

## Teachers' Perceptions of the Application of Active Learning Models in Islamic Education Learning

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze teachers' perceptions of the application of active learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), its implementation in the learning process, and the various obstacles faced during its implementation. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach by involving Islamic Religious Education teachers as research informants. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that teachers have a positive perception of active learning because they are able to create a more interactive, participatory learning atmosphere and increase student involvement in the learning process. The implementation of active learning is carried out through various strategies such as group discussions, worship practices, role play, simulations, and questions and answers that are considered effective in helping students understand PAI material more contextually. Active learning also has a positive impact on learning motivation, critical thinking skills, courage to express opinions, and students' social interactions. However, the implementation of active learning still faces various obstacles such as time constraints, heterogeneity of student abilities, classroom management, and teachers' readiness to implement appropriate learning strategies. This study confirms that the success of active learning is greatly influenced by perception, pedagogical competence, and the adaptive ability of teachers in adapting learning strategies to the characteristics of the material and the conditions of students. Thus, active learning in PAI needs to be understood as a flexible, contextual, and holistic student engagement oriented approach.

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## INTRODUCTION

The change in the educational paradigm in the modern era requires a transformation in the learning process, from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. This transformation emerged in response to the needs of 21st-century education that emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. In this context, active learning is one of the approaches that has been widely developed because it is considered to be able to increase students' intellectual, emotional, and social involvement in the learning process. Bonwell and Eison (1991) explain that active learning places students as the main subjects who are directly involved in learning activities through discussion, problem-solving, reflection, and various other forms of learning interactions. This approach is also considered effective in improving learning

outcomes and understanding concepts more deeply (Prince, 2004). In fact, Freeman et al. (2014) through their research show that active learning is able to significantly improve students' academic performance compared to conventional lecture-based learning. Thus, active learning is not only understood as an alternative learning strategy, but has become a necessity in creating a more meaningful and participatory learning process.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), learning not only aims to transfer religious knowledge to students, but also to form character, attitudes, and spiritual values in daily life. Therefore, the PAI learning process should ideally be not only informative, but also transformative and reflective. Learning that only emphasizes memorizing material without actively involving students is considered less able to form

understanding and internalize values in depth. Michael (2006) stated that students' active involvement in the learning process can improve conceptual understanding while building a more meaningful learning experience. In PAI learning, the active involvement of students is important because religious values are not sufficiently understood theoretically, but need to be practiced and experienced directly through learning activities. However, the reality on the ground shows that PAI learning is still often dominated by conventional methods such as one-way lectures, memorization, and individual assignments. This condition causes students to tend to be passive, less enthusiastic, and less involved in the learning process. This phenomenon shows that there is a gap between the demands of modern learning and the PAI learning practices that are still ongoing in many schools.

The empirical phenomenon regarding the dominance of conventional learning in PAI can be seen from the low active participation of students during the learning process. In many cases, teachers still act as information centers, while students only passively receive material without being given enough space to discuss, ask questions, or explore their own understanding. This condition has an impact on low critical thinking skills and less than optimal students' understanding of learning materials. In addition, monotonous learning often causes students to feel bored so that their motivation to learn decreases. In fact, PAI learning has material characteristics that allow the application of an active approach, such as worship practices, moral discussions, social simulations, and experiential learning. The limitations of the implementation of active learning in PAI are not only influenced by the means and time factors, but also by the readiness and perception of teachers towards the approach. Teachers who have a positive understanding of active learning tend to be more open to developing innovative learning strategies, while teachers who still view active learning as an approach that is difficult to implement tend to stick to conventional methods. Therefore, teacher perception is an important factor that affects the successful implementation of active learning in the classroom.

Various previous studies have shown that active learning has a positive influence on improving the quality of learning. Rozak (2024) and Wisnu et al. (2024) found that active learning is able to significantly increase student engagement and learning motivation. Another

study conducted by Iskandar (2024) shows that the application of active learning in PAI can improve students' critical thinking skills and create a more interactive learning atmosphere. Putri et al. (2025) also emphasized the importance of a collaborative approach in increasing student participation during the learning process. In addition, Musyarrofah (2024) and Nurhikmah (2025) said that active learning is able to increase learning motivation and build students' confidence in expressing opinions. In fact, the integration of technology in active learning further strengthens the effectiveness of PAI learning in the digital era (Yunus & Masjudin, 2025). However, most of these studies focused more on the effectiveness of active learning on student learning outcomes, learning motivation, or the use of certain methods in learning. Studies that specifically discuss teachers' perceptions of the implementation of active learning in the context of PAI are still relatively limited.

