

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in the Development of Students' Mental and Emotional Well-Being

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Abstract:

The increasing prevalence of mental and emotional health issues among students has become more evident in modern educational environments, including at SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan. Students face academic pressure, the influence of social media, family expectations, and complex social interactions. These conditions give rise to anxiety, stress, burnout, decreased motivation, and emotional instability, all of which impact the learning process and character development. This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in fostering students' mental and emotional well-being, as well as to identify the forms of guidance implemented by PAI teachers both formally and informally. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan. The findings show that PAI teachers play a significant role as educators, spiritual guides, and moral counselors who provide emotional support, habituation of worship, religious activities, and dialogical learning to strengthen students' mental stability. The implemented guidance includes reinforcing religious character, enhancing emotional intelligence, managing stress, and creating a conducive and Islamic-based school environment. The implications of this study highlight that Islamic Religious Education contributes strategically to the development of students' mental health; therefore, schools need to strengthen mental guidance programs rooted in religious values, improve the capacity of PAI teachers, and integrate spiritual approaches into all aspects of student development.

Keywords: Character development, Emotional intelligence, Student mental health,

INTRODUCTION

Education fundamentally plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of the younger generation, who are expected to be not only intellectually capable but also emotionally and spiritually mature (Gherasim, 2024; Jumaevich et al., 2021; Wenas & Verana, 2024). In an increasingly competitive global era, the educational system is required to produce students with strong mental resilience and the ability to adapt to various social changes (Herbers et al., 2021; Jin,

2022; Sahri et al., 2023). The rapid pace of modern life makes students more vulnerable to psychological pressure, academic stress, and emotional challenges that affect their learning processes. Therefore, education can no longer focus solely on academic achievement; it must also emphasize strengthening students' mental and emotional well-being. This shift highlights the importance of mental development efforts across all levels of education. Effective mental development helps students build a positive self-concept and develop self-control in facing various challenges (Mozaffari et al., 2024; Yanhong et al., 2021). Thus, the educational world must allocate greater space for enhancing mental and emotional aspects as part of efforts to support overall student success.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) serves as an essential component of the educational system aimed at forming holistic human beings (Rukmana et al., 2024; Shaleh & others, 2024). PAI not only teaches the cognitive aspects of religious doctrine but also shapes students' personality, behavior, and character. In this framework, PAI plays a strategic role in strengthening students' emotional maturity and mental health through the internalization of spiritual values that bring tranquility to the soul. These values help cultivate attitudes such as patience, gratitude, empathy, and perseverance traits that are essential in coping with the pressures of modern life. In addition, PAI provides a strong moral foundation to prevent students from falling into negative behaviors, emotional conflicts, and psychological distress (Abbas et al., 2021; Setiawati & Achadi, 2024). Religious activities conducted at school also contribute to the development of student integrity and self-control. Thus, the role of PAI is highly significant in creating a healthy and harmonious educational atmosphere oriented toward noble character formation.

In an increasingly complex social environment, students face various psychological challenges such as academic pressure, social conflicts, social media dependency, and weak family support. These conditions have contributed to rising cases of anxiety, mild depression, and emotional instability among students. Therefore, mental development through religious education has become increasingly relevant and urgent to implement systematically within the school environment. Through spiritual and moral values, students can attain inner peace and develop more effective emotional management skills. The religious values instilled in PAI function as a

psychological shield that helps students cope with the dynamics of life. This form of development also fosters self-awareness and reflective abilities needed to handle various pressures. Thus, strengthening students' mental and emotional well-being through PAI is an integral part of improving the quality of holistic education. This condition demonstrates that religious education holds an important position in responding to the psychological challenges faced by modern youth.

However, field observations reveal that many students today experience mental and emotional instability that significantly affects their learning processes. Various studies have shown that academic stress is increasing due to curriculum demands, peer competition, and insufficiently supportive school environments. Furthermore, unhealthy social interactions such as bullying, peer conflict, and social pressures have become major triggers for emotional disturbances among students. This condition is worsened by uncontrolled social media use, which heightens anxiety and undermines students' self-confidence. Many students also struggle to manage their emotions, making them easily angered, anxious, or insecure. Such mental unpreparedness decreases learning motivation and reduces their ability to adapt when facing academic challenges. In some cases, students even display deviant behaviors as a result of weak mental and religious development. These realities indicate that mental development through PAI has not yet been optimized in addressing students' psychological challenges.

