The Integrated Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education in Junior High School

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Abstract

The integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level seeks to improve students' understanding of religious values and engagement in learning. This study examines the application of the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level, focusing on its impact on students' understanding of religious values and engagement in the learning process. This study was conducted at Al Azhar 1 Junior High School in Bandar Lampung. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to explore the implementation of the integrated learning model. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The participants included teachers, students, the school principal, and the vice principal. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, with data validity ensured through triangulation, offering an objective view of the model's effect on student engagement and understanding. Results showed that the integrated learning model effectively connects religious values with students' real-life contexts, enhancing their understanding and participation. Students became more active in discussions and felt motivated to apply religious values in their daily lives, mainly through themes like honesty, discipline, and cooperation presented in relatable scenarios. The study implies that the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education increases student engagement and supports positive character development. These findings provide valuable insights for designing a more engaging and impactful curriculum that aligns with the goals of Islamic Religious Education.

Keywords: integrated learning; Islamic religious education; student engagement

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A. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education in schools plays a vital role in shaping students' character and fostering a deep understanding of religious values. Through religious education, students are expected to comprehend the theoretical aspects of Islamic teachings and apply these religious values in their daily lives (Parnawi & Ahmed Ar Ridho, 2023). However, Islamic Religious Education often faces challenges such as low student engagement, monotonous teaching approaches, and a lack of relevance of the material to real-life situations students experience (Aziz & Zakir, 2022). Conventional approaches that focus on memorization and theoretical understanding are sometimes less effective in building an applicative understanding for students (Hand et al., 2021; Wati et al., 2024). To address these challenges, the integrated learning model has become an increasingly used approach to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education, especially at the junior high school level.

In Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level, traditional learning models such as lecture-based teaching, rote memorization, and subject-centered approaches are commonly used. These models often emphasize theoretical understanding and factual recall of religious content but may lack connections to real-life applications and critical thinking. As a result, students may struggle to see the relevance of Islamic teachings in their daily lives, leading to limited engagement and understanding (Aziz & Zakir, 2022; Hand et al., 2021; Wati et al., 2024).

The reliance on conventional methods poses a challenge in cultivating a deep and meaningful comprehension of Islamic values among students. Since these methods typically focus on isolated subjects without integrating them into broader contexts, they do not effectively address students' needs to engage with the material in ways that promote active learning and application (Hidayatullah, 2019; Rahmawati & Salim, 2021).

In this regard, studying the use of an integrated learning model in PAI is critical. Integrated learning approaches combine disciplines or themes within a single topic, enabling students to explore religious concepts from multiple perspectives and see their practical relevance (Supiadi1 et al., 2023; Willard et al., 2023). This model can potentially deepen students' understanding of religious teachings, foster critical thinking, and encourage active learning (Armellini et al., 2021; Mielikäinen, 2021). By investigating this approach in PAI, the study aims to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers to enhance Islamic Religious Education, making it more impactful, engaging, and relevant to student's lives (Lubis et al., 2024; Wijayanto, 2020).

Previous research has shown that the implementation of integrated learning in religious education has a positive impact on students' understanding. For example, a study by Rahmawati and Salim found that the integrated learning approach in elementary schools can increase students' interest in Islamic Religious Education, as the material presented is more varied and closely related to their everyday experiences (Rahmawati & Salim, 2021). Additionally, Hidayatullah et al. found that integrated learning can enhance students' critical thinking skills, as they are encouraged to view a concept from multiple perspectives (Hidayatullah, 2019). By combining religious material with real-life themes, integrated learning allows students to develop critical thinking skills essential for facing life's challenges.

At the junior high school level, research shows that an integrated approach significantly impacts the development of students' religious understanding. Sinulingga & Dahlan's research revealed that integrated learning of Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level can develop students' analytical skills to connect religious concepts with real-life situations (Sinulingga & Dahlan, 2022). Students involved in integrated learning tend to be more active and engaged in class discussions, which contributes to developing their communication and collaboration skills. However, this study also shows that the effectiveness of integrated learning depends on the support of the school environment and the teacher's skills in integrating subject matter.

