INTERDISCIPLINARY-BASED ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (PAI) LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT
Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a weekly mandatory subject often taught through lectures, resulting in passive student engagement and a lack of creativity. This study explores an innovative interdisciplinary approach to PAI at Bustanul Ulum Islamic Elementary School, integrating it with subjects like natural and social sciences, civics, Indonesian language, and mathematics. The research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology, using interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis involves data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Findings show that the interdisciplinary approach makes PAI more engaging and meaningful, reducing student boredom. Effective implementation requires competent teachers and collaboration among subject teachers for integration.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Interdisciplinary Approach, Elementary School

ABSTRAK
Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) adalah mata pelajaran wajib mingguan yang sering diajarkan melalui ceramah, yang mengakibatkan keterlibatan siswa yang pasif dan kurangnya kreativitas. Penelitian ini menggali pendekatan interdisipliner yang inovatif terhadap PAI di Sekolah Dasar Islam Bustanul Ulum, dengan mengintegrasikannya dengan mata pelajaran seperti ilmu alam dan sosial, pendidikan kewarganegaraan, bahasa Indonesia, dan matematika. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif, dengan menggunakan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data melibatkan reduksi data, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan interdisipliner membuat PAI lebih menarik dan bermakna, serta mengurangi kebosanan siswa. Pelaksanaan yang efektif memerlukan guru yang kompeten dan kolaborasi antar guru mata pelajaran untuk integrasi.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), Pendekatan Interdisipliner, Sekolah Dasar
INTRODUCTION

In primary education, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is allocated only three hours per week. Field observations reveal that the teaching of PAI predominantly relies on the lecture method. This monotonous approach results in a lack of enthusiasm among students towards the subject. Additionally, the monodisciplinary nature of PAI education, which is confined to a single discipline focusing solely on teachings about what is permissible and what is not, further exacerbates the issue. As Durhan (2020) notes, Islamic Religious Education is often perceived merely as a part of the curriculum emphasizing religious aspects, with a focus on the concepts of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and education in Indonesia, in general, remain predominantly teacher-centered. The teacher is the primary actor, the source of knowledge, and the determinant of students’ “success.” This approach leaves little room for individual differences. Following the “teaching within religion” approach, PAI tends to be top-down, unilateral, and doctrinaire. Consequently, students often pursue achievement rather than deep learning (Mu’ti, 2023).

The rapid advancement of technology demands a more flexible and dynamic knowledge approach. The current trend in scientific fields reflects an increasing integration and interconnectedness across disciplines. For instance, in studying education, the role of psychology is indispensable, leading to the fusion of educational science and psychology into educational psychology.

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) system consistently offers new perspectives, one of which is the holistic education paradigm. This paradigm is crucial in encompassing the entire educational dynamics comprehensively. However, there are challenges in understanding PAI, as it is often viewed from a limited perspective, such as preparing students for higher education levels. In contrast, PAI should aim to uncover and develop the unique potential of each student (Amin, 2015).

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning has traditionally employed a single-discipline (monodisciplinary) approach. This monodisciplinary approach limits students’ understanding to a singular perspective, thereby closing off other fields of study (Muzakki, Natsir, and Fahrudin, 2021). In reality, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) content is fundamentally open to ideas from various disciplines. This openness should encourage educators to prepare the delivery of Islamic teachings by integrating knowledge from other fields (interdisciplinary). With this approach, IRE learning encompasses not only religious content but also integrates material from diverse disciplines, enabling students to gain deeper and more meaningful knowledge and learning experiences.

This explanation highlights the urgency of the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in providing significant contributions. The most notable contribution is the shift in orientation within the IRE learning process,
aimed at forming an understanding of Islam that aligns with contemporary developments. This approach makes IRE learning more relevant to students as it connects meaningfully with their lives.

The problem with IRE content becomes more evident when considering the limited time allocation of just three sessions per week. This issue, as noted by a fourth-grade Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teacher at Bustanul Ulum Elementary School, is critical: “I believe the time allocated for IRE lessons is insufficient due to the extensive content. With such limited time, IRE teachers must strategize to cover all the material within the given timeframe.” The interdisciplinary approach in Islamic education is intriguing as it offers a different atmosphere for students, facilitating the achievement of their noble goals. Islamic education, reinforced with an interdisciplinary methodology, can transform the rigid structure and techniques of traditional Islamic teaching into modern learning (Faizal et al., 2023).

