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Analysis of the Pedagogical Competence of Islamic Education Teachers in Improving Student Understanding in Madrasah Aliyah

Khansa Auliya Halizzah*[1], Chusniatun[2]

[1] University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta; g000220143@student.ums.ac.id
[2] University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta; chu144@ums.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) affects students' morals, attitudes, and understanding. The pedagogic ability of teachers to supervise the learning process has an impact on the effectiveness of PAI teaching. The purpose of this study is to analyze the pedagogic competence of PAI teachers in managing learning and its impact on students' religious understanding and development. This research uses phenomenological, qualitative, and field research methodologies. Teachers of Islamic Cultural History (SKI), Al-Qur'an Hadith, Fiqih, and Aqidah Akhlak acted as supporting informants. Observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation are the methods used to collect data. Technical triangulation is used to assess the validity of the data, while data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing are used to analyze the data. As a result of the research, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at MA Al-Islam Jamsaren Surakarta have successfully applied their pedagogic skills. This is evidenced by the ability of teachers to prepare lessons, choose various contextual strategies and techniques, use dialogical learning, and conduct continuous evaluation and learning exercises. Students' understanding in the cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor realms is positively influenced by the teacher's pedagogic competence. The pedagogic competence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is supported by a number of elements, including educational background, teaching experience, support from school policies, and the availability of learning infrastructure and facilities. On the other hand, limited time for learning activities and variations in students' motivation and learning capacity are limiting factors.

Corresponding Author
Khansa Auliya Halizzah
University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta; g000220143@student.ums.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) occupies an important position in the implementation of education in schools because it functions not only to convey Islamic knowledge, but also to shape the character, attitudes, and moral values of students. Through the PAI learning process, students are guided to gain a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings so that they are able to instill and apply Islamic values in their daily lives. Al-Ghazali also emphasized that Islamic education aims to form a complete human being and bring humans closer to Allah SWT. In addition to the curriculum, facilities, and learning environment, the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching also depends heavily on the caliber of teachers who play the role of the main educators.(Pulungan & others, 2022) To achieve learning goals as best as possible, teachers strategically manage the teaching

and learning process. Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers states that in order for teachers to fulfill their professional responsibilities, they must possess and master various knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. Pedagogic competence is one of the skills that has a significant impact on the effectiveness of learning.(Sumiarti & others, 2021). In his work, Mulyasa defines pedagogic competence as the proficiency of a teacher in supervising the teaching and learning process. A teacher's level of understanding of the concept of teaching readiness that includes a thorough understanding of the subject matter and ability to deliver instruction reflects this skill.(Indonesian House of Representatives, 2005) In addition, educators with strong pedagogic abilities are able to evaluate learning objectives and continuously innovate to improve their teaching standards. As a result, pedagogic competence serves as a technical skill and the main foundation for teachers' effectiveness in carrying out their responsibilities as teachers, motivators, and agents of change.(Adang Hambali, 2011).

Islamic Religious Education teachers have a comprehensive understanding of pedagogic competence. His role is not limited to the delivery of religious materials, but also as a moral and spiritual coach for students. Therefore, PAI teachers are required to be able to convey the values and goals of Islamic teachings in harmony with the stages of student development through dialogical, reflective, and contextual learning. Iwan Wijaya stated that in order for Islamic Religious Education learning to be carried out theoretically as well as applicatively, teachers need to have a deep understanding of the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical characteristics of students.(Nurfadilah, Saenab, & Timung, 2024)(Sukmawati, Ainiyah, & Rohma, 2025) Despite the importance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), there are still problems with the pedagogic competence of teachers, such as lack of variety in teaching strategies, inadequate use of media, and low student enthusiasm. In addition, because students at MA Al-Islam Jamsaren Surakarta are in the final adolescent phase, which requires dialogical, reflective, and contextual Islamic Religious Education learning, the pedagogic competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers is an important factor due to the uneven understanding of religion caused by differences in students' character and background.(Chesnavage, 2021).

