



The Implementation of Interactive Methods in Islamic Religious Education Learning at RA Masjid Al-Azhar, Permata Puri, Semarang

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the Early Childhood Education stage plays an important role in shaping children's religious values and behaviour. The main challenge faced by ECE teachers today is how to present IRE material effectively so that it is easily understood by students. This study aims to analyse the application of interactive learning in improving children's understanding of PAI material at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri. The study uses a qualitative approach with a field study method. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that interactive learning is applied through group activities, practical activities, and the direct involvement of children in the learning process. The findings also indicate that this strategy is able to increase the enthusiasm, participation, and conceptual understanding of students towards PAI material. Thus, interactive learning is considered relevant and effective in supporting the success of PAI learning in early childhood.

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is an important stage in human development for the formation of self-capacity or foundation for humans between the ages of 0-6 years in preparation for further education, often referred to as pre- primary school (Poewarti et al., 2025). The objectives of this stage of education are to optimise potential early childhood development, which includes social-emotional aspects, religious aspects, cognitive aspects, motor aspects (fine and gross motor skills), and artistic aspects (Khadijah, 2015). In addition, Mardyawati Yunus' opinion states that the development of attitudes, knowledge and creativity in accordance with the surrounding environment is the goal of Early Childhood Education, especially in the Islamic perspective (Yunus, 2016). This opinion is in line with what Wathoni has stated in his writing, that early childhood education is aimed at acquiring worldly and spiritual knowledge so that happiness in this world and the hereafter can be achieved (Wathoni, 2020). Thus, education at this stage has an essential purpose, namely to

stimulate humans to continue learning and to shape their character. This provides evidence that early childhood education has a crucial urgency in the stages of human education.

Religious learning is an important instrument in early childhood education, especially in Islamic educational institutions, often referred to as Islamic religious education or PAI. In the context of Early Childhood Education, Islamic Religious Education covers two aspects, namely tauhid and worship (Darmawan & Abdullah, 2023). It can take the form of reading and writing Iqro', daily prayers or short surahs, and the practice of prayer (Nurfarida et al., 2021). At first glance, Islamic Religious Education is closely related to the fundamentals of Islam. This enables students to learn and understand the basic tenets of Islam itself. However, upon closer examination, the impact of this learning goes beyond a basic understanding of monotheism and Islamic law. This is reflected in the objectives and role of Islamic Religious Education itself.

According to Cindy and Nurvinayani, Islamic religious education has an urgent role in the process of shaping children's character and personality (Mulaicin & Nurvinayani, 2023). It also plays a role in moral and spiritual development (Darmawan & Abdullah, 2023). More comprehensively, Konik Naimah mentions that Islamic Religious Education aims at several aspects, such as attitude, knowledge, skills, creativity, and conscience (Naimah, 2020). Therefore, from this description of urgency, it can be said that Islamic Religious Education has three important influences on students, namely knowledge, character, and spirituality. This means that maximizing Islamic Religious Education learning at the early childhood stage can provide fundamental foundations in human beings. Considering the various objectives mentioned above, the Islamic Religious Education learning process is very important in Early Childhood Education. Successful delivery of the material enables students to prepare themselves well for both their education and future life. Thus, the key formula in the Islamic Religious Education learning process is the focus of Early Childhood Education. The main key lies in the learning process between teachers and students.

However, in reality, the Islamic Religious Education learning process has its own challenges, both from the perspective of teachers and students. Several studies have shown the general problems that occur in the process at the early childhood level, such as teachers who only focus on cognitive aspects or final results without looking at the teaching and learning process (Kudadiri, 2019), the diversity of characteristics and abilities of early childhood (El Barusi & Rahimah, 2025), and can also to support facilities (Salsabila & Haeruddin, 2024). If we look closely, the learning process in early childhood education is very complex. This can be seen in the capacity of teachers to understand the concepts and techniques used during learning, the conditions of each student, and the facilities available to support education. Therefore, early childhood education institutions and educators must develop a new formula in the learning process so that the material to be delivered can be conveyed as expected. Of course, when linked to the process of Islamic Religious Education in early childhood education, there is a correlation. This is because these general challenges can occur in the Islamic Religious Education learning process at the early childhood level.

