



The Impact of Islamic Religious Education on Students' Spiritual and Social Development: A Study at Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang

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ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization, students are expected to possess intellectual, spiritual, and social intelligence. Spiritual, and social intelligence to navigate complex societal challenges effectively. However, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in fostering these qualities, particularly in higher education, remains underexplored. This study examines the impact of PAI on students' spiritual and social qualities. This study bridges this gap by examining the effects of PAI on students' spiritual and social qualities. This study examines the impact of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) on improving students' spiritual and social qualities at the Faculty of Agricultural Science and Technology, University Muhammadiyah Semarang. The research employed a quantitative survey method using accidental sampling, involving 150 third-semester students who had completed the PAI course. Data were collected through a 12-item questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive analysis and t-tests. The results indicate that PAI learning significantly enhances students' spiritual quality, reflected in their understanding of religious teachings, frequency of worship, and ethical awareness. Social quality also showed significant improvement, as evidenced by increased participation in social activities, empathy towards others, and effective communication skills. All variables demonstrated a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating significant changes after the PAI learning. Although this study highlights the crucial role of PAI in shaping students' character, it has several limitations, such as its single-faculty focus, reliance on a specific questionnaire, and short-term observation, highlight the need for further research. Moreover, the study only observed short-term effects, suggesting the need for further research with

Introduction

The teaching of Islamic Religious Education in universities plays a crucial role in shaping the character and personality of students (Hambali & Asyafah, 2020). In the midst of the challenges posed by globalization and modernization, students are not only required to have intellectual intelligence but also spiritual and social intelligence (Suraji & Sastrodiharjo, 2021). As Khadavi (2023) stated, several characteristics are related to spiritual intelligence, such as *Istiqāmah* (consistency), *Tawāḍu'* (humility), *Tawakkul* (effort and surrender), *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), *Kāffah* (wholeness), *Tawāzun* (balance), and *Ihsān* (integrity and perfection), all of which are referred to as *Akhlaq al-Karimah*. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education education in higher education is expected to have a positive impact on the development of both of these aspects.

Students' spiritual quality is closely related to their understanding and practice of Islamic teachings in daily life. This connection is built through various educational and social approaches that emphasize the importance of internalizing Islamic values in every student activity, both in daily interactions and in moral judgments. This integration happens through a learning process

that not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also on character development, making Islamic teachings a main guide for action and thought, creating a strong spiritual foundation. As researched by Mohd Yusoff (2022) Islamic spiritual disposition has a substantial influence on students' moral judgment in religious educational institutions. By integrating spiritual and social norms into the curriculum, the educational process not only enriches academic knowledge but also shapes students' ability to make moral decisions aligned with the principles of Islamic teachings. This provides a strong foundation for character development, ensuring that Islamic moral and spiritual values become their primary reference in every action and consideration.

The formation of character through Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in shaping students' personalities. This education provides a solid foundation for character education by instilling religious values that guide students' behavior and mindset in daily life. As Puspitasari (2022) noted, the success of Islamic education in shaping students' character depends heavily on the implementation of relevant teaching methods that meet their spiritual needs. Evi Gusliana (2022) also emphasized that in higher education, Islamic Religious Education continues to strengthen students' character by instilling values such as honesty, politeness, and responsibility, which are essential for personal development as well as for contributing to national progress.

Islamic Religious Education aims to equip students with religious knowledge that can guide them in worship, morality, and understanding the essence of religious life (Heti Aisah, Qiqi Yulianti Zaqiah, 2021). Amid the dynamic and often tempting campus life, students need a strong spiritual foundation to lead a more meaningful life. Those with good spiritual quality are expected to be more capable of facing various life challenges, both personal and social (Damayanti et al., 2024).