Although many studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the integrated learning model, research on its implementation in Islamic Religious Education at Al Azhar 1 junior high school remains limited. Research by Fuadi, Rusmawati, and Tu'aini et al. highlights that most studies on integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education still focus on the elementary or higher education levels (Fuadi & Suyatno, 2020; Rusmawati et al., 2022; Tu'aini et al., 2024), whereas the junior high school context has different needs and challenges (Lee & Perret, 2022; Simanjuntak et al., 2022). At the junior high school level, students are at a developmental stage requiring a specialized approach to balancing their cognitive and emotional aspects. Therefore, further study on implementing the integrated learning model in the context of Islamic Religious Education at junior high schools is needed.

This research addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on the implementation of the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education for junior high school students. Unlike previous studies, this research emphasizes analyzing the integrated learning model as a teaching method and an approach to strengthen students' understanding and internalization of religious values. Integrating Islamic values within unified themes aims to help students comprehend how religious teachings can be applied in relevant social and cultural contexts. Thus, this study offers a more comprehensive and practical approach to Islamic Religious Education learning.

This study aims to identify and analyze the application of the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level, evaluate its impact on students' understanding of religious values, and assess how this model can enhance student engagement in the learning process. Additionally, this research is expected to enrich students' learning experiences in holistically and practically understanding Islam. Through the integration of religious values into contextual themes, this study provides new insights that benefit Islamic Religious Education teachers and education policymakers in developing more effective and relevant teaching methods. Scientifically, this research also has the potential to serve as a foundation for creating a dynamic and sustainable Islamic Religious Education curriculum that not only focuses on memorization but also equips students with critical thinking skills and the ability to apply religious teachings in real-life situations. In the long term, this approach is expected to shape students' character to be more tolerant, with heightened social and spiritual awareness, and to become individuals ready to face contemporary challenges with strong Islamic values.

B. Literature Review

1. Integrated Learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE)

Integrated learning has gained significant traction in Islamic Religious Education as it addresses a common challenge: making religious teachings relevant and engaging for students in modern contexts. Research shows that linking Islamic Religious Education content to real-life applications helps students develop a practical understanding of Islamic values, fostering deeper engagement in the subject (Rahmawati & Salim, 2021). Unlike traditional methods that often emphasize memorization, integrated learning enables students to interact with the material meaningfully, enhancing their connection to religious values that they can practice daily (Lubis et al., 2024).

The practical integration of Islamic Religious Education with other subject areas or themes allows for a more comprehensive learning experience. By bridging disciplines, teachers can design lessons encouraging students to think about Islamic principles in broader social, cultural, and environmental contexts (Armellini et al., 2021). For instance, lessons incorporating ethical issues in science or social studies can help students see the relevance of honesty and integrity, core Islamic values, in real-world situations. This approach deepens their comprehension and motivates students to participate actively as they view religious education as directly applicable to their lives (Schcolnik & Abarbanel, 2006).

Integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education has also effectively addressed various learning styles. Students who benefit from experiential learning find that hands-on activities and interactive discussions resonate more than passive learning approaches. According to Armellini and Rahman et al., students who engage with Islamic Religious Education in ways that reflect their personal experiences tend to develop a stronger interest in the subject and are more likely to retain the information (Armellini et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2021). This alignment of content with students' lived experiences helps make religious education a dynamic and impactful component of their education.

2. Constructivist Principles in Integrated Learning

Constructivist learning theory plays a central role in the success of integrated learning approaches in Islamic Religious Education. Constructivism, which asserts that knowledge is constructed based on learners' experiences, provides a framework where students actively engage with content, forming connections that lead to meaningful understanding (Armellini et al., 2021). By engaging in activities that link Islamic values to familiar contexts, students create mental models that allow them to understand and internalize religious principles more deeply. This is particularly effective in IRE, where the goal is knowledge acquisition and forming values and character (Schcolnik & Abarbanel, 2006).