Previous studies have confirmed that the pedagogic competence of PAI teachers has an effect on improving the quality of learning in schools. Research by Erni Yuliansa, Fitriyani, and Taufik Mukmin revealed that the pedagogic competence of PAI teachers, which includes understanding student character, planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning, is able to support the learning process effectively. Meanwhile, Ihda Puteri Nabila's research shows that the application of pedagogic competence of PAI teachers, especially in Fiqh subjects, is able to improve student learning outcomes, although they are still faced with several obstacles in its implementation.(Solechan, Zahrotun Afif, Sunardi, Binti Masrufa, & Ainur Rofiq, 23 C.E.) Therefore, this study aims to analyze the pedagogic competence of PAI teachers in managing learning and its impact on students' religious understanding and development.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative field research (Kusumastuti Andhi, 2019) with a phenomenological approach, which aims to deeply understand the pedagogic competence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in improving student understanding. The qualitative approach was chosen because it was able to explore the meaning, context, and subjective experience of PAI teachers in implementing their pedagogic competencies in the learning process. The phenomenological approach is used to describe the conscious experience of PAI teachers and how these experiences are interpreted in learning practices(Hasbiansyah, 2008)

The data sources in this study include primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with four Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, namely teachers of Aqidah Akhlak, Al-Qur'an Hadith, Fiqh, and Islamic Cultural History (SKI). Data collection was carried out through observation, interview, and documentation techniques, while the validity of the data was tested using triangulation techniques. Furthermore, the data was analyzed continuously by applying the Miles and Huberman model which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, as well as drawing conclusions

and verification, so as to produce valid findings related to the pedagogic competence of PAI teachers in improving students' understanding. (Matthews, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. PAI Learning Planning Based on Teachers' Pedagogic Competencies

From the interviews, all PAI teachers stated that learning planning is an important stage that is always done before teaching in the classroom. SKI teachers plan learning using the Independent Curriculum teaching modules provided, but still make modifications according to the characteristics, abilities, and conditions of students in each class. Differences in classroom characteristics affect time allocation and learning achievement targets, so teachers implement planning that is not rigid, but flexible and adaptive to students' conditions.(Nordin & Ossman, 2023)

Teachers of Aqidah Akhlak, Al-Qur'an Hadith, and Fiqih also prepare lesson plans referring to the teaching materials provided by the Ministry of Religion, ATP, and applicable guidebooks. However, the learning plan is still designed according to the characteristics and needs of the students. This shows that Islamic Religious Education teachers view lesson preparation as the main principle to guide the learning process so that the goals can be achieved as effectively as possible, not just an administrative formality.(Nanggala, 2020)

These results show that Islamic Religious Education teachers have used pedagogic competence in classroom planning, especially in understanding student characteristics and methodically creating lessons. The teacher's ability to understand students in depth, plan and execute successful lessons, and conduct thorough and continuous learning assessments are all included in pedagogical competence. (Solechan et al., 23 M.) Teachers can manage learning in an organized, efficient, and productive manner when they have a clear strategy. In addition, in addition to content memorization, Islamic Religious Education teachers design learning objectives that emphasize conceptual understanding, learning from the material, and students' ability to apply Islamic values in daily life practices. This approach is in line with the concept of meaningful learning that emphasizes the relationship between academic materials and students' real experiences, so that the learning process does not stop at the theoretical level, but is contextual and applicative. (Wahyuni, Kusuma, & Bengkulu, 2024)

B. PAI Learning Strategies in Improving Student Understanding

The results of the interviews showed that Islamic Education teachers applied various types of learning strategies that were contextually relevant to the characteristics of the material and students. SKI teachers apply Problem Based Learning (PBL) and Project Based Learning (PJBL) methods to encourage students to be actively involved in the learning process by working on projects and solving problems. The PBL approach is used by Aqidah and Akhlak teachers by raising real-world issues that are relevant to students, especially those related to morality and manners in daily life.(Ardiansyah, Andini, Nurahmah, & Tabroni, 2023) To create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment, Qur'an and Hadith instructors combine lectures, group activities, and quizzes. In particular, in terms of elements of worship such as ablution, prayer, and basic transactional affairs, fiqh teachers organize learning by emphasizing demonstration, simulation, and integrated practice steps. (Shahzad, Xu, Lim, Yang, & Khan, 2024) This approach was chosen to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities through practice and observation, rather than just verbal explanations. The pedagogic ability of Islamic education teachers in choosing and implementing teaching strategies according to the needs of students is shown by the use of various tactics. Learning strategies can be modified by teachers who have great pedagogic abilities.(Ezquerro et al., 2024) For example, the PBL approach is considered successful in improving student understanding because it views students as active learners, fosters critical thinking skills, and teaches them how to work independently and together to solve problems. The application of pedagogic skills in adapting learning strategies to the characteristics of the subject matter is reflected in Fiqh learning strategies, which strongly emphasize simulation and demonstration. Students can gradually develop

procedural understanding through practice-based learning, which increases their accuracy and readiness to apply Fiqh rules in daily life. (Sikumbang, 2017)