The selection of an interdisciplinary-based Islamic Religious Education is deemed appropriate, as the challenges in IRE learning are directly experienced during the learning process, closely related to the choice of teaching materials. This longstanding issue has yet to find a satisfactory solution. The scope of IRE content aligns with seven subjects, as it summarizes various Islamic sciences, including the Quran, hadith, theology, ethics, jurisprudence, Islamic cultural history, and Arabic (Muhaimin, 2008).

Several studies on similar topics, such as Faizal et al. (2023), have shown that an interdisciplinary approach can stimulate students. This study used library research methods. Similarly, Surohim (2021) concluded that an interdisciplinary approach in Islamic education creates a new learning environment for students to achieve higher goals. IRE with an interdisciplinary approach has transformed IRE learning from classical to modern. Another study by Rusmawati et al. (2022) concluded that interdisciplinary learning in IRE is part of integrated learning. At the elementary level, integrated learning is achieved through integrated topic learning, combining competencies from various subjects into a network of topics representing different disciplines. Its relevance becomes clearer with the independent curriculum, which not only includes but enriches it with openness to other relevant approaches. The method used in this research is library research.

Previous studies on Islamic Religious Education and interdisciplinary approaches have predominantly used library research. In this study, the researcher aims to directly observe the interdisciplinary-based IRE learning process implemented in elementary schools. IRE at the elementary level can be integrated with other subjects such as Natural and Social Sciences, Citizenship Education, Indonesian Language, and Mathematics.

The above discussion indicates that IRE teaching methods require innovation to avoid monotony, necessitating an interdisciplinary approach in its implementation. This study aims to describe
how interdisciplinary-based IRE is conducted in elementary schools. Thus, collaboration between school curriculum policymakers and IRE teachers is essential to integrate IRE learning with other subjects.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was conducted at the Bustanul Ulum Islamic Elementary School in Jember during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. The informant for this research was a teacher of Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. P1</td>
<td>Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teacher</td>
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Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were employed to gather information regarding the implementation of interdisciplinary-based Islamic Religious Education. Observations were utilized to examine the interdisciplinary-based Islamic Religious Education activities and students’ reactions when this subject was integrated with other lessons. Documentation was used to complement the report data related to the implementation of the teaching. Once the data was collected, it was analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and data conclusion (Umar & Choiri, 2019).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning in Elementary Schools

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a mandatory subject in elementary schools, allocated just three hours per week. As stated by Mrs. P1 regarding the Islamic Religious Education learning at Sekolah Dasar Islam Bustanul Ulum, “PAI lessons are given to all students from grades 1 to 6. Each class is allocated three hours of lessons per week. Initially, before our school implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, I delivered the material through lectures like other teachers. The children became bored, and many did not pay attention, especially the upper-grade students.”

In the teaching and learning process, teachers play a very significant role. Teachers need to have the ability to design active learning, engaging students in various learning activities. This is expected to enhance the students’ mental, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual involvement in the learning process (Budiyanti, Rizal, & Sumarna, 2016). The use of appropriate teaching methods is essential. Suitable teaching methods will create an active and interactive classroom atmosphere, with good communication between students and teachers.

According to Zakiyah Darajat (Majid, 2004), Islamic Religious Education is an effort to nurture and foster students so that they always have a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings, appreciate its goals, and eventually can practice and make Islam a way of life. Similarly, Abudin Nata (Nata, 2016) defines Islamic Education as education based on the practice of Islamic teachings sourced from the Qur'an and al-Sunnah. Therefore, the
The difference between Islamic education and other education is determined by the foundational teachings of Islam. Islamic education encompasses two main points: first, educating students to become individuals with Islamic morals; second, educating students to study Islamic teachings based on the Qur’an and Hadith.

Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools includes Qur’an Hadith, faith, morals, jurisprudence, and Islamic history. The scope of Islamic Religious Education includes the realization of harmony, alignment, and balance in human relationships with Allah, oneself, fellow human beings, other living beings, and the environment (Sulistyowati, 2012).

This aligns with Mrs. P1’s statement that Islamic Religious Education lessons in elementary schools include Qur’an Hadith, aqidah morals, jurisprudence, Arabic language, and Islamic Cultural History (SKI). In essence, this material is almost the same as what is taught in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), but in elementary schools, it is not discussed in detail. Unlike MI, where each subject is a separate lesson with broader discussions.

