

Challenges of PAI Teachers in Building Student Learning Comfort at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School, South Totikum District

Andika Fahri^{1*}, Tethy Agual², Jamaika Rawis³, Waode Sumarni Laode Alim⁴
Universitas Muhammadiyah Luwuk

Corresponding Author: Andika Fahri; Fahryave13@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education Teacher, Learning Comfort, Pedagogical Strategy, Elementary School

Received : 5 February

Revised : 23 March

Accepted: 23 April

©2026 Fahri, Agual, Rawis, Alim: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and analyze the challenges faced by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in creating a comfortable learning environment for students at SD Muhammadiyah Peley, South Totikum District. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon comprehensively based on the experiences and perspectives of the research subjects within their natural school context. The primary subject of the study was the PAI teacher, supported by the principal, students, and parents who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using interactive stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students' psychological dynamics and developmental characteristics at the elementary level significantly influence learning comfort in Islamic Religious Education. Students' need for emotional security, recognition, and supportive interaction requires teachers to implement adaptive and communicative pedagogical approaches. In addition, limited facilities, instructional media, and school environmental conditions pose challenges in establishing a conducive learning atmosphere. Pedagogical strategies such as dialogical approaches, religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and varied instructional methods contribute positively to fostering a humanistic and religious classroom climate. Furthermore, collaboration between the school and parents plays a crucial role in strengthening students' learning comfort through emotional support and value consistency between home and school environments. In conclusion, learning comfort in Islamic Religious Education is influenced not only by teachers' pedagogical competence but also by students' psychological conditions, the availability of educational resources, the school climate, and the synergy between school and family

INTRODUCTION

Discussions on the psychology of elementary school students in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning are rooted in child development theory, which emphasizes the importance of matching cognitive, emotional, and social developmental stages with the applied learning strategies. Contemporary developmental theory explains that elementary school-aged children are in the phase of forming self-concept, seeking social recognition, and seeking a sense of security in the learning environment. In the context of religious education, the process of internalizing values depends not only on the transfer of material but also on the psychological readiness of students. As explained by Laila and Arsan (2025), students' emotional stability significantly influences their level of engagement and understanding in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Similarly, Sari (2022) states that a learning environment that addresses psychological aspects has been shown to increase students' intrinsic motivation. Thus, theoretically, a comfortable learning environment is a crucial prerequisite for successful religious education in elementary schools.

From a cognitive perspective, modern constructivist theory emphasizes that students construct their understanding through concrete experiences and active interaction with the learning environment. This is relevant to the often normative and abstract nature of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material, such as concepts of faith and morals. Mulyawati et al. (2023) concluded that learning strategies tailored to the cognitive developmental stage of elementary school students can increase learning effectiveness while reducing academic stress. This argument is supported by Putri and Hadi (2024), who demonstrated that differentiated learning in religious education positively impacts student comfort and participation. This theoretical foundation provides a reference for Islamic Religious Education teachers to integrate concrete, visual, and participatory approaches to maintain a stable and conducive psychological environment for students.

Beyond individual aspects, the ecological theory of education explains that student development is influenced by interactions between the school, family, and community environments. The school's physical and social environment plays a role in shaping students' perceptions of learning comfort. Rahmawati and Nurhayati (2022) found that the quality of school facilities and the physical environment correlated with students' concentration and psychological well-being. Meanwhile, Sari and Pratama (2021) emphasized that a positive school climate enhances a sense of security and learning engagement. Based on this theory, limitations in facilities, media, and the learning environment are not merely technical factors but are important variables influencing students' psychological dynamics in Islamic Religious Education learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a pedagogical context, humanistic learning theory positions teachers as facilitators who build empathetic relationships with students. Humanistic and religious pedagogical strategies serve to create a balance between spiritual character formation and meeting students' emotional needs. Hasanah and

Mulyadi (2022) explain that an approach that positions students as active subjects of learning has been shown to increase their sense of security and engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes. Research by Rahman et al. (2023) also shows that dialogic communication in religious education strengthens the internalization of values and emotional closeness between teachers and students. Based on this study, it can be conceptually assumed that empathetic and participatory pedagogical strategies will contribute to optimal learning comfort.

