy for the characters in the story, their understanding of the values of patience, faithfulness, and the importance of family becomes more profound, going far beyond just knowing the sequence of events.

Creating a warm and supportive classroom atmosphere by understanding and responding to students' emotions, providing support when they are struggling, and celebrating success indirectly fosters students' intrinsic motivation to learn. In an environment like this, students feel valued and are not afraid to ask questions, share ideas, and even make mistakes as part of the learning process. This is in stark contrast to a rigid classroom that only emphasizes information transfer, which has the potential to make students feel pressured and less motivated to be actively involved. To comprehensively understand the emotional approach in PAI learning, the subsequent analysis will be divided into two main parts, namely:

1. Learner Understanding

The authors found that emotional engagement is important in improving learners' understanding of PAI learning. With this, students can show the values of Islamic religious teachings, compared to passively receiving information. According to Goleman (2001), emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions and those of others and motivate oneself. In the Qur'an, this concept involves a deep understanding of the complexity of the human soul, which has the freedom to choose between good and evil. The Qur'an teaches that man is equipped with the ability to direct his soul, and God gives guidance to distinguish right from wrong. As Allah SWT says in the Qur'an surah Ash-Shams verses 7-10, which reads:

Meaning: "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption]." (Q.S Asy-Syams (91): 7-10)

The content of this verse shows the need to purify the soul from all negative behavior. This implies a mandate for humans to continue to improve themselves and distance themselves from harmful acts (Nur'aini & Hamzah, 2023). The author concludes that there is a significant correlation between the emotional experiences experienced by the students and the process of internalizing the values of Islamic religious teachings. The internalization of Islamic values means that learners not only memorize verses or understand religious concepts cognitively but also feel **and** understand their meaning for their lives, accept them as guidelines, and apply them in their daily behavior.

2. Motivation to Learn Learners

The emotional approach has a significant influence on increasing students' motivation to learn. Studies have shown that when students feel emotional support, rewards, and are in a positive learning environment, they are intrinsically motivated to learn more passionately.

Yusuf (2019) found that intrinsic motivation is essential for learning success. Internal motivation fosters lasting understanding. Thus, an effective PAI teacher must manage this through a challenging and engaging learning environment for intrinsic motivation and provide constructive external support to keep students focused on learning goals (Fitriya et al., 2025).

The author also sees that this spiritual aspect has excellent potential to encourage or motivate students. The motivation in question is not just an encouragement to get grades or avoid punishment, but rather an encouragement that comes from understanding the meaning and purpose of teaching itself. When learners connect with the spiritual aspect of education, they tend to find deeper and more personal reasons for learning. They not only learn to meet the demands

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of the curriculum, but also because they see the relevance of learning to their understanding of themselves, the purpose of life, and the values of Islamic teachings.

Through an in-depth analysis of various studies and field observations, it has been found that the emotional approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) holds great potential in shaping students' religious character profoundly and holistically. This approach emphasizes the importance of positive emotional experiences in the learning process, such as feelings of awe, gratitude, love, and empathy when students engage with religious content. Such experiences can create a strong emotional bond between students and the Islamic values being taught, enabling them to understand intellectually and internalize these teachings spiritually. In this context, Islamic teachings are no longer just memorized knowledge but have become deeply rooted values that influence students' daily attitudes and behaviors. This highlights the need for the affective aspect of religious education to be given equal attention alongside cognitive and psychomotor aspects to create more meaningful and long-lasting learning experiences.

Furthermore, the emotional approach has been proven to enhance students' intrinsic motivation in learning and practicing religion. Students who undergo emotionally engaging learning tend to be more enthusiastic, sincere, and consistent in participating in lessons and applying Islamic values in real life. For example, when teachers connect the material with inspiring stories or touching life experiences, students can better grasp the essence of Islamic teachings more meaningfully. As a result, the learning becomes more contextual and personal, making students feel emotionally connected to the material and their teacher. In the long term, this contributes to developing a stronger character, deeper religious awareness, and a more sincere commitment to Islamic values. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers must be more creative and reflective in designing learning strategies that can holistically touch the heart and strengthen students' spiritual dimensions.