**An Interdisciplinary Approach**

Islamic religious education, as part of the curriculum, encompasses Islamic principles and values that play a crucial role in shaping character and life in accordance with religious teachings. Therefore, it is essential to implement effective teaching methods that can influence students’ choices, decisions, and life development. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are expected to possess the skills to design learning patterns professionally, one of which is through an interdisciplinary approach, to create profound learning experiences and instill Islamic life values in students.

According to Mrs. P1, “We try to integrate Islamic Religious Education lessons with other subjects in the hope that students will be more engaged with the material presented. This method is often referred to as an interdisciplinary approach. I see that the material presented in the new curriculum designed by Mr. Nadiem, the Minister of Education, can be linked with other subjects such as Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS), Civic Education (PKn), Indonesian Language, and so on.”

Nasution (2021) states that an interdisciplinary approach is a method of solving a problem by utilizing various perspectives from related fields in an integrated manner. Interdisciplinary studies, in principle, also represent new knowledge emerging from development. The consequence of being a new field means it possesses new methods, resulting from new epistemology, axiology, and ontology. An example of an interdisciplinary approach is when psychology combines with education, forming a new field known as educational psychology.

An interdisciplinary approach is also defined as the intensive interaction between one or more disciplines with the aim of unifying concepts, methods, and analyses (Nimawat et al., 2020). Each discipline involved has its own concepts, methods, and...
analyses. From the integration of these disciplines, a new epistemology or a new discipline emerges, which is then used to solve specific problems.

According to Sari and Amin (2020), interdisciplinary studies involve collaboration between different fields, resulting in a unified method. Interdisciplinary studies are based on the principle that knowledge is a blend of two different fields, which evolves into a distinct discipline.

From various definitions related to the interdisciplinary approach, it can be concluded that this approach employs various perspectives from related fields to find solutions to problems. Related fields refer to a collection of knowledge within a specific branch of science, such as Natural Sciences (IIK), Social Sciences (IIS), or Cultural Sciences (IIB). Relevant knowledge refers to the knowledge suitable for solving a particular problem. A key characteristic of the interdisciplinary approach is the integrated interaction between sciences within the same branch of knowledge.

**Interdisciplinary-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning in Elementary Schools**

The interdisciplinary approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning represents a novel effort to make this education more meaningful and easier for students to comprehend. This approach is implemented by integrating PAI lessons with other subjects. Effective implementation requires collaboration and communication between PAI teachers and teachers of other subjects to achieve the desired objectives. This aligns with the statement from Mrs. P1, who mentioned that integrating PAI with other subjects is a new practice at our school. In practice, we cooperate with fellow teachers. For instance, in the fourth-grade PAI material discussing the theme of diversity, this theme is also covered in Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) and Civic Education (PKn). Therefore, when I explain the material, I confirm with the IPAS and PKn teachers that the content has been covered, allowing them to only need to add a little additional information. I believe this interdisciplinary approach will save time allocated for other subjects. As I have exemplified, PAI can be integrated into any subject at certain points, such as IPAS, PKn, Indonesian Language, Mathematics, and so forth.

Nino Indrianto interprets the interdisciplinary approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as a solution-oriented method to achieve the goals of PAI learning. He explains that the interdisciplinary approach entails dialogue and collaboration between religious sciences and general sciences, forming a unified whole. Consequently, Islamic education is no longer perceived as a rigid system that is unresponsive to contemporary developments (Indrianto, 2020).

![Figure 1. PAI Learning Process](image-url)
Figure 1. The teacher explains PAI lesson material. The image depicts students actively engaging in the learning process. They confidently come forward to answer questions posed by Ms. P1. Students seem to enjoy the classroom learning experience.

The use of an interdisciplinary approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is believed to make this subject “alive” and “meaningful.” As Ms. P1 mentioned in an interview, “The approach that links PAI with other subjects makes my students active in the learning process. They can respond to the material and questions I provide. The class becomes more lively, and they understand the material easily.” On another occasion, a science teacher shared his experience with me regarding the explanation of diversity material. When asked about this topic, the students provided explanations complete with relevant verses. This story further motivated me to explain PAI using an integrative or interdisciplinary approach.

Interdisciplinary and integrative Islamic Religious Education is a tool to achieve the objectives of Religious Education, as stated in Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007. PAI material does not stand alone but needs to be integrated with other relevant topics. The implementation of integrative learning is expected to address issues that have long plagued Islamic education, transforming it from stagnant to meaningful and holistic learning.

The application of an interdisciplinary approach in PAI can also address the persistent dichotomy in education, as this approach integrates religious and general knowledge. This integration goes beyond matching verses with established theories; it also considers the values embedded and induced in the learning process. The outcome of this integrative learning process is expected to produce graduates with a mature conceptual understanding, strong character, and skills to face life in the 21st century.