A number of previous studies have examined the role of PAI in personality formation and the improvement of students' emotional quality. Most of these studies found that religiosity has a strong relationship with emotional stability and students' ability to cope with psychological pressure. Some studies show that effective religious learning can improve emotional regulation and foster optimistic attitudes in academic settings. Other research reveals that school religious activities—such as worship practices and moral instruction—positively influence adolescents' mental health. Through spiritual development, students can attain inner peace and reduce stress levels. Previous research also highlights that the internalization of religious values plays an important role in reducing negative behaviors and enhancing social relationships among students. Overall, these studies emphasize the importance of strengthening PAI as an approach to

developing students' mental and emotional well-being. However, previous research generally remains limited to behavioral or religiosity aspects alone.

Other studies found that the implementation of creative and meaningful PAI learning methods can significantly enhance students' emotional stability. These studies show that active, reflective, and contextual learning approaches foster students' deep understanding of life and spiritual meaning. Additionally, several studies emphasize that the quality of interaction between PAI teachers and students greatly influences emotional development. Teachers who model good behavior and provide emotional support have been shown to enhance students' sense of security, self-confidence, and mental stability. Some research also highlights the role of religious extracurricular activities as effective platforms for mental development among adolescents. These findings confirm that comprehensive approaches—through both learning and religious activities—can help address students' emotional problems. Nevertheless, most previous studies focus only on one aspect of development, leaving the holistic role of PAI in mental and emotional formation insufficiently explored.

Based on the mapping of previous research, there is a clear gap in studies related to the role of Islamic Religious Education in developing students' mental and emotional well-being. Most research only examines the relationship between religiosity and student behavior without deeply exploring the mental development processes occurring through PAI. Furthermore, studies that comprehensively analyze emotional development through learning, mentoring, and religious habituation are still limited. Some research also fails to explain in detail how PAI strategies contribute to building students' mental resilience in facing social and academic pressures. Therefore, research that examines the role of PAI from a broader and more integrated perspective is needed. Such research will provide deeper insights into PAI's contribution to the mental health of the younger generation. This gap demonstrates that further studies are crucial. Hence, the present study seeks to fill this void through a more comprehensive and in-depth approach.

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education in developing students' mental and emotional well-being within the school environment. Its primary objective is to describe how PAI learning contributes to strengthening students' mental resilience

in facing various life pressures. In addition, the study aims to identify the emotional development strategies implemented by PAI teachers both inside and outside the classroom. This study also seeks to evaluate the impact of school religious activities on students' emotional stability. Another objective is to uncover supporting and inhibiting factors in mental development through PAI. Thus, this study provides a holistic description of the effectiveness of PAI in shaping students' emotional well-being. It is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of religious education in schools. Overall, this study aims to provide solutions and recommendations for improving the quality of students' mental and emotional development.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach because it aims to provide an in-depth depiction of the dynamics of students' mental and emotional development through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within the school environment (Moleong, 2017). This approach was chosen to understand the social reality and PAI learning processes as they naturally occur, without manipulation or experimental treatment. The research was conducted at SMA Islam Al Fattah Pungpungan, an Islamic educational institution with active and systematic religious programs. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that the school implements various religious activities relevant to the study's focus on mental and emotional development. The researcher's direct presence at the school provided opportunities to naturally observe learning processes, teacher-student interactions, and daily religious activities. This naturalistic approach enabled the researcher to capture the meanings, values, and practices of emotional development occurring in context. The study also took into account the school's cultural characteristics and the unique traits of the students at SMA Islam Al Fattah Pungpungan as part of the phenomenon analysis. Thus, the qualitative approach offers ample space to obtain comprehensive understanding regarding the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping students' mental and emotional development at the school.