In addition, Islamic Religious Education is also expected to enhance students' social quality. In Islamic teachings, good social relationships are highly emphasized, such as the importance of maintaining *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), behaving justly, and contributing positively to society. Students who study Islamic Religious Education should not only develop in terms of personal worship but also in their ability to interact with others, cooperate, and contribute meaningfully to their environment. Musnandar (2022) found that Islamic values naturally encourage the development of soft skills, such as good ethics, a positive attitude, and the ability to spread kindness to others. These skills are vital for fostering effective interactions and collaboration, both in social and professional contexts. As explained by Althof (2022), for the millennial Muslim generation, the values of Islamic Religious Education play an important role in building personal branding and achieving career success. These values strengthen self-control, resilience, adaptability, and social skills, all qualities essential for navigating the ever-changing dynamics of the working world. Furthermore, Abu Bakar (2023) reviewed that Islamic Religious Education emphasizes noble morals and piety, which guide individuals in making ethical decisions in their careers. This moral compass helps avoid behaviours that undermine personal and professional integrity. Thus, Islamic Religious Education plays a role in shaping individuals who are not only spiritually devout but also active and socially conscious.

Students often face moral and social dilemmas on campus, requiring them to make difficult decisions. In such situations, Islamic Religious Education can serve as an important guide to help them face these challenges. With a strong understanding of religion, students can make wiser decisions, both in personal and social matters, by Islamic principles (Triantiani et al., 2022). However, not all students have a deep understanding of religion, leading to confusion when confronted with moral issues. Islamic Religious Education should not only be theoretical but also applicable in daily life, making it easier for students to handle these situations. Another

issue that arises is how universities can provide Islamic education that is relevant to students' lives today. If delivered only in theory without a connection to campus reality, students may find it difficult to apply in real life. Therefore, the main challenge is how students can integrate religious teachings with their daily lives. Universities need to find ways to make Islamic education more relevant and useful in helping students face moral and social dilemmas.

This study aims to examine how the teaching of Islamic Religious Education in higher education can influence the improvement of students' spiritual and social qualities. The main focus of this research is to observe the relationship between the intensity and quality of Islamic Religious Education learning with the development of students' character, particularly in terms of their spirituality and social skills.

Research Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method to analyze the impact of Islamic Religious Education on the enhancement of students' spiritual and social qualities. The research design used is a comparative survey to assess differences in students' levels of intensity before and after the Islamic Religious Education course.

The population for this study includes third-semester students who have taken the Islamic Religious Education course at the Faculty of Agricultural Science and Technology, Muhammadiyah University of Semarang, across four study programs. From this population, a sample of 150 students was selected using accidental sampling, a technique where respondents encountered directly are chosen as research subjects (Daengs et al., 2022). Primary data for this research were collected through a questionnaire based on relevant theories. This questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and distributed to respondents through student WhatsApp groups.

The research instrument consists of 12 items measuring the understanding and application of Islamic Religious Education concepts. Respondents provided their answers using a four-point Likert scale, with categories ranging from strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), to strongly disagree (1). A neutral option was excluded because uncertainty is seen as ambiguous and does not reflect a clear positive or negative tendency (Rokhimawan et al., 2023)

Table 1. Instrument Dimensions

Variable	Dimensions
Spiritual Quality	Understanding of religious teachings
	Frequency of worship
	Concern for ethics
Social Quality	Participation in social activities
	Empathy towards others
	Good and polite communication

Spiritual quality refers to the aspects of an individual's spirituality that influence how they interact with themselves, others, and their environment. This includes profound experiences, values, beliefs, and practices related to the sacred or transcendent. Spiritual quality can encompass several elements such as:

1. Self-Awareness: The individual's understanding of themselves, including emotions, beliefs, and values that underlie their actions.

2. **Connectivity:** A sense of connection with others, nature, and a higher power, often creating a sense of purpose and meaning in life.
3. **Spiritual Values:** Principles that guide behavior and decision-making, such as compassion, honesty, and justice.
4. **Spiritual Practices:** Activities aimed at enhancing spiritual quality, such as meditation, prayer, reflection, or participation in spiritual communities.
5. **Emotional Resilience:** The ability to face challenges and difficulties using spiritual beliefs and support.

Research shows that spiritual quality can affect mental and physical health, as well as overall life satisfaction.