Furthermore, educational partnership theory emphasizes that collaboration between schools and families is a contributing factor to successful learning. Parental support in religious education strengthens the consistency of values students receive at home and at school. Amalia and Kurniawan (2022) state that parental involvement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning influences students' motivation and self-confidence. Research by Hidayah (2024) also shows that school-family partnerships create a more supportive and responsive learning environment to children's needs. Based on the theoretical basis and previous research, research on the psychological dynamics and characteristics of students in building a comfortable learning environment for Islamic Religious Education at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School, South Totikum District has a strong conceptual basis, with the assumption that learning comfort is influenced by the interaction between students' psychological factors, teachers' pedagogical strategies, availability of facilities, and support from the family and school environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand the challenges faced by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering a comfortable learning environment for students at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School in South Totikum District. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on uncovering natural phenomena based on the experiences and perspectives of the research subjects without any manipulation of variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). Descriptive methods were used to describe the actual conditions of PAI learning and the factors influencing the creation of a comfortable learning environment in the classroom (Sugiyono, 2022).

The research subjects were PAI teachers, with supporting informants including the principal, students, and parents. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on their direct involvement in the learning process (Yusuf, 2020). Data were collected through observations of the learning process, semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' challenges and strategies, and documentation as supporting data. The use of these various techniques aligns with the principles of qualitative research, which emphasizes the depth and integrity of information (Moleong, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking with informants to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings (Sugiyono,

2022). With these procedures, this study is expected to produce a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by Islamic Religious Education teachers in fostering a comfortable learning environment for students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Psychological Dynamics and Characteristics of Elementary School Students in Islamic Religious Education Learning

The psychological dynamics of elementary school students are a crucial factor in the success of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, particularly in creating a comfortable learning environment at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School in South Totikum District. At this stage of development, children have a strong need for a sense of security, attention, and emotional support from their surroundings. If a student's psychological state is disrupted by anxiety, pressure, or a less than conducive classroom atmosphere, the process of understanding and appreciating religious values will struggle to develop optimally. Research by Laila and Arsan (2025) shows that students' emotional state is closely related to their level of engagement in learning activities and their ability to comprehend Islamic Religious Education material. Therefore, teachers need not only to pay attention to the orderliness of the physical classroom environment but also to be able to foster a positive emotional atmosphere so that students feel comfortable, valued, and motivated to learn.

Beyond emotional aspects, elementary school students' cognitive abilities also have unique characteristics that must be understood in the religious learning process. At this age, most students are still in the concrete thinking stage, so they tend to understand concepts more easily through real-life examples, direct experiences, or visual media. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) materials such as faith, worship, and morals are often abstract, requiring a more contextual and communicative approach. Mulyawati et al. (2023) emphasized that learning strategies tailored to children's cognitive developmental stages will make the learning process more effective and less stressful for students. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School need to utilize various methods such as storytelling, demonstrations, worship practices, and engaging learning media to help students understand the material and feel comfortable during the learning process.

In addition to emotional and cognitive factors, social dynamics and differences in students' family backgrounds also influence the comfort of learning in the classroom. Elementary school-aged children have a strong need to interact with peers and gain recognition from their social environment. If relationships between students are not harmonious or the classroom atmosphere is unsupportive, the learning process can be disrupted. Handayanti et al. (2024) explained that understanding students' social characteristics helps teachers design collaborative learning that supports their social development. Furthermore, Zahara et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of teacher sensitivity to differences in students' religious experiences and family backgrounds to ensure inclusive learning. With an empathetic, communicative approach and attention to the individual needs of students, Islamic Education teachers can create a humanistic, religious classroom atmosphere that supports

the formation of comfortable learning and optimal character development of students.

Limitations of Facilities, Media, and Learning Environment

As researchers, we believe that limited learning facilities are a significant challenge faced by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in creating a comfortable learning environment for students at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School in South Totikum District. The availability of physical facilities, such as adequate classrooms, adequate lighting, good air circulation, and learning aids, significantly impacts the quality of the learning process. If these facilities are not optimally provided, students are likely to experience decreased concentration and fatigue during lessons. Research findings by Rahmawati and Nurhayati (2022) indicate that the physical condition of the school environment is closely related to students' levels of psychological comfort and learning focus. Therefore, limited facilities are not only related to technical aspects but also impact the success of instilling religious values in PAI learning.

In addition to limited physical facilities, the lack of a variety of learning media also hinders the delivery of engaging and relevant PAI learning for students. PAI material, which contains many normative concepts, requires the support of media such as images, instructional videos, and religious practice tools to facilitate easier comprehension for elementary school students. Without a variety of media, the learning process tends to be one-way and monotonous. Hidayat et al. (2023) stated that the use of innovative learning media can increase student motivation and active engagement in religious studies. At Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School, limited access to technology and digital media presents a challenge for Islamic Religious Education teachers to maintain creative learning so that students feel comfortable and avoid boredom during the learning process.