The research subjects include Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and school personnel directly involved in the mental and religious development programs at SMA Islam Al Fattah Pungpungan. Data collection techniques involved in-depth interviews, direct observations,

and document analysis related to religious activities and PAI learning processes at the school(Nurfajriani et al., 2024). Interviews were used to explore PAI teachers' understanding of the strategies they implemented to foster students' emotional resilience. Observations were conducted to directly examine student behavior, learning interactions, and the effects of religious activities on their mental and emotional well-being. Documentation consisted of reviewing schedules of religious activities, student development records, the PAI curriculum, and other relevant school archives. The research instruments included interview guidelines, observation sheets, and field notes organized systematically to ensure orderly data collection procedures. The researcher acted as the primary instrument responsible for interpreting data based on field context and realities. This combination of techniques yielded rich, in-depth data capable of authentically describing mental and emotional development efforts at SMA Islam Al Fattah Pungpungan.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing carried out continuously. Data reduction was performed by filtering and organizing key information from interviews, observations, and documentation to maintain focus on aspects related to students' mental and emotional development. Data display was presented in systematic narrative form to facilitate understanding of the relationships between findings at SMA Islam Al Fattah Pungpungan. Conclusions were drawn iteratively from the beginning to the end of the research to ensure that each interpretation was supported by valid data. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation to ensure accuracy and credibility. The research procedures were carried out sequentially, starting from the pre-field stage, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the final report. The study adhered to research ethics by respecting informants' privacy and maintaining objectivity throughout the entire process. With systematic data analysis and structured procedures, this study provides a comprehensive description of the role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering students' mental and emotional development at SMA Islam Al Fattah Pungpungan.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Mental and Emotional Condition of Students at SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan

The mental and emotional conditions of students at SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan exhibit a wide range of variations, from relatively stable psychological states to more vulnerable conditions that require special attention. Field observations reveal that while some students demonstrate good adaptability to academic and social pressures, others struggle to manage stress, anxiety, and the increasing academic workload from year to year. Factors such as family upbringing, peer environment, and socioeconomic conditions significantly contribute to students' emotional stability. Students from harmonious families tend to be calmer and more capable of controlling their emotions, whereas those from families experiencing internal conflicts show greater susceptibility to distress and have difficulty maintaining focus during the learning process. In addition, the strong influence of digital culture and social media affects their mental health, as many students spend excessive time on online activities that contribute to mental fatigue. This situation presents a challenge for the school to develop a comprehensive and responsive mental development approach tailored to the psychological needs of each student.

In-depth interviews with several students indicate that academic anxiety is one of the main triggers of their emotional instability. Students admitted to frequently worrying about their grades, competition with classmates, and parental expectations for high performance in every subject. This anxiety intensifies as students enter the final semesters, particularly for those in grades XI and XII who begin preparing for higher education. They feel pressure from multiple directions—school, family, and themselves—which leads to psychological symptoms such as lack of sleep, irritability, decreased motivation, and difficulty concentrating in class. Moreover, some students exhibit signs of chronic stress, characterized by persistent fatigue, feelings of inadequacy in meeting expectations, and loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed. This condition underscores the urgent need for educational interventions that prioritize mental health, not merely academic achievement.

Classroom observations and students' social interactions demonstrate varying levels of emotional regulation, and some students continue to show impulsive behavior triggered by minor conflicts both inside and outside the classroom. The guidance and counseling (BK)

department reports that the most frequent emotional issues include irritability, recurring minor conflicts among peers, declining empathy, and tendencies toward social withdrawal. These issues are exacerbated by intense exposure to social media, which shapes students' self-perception and promotes unhealthy social comparison. Students with low self-confidence are especially vulnerable, often feeling inadequate and emotionally pressured. Some students also display a pattern of reliance on social validation, such as likes, comments, and other forms of digital recognition. This emotional instability directly affects their learning process; students experiencing emotional disturbances show reduced enthusiasm, concentration, and active participation in class. This demonstrates that unstable mental and emotional conditions can become significant barriers to academic achievement.

Students' mental and emotional well-being is also influenced by the emergence of academic fatigue or academic burnout, particularly among those in intermediate and senior grades who face heavier academic demands. This burnout manifests as feelings of boredom, extreme exhaustion, and loss of motivation to engage in both theoretical and practical learning activities. Several students expressed that they felt unable to maintain balance between academic expectations, social life, and personal needs, resulting in difficulties managing their time and mental health. PAI and BK teachers note that burnout not only leads to a decline in academic performance but also affects students' emotional behavior, such as irritability, hopelessness, and an inability to cope with even simple problems. Therefore, the school needs to provide more structured support, including mental guidance grounded in religious values, continuous counseling, and character-strengthening programs that foster inner calm and enhance students' emotional resilience. With appropriate intervention, vulnerable mental conditions can gradually improve, enabling students to adapt more effectively to the school environment and daily life.