Discussion

Emotional Approach in PAI Learning to Students' Understanding and Motivation

Emotional intelligence plays an important role in increasing students' motivation to learn. Teachers with high emotional intelligence can create a learning environment that triggers students' enthusiasm and interest in PAI learning. This implies that teachers who recognize, understand, manage, and use their own emotions and feel and respond appropriately to students' emotions will be more successful in fostering students' enthusiasm and desire to learn (Suhendra & Ferdinand, 2023). In other words, the ability of teachers to build positive emotional relationships with students, show empathy, and create an emotionally conducive learning atmosphere, correlates with increased student learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education subjects. To comprehensively understand the emotional approach in PAI learning, the subsequent analysis will be divided into two main parts, namely:

1. Learner Understanding

The emotional approach in PAI (Islamic Religious Education) learning has been shown to have a significant positive impact on students' understanding and motivation. Unlike traditional approaches that focus solely on transmitting knowledge, the emotional approach involves the affective domain, crucial in deepening students' comprehension of Islamic teachings. Jailani et al. (2021), students' understanding is not merely built through cognitive processes but is also strongly influenced by emotional engagement during learning activities. Emotional involvement can create

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a meaningful and memorable learning experience, allowing students to connect more personally with the taught values and concepts. When students feel emotionally touched by stories, real-life examples, or reflections related to the lesson, their learning becomes more impactful and internalized.

Supporting this view, a study by Depita (2024) reveals that emotionally involved students demonstrate a greater ability to understand and embody Islamic values than those who receive the material passively. This is attributed to the strong link between emotional experiences and the internalization of values, as learners tend to feel more connected and committed to what they learn when their emotions are engaged. For instance, when teachers use storytelling, empathetic discussions, or reflective exercises, students are more likely to personalize and apply the lessons in their daily lives. As a result, emotional engagement serves as a bridge between knowledge and practice, making religious education informative and transformative. Therefore, incorporating emotional elements into PAI learning is essential in fostering genuine understanding and lasting commitment to Islamic values among students.

2. Motivation to Learn Learners

Students' motivation to learn has significantly increased when an emotional approach is implemented in the learning process. When learners feel emotionally supported and appreciated by their teachers and the broader learning environment, their intrinsic motivation to engage with the material strengthens. Emotional support fosters a sense of belonging, security, and self-worth, essential for creating a positive learning atmosphere. According to a study by Arsyad et al. (2020), students who receive consistent emotional support from their teachers exhibit higher levels of classroom attendance, greater participation in discussions, and more enthusiasm in engaging with Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This increased motivation stems from the feeling that their personal growth and emotional well-being are genuinely cared for, making them more willing and eager to participate actively in the learning process.

Moreover, emotional engagement in learning is closely linked to developing spiritual awareness and purpose in education. The emotional approach helps students to identify meaning and personal relevance in what they learn, encouraging them to adopt an internalized learning orientation. Suriana et al. (2024) argue that this orientation is more enduring and profound, as students no longer view learning solely as a means to fulfill obligations, earn good grades, or avoid punishment. Instead, they perceive learning as a meaningful process contributing to personal and spiritual development. This perspective fosters a sustainable learning motivation beyond extrinsic rewards, allowing students to engage deeply and sincerely with the material. As a result, learning becomes a transformative experience that touches the heart, strengthens faith, and builds character, aligning well with the core goals of Islamic education.

A positive relationship between teachers and students also contributes to increasing learning motivation. Teachers with high empathy and good communication with students can create a more comfortable and enjoyable learning atmosphere (Maulia & Purnomo, 2023). Research by Hanaris (2023) reveals that teachers who show concern for students' feelings and emotional needs can awaken their confidence, ultimately increasing motivation to learn.

A conducive school environment also plays a role in building student motivation. Schools that instill Islamic values in various aspects of school activities, such as religious activities, school culture, and social interaction, provide a positive emotional experience for students (Djollong Andi

Fitriani & Akbar Anwar, 2019). (Mayasari & Arifudin, 2023) states that students in a school environment that consistently applies Islamic values show higher learning motivation than students who study in schools that pay less attention to the emotional aspects of Islamic religious education.