One way to overcome this problem is to use interactive learning as a solution in the Islamic education learning process at the early childhood level. This is because the learning model is quite different from the traditional learning model. According to Handoko,

interactive learning is a learning process that focuses on students (Handoko, 2020). This means that education prioritises students as the main instrument and teachers as facilitators. In line with this opinion, interactive communication learning provides breadth to students by avoiding teachers in the learning process (Sutikno, 2019). This means that interaction allows for reciprocity between the two, and students are required to be more active. The most important aspect of this learning model is that it leads to constructivism (Hakim, 2021). This shows that the concept of interactive learning provides space for students to actively grasp the material taught by the teacher.

Ramlan Muhammad writes that the interactions that occur in this learning model have complex communication directions, between teachers and students, students and students, students and material, and students and their surroundings (Kamaruddin, et al., 2022). Thus, the learning process does not only focus on the teacher-student teaching aspect, but more than that, it focuses on all interactions that occur during the learning process. This allows students to make more exploratory efforts, thereby optimising everything within the learners, especially knowledge transfer and self-development. Still in Ramlan Muhammad's writing, interactive learning is expected to create three aspects in students, namely thinking, social and practical skills (Kamaruddin, et al., 2022). This provides the complexity of the impact of the interactive learning process on students.

Interactive learning can be used to deliver Islamic Religious Education material at the AUD education level. This is because the teaching problems that occur at this education level, especially in delivering PAI material, can be optimally addressed through interactive learning. This stems from the fact that Islamic religious education material is not only theoretical but also practical. This means that the content of the material requires learning that is able to accommodate theory and practice in a balanced manner by making students the subject so that they are interested in learning. This is as stated by Agus Darmawan and Abdullah that creative, interactive and role-playing methods can increase children's interest and participation (Darmawan & Abdullah 2023). Therefore, interactive learning can be one of the strategies in Islamic education at the early childhood education level.

One of the early childhood education levels that implements interactive learning in the teaching of Islamic Religious Education is Raudhotul Athfal (RA) Al-Azhar Mosque in Permata Puri. The learning aspect focuses on the basic understanding of Islam for students. In general, RA Al-Azhar Mosque Permata Puri has an academic genealogy that places Islamic teachings as its foundation. Therefore, Islamic religious education is one of the academic disciplines that is highly focused on in the learning process. In initial observations, the researcher found that the teaching and learning process carried out by educational institutions not only refers to academic potential but also focuses on the development and character building of students based on religious principles.

According to the researcher, the most unique aspect is the Islamic religious learning process applied in the school. The learning process emphasises the ability to stimulate students to learn and understand the Islamic religious learning materials presented. The process uses interactive learning that allows children to actively participate and be involved. The learning models are designed to provide space for students to directly grasp what is being

taught. This is where the uniqueness lies. RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri emphasises the principle of interactive learning, which allows students to respond directly to the material.

This study departs from previous studies, including research by Fauzi Rahmanul Hakim, which shows that interactive learning is quite effective in motivating and improving learning achievement (Hakim, 2021). Another study conducted by Beben & Nurul also shows that interactive learning demonstrates that after implementing interactive education, there is an increase in learning enthusiasm as well as mutual self-confidence and active students (Salahudin & Hidayah, 2025). Furthermore, research conducted by Apriyani Lestari Kuladiri (Kudadiri, 2019) revealed that there are three difficulties in the process of learning Islam, namely students, teachers, facilities and infrastructure. The solution to overcome this is to use the eight types of learning proposed by Robert M. Gagne. Finally, research by Rida Nurfarida et al. shows that Islamic religious education can be easily accepted by students with the right methods according to the context of what they are learning (Nurfarida et al., 2021).

Based on the above studies, research on the application of interactive PAI learning models at RA Al-Azhar Permata Puri has never been conducted. This is because interactive research at RA Masjid al-Azhar Permata Puri. Therefore, the researcher attempts to describe the application of interactive learning at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri. In addition, the researcher also wants to see the extent to which this application is able to provide an understanding of Islamic religious learning materials to students at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri.