The limitations of previous research indicate that there is a research gap that needs to be studied further. So far, teachers are often positioned only as learning implementers, even though the teacher's perception and understanding of a learning approach greatly determines the success of its implementation in the classroom. Teacher perception affects the way teachers choose learning strategies, manage classes, adjust methods to student characteristics, and respond to various obstacles that arise during the learning process. Thus, the success of active learning is not only determined by the concepts or methods used, but also influenced by how teachers interpret and implement the approach in real practice. Research on teacher perception is important because it can provide an empirical picture of how active learning is understood, applied, and faced by teachers in the context of PAI learning. In addition, this study can also show various challenges faced by teachers in implementing active learning, both related to student readiness, time constraints, classroom management, and the demands of a busy curriculum.

The novelty of this research lies in the focus of the study which not only discusses the effectiveness of active learning, but specifically analyzes teachers' perceptions of the implementation of active learning in Islamic Religious Education. This research seeks to explore teachers' experiences, meanings, and views on active learning in daily learning practices. In addition, this study also places active learning in a more contextual and adaptive

perspective, rather than as a universal approach that can be applied uniformly to all PAI materials. Thus, this research is expected to be able to make a theoretical contribution to the development of active learning studies based on teachers' perspectives, as well as make a practical contribution to the development of PAI learning strategies that are more participatory and relevant to student needs. In contrast to previous research that emphasized student learning outcomes, this study highlights the subjective aspect of teachers as the main actor in the implementation of learning in the classroom.

Based on this description, this research departs from the formulation of problems regarding how teachers perceive the application of active learning in Islamic Religious Education, how it is implemented in the learning process, and the obstacles faced by teachers in its implementation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze teachers' perceptions of active learning, describe the practice of implementing active learning in PAI learning, and identify various challenges that arise in the implementation process. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the importance of teachers' perceptions in supporting the success of active learning, as well as being an evaluation material in the development of more effective, participatory, and contextual PAI learning in accordance with the dynamics of modern education.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand teachers' perceptions of the application of active learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore teachers' experiences, views, and meanings contextually to learning practices that take place in the classroom (Creswell, 2014). The research was carried out in one of the Islamic-based secondary schools in 2025. The research informants consisted of 6 Islamic Religious Education teachers who were selected using purposive sampling techniques by considering teaching experience and active involvement in the implementation of active learning. Research data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation of the learning process, and documentation of learning tools to obtain more comprehensive data. The interview process is carried out directly using interview guidelines that have been prepared based on the focus of the

research, including teacher perception, active learning implementation, and obstacles faced during the learning process.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques which include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as stated by Miles et al. (2014). Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were systematically analyzed to find patterns, themes, and meanings related to the application of active learning in PAI. To increase the credibility of the research, the researcher applied a data validity test through source triangulation and triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, the member check process is also carried out to informants to ensure the suitability of the results of the researcher's interpretation with the experience conveyed by the participants. Thus, the data analysis and validation process is carried out in depth so that the research results have a stronger level of trust and validity (Moleong, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Active Learning in Islamic Religious Education**

The results of the study show that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have a positive perception of the application of active learning in the learning process. Teachers view that this approach is able to create a more lively, interactive learning atmosphere and encourage student involvement more optimally than conventional learning methods. In the teacher's view, active learning provides space for students to not only passively receive material, but also participate directly through discussions, practices, questions and answers, and a variety of other learning activities. One of the speakers stated that "students are more enthusiastic when they are directly involved in learning than when they just listen to the teacher's explanation." The statement shows that active student involvement is an important indicator in the success of the PAI learning process. This finding is in line with the theory of active learning put forward by Bonwell and Eison (1991) that active learning is able to increase student participation through meaningful learning activities. In addition, Freeman et al. (2014) also explained that active learning contributes significantly to improving students' academic performance because students are not only recipients of information, but also involved in the process of building understanding.