In IRE, constructivist approaches facilitate reflective thinking, enabling students to consider how religious values apply to their lives. This reflective process encourages them to explore multiple perspectives, strengthening their understanding of complex religious concepts (Rahmawati & Salim, 2021). For example, group discussions on social justice or environmental stewardship allow students to explore how Islamic teachings promote ethical behavior collaboratively. These discussions support critical thinking and enable students to see how religious teachings are relevant to broader societal issues, encouraging a more nuanced understanding of their faith (Andayani et al., 2022).

Additionally, constructivist learning in Islamic Religious Education is facilitated through activities that promote self-directed learning and personal inquiry. Students become active participants in learning, constructing their knowledge through dialogue, reflection, and real-life application. Research shows that students who engage in this type of active learning in Islamic Religious Education are more motivated and show a greater capacity for critical thought, as they are not simply recipients of information but co-constructors of knowledge (Maulana et al., 2022). Using constructivist principles thus helps transform Islamic Religious Education into an engaging, student-centered experience that fosters lifelong learning.

3. Enhancing Critical Thinking and Social-Emotional Skills

Integrated learning within Islamic Religious Education is crucial in developing critical thinking and social-emotional skills. By connecting religious values to real-world issues, students are encouraged to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information, which fosters critical thinking (Andayani et al., 2022). Research shows that students engaged in integrated Islamic Religious Education are better equipped to think critically about moral and ethical issues, applying religious teachings to analyze situations such as fairness, justice, and community service. This analytical ability deepens their understanding of Islamic principles and equips them with the skills necessary to make informed, ethical decisions in their daily lives (Rahmawati & Salim, 2021).

Social-emotional skills are also enhanced through integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education. Activities like group discussions, role-playing, and collaborative projects require students to communicate effectively, empathize with others, and work in teams, all of which are essential social skills (Armellini et al., 2021). For instance, discussing scenarios that involve ethical dilemmas encourages students to express their opinions respectfully, consider alternative viewpoints, and develop empathy. These social-emotional competencies are valuable in academic settings and contribute to students' personal growth and interpersonal relationships outside the classroom (Fadli, 2021; Maulana et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2021).

Furthermore, integrating Islamic Religious Education with social themes allows students to explore the emotional aspects of religious values, such as compassion, patience, and forgiveness. Research by Sinulingga and Dahlan found that students who engaged in lessons that highlighted emotional connections to Islamic teachings reported a higher level of empathy and a willingness to help others (Dahlan et al., 2022). This approach to Islamic Religious Education develops students' critical thinking and enhances their emotional intelligence, which is crucial for fostering a balanced, ethical, and compassionate outlook on life.

4. Character Development through Contextualized Religious Education

A key advantage of integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education is its impact on character development. Contextualizing Islamic values within students' everyday lives fosters a sense of responsibility and ethical awareness, as students see religious teachings as directly relevant to their social interactions (Dahlan et al., 2022; Sinulingga & Dahlan, 2022). When students can connect values like honesty, respect, and cooperation with real-world situations, they are more likely to internalize and practice these principles. This aligns with the goals of Islamic Religious Education, which aims not only to impart knowledge but also to instill positive character traits in students (Andayani et al., 2022).

Integrated learning also promotes character education by encouraging students to reflect on their behavior and its alignment with Islamic teachings. Through reflective exercises and discussions, students are guided to evaluate their actions and consider ways to improve, fostering a sense of moral responsibility (Andayani et al., 2022). This reflective approach is particularly effective in IRE, as it enables students to explore their own values in light of religious principles, creating a personalized understanding of what it means to lead a virtuous life. As students engage in these reflective practices, they commit to ethical conduct beyond the classroom (Maulana et al., 2022).

The impact of contextualized Islamic Religious Education on character development is further supported by research highlighting its long-term benefits. Studies show that students exposed to integrated, values-based education exhibit greater resilience and social awareness, as they are more prepared to navigate complex moral situations with integrity and empathy (Dahlan et al., 2022; Sinulingga & Dahlan, 2022). As they grow, students who have received character-focused Islamic Religious Education are likely to become active, ethical members of their communities, embodying Islamic values in a way that contributes to social harmony and cohesion.