METHODS

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research attempts to focus on describing an object, whether in terms of its characteristics, values, or phenomena that occur (Abdussamad, 2021). In terms of approach, this study uses a case study approach. A case study is a research approach used to gain in-depth knowledge about individuals, groups, organisations, activities or other subjects within a certain period of time (Naamy, 2019). This case study was used to limit the scope of the research to RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri and was conducted in October 2025. The subjects of this study are teachers and students at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri. Regarding the data collection sources, the researcher used participatory observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during the learning process, while interviews focused on educators as teachers and facilitators during the learning process, and documentation was used to record the necessary data. The analysis used data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing

RESULT

Understanding interactive methods at RA Al-Azhar Permata Puri cannot be separated from the substance of Islamic religious teaching carried out in the learning process. This is because the substance of this delivery will be used as the main parameter in the success of Islamic religious learning, in addition to the methods used. In general, the Islamic education process at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri focuses on the fundamentals of religion. This is as explained by the Head of RA:

“Islamic religious education here emphasises the fundamentals of religion. This can include aspects of faith, sharia, and its practices.”

The above explanation is basically similar to the theoretical aspects that have been formulated regarding the concept of Islamic religious education in early childhood. This stage is designed to provide an introduction to students so that they are able to understand the fundamentals of Islam itself. Therefore, an important instrument in the learning process in this case is how the teacher's delivery can target the aspects of aqidah, sharia and also social aspects. This is done in order to strengthen the fundamentals of the religion. In addition, this mapping is also used as a benchmark in the learning process. This process is intended to formulate interactive methods that are appropriate for the materials being taught.

The results of the interviews also show that the interactive methods used in Islamic religious education at this RA take various forms. This is adjusted to the material being delivered. This is because the key to the success of the learning process is related to the methods used in the learning process. These various forms enable students to actively participate in understanding the material. Thus, the teacher's task is only to facilitate the learning process, while the main subject in the learning activity emphasises the students as the subject.

“The interactive methods we implement are more practical in nature, such as practising prayer and ablution. In addition, we also usually tell stories about the prophets, angels, and the pillars of Islam and faith. On the one hand, we also do this mostly in groups.”

The interview above describes several forms of interactive learning methods implemented at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri, which can take the form of direct practice (applicative), storytelling, and group work. *First*, storytelling. Interactive learning through storytelling enables children to enhance the learning process being carried out. The method of storytelling, singing and playing is a learning method that applies learning while playing, telling stories about characters, legends or myths that have an implicit role in moral goodness, as well as singing songs that inspire enthusiasm for learning (Kusuma, et al. 2023). This is an effort to spark more curiosity in children. On the other hand, this process is very suitable for early childhood. Storytelling here focuses more on the history of the Prophet, the introduction of angels and their duties, and the implementation of the pillars of Islam and the pillars of faith.

The results of the observation show that the process of learning Islam using stories makes children feel enthusiastic. In addition, other activities such as singing and playing are also included in this activity. Thus, apart from providing a comfortable space for children, it also provides basic religious education. However, the most important thing about this activity is that the students participate in what is conveyed by the teacher. This means that the students are actively participating. This is in line with the characteristics of interactive learning, where students do not just listen, but also actively ask questions (Lingga, 2025). This is evident in the students who repeat what the teacher says and try to explore further by asking questions.



Figure 1. Interactive learning in the form of storytelling activities

Active participation is essentially able to encourage students to understand more quickly and accurately. This means that with active students, learning objectives can be achieved and understood well by students. This shows that there is a significant correlation between storytelling activities in interactive learning conducted at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri. The observation data provides an overview of how the learning process generated questions from several students, especially in Islamic education material. These questions led them to gain deeper and broader knowledge about the basics of Islam. This is because active participation demonstrates the effectiveness of learning methods that can be represented by question and answer activities (Liskawati, 2024). This has the same objective as the interactive learning process, which emphasises a learning process that enables students to construct their own knowledge (Kamaruddin, et al., 2022).