B. The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Mental Development

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher holds a highly strategic role in fostering students' mental stability, as their presence is not limited to delivering instructional material but also functions as a moral exemplar and character builder closely connected to students'

emotional lives. In the context of SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan, PAI teachers act as spiritual leaders who provide religious guidance and psychological support for students experiencing mental pressure due to academic demands or personal issues. Their presence in the classroom serves as a source of calmness for many students because the teaching methods they apply emphasize peace, wisdom, and moral exemplification. PAI teachers carry out religious coaching focused on strengthening faith, practicing worship, and cultivating noble character—all of which contribute significantly to improving students' emotional stability. By instilling a proper understanding of patience, sincerity, and inner tranquility, PAI teachers help students develop a positive perspective in dealing with life pressures. This role positions PAI teachers not only as formal instructors but also as mental caregivers who help students find a firm foundation in navigating daily emotional struggles.

Interview findings indicate that PAI teachers often act as moral counselors who offer guidance, psychological support, and direction when students face emotional challenges. PAI teachers are perceived as accessible figures because emotional closeness is cultivated through empathetic and attentive classroom interactions. Many students report feeling calmer after speaking with their PAI teacher, especially when dealing with parental expectations, anxiety over academic performance, or friendship issues that disrupt concentration. PAI teachers also respond immediately when observing signs of stress among students—such as loss of motivation, drastic shifts in behavior, or withdrawal from social interaction. In such situations, they conduct personal approaches to identify the root of the problem and provide reinforcement tailored to each student's emotional needs. Therefore, PAI teachers play a significant role in preventing prolonged psychological disturbances through humane, empathetic, and morally guided mentoring.

In addition to offering personal support, PAI teachers implement dialogical learning strategies that create space for students to openly express their feelings, experiences, and challenges. Learning methods that emphasize discussion, case studies, and emotional reflection have proven effective in helping students feel valued and heard, fostering a more supportive and mentally friendly classroom climate. Observations show that students become

more comfortable expressing their opinions and concerns because PAI teachers establish a safe, non-judgmental learning environment. This situation helps reduce psychological tension often caused by students' inability to express their emotions in healthy ways. Dialogical learning also enhances students' emotional intelligence, particularly in understanding their own feelings, respecting others' perspectives, and managing conflicts maturely. Through these approaches, PAI teachers create a learning environment that not only focuses on cognitive development but also facilitates stable mental and emotional growth.

Beyond the classroom, PAI teachers lead a variety of religious activities that serve as instruments for mental development and character strengthening. Activities such as communal dhuha prayer, morning supplication, religious study circles, short-term Islamic camps, and celebrations of Islamic holidays at SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan significantly contribute to students' emotional balance. These religious practices help students develop spiritual habits that cultivate serenity, resilience, and wisdom in facing life's pressures. PAI teachers guide these activities by ensuring that religious values are not merely taught but also internalized and consistently practiced by students. Through continuous engagement in religious routines, students learn to calm themselves, focus their thoughts, and reflect on life's meaning, which helps reduce anxiety, anger, and academic stress. Such religious habituation serves as a strong psychological foundation that equips students to face mental challenges more constructively while avoiding impulsive behavior.

Overall, the role of PAI teachers in fostering students' mental well-being creates a conducive learning environment that supports healthy and stable psychological development. Through humanistic teaching approaches, structured religious activities, and empathetic personal mentoring, PAI teachers successfully cultivate students' mental character to be calmer, more patient, and capable of thinking clearly in the face of conflict or life pressures. They instill values of self-control, trust in God (tawakkul), and the ability to interpret problems from a spiritually soothing perspective. These efforts contribute to students' increased self-confidence, stronger learning motivation, and better ability to evaluate situations rationally without being overwhelmed by emotions. Consequently, PAI teachers play an irreplaceable

role in strengthening students' mental resilience and serve as key pillars in ensuring that their emotional development aligns with Islamic moral values and character principles. Their presence demonstrates that PAI teachers are vital not only in academic domains but also in shaping a mentally resilient, ethical, and spiritually grounded young generation.