C. Learning Assessment and Follow-up of PAI Teachers

Islamic Cultural History (SKI) teachers assess student learning through written tests, project assignments, discussions, presentations, and oral assessments, which involve students telling Islamic history. This assessment focuses not only on mastery of the material but also on students' understanding of Islamic historical events. In addition, SKI teachers also observe students' attitudes during the learning process, and this is an example of affective assessment.

Teachers of Faith and Morals focus on assessing students' understanding of the concept of faith and the practice of moral values. Assessment techniques include written tests, oral assessments, individual and group assignments, and observations of students' attitudes and behaviors in and out of the classroom. Affective assessment is the main focus, because the subjects of Faith and Morals are not only about understanding concepts, but also about building behaviors that reflect Islamic values.(Nani Fitriani, 2021)

Qur'an and Hadith teachers assess students through written tests, oral tests, practical tests of reading and memorizing verses and hadiths, quizzes, and tasks of understanding the meaning of verses and hadiths. Psychomotor assessment is also seen in the ability of students to read the Qur'an accurately and correctly, and affective assessment is also carried out through observation of students' attitudes in applying the content of verses and hadith in daily life. (Juwairiyah, & Fanani, 2025)

Fiqh teachers carry out learning assessments by emphasizing aspects of understanding concepts and students' practice skills. The form of assessment used includes written tests, oral tests, and practical assessments on worship and muamalah materials. Psychomotor assessment is carried out through observation of students' accuracy in practicing worship, while affective assessment is carried out by observing the discipline, order, and seriousness of students during the Fiqh learning process.(Harahap, 2023)

Teachers of SKI, Akidah Akhlak, Al-Qur'an Hadith, and Fiqih provide follow-up in the form of additional guidance, relearning, and assistance outside of class hours for students who have not yet achieved mastery of the material. This method of assessment is in line with the idea of authentic assessment, which emphasizes the importance of thorough and continuous evaluation to represent the full potential of students. (Azizatus Shofiyyah, N., Ulum, M., & Zaelani, 2025)To ensure each student gets a fair and ideal learning opportunity based on their needs, learning evaluations must also be complemented by adequate follow-up.

D. The Influence of Pedagogic Competence of PAI Teachers on Student Understanding

The Akidah Akhlak teacher explained that pedagogic competencies have been applied in such a way as to help students have a better understanding of faith, as well as behavioral changes in the application of moral values and ethics in the school environment. Students not only explain the material theoretically, but also exhibit more behaviors that are in line with the values being taught.("Food Security and Nutrition under Climate Change and Socio-Economic Conditions," 2024)

The Islamic Cultural History Teacher (SKI) stated that students' understanding of Islamic history material becomes better after learning is delivered using various contextual methods. This can be seen from the ability of students to explain historical events, Islamic figures, and lessons that can be drawn from the subject in their own language.

The Qur'an Hadith teacher explained that there is an increase in students' ability to read, memorize, and understand the meaning of verses and hadiths. Students who were previously less focused and less understanding of the material, showed better development after being given continuous assistance and reinforcement of the material.

Fiqh teachers explained that the application of pedagogic competencies helps students to understand Fiqh material in a more focused and systematic way. The impact can be seen in increasing students' accuracy in understanding worship procedures and students' awareness in applying Fiqh rules in daily activities in the school environment.

The results of the interviews are consistent with research that shows that the pedagogic ability of Islamic religious education teachers significantly affects students' understanding and learning outcomes both in the cognitive and affective domains. Effective and meaningful learning can be created by teachers with strong pedagogic skills, thus enabling students to not only understand the subject matter conceptually but also absorb and apply it in daily life.