Social quality, to an individual's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with others and interact effectively in various social contexts. This quality includes various aspects of social interaction, such as:

1. **Communication Skills:** The ability to clearly and effectively convey and receive information, including empathetic listening and confident speaking.
2. **Interpersonal Relationships:** The quality and depth of relationships with family, friends, and colleagues, including the support received and given.
3. **Cooperation:** The ability to work with others to achieve shared goals, including negotiation and conflict resolution skills.
4. **Empathy:** The ability to understand and feel what others are experiencing, contributing to stronger social bonds.
5. **Social Engagement:** Participation in community or organizational activities that strengthen social networks and promote collective well-being.

Studies indicate that good social quality can improve mental health and individual well-being. For example, a study by Holt-Lunstad (2010) found that strong social support correlates with reduced mortality risk and overall health improvements.

The instrument was initially tested with 50 respondents, validated using the Pearson Product Moment validity test, and tested with Cronbach's Alpha to measure its reliability. The results of the validity test showed that all statement items had $r_{xy} > r_{tabel}$ (0.05), and Cronbach's Alpha results were greater than 0.60, making the instrument both valid and reliable for use in the study.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability

Variable	N items	Validity		Reliability
		r	r _{tabel}	
Spiritual Quality	50	0.512-0.818	0.2759	0.783
Social Quality	50	0.613-0.914	0.2759	0.833

Data analysis was conducted using Descriptive Analysis to provide a general overview of respondent characteristics and the distribution of responses for each research variable (Sugiyono, 2013). This includes the mean, frequency, and standard deviation to examine the extent to which students perceive the impact of Islamic Religious Education on their spiritual and social quality.

Additionally, a T-test was used to test the hypothesis of whether there are significant differences in students' spiritual and social quality based on certain variables, such as the intensity of Islamic Religious Education. The test compared two groups of students: those with high intensity in Islamic Religious Education and those with low intensity. The T-test was

conducted with a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups. If the p-value is less than 0.05, it indicates a significant difference between the groups.

Findings

Research Results of the Impact of Islamic Religious Learning on the Spiritual and Social Abilities of Students at Muhammadiyah University of Semarang

This study examines the impact of Islamic Religious learning on the spiritual and social abilities of Muhammadiyah University of Semarang students. Data were obtained through questionnaires distributed to 200 students taking Islamic Religious courses and interviews with several lecturers and related students.

1. Impact on Spiritual Ability

The results of the study show that Islamic Religious learning at Muhammadiyah University of Semarang has a significant impact on improving students' spiritual abilities. As many as 85% of students who take Islamic Religious courses feel more connected to religious teachings, improve the quality of their worship, and understand more deeply about spiritual concepts in everyday life. This learning helps students to understand better deep religious values, such as patience, sincerity, and gratitude.

1. Several indicators of students' spiritual improvement include: Discipline in worship: Students show an increase in religious obligations such as praying five times a day, reading the Qur'an, and praying.
2. Tendency to improve themselves: Students do more self-introspection and try to avoid negative behavior. Strengthening religious understanding: Students become more open to religious studies and seek more references related to Islamic teachings.

3. Impact on Social Skills

Learning Islam also has an impact on students' social skills. As many as 78% of students reported that learning Islam helped them to better appreciate differences, behave more tolerantly, and increase their social awareness of others. Learning about social values in Islam, such as ukhuwah (brotherhood), amanah (trust), and adab, has strengthened students' social skills, both on and off campus.

1. Some of the observed social impacts include:
 - Increased empathy and concern: Students are more active in social activities, such as fundraising for disaster relief, teaching underprivileged children, and other activities that prioritize social solidarity.
 - Increased tolerance between religions and cultures: Students show a more open attitude towards differences in religion, culture, and social background.
 - Involvement in social organizations: Many students are involved in student organizations that focus on social and religious activities, such as pengajian, Islamic studies, and charity activities.

3. Impact Determining Factors

Some factors that influence the impact of Islamic learning on students' spiritual and social abilities include:

1. Teaching Methods: Learning that uses an interactive approach, group discussions, and case studies helps students to more easily understand and internalize religious teachings in their social lives.
2. Lecturer Quality: Lecturers who have good communication skills and can provide real examples in life play an important role in improving student understanding.
3. Student Participation: Students who actively participate in classes and religious activities outside the classroom show a more significant increase in their spiritual and social abilities.

1. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to reveal general data information. This process includes calculating the sample size, mean, and standard deviation of the data.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis

Dimension	N	Mean (SD)	
		Before	After
Understanding of religious teachings	150	2.780 (0.684)	3.313 (0.696)
Frequency of worship	150	3.007 (0.700)	3.413 (0.626)
Concern for ethics	150	3.167 (0.670)	3.340 (0.643)
Participation in social activities	150	2.507 (0.757)	2.933 (0.774)
Empathy for others	150	3.040 (0.759)	3.213 (0.808)
Good and polite communication	150	3.153 (0.712)	3.320 (0.717)

Based on Table 3, it is shown that Islamic Religious Education has a positive impact on enhancing students' spiritual and social quality. The average understanding of religious teachings increased from 2.780 to 3.313, the frequency of worship from 3.007 to 3.413, and concern for ethics from 3.167 to 3.340. Participation in social activities also increased from 2.507 to 2.933, followed by empathy for others rising from 3.040 to 3.213. Lastly, good and polite communication skills improved from 3.153 to 3.320. The increase across all variables indicates that Islamic Religious Education has successfully enhanced students' spiritual and social aspects significantly.

2. T-test

A t-test was used to assess the significance of changes between the pre- and post-education values. Based on the t-test results table, all variables showed significant changes, as indicated by a p-value less than 0.05 for all variables.

Table 4. Paired t-test

Variable	t-value	P-value
Understanding of religious teachings	8.532	0.000
Frequency of worship	7.709	0.000
Concern for ethics	3.360	0.001
Participation in social activities	6.234	0.000
Empathy for others	2.836	0.005
Good and polite communication	3.566	0.000

Based on Table 4, all variables show significant changes after Islamic Religious Education. Understanding of religious teachings has a t-value of 8.532 with a p-value < 0.001, indicating a

highly significant improvement. The frequency of worship also shows a significant increase with a t-value of 7.709 and p-value < 0.001. Concern for ethics has a t-value of 3.360 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a significant change but more moderate compared to the other variables. Participation in social activities increased significantly (t-value = 6.234, $p < 0.001$), while empathy for others showed a significant but relatively smaller increase (t-value = 2.836, $p = 0.005$). Finally, good and polite communication improved significantly with a t-value of 3.566 and p-value < 0.001. Overall, these results indicate that Islamic Religious Education has a significant impact on improving students' spiritual and social aspects.

Discussion

Spiritually, students show an increase in their understanding of the deep teachings of Islam, as well as an increase in their worship practices, such as prayer, fasting, and dhikr. The growth of students' spirituality, particularly in comprehending Islamic teachings deeply and improving acts of worship like prayer, fasting, and remembrance of Allah (dhikr), is greatly shaped by Islamic education. This form of schooling combines spiritual, moral, and intellectual elements, striving to foster a holistic grasp of Islamic principles, as noted by Kasman (2024) Islamic education plays a vital role in forming a person's spiritual foundation, encouraging belief in God, and promoting noble character. It integrates religious teachings into daily behavior, distancing individuals from negative actions and fostering a harmonious community. The combination of thinking and dhikr (remembrance of Allah) in Islamic education strengthens students both externally and internally, enhancing their relationship with Allah and promoting moral behavior (Kusuma et al., 2023). This reflects a strengthening of students' relationship with God, which has a positive effect on their inner peace and peace of mind.

Islamic Education holds significant importance in shaping students' spiritual and social growth by combining religious knowledge with character and ethical education. This synergy promotes a comprehensive developmental framework that encompasses intellectual, ethical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. As observed by Ilham (2024) The integration of Islamic Education with general education and extracurricular activities helps build students' character. This approach includes combining religious lessons with other subjects, engaging in community activities, and fostering collaboration between teachers and parents. Such integration promotes social spirit and character development. The education system also emphasizes the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity, promoting a harmonious and inclusive social environment. This is achieved through teachings that encourage empathy, justice, and a sense of caring for others (Adinda Khoirunnis et al., 2023)