Teachers' positive perceptions of active learning can also be seen from their views on changing learning dynamics in the classroom. Teachers consider that active learning is able to reduce the dominance of teachers as the center of learning and provide greater opportunities for students to explore their own understanding. In the context of modern pedagogy, this condition shows a shift in the learning paradigm from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. Teachers are no longer positioned as the only source of knowledge, but rather as facilitators who direct and guide the learning process of students. One teacher stated that "when students actively ask questions and discuss, they seem to understand the material better than just listening to the lecture." The statement shows that teachers are aware of the importance of two-way interaction in creating effective learning. This perspective is in line with the view of constructivism which emphasizes that knowledge is built through experience and social interaction. Thus, active learning is not only understood as a learning method, but also as a pedagogical approach that encourages students to construct knowledge independently.

However, the results of the study show that teachers' understandings of the concept of active learning are still diverse. Some teachers interpret active learning as just a group discussion or presentation activity, while others understand active learning as an approach that puts students as the main subject in the overall learning process. This difference in understanding shows that the concept of active learning has not been fully understood comprehensively by all teachers. Michael (2006) explained that active learning is not just about presenting physical activity in learning, but also involves the process of critical thinking, reflection, and deep mental involvement of students. In practice, there are still teachers who view active learning as an additional method that is only used in certain conditions, not as the main approach in learning. This shows that the implementation of active learning is greatly influenced by the level of pedagogical understanding of teachers. Therefore, improving teachers' competence in understanding the concept of active learning is an important aspect in supporting the successful implementation of more participatory and meaningful PAI learning.

### **Implementation of Active Learning in PAI Learning**

In classroom learning practices, teachers

apply various active learning strategies that are participatory and contextual. The most commonly used strategies include group discussions, presentations, role plays, simulations, questions and answers, and hands-on practice on certain materials. In worship materials, for example, students are directly involved in the practice of ablution, prayer, or simulation of funeral procedures. Meanwhile, in the material on morality and muamalah, teachers use group discussions and role play to help students understand the application of Islamic values in daily life. One of the speakers stated that "PAI material is easier to understand when students practice directly than just reading theory." The statement shows that the direct involvement of students is able to strengthen conceptual understanding as well as internalize values in PAI learning. These findings are in line with experiential learning theories that emphasize the importance of hands-on experience in the learning process. Through concrete learning experiences, students not only understand the material cognitively, but are also able to relate it to the reality of everyday life.

The application of active learning in PAI also shows an increase in social interaction between students during the learning process. Group discussion activities and cooperation in completing tasks allow students to learn to communicate, respect the opinions of others, and develop collaborative skills. This is in accordance with the cooperative learning theory put forward by Slavin (2015), that collaborative learning can increase student involvement while strengthening their understanding of learning materials. In the context of PAI, social interaction has an important value because religious learning is not only related to individual understanding, but also the formation of social and moral attitudes in social life. The teacher assessed that students became more active in expressing their opinions and daring to ask questions when learning was carried out in groups rather than through the lecture method. In fact, some teachers state that students who are usually passive begin to show participation when given the opportunity to discuss with their peers. Thus, active learning not only improves material comprehension, but also builds students' social skills more broadly.

However, the implementation of active learning in PAI is not always carried out in full in every learning process. In certain conditions, teachers still use the lecture method as a complement, especially in material that is

conceptual or requires basic explanations before students are involved in learning activities. One of the teachers stated that "for certain materials, students still need an initial explanation so that they have a basic understanding before discussing." This statement shows that active learning in practice is flexible and adaptive to the characteristics of the material and the condition of the students. The findings reinforce the view that there is no one completely ideal learning approach for all learning situations. From a pedagogical perspective, the combination of active learning and conventional methods can actually be a more effective strategy if applied proportionally. Thus, active learning should be understood not as a total substitute for the lecture method, but as part of a broader and contextual pedagogical approach.

### **The Impact of Active Learning on the Student Learning Process**

The application of active learning has a significant impact on the dynamics of learning in the classroom. Teachers assess that students show increased enthusiasm and motivation to learn when they are directly involved in learning activities. Students are seen to be more active in asking questions, answering questions, and participating in group discussions. One of the speakers stated that "when students participate in practice or discussions, they look more enthusiastic and do not get bored quickly." This statement shows that active learning is able to create a more interesting and non-monotonous learning atmosphere. These findings are in line with research by Musyarrofah (2024) and Nurhikmah (2025) which shows that active learning can significantly increase students' motivation to learn. In the theory of learning motivation, students' direct involvement in the learning process can increase their sense of belonging to the learning process so that students become more motivated to understand the material in depth.