C. The Implementation of Islamic Religious Education in Students' Emotional Development

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in emotional development at SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan is carried out through an integrated approach that includes intracurricular activities, extracurricular programs, and daily worship habituation. Field observations show that PAI learning in the classroom is not only focused on delivering material but is also directed toward fostering students' emotional intelligence through dialogue, religious discussions, and personal reflection. Students are encouraged to reflect on their attitudes, thoughts, and emotional responses to various moral and social issues encountered in daily life. This learning process provides ample space for students to develop self-awareness, understand their feelings, and regulate emotions in a positive manner. Through this humanistic and participatory approach, PAI teachers have succeeded in creating a classroom environment that supports students' emotional development, enabling them to manage anxiety, build empathy, and enhance patience. This emotional guidance serves as an essential foundation for forming balanced emotional character, especially amid the growing academic and social pressures faced by students today.

In the classroom, emotional development is implemented through learning methods that emphasize "dialogue of the heart," self-reflection, and case analysis of moral problems commonly faced by students. Dialogue-based learning allows students to openly express their emotional experiences, while teachers provide guidance on how to respond to such situations in accordance with noble moral values. Through self-reflection, students learn to evaluate their actions, understand sources of anger, and identify stress triggers so they can regulate their emotions appropriately. Case studies discussed in PAI lessons help students understand complex social situations and develop the ability to make wise decisions when dealing with

conflicts. Observations indicate that this method has a significant impact on improving students' ability to think calmly, avoid reactive behavior, and respond more rationally under pressure. Thus, the PAI learning process not only enhances cognitive abilities but also provides space for students to develop strong and sustainable emotional stability.

Outside the classroom, emotional development is strengthened through extracurricular activities and non-formal programs such as religious mentoring, group discussions, and personal counseling provided by PAI teachers and school mentors. These activities give students the opportunity to express their emotions and personal experiences in a safe environment without fear of judgment. Mentors or supervising teachers assist students in unpacking the emotional challenges they face and teach stress management techniques grounded in moral and spiritual values. Observations show that students who actively participate in religious activities appear more emotionally stable, more cooperative in group settings, and more capable of controlling anger in stressful situations. These non-formal activities also foster empathy and solidarity among students, as they learn from one another's experiences. Thus, such programs function as important mediums for reinforcing students' emotional resilience through more personal and in-depth guidance.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education in emotional development becomes even more effective with school policies that emphasize religious culture, ethical conduct, and a respectful environment. The school enforces a culture of greeting, smiling, and polite communication as part of moral habituation that influences students' emotional interactions. PAI teachers collaborate with homeroom teachers, guidance counselors, and student affairs personnel to ensure that moral values are applied not only in formal activities but also in daily life within the school environment. This integration of moral values affects how students handle conflicts, maintain social relationships, and cope with emerging mental challenges. Such a comprehensive implementation ensures that emotional development is not only visible in students' outward behavior but also reflected in changes in mindset, attitudes, and habits when dealing with various social issues. The presence of a supportive religious environment makes the school a holistic emotional development space where spiritual values

serve as sources of calmness and mental strength for students.

CONCLUSION

The mental and emotional development of students at SMA Islam Al-Fattah Pungpungan is carried out through an integrative approach that includes character strengthening, psychological support, and the internalization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values. The diverse mental conditions of students ranging from stable to vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and burnout indicate the need for educational interventions that focus not only on academic performance but also on psychological well-being. PAI teachers play a central role as educators, spiritual mentors, and moral counselors who provide exemplary behavior, personal guidance, and dialogic learning approaches to help students manage their emotions, develop empathy, and strengthen their resilience. The implementation of PAI through intracurricular learning, religious activities, worship habituation, mentoring, and a religious school environment has proven effective in shaping students' emotional character making them more patient, calm, disciplined, and able to think clearly when facing pressure. Thus, Islamic Religious Education makes a significant contribution to fostering students' mental stability and strengthening emotional resilience in alignment with noble moral values and a school culture grounded in Islamic spirituality.

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