The idea of knowledge integration, leading to an interdisciplinary approach, is heavily influenced by the dynamic nature of life. This phenomenon demands changes and developments in education to meet these challenges. Educational patterns cannot stand alone between disciplines; there must be integral synergy among various disciplines. The complexity of life issues underpins the need for integrative education changes. This learning not only focuses on the students’ understanding of the material but also provides space for children’s potential to explore broadly for self-development (Purwaningrum, 2019).

Education will always follow the changes of the times and the realities of life in society. To maintain its existence, education must remain relevant to human demands and needs. The core of this must be preserved, ensuring that the role of education is maintained without being reduced by any factor. This means that the curriculum must address actual reality challenges. This is because education graduates will live in society, and the role of education is to equip and guide them to be ready and capable of playing a role in their social environment. Curriculum integration is a step to bridge the gap that has occurred.
Integration of Islamic Religious Education with Other Subjects: An Example

Based on an interview with Mrs. P1, here are examples of the integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) with other subjects: firstly, Integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS). The topic of diversity in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is explained in QS. Al-Hujurat: 13. Essentially, Allah created humans in diversity. Through the Qur'an, Allah illustrates human diversity, its purpose, and its honor in His sight. “We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another, not to despise each other, and not to create conflicts among different groups.”

In IPAS, the concept of diversity is explained by teaching students how to respond to differences in ethnicity, religion, and culture in Indonesia. One of the attitudes emphasized is tolerance. The integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and IPAS aims to equip students not only with the ability to explain Qur’anic verses about diversity but also with the understanding of how to approach diversity in real life.

Another example is the topic of ecosystems and environmental sustainability in science (IPA). This involves linking the concept of environmental stewardship in Islamic teachings with the study of ecosystems, food chains, and environmental preservation in science. For instance, explaining the concept of ‘khalifah’ in Islam and the responsibility of being stewards of the earth in line with the scientific...
understanding of environmental conservation.

Secondly, Integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Citizenship Education (PKn). Fostering harmony in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is illustrated through the historical context of Prophet Muhammad’s migration to Madinah. During his time in Madinah, he established harmony among the diverse inhabitants. The Prophet made a pact between the Muslims (Muhajirin and Ansar) and the Jews, known as the Charter of Madinah. Similarly, this subject is covered in Citizenship Education (PKn) through the concept of ‘Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,’ which means unity in diversity.

Thirdly, Integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Indonesian Language. Reading and understanding stories in Indonesian Language lessons can be integrated with the stories of prophets in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Teachers can use narratives about prophets or prominent figures in Islam as reading materials for Indonesian Language classes. After reading these stories, students can express their understanding through writing or group discussions.

Fourthly, Integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Mathematics. The concept of morals in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can be integrated into mathematical concepts such as the multiplication of integers. For example, when a positive integer is multiplied by a negative integer, the result is negative. This can be related to the idea that failing to follow Allah’s obligatory commands results in negative consequences. Conversely, when a negative integer is multiplied by another negative integer, the result is positive. This can be interpreted as avoiding prohibitions from Allah, resulting in positive outcomes.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should adopt an interdisciplinary approach with communicative teaching methods and optimal classroom management to achieve learning objectives. The basic competencies should be integrated with other relevant themes or subjects. This type of learning provides meaningful experiences for students, focusing not only on mastering the concepts of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) but also on developing systematic, creative, and innovative thinking patterns from diverse perspectives (Ashari et al., 2023). Therefore, using an interdisciplinary approach can make PAI learning more enjoyable and flexible, adapting to the changing times.

CONCLUSION

The teaching of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in primary schools has demonstrated the application of an interdisciplinary approach. This is evident through the integration of PAI with other subjects such as Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS), Civic Education (PKn), Indonesian Language, and Mathematics. By employing an interdisciplinary approach, classroom learning becomes more interactive and meaningful for students. The classroom atmosphere becomes more dynamic, students show high enthusiasm for learning, and their learning experiences become broader and more open to understanding.
concepts from various academic perspectives.

However, this study has limitations as it focuses on only one PAI teacher and covers material across all grades, from first to sixth grade. Future research is recommended to focus on a single grade level to obtain more in-depth data. It is hoped that there will be collaboration among subject teachers in primary schools to integrate all subjects, allowing students to gain broader knowledge from multiple academic perspectives.

REFERENCES