From the findings of previous research, it can be concluded that the emotional approach in PAI learning significantly impacts students' understanding and motivation. Through storytelling, experiential learning, positive relationships between teachers and students, and a conducive learning environment, students can experience a deeper and more meaningful learning process. Therefore, the application of an emotional approach in PAI learning needs to receive more attention in the development of teaching strategies to increase the effectiveness of Islamic religious learning in schools. The following is a conceptual table of the emotional approach in PAI learning:

Table 1. conceptual table of the emotional approach in PAI learning

Elements of Emotional Approach	Key Concepts	Implications in PAI Learning	Examples of Implementations in PAI
Emotional awareness of teachers	Empathy, self- reflection, and emotion management	Creating a safe and comfortable classroom atmosphere responsive to students' emotional needs and setting an example for managing emotions.	Teachers recognize and respond to changes in students' moods, reflect on the impact of their words and actions, and manage stress well.
Students' emotional awareness	Self-emotion recognition, recognition of other people's emotions	Improve self- understanding, develop empathy skills, and build positive relationships with friends and teachers.	Students are invited to identify their feelings when studying specific material, discussing the characters' feelings in Islamic stories.
Student emotional management	Self-regulation, impulse control, adaptability	Improve focus and concentration of learning, overcome frustrations and challenges, and develop resilience.	Students are taught simple relaxation techniques when feeling anxious, as well as practicing self-control when discussing or disagreeing.
Emotional motivation	Enthusiasm for learning, optimism, perseverance	Increase active involvement in learning, have a favorable view of PAI material, and not give up easily in learning.	Teachers associate PAI material with values relevant to students' emotional lives, providing constructive and motivating feedback.

Social-emotional	Empathy, active	Building harmonious	Students are invited to
skills	listening,	relationships,	discuss in groups about
	cooperation, and	communicating	moral issues, role-play
	conflict resolution	effectively, working	about Islamic social
		together in groups, and	interactions, and learn to
		solving problems	listen to the opinions of
		wisely according to	friends attentively.
		Islamic values.	
Positive emotional	Trust, respect,	Increase a sense of	Teachers establish
class climate	support, emotional	belonging and	positive classroom
	security	attachment to the	routines, provide
		classroom, encourage	students with
		active participation,	opportunities to share
		and create a learning	experiences, and
		environment	respond to students'
		conducive to spiritual	questions patiently and
		and moral growth.	attentively.
Emotional	Personal relevance,	Increase deep	The teacher uses
connection with	emotional meaning,	understanding,	inspirational stories from
PAI material	and value	internalize religious	the Qur'an and Hadith
	appreciation	values, and foster love	that touch emotions,
		for Islamic teachings.	inviting students to
			reflect on religious
			values daily.

Conclusion

The emotional approach in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a vital role in enhancing students' understanding and intrinsic motivation. This approach involves more than just delivering information—it seeks to touch learners' emotional and spiritual dimensions, thereby making the educational experience more holistic and transformative. Techniques such as storytelling, experiential learning, reflective discussions, and nurturing positive teacher-student relationships create a learning atmosphere that encourages emotional engagement. When students are emotionally involved, the internalization of Islamic values becomes more meaningful and lasting. Furthermore, a supportive and emotionally safe school environment is key to facilitating positive learning experiences. Such an environment fosters a sense of belonging and security, enabling students to be more open, reflective, and motivated in learning and practicing Islamic teachings daily.

Given the promising outcomes of this approach, the authors recommend that future research delve deeper into the implementation of emotional strategies in PAI across different educational levels, ranging from primary to higher education. It is also essential to investigate the moderating factors that may influence the success of this approach, such as students' age, cultural background, socio-emotional development, and teachers' pedagogical competence. Exploring these aspects will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional engagement can be effectively integrated into religious education. Moreover, future studies may consider longitudinal research to

assess the long-term impact of emotional approaches on students' religious character and moral behavior. By doing so, educators and policymakers can formulate more targeted and practical strategies to cultivate a generation that understands Islamic teachings and embodies them with sincerity and emotional depth.

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