Furthermore, learning environment factors and family support also influence students' comfort in Islamic Religious Education. A less conducive school environment, such as high noise levels, less harmonious social relationships, and a school culture that does not fully reflect religious values, can hinder the process of character development in students. Sari and Pratama (2021) emphasized that a positive school climate plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of security and increasing student engagement in learning. Furthermore, limited family support in religious studies can also impact students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education material. Therefore, as explained by Anwar et al. (2024), good collaboration between schools and parents is essential to strengthen religious education and build student character. In this context, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to be able to innovate, utilize existing facilities optimally, and build good communication with parents to create a comfortable, religious learning environment that supports the overall development of students.

Islamic Education Teachers' Pedagogical Strategies in Creating a Humanistic and Religious Classroom Climate

The pedagogical strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in creating a humanistic and religious classroom atmosphere,

particularly in fostering a comfortable learning environment for students at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School in South Totikum District. A humanistic classroom environment is reflected in the mutually respectful relationship between teachers and students, open communication, and a stress-free learning process. Furthermore, a religious atmosphere in the classroom can be seen through the instillation of Islamic values in daily interactions, positive habits, and classroom rules that reflect religious teachings. Research by Hasanah and Mulyadi (2022) shows that a pedagogical approach that places students at the center of learning can increase students' sense of security, participation, and active engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons. Therefore, teachers function not only as transmitters of religious material but also as facilitators, creating learning experiences that address students' emotional, social, and spiritual aspects in a balanced manner.

One approach that can be implemented to foster a humanistic classroom atmosphere is the use of dialogic and participatory learning methods. PAI teachers need to provide opportunities for students to ask questions, express opinions, and share their religious experiences without feeling afraid or pressured. When students feel valued and listened to, their self-confidence grows, and classroom interactions become more lively. Rahman et al. (2023) explain that two-way communication in religious instruction can strengthen students' emotional engagement while also fostering deeper values. Furthermore, fostering a religious atmosphere can also be achieved through consistent religious activities, such as reciting prayers before and after lessons, engaging in simple religious practices, and modeling good morals in every classroom interaction. Research by Siregar (2021) confirms that teacher role models have a strong influence on shaping students' religious character at the elementary school level.

In addition to dialogic approaches and role models, implementing a variety of learning strategies is also crucial to creating a comfortable learning environment for all students. Each student has different abilities, interests, and learning styles, so consistently using the same methods can lead some students to feel less engaged in learning. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers need to utilize a variety of methods, such as inspiring stories with Islamic nuances, group discussions, educational games, and practical activities related to religious material. Putri and Hadi's (2024) research shows that learning that adapts to students' needs and characteristics can increase learning motivation and create a sense of comfort during the learning process. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School in South Totikum District need to continue developing creative, communicative, and exemplary learning strategies to ensure the classroom is a safe, enjoyable learning environment, imbued with Islamic values.

The Role of School and Parent Collaboration in Supporting Comfortable Islamic Education Learning

Collaboration between schools and parents is crucial in creating a comfortable learning environment for elementary school students in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). An effective learning process is not only determined by classroom activities but also greatly influenced by the support provided by

the family environment. At Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School in South Totikum District, parental involvement in supporting children's religious education can strengthen their understanding and application of Islamic values learned at school. Research by Amalia and Kurniawan (2022) shows that parental participation in the religious learning process is significantly related to increased learning motivation and student self-confidence in PAI lessons. Therefore, a harmonious relationship between schools and families is a crucial foundation for creating a comfortable, stable, and sustainable learning environment for student development.

In implementing PAI learning, collaboration between schools and parents can be realized through intensive communication regarding students' academic and spiritual development. PAI teachers are not only tasked with delivering learning materials but also act as partners for parents in guiding their children's religious habits and developing their morals. If communication between teachers and parents is open and continuous, parents will more easily understand their children's learning needs and provide appropriate support at home. Rahmat et al. (2023) explain that effective communication between schools and families can positively impact students' emotional stability while increasing their engagement in learning activities. Therefore, structured and ongoing communication patterns can be an important tool for strengthening students' learning comfort at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School.

Beyond communication, collaboration between schools and parents can also be realized through direct family involvement in various religious activities organized by the school. Activities such as commemorating Islamic holidays, practicing joint worship, and moral development programs will have a stronger impact if supported by the family environment. This participation can create value alignment between home and school, so that students do not experience differences in understanding and applying religious values in their daily lives. Sari and Maulana (2021) emphasize that consistency of religious values between family and school plays a crucial role in strengthening character formation and fostering a sense of security for students in the learning process. Furthermore, a strong partnership also allows teachers and parents to more quickly identify any learning difficulties or issues experienced by students. Therefore, synergy between schools and parents needs to be continuously developed to ensure optimal Islamic Religious Education learning and support the development of students' overall religious character.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the psychological condition and developmental characteristics of elementary school students significantly influence the success of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in creating a comfortable learning environment at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School, South Totikum District. At this age, students require a sense of security, attention, and emotional support to be able to optimally participate in the learning process. Comfortable learning depends not only on the teacher's mastery of the material, but also on the teacher's ability to build a warm,