Second, it is applicable. Islamic teachings are not only theoretical but also practical. This means that the substance of Islamic teachings emphasises harmony between written teachings and practical implementation. This can be seen in Islamic law, where the aspects of Sharia provide guidelines on how to carry out the commands of Allah SWT. Of course, this basis is an important consideration in the process of learning Islam. This is because Islamic education also contributes to building knowledge and implementation or practice of worship in Islam. Therefore, the right method is very influential in achieving basic knowledge and practice or application in its implementation, especially at the Early Childhood Education level.

This is also applied at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri. The learning process does not only emphasise theoretical knowledge but also practical application. In the learning process, they not only understand but also practise directly. This aims to enable students at RA to apply the sharia in Islamic teachings in their daily lives. The learning process at RA Al-Azhar Permata Puri implements interactive learning with an applicative model. Students are first taught the basics of sharia, after which they are invited to practise it directly. These applicative activities have been implemented in the subjects of prayer and wudhu.



Figure 2. Students performing wudu practice

“The practice of prayer and wudu is basically so that students can actively participate in learning. Therefore, the teacher’s job is to guide and assist, while the students practise. Even though some students refuse to participate for certain reasons, we believe that by seeing it directly, they will understand.”

An interview with the principal revealed that the practice of salat and wudu enables students to understand its application directly. In its implementation, students can experience and practise all the stages of salat and wudu themselves, thus making students the centre of the learning activity. Observational data also indicated that students showed high enthusiasm and did not easily become bored because the activities were carried out outside the classroom. Furthermore, the practice of prayer and ablution was in line with the principles of interactive learning, which emphasised the active involvement of students throughout the learning process. In addition, an applicative approach was also applied in delivering the prayer material; students were not only taught the movements and recitations of prayer, but were also directed to perform simulations directly. Thus, students not only learned the concepts of prayer movements, but also understood the meaning and sequence of each movement in greater depth.



Figure 3. Students performing prayer practice

When correlated with interactive learning, the applied method implemented at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri is consistent with interactive learning. This is based on the fact that effective learning is characterised by a teaching and learning process that is able to provide knowledge to students and produce satisfactory results (Muslih & Roslaeni, 2024).

Field data shows that applied learning can achieve a high level of learning success. Children are not only comfortable while playing, but they are also able to gain knowledge and practical understanding of the material that has been presented. This activity also focuses on the learning process itself. In addition, the process is carried out periodically to create a supportive environment for students. This is because interactive learning models emphasise the learning process rather than the results themselves (Hakim, 2021).

Third, grouping. The main characteristic of interactive learning is that it emphasises the process of interaction between teachers and students, as well as between students themselves. Therefore, grouping makes interactive learning methods very easy to apply. This is because, according to Piaget and Vygotsky, direct experience and social interaction greatly influence children's cognitive development (Sajudin & Hidayah, 2023). Thus, forming groups in the learning process not only facilitates the learning process but also supports interactive learning itself.

At RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri, group work is one of the most prioritised learning mechanisms. Almost all Islamic education learning activities use a group system rather than an individual system (teacher with student). This includes memorising verses and prayers, stories of the Prophets and Messengers, and even the practice of prayer and ablution using a group system. Once formed, these groups will carry out the learning process together, making activities more efficient and interactive.

“Most of our learning processes are carried out in groups. The group learning process allows children to actively participate in learning. This ensures that no child is left behind. Even if there are those who fall behind, they can follow their friends.”

This shows that grouping allows for interaction between all elements, both between teachers and students, as well as between students themselves. Observation data also shows that they are more enthusiastic when memorising prayers and short surahs as well as other activities. Liskawati, in her research, revealed that group discussion activities are very relevant in improving the learning process (Liskawati, 2024). Although the group stage is more about delivering material, the results show that the students are quite enthusiastic. This is in line with the principles of interactive learning that involve students in the learning process. This is because interactive learning emphasises that students can directly understand the knowledge they acquire (Sajudin & Hidayah, 2023). This means that the most emphasised learning process is motivating students to actively participate in the process of acquiring knowledge.