E. Obstacles and Efforts of PAI Teachers in Improving Student Understanding
1. Obstacles Faced by PAI Teachers

Differences The level of understanding and characteristics of students The Islamic Cultural History Instructor (SKI) explained that each class has a unique learning environment and level of understanding. Learning objectives can be achieved in the specified time in the classroom which is conducive to students' understanding of the subject matter. However, because students have a harder time concentrating and understanding the content in a less appropriate classroom, teachers need more time. Qur'an and Hadith teachers are also affected by this, especially related to the differences in students' basic abilities in reading and understanding the Qur'an. These results are consistent with the theory of pedagogical competence, which states that in order to successfully modify the tactics and tempo of learning, teachers must understand the initial characteristics and abilities of their students. Low Student Concentration at a Certain Time Teachers of Aqidah Akhlak and teachers of the Qur'an and Hadith, students' focus often decreases, especially in the last hours of the learning session. As a result, students are less engaged and concentrated, and they need to repeat the material in order to fully understand it. These results show that learning time affects student focus and engagement.

Students often have trouble concentrating on the last few hours of class, which makes them less engaged and requires repetition to fully understand the material. This situation emphasizes how important it is for educators to be able to modify teaching strategies and techniques to fit the classroom environment to ensure the achievement of learning objectives. Limitation of Learning Time According to SKI teachers, time constraints make it difficult to provide in-depth explanations on the topic. Teachers must modify learning objectives due to strict learning schedules, especially when students need more in-depth explanations and assistance. Limited study time is a major obstacle to delivering material in depth, according to the study's findings, especially when the class needs more in-depth explanation and support. As a result, teachers often have to modify learning objectives to fit the time available. Since there is not enough time to explain the entire content of the material in full, this situation is consistent with the research findings that short teaching hours have an impact on the effectiveness of the delivery of the material and the achievement of learning objectives. Limited Learning Facilities and Media.(Oleiro Ara'ujo, Silva Peres, Cochicho Ramalho, Lidon, & Barata, 2023)

The teacher of the Qur'an and Hadith, stated that the implementation of learning has not run optimally due to the limited support facilities, especially the availability of technology-based teaching materials. This condition causes not all classes to have adequate facilities to support more varied and interesting learning. This situation is in line with the research findings that the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process is influenced by the absence of technological resources and educational materials, as these obstacles hinder student engagement and understanding of the content delivered digitally. Low interest in learning students. Fiqh teachers, the lack of enthusiasm of students in learning at home is one of the obstacles to learning. This is because students spend less time preparing and repeating material outside of school hours due to spending more time on their phones. According to research, excessive smartphone use may be linked to students' low motivation and interest in learning because digital distractions distract students from academic tasks, which can ultimately affect their readiness for future learning. (Jiang, Cai, Yang, & Huang, 2025)

2. PAI Teachers' Efforts in Overcoming Obstacles

Adjustment of Learning Strategies and Methods. Teachers of SKI, Aqidah Akhlak, and Al-Qur'an Hadith modify their teaching methods for each session to accommodate variations in

students' levels of understanding. To help students be more engaged and more easily understand the material, they use a variety of learning strategies, including lectures, discussions, Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and educational games. This diverse approach to learning is in line with research findings that show how the use of problem-based learning (PBL) models and other active learning techniques can increase student engagement, participation, and understanding in the learning process, thereby bridging gaps in students' early skills and increasing learning effectiveness. Material Repetition and Intensive Mentoring. The Qur'an Hadith teacher and the Moral Faith teacher reviewed the material and provided additional assistance to students who were still struggling. This advice is given both during and after class hours as a way for teachers to monitor their students' learning progress. This strategy is essential for developing an efficient learning process that is sensitive to the unique needs of each student because it is in line with research findings that show that learning support and intensive guidance from teachers can improve students' understanding and learning achievement, especially for students who have learning difficulties.(Kannan & others, 2024) Classify students based on level of understanding. SKI teachers and Akidah teachers use student grouping in discussions and group projects by pairing students who have mastered the subject matter with students who are still experiencing difficulties. This method accelerates students' understanding of the subject matter. According to the research, teachers in SKI and Akidah Akhlak applied the method of grouping students in group projects or debates by pairing students who had mastered the material with students who were still experiencing difficulties. This approach makes learning more efficient and equitable by encouraging shared learning between students, improving interaction, and helping students who struggle to understand the subject matter faster. Utilization of Available Learning Media Islamic Religious Education teachers strive to utilize available media, such as smart TVs, visual aids, and other basic learning resources, so that teaching becomes more interesting and easier for students to understand, even with limited facilities. (Wan Daud, 2017)