communicative, and religious classroom atmosphere through participatory learning, a dialogical approach, exemplary attitudes, and the instilling of religious values. On the other hand, limited facilities, learning media, and the condition of the school environment pose challenges that require teacher creativity in managing the learning process. In addition, good cooperation between the school and parents has also proven important in supporting students' emotional stability and maintaining the continuity of value instillation between home and school. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to continue to improve their competencies, schools need to strengthen support for facilities and a conducive learning culture, parents are expected to actively accompany their children at home, and further research is recommended to expand the study so that the development of Islamic Religious Education learning strategies is more adaptive and effective for the development of students.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic of Challenges of PAI Teachers in Building Student Learning Comfort at Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School, South Totikum District in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With gratitude and humility, the authors extend their deepest gratitude to all those who provided support, guidance, and contributions to the completion of this research. In particular, we extend our sincere thanks to Mr. Khairul Akbar, S.Pd.I., M.Pd., our Field Supervisor, who devoted his time, energy, and thoughts to providing direction, input, and motivation throughout the process of preparing this thesis, ensuring the successful completion of this research.

The authors also express their appreciation and gratitude to the Muhammadiyah Peley Elementary School in South Totikum District, especially the Principal, Islamic Education Teacher, and all the teachers and staff who provided permission, opportunity, and assistance during the data collection process. Their cooperation and openness significantly assisted us in obtaining the information needed to complete this research. Equally important, we extend our gratitude to our friends at the Peley post who provided constant support, encouragement, and companionship throughout the research and preparation of this thesis. The togetherness, discussions, and motivation provided were a source of strength for the author in completing each stage of the research. May all the help, support, and kindness given be rewarded manifold by Allah SWT, and may this research benefit the development of education, particularly in Islamic Religious Education.

REFERENCES

- Amalia, R., & Kurniawan, D. (2022). Parental involvement in Islamic education learning and its impact on students' motivation. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(2), 145-158.

- Anwar, M., Rahim, A., & Syafitri, L. (2024). School-parent partnership in strengthening students' religious character. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 14(1), 77-89.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2021). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Fauzi, A. (2020). Learning environment management in Islamic primary schools. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 5(1), 23-35.
- Hasanah, U., & Mulyadi, S. (2022). Humanistic approach in Islamic religious education learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 19(2), 201-215.
- Hidayah, N. (2024). Family-school collaboration in supporting elementary students' learning comfort. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 30(1), 55-68.
- Hidayat, T., Prasetyo, R., & Aminah, S. (2023). Innovative learning media in Islamic education at primary schools. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 25(3), 301-315.
- Laila, F., & Arsan, M. (2025). Emotional stability and student engagement in Islamic education learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer*, 10(1), 33-47.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Moleong, L. J. (2021). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif (Edisi revisi)*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Mulyawati, E., Rahman, A., & Fitriani, D. (2023). Cognitive development characteristics and effective Islamic learning strategies in elementary school. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Islam*, 15(2), 98-112.
- Putri, A., & Hadi, M. (2024). Differentiated instruction in Islamic religious education at elementary level. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Islam*, 12(1), 65-79.
- Rahman, F., Ismail, H., & Yusuf, M. (2023). Dialogical communication in Islamic religious education classrooms. *Jurnal Studi Keislaman dan Pendidikan*, 18(2), 155-170.
- Rahmawati, I., & Nurhayati, S. (2022). School physical environment and students' psychological well-being. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Lingkungan Sekolah*, 6(2), 120-134.

- Sari, D. (2022). Psychological aspects in creating meaningful Islamic learning environment. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 44-59.
- Sari, R., & Pratama, A. (2021). Positive school climate and student engagement in religious education. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 9(2), 88-101.
- Sugiyono. (2022). *Metode penelitian kualitatif, kuantitatif dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Siregar, N. (2021). Teacher role modeling and religious character building in elementary students. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 11(3), 210-224.
- Wahyuni, S. (2020). Integrative pedagogical approach in Islamic religious education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2), 133-148.
- Yusuf, A. M. (2020). *Metode penelitian: Kuantitatif, kualitatif dan penelitian gabungan*. Kencana.
- Zahara, L., Handayani, T., & Ilham, R. (2024). Inclusive Islamic education and student diversity in elementary schools. *Jurnal Pendidikan Multikultural*, 4(1), 50-63.