Figure 4. Students are divided into several groups during the learning process

Interactive learning is considered to have a fairly good impact on the learning process, but there are several challenges that arise. Observational data shows that the activity process has a fairly high participatory aspect, but there are some students who are still passive. In addition, the complex differences in student backgrounds mean that some students cannot be reached using this approach. These two points show that, in general, interactive learning can be considered successful. However, individually, there are some who have not been able to understand it. This is in accordance with the writing by Liskawati who reveals that the challenges of interactive learning lie in time constraints, student interaction, and difficulties in comprehending the material thoroughly (Liskawati, 2024). These challenges indicate that the learning process implemented still has several shortcomings. Therefore, serious attention and improvement are needed as evaluation material.

DISCUSSION

An appropriate learning process enables students to achieve a basic level of understanding. This also occurs in the Islamic education learning process. An appropriate model will enable the parameters for achieving an understanding of Islamic Education material to be met as expected. Field data shows the relevance of interactive learning processes to Islamic religious education material. This learning model highlights several important points related to the relevance of interactive learning. Interview results and observational data indicate a fairly high level of relevance to the basic understanding of Islamic religious education material for early childhood.

“In our opinion, interactive learning is very useful in helping children understand and increasing their motivation. This is because during and after learning, many children are active and participatory. In addition, there have been parents who said that their children talked about the material that was presented.”

The interviews revealed two important points regarding the effectiveness of the learning process: first, the motivation and basic understanding of students towards the material, and second, the basic understanding of students towards Islamic religious learning material. Increasing students' interest in learning a subject is one of the achievements of the learning strategy used. This means that the learning process is a crucial determinant in shaping students' motivation to explore the material that has been delivered in greater depth. Fauzi Rahamanul Hakim, in his writing, reveals that in the learning process, teachers play an important role in increasing students' interest in learning (Hakim, 2021). This means that student interest is the main objective of the learning process.

Field data shows that most students have a high level of interest after the learning process takes place. Their interest can take various forms, some verbal and some non-verbal. This can be seen when students ask questions and enjoy practising what they have learnt. In addition, interview data also shows that the success of this interactive learning process can be seen from several aspects, such as when students are more active in the learning process. Furthermore, this increase in motivation can be seen when the parents of students tell teachers that their children feel enthusiastic about the learning process that has been carried out at school.

This motivation encourages students to explore the material presented, both theoretically and practically. Through interactive learning, teachers are ultimately able to increase students' curiosity. This shows that interactive learning is successful because students are active and participatory in the learning process. This is because teachers are able to stimulate the main subjects, namely the students, to be more active in activities.

In addition to increasing students' interest in exploring Islamic learning materials, interactive learning is also relevant in shaping students' basic understanding of Islam. Basic understanding is a very important foundation for education. This is because this foundation will later be used as a guideline in exploring Islamic materials further.

The Islamic education process at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri emphasises a basic understanding of Islam. Using interactive learning methods, the fieldwork shows that this process greatly helps students. Activities that are not only theoretical but also practical, focusing on student comfort in learning, show that many of them are beginning to know and understand the material being taught. This is evidenced by the fact that after being taught, most of them know a little more than before about the basics of religion. In addition, activities carried out regularly enable what students have learned to meet the expectations set by teachers.

CONCLUSION

Islamic religious education is an important instrument in the process of shaping individuals, both in terms of character and identity. Therefore, Islamic religious education is very important in the world of education, including in early childhood education. However, in reality, the learning process sometimes encounters obstacles and challenges. Therefore, effective learning methods are crucial. Interactive learning can essentially address these problems. The principle of learning that emphasises students allows them to actively participate in the learning process. This is what has been done at RA Masjid Al-Azhar Permata Puri. The results show that this RA uses interactive learning methods in the form of group activities and is also applicable in the process of delivering Islamic education material. As a result, interactive learning is relevant in supporting the Islamic religious education learning process. This is demonstrated by the enthusiasm of students to understand and explore Islamic religious education material more deeply, as well as helping students to know and understand the Islamic religious education material delivered by teachers in the learning process.

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