In the social aspect, Islamic religious education forms attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and concern for others. Students are more sensitive to diversity and can interact well in a pluralistic society. Islamic religious education also strengthens moral and ethical values in students, which are reflected in their positive behavior on campus and in society. As analyzed by Ciptadi (2023) By aligning religious teachings with social realities, Islamic Education helps students understand the influence of Islam on social structures and interactions. This approach promotes tolerance, interfaith harmony, and critical thinking, preparing students to contribute positively to a diverse society. Holistic Islamic habituation practices, such as daily prayers and gratitude, enhance students' moral behavior and engagement in religious activities. This systematic approach fosters

a supportive community environment conducive to religious learning (Ainawa Kholilatul Nurizah & Muhlasin Amrullah, 2024).

Islamic religious education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang plays a crucial role in enhancing the spiritual and social quality of students. This program not only shapes individuals to be intellectually capable but also instills strong character, noble morals, and the ability to adapt well in social life. Studies from various institutions indicate that Islamic religious education has a similarly positive impact. For instance, research at other universities highlights the significant role of Islamic religious education in fostering students' spiritual growth, moral integrity, and social adaptability. According to studies carried out by Sofa (2023) At Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University, spiritual and emotional intelligence is prioritized alongside intellectual development, using methods such as *Hablum MinAllah* (relationship with God) and *Hablum Minannaas* (relationship with people) to cultivate students' morals. Khasanah (2023) The study highlights the significant role of Islamic education at the Islamic Institute of Mamba'ul 'Ulum Surakarta in fostering students' spiritual growth, moral integrity, and social adaptability. It emphasizes that the integration of Islamic values in the curriculum and daily activities cultivates positive behavior and harmonious social interactions. Values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy are instilled through Islamic education, shaping students into moral and responsible individuals, thereby enhancing their overall character and social adaptability. As revealed in the research by Nargis Mushtaq Ahmed (2022) Islamic studies at the university level in promoting Islamic ethics and morals, which are crucial for students' spiritual growth and moral integrity. It highlights the role of Islamic studies teachers, educational curricula, and teaching methodologies in shaping students' moral and spiritual upbringing. By addressing contemporary global challenges, Islamic studies can significantly contribute to the formation of an ideal Islamic society characterized by high moral values and social adaptability among students.

Islamic religious education plays a vital role in developing students' spiritual and moral values. However, it is equally crucial to view this within the framework of a broader educational system. Integrating religious principles with modern educational approaches demands thoughtful planning to prepare students for the complexities of an ever-evolving world. Striking a balance between preserving traditional values and addressing contemporary demands is key to nurturing holistic individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to society. This is also evident at Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang, where Islamic religious education has been proven to significantly improve both the spiritual and social quality of students. The program prepares them to become well-rounded individuals—intellectually competent, morally upright, and socially resilient—ready to make meaningful contributions to society

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education significantly improves the spiritual and social quality of students at the Faculty of Agricultural Science and Technology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang. Spiritual improvement is evident in better comprehension of religious teachings, increased worship frequency, and heightened ethical awareness. Social enhancement includes greater participation in social activities, empathy, and improved communication skills. These findings emphasize the critical role of Islamic Religious

Education in fostering individuals who are spiritually and socially competent. Despite limitations in scope and focus, this research highlights the importance of integrating religious education into higher learning to develop well-rounded students who can contribute positively to society and address the moral and social challenges of a rapidly changing world. Further studies could explore long-term impacts and broader populations to deepen understanding of this educational approach. Statistical tests showed that all research variables had a p-value < 0.05, confirming significant changes after Islamic Education

Although this study provides valuable insights into the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping students' character, there are some limitations, such as the sample being limited to one faculty and the research instrument focusing only on certain spiritual and social aspects. Moreover, this study only observed short-term effects, so further research is needed to include a broader population and utilize a qualitative approach to explore long-term impacts and other aspects. In conclusion, Islamic Religious Education has proven to play a role in shaping individuals who are not only spiritually intelligent but also socially competent. This highlights the importance of religious education as an effective effort in forming students' character who are both religious and socially aware

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