According to research, Islamic Religious Education teachers continue to utilize available media, including smart TVs, visual aids, and other basic learning resources, even in the midst of limited resources. This initiative aims to make learning more engaging and facilitate understanding of the subject matter. The innovative use of media by teachers demonstrates a pedagogical understanding that enables successful learning even in the midst of limited resources. Improving Teacher Competence through Training and MGMP.(Sung & Hwang, 2013) Teachers of SKI, Akidah Akhlak, and Fiqih are actively involved in workshops, training sessions, and Subject Teacher Meetings (MGMP) to improve pedagogic abilities and Islamic Education teaching standards. These exercises provide educators with a forum to exchange experiences, deepen their understanding of teaching techniques, and create a wider range of approaches and media.(Sahin, 2018) Teachers' capacity to create and implement more efficient teaching that meets the needs of students increases when they actively participate in MGMP and professional development. Facilitate to ask questions.(Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018) Fiqh teachers make it easy for students to ask questions and discuss about exams. The widest possible opportunity is given by teachers to students who are experiencing difficulties so that they can benefit from the re-explanation, so that they become more capable and better understand the material. This approach is in line with research findings that show that the use of discussion techniques and active interaction between teachers and students can improve student engagement and understanding of subject matter. Students are given better explanations of ideas they may not yet fully understand and are encouraged to think critically through conversation.(Ritzhaupt & Martin, 2014)

CONCLUSION

Through learning plans that are systematically developed and tailored to the curriculum and student characteristics, Islamic Education teachers apply pedagogical competencies in the learning process. These plans serve as implementation guidelines, ensuring that Islamic Education learning objectives are achieved as effectively as possible. Islamic Education teachers use various strategies, techniques, and contextual learning materials to carry out the teaching process. In addition, they

emphasize student involvement, reduce potential learning challenges, and the Islamic Education learning process. This improves student understanding, especially in terms of religious knowledge and the application of Islamic principles in daily life. Islamic Education (PAI) teachers conduct comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of learning outcomes. There are several challenges, such as variations in student understanding and characteristics, lack of student enthusiasm for learning, lack of learning materials and media, limited learning time, and situations where students have difficulty concentrating at certain times. In this case, PAI develops different approaches for each class to overcome existing challenges. These efforts aim to strengthen the influence of PAI teachers' pedagogical competencies on learning effectiveness and improve student understanding.

This study contributes theoretically by enriching the understanding of the application of PAI teachers' pedagogical competencies in the context of character-based curricula, as well as practically through recommendations for differentiation strategies that can be adopted by PAI teachers at various levels of education. In addition, these findings support the development of religious education policies that are more adaptive to the challenges faced by students, thereby improving the overall quality of PAI learning and its relevance to everyday life. Future researchers are advised to explore the impact of digital technology integration (such as AI-based learning applications) on the pedagogical competence of PAI teachers in overcoming media and time constraints. In addition, longitudinal studies involving larger samples from various regions in Indonesia can test the sustainability of this differentiation approach and measure its long-term impact on the formation of students' religious character.

The conclusion serves to distill the essence of the study by highlighting its main findings without simply restating statistical results. Authors should succinctly reflect on how the study contributes to the understanding of the intersections between language, technology, and social media, especially in relation to the research questions. This section should also articulate the practical and theoretical implications of the study, showing how the results can inform educational practice, platform design, policy development, or future academic inquiry. Importantly, the conclusion should point toward future research directions that emerge logically from the study's outcomes and limitations. It must be written in a reflective and conclusive tone, avoiding the introduction of new data, arguments, or references.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in only one institution, MA Al-Islam Jamsaren Surakarta, so the findings cannot be generalized to all madrasahs or schools with different contexts. Second, the number of informants was limited to four Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, which may not fully represent the broader perspectives of PAI teachers in other regions. In addition, the qualitative approach relies on interviews and observations that may contain subjective interpretations. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve larger samples and broader research settings to obtain more comprehensive results.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

KH, conceptualized the research, conducted data collection through observations and interviews, performed data analysis, and prepared the original manuscript draft. CH, supervised the research process, contributed to the research design and methodology, reviewed and edited the manuscript, and provided academic guidance throughout the study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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