In addition to increasing learning motivation, active learning also has an impact on students' critical thinking skills and courage in expressing opinions. Teachers observe that students become more accustomed to presenting ideas, giving feedback, and discussing learning materials. In fact, some students are starting to be able to relate PAI material to daily life experiences reflectively. This condition shows that active learning not only improves cognitive aspects, but also encourages the development of students' critical and reflective thinking skills. In the

perspective of social constructivism, the process of discussion and interaction allows students to build knowledge through shared experiences and the exchange of ideas. Therefore, active learning in PAI has important implications in shaping critical thinking skills while strengthening the internalization of religious values in students' lives.

However, the impact of active learning is not felt uniformly by all students. Some students show high participation, while others still tend to be passive or take longer to adapt. The teacher explains that individual characteristics such as confidence level, communication skills, and learning readiness affect students' engagement in active learning. One of the teachers stated that "there are students who are immediately active during discussions, but there are also those who need to be encouraged first." The statement shows that the success of active learning depends not only on the methods used, but also on the teacher's ability to understand the characteristics of students and create a supportive learning environment. Thus, the implementation of active learning requires a flexible approach so that all students can be optimally engaged according to their respective abilities.

### **Research Challenges and Contributions**

Despite its various advantages, the implementation of active learning in PAI faces a number of challenges that are quite complex. One of the main obstacles is the limited learning time. Teachers consider that active learning takes longer than the lecture method because it involves various activities such as discussions, practices, and presentations. In addition, classroom management is also a challenge in itself, especially in maintaining a balance between student activity and learning conduciveness. Teachers also face difficulties in dealing with the heterogeneity of students' abilities as well as the demands of a dense curriculum. One of the speakers stated that "sometimes active learning is difficult to fully implement because of limited time and classroom conditions are not always supportive." These findings are in line with the research of Rozak (2024) and Fadli et al. (2025) which showed that technical factors and teacher readiness are the main obstacles in the implementation of active learning. Therefore, the success of active learning is greatly influenced by the teacher's ability to manage the classroom and adjust learning strategies to existing conditions.

The results of this study provide important

implications for PAI learning practices in schools. The findings of the study show that active learning can be a strategic alternative in creating more participatory, contextual, and meaningful PAI learning for students. However, its implementation requires teacher readiness, school support, and adequate pedagogical competence development. This study also shows that active learning cannot be understood as a universal approach that is applied uniformly, but must be adjusted to the characteristics of the material, student conditions, and learning situation. Thus, the contribution of this research lies in strengthening the perspective that the success of active learning is greatly influenced by the perception and adaptive ability of teachers in managing PAI learning. These findings also enrich the theoretical study of active learning by placing teachers as the main actors in determining the effectiveness of the implementation of learning in the classroom.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have a positive perception of the application of active learning in the learning process. Teachers view that this approach is able to create a more interactive, participatory learning atmosphere and encourage student involvement more optimally than conventional methods. The implementation of active learning is carried out through various strategies such as group discussions, worship practices, simulations, role plays, and questions and answers that allow students to be directly involved in the learning process. The application of this approach has a positive impact on increasing learning motivation, the courage to express opinions, the ability to think critically, and students' understanding of PAI materials. In addition, active learning also strengthens social interaction and communication between students so that the learning process becomes more contextual and meaningful. The findings of this study show that active learning in PAI is not only oriented towards achieving cognitive aspects, but also supports character formation, social attitudes, and the internalization of religious values in daily life.

However, the implementation of active learning still faces various challenges, such as time constraints, heterogeneity of student abilities, classroom management, and teachers' readiness to implement appropriate learning strategies. Therefore, active learning cannot be applied

uniformly to all PAI materials and still requires a combination with conventional methods under certain conditions. This research makes an important contribution in strengthening the perspective that the success of active learning is greatly influenced by perceptions, pedagogical understanding, and teachers' adaptive abilities in managing the learning process. Thus, it is necessary to strengthen teachers' pedagogic competence, school support, and develop flexible and contextual learning strategies so that the implementation of active learning in PAI can run more effectively and sustainably.

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