5. Challenges in Implementing Integrated Learning in IRE

Despite its many benefits, implementing integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education challenges educators, particularly regarding time and resources. Designing integrated lessons that effectively combine Islamic values with other disciplines requires extensive planning and coordination, which can be difficult for teachers with limited resources (Islam et al., 2016). Teachers must carefully select themes relevant to Islamic Religious Education and align them with students' experiences, ensuring that each lesson provides meaningful connections between Islamic teachings and everyday life. Without sufficient preparation time and support, achieving these goals can be challenging and may limit the effectiveness of integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education (Maulana et al., 2022).

Another significant challenge is ensuring consistency in delivering integrated Islamic Religious Education content across different classrooms and teachers. Islam et al. (2022) suggest that schools must establish professional development programs and collaborative planning sessions to support teachers in implementing integrated learning (Islam et al., 2016). By fostering a community of practice, teachers can share resources, insights, and strategies, creating a more unified approach to integrated learning in IRE. This collaboration helps teachers design cohesive lessons that maintain high standards of instruction and support students' character and knowledge development.

Finally, integrated learning requires a shift in teaching practices that may be unfamiliar or challenging for some educators. Teachers accustomed to traditional methods may need training to effectively adopt an integrated approach emphasizing critical thinking, student-centered learning, and interdisciplinary connections (Sinulingga & Dahlan, 2022). With ongoing professional development and administrative support, teachers can adapt to these new practices and enhance their ability to provide students with engaging relevant, and meaningful Islamic Religious Education lessons. Despite the challenges, integrated learning holds great potential for transforming IRE, fostering students' understanding of religious values while equipping them with essential skills for life in a diverse, complex society.

C. Method

1. Research Design

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on the implementation of an integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung. This research design allows for an in-depth examination of the implementation process and the impact on students' understanding and engagement in Islamic Religious Education.

2. Participants of the Study

The research subjects were selected based on specific criteria to provide insights into the effectiveness of the integrated learning model. The subjects include three Islamic Religious Education teachers, three students from grades 7 and 8, the school principal, and the vice principal responsible for the curriculum. Teachers were chosen based on their active involvement in implementing the integrated learning model. The three students were selected based on their level of active participation and academic performance in class. They were categorized as high, medium, and low, ensuring they could provide relevant and meaningful feedback on the model's impact.

3. Data Collection

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, each supported by specific instruments to ensure comprehensive data collection (Creswell, 2014). An interview guide was developed for the semi-structured interviews to explore perspectives from teachers, students, the principal, and the vice principal regarding the integrated learning model's implementation process, benefits, and challenges. An observation checklist was used for classroom observations to systematically capture teacher-student interactions and student engagement, providing a direct view of how the model was applied. Additionally, documentation analysis was conducted, where documents such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and student work were reviewed using a document review sheet to support and validate findings from interviews and observations, offering further evidence of the model's application.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis with the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure validity, data were triangulated by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation, enhancing the consistency and reliability of the results (Miles et al., 2014). This triangulation method provided a more comprehensive and objective view of the integrated learning model's role in enhancing student engagement and understanding in Islamic Religious Education.

D. Findings

1. Implementation of the Integrated Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education

The SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung integrated learning model incorporates Islamic Religious Education content with relevant themes from other disciplines and students' daily experiences. In this process, teachers design Islamic Religious

Education as theoretical religious instruction and a learning experience that enables students to understand the application of religious values in various life contexts. During the planning stage, Islamic Religious Education teachers collaborate with teachers from other disciplines, such as moral education or social sciences, to identify themes that can be integrated and are relevant to Islamic Religious Education content.

The Islamic Religious Education teachers stated,

"We strive to select themes closely related to students' everyday experiences. When teaching honesty, I use examples they encounter within their families or school life. This way, they don't just memorize concepts but also understand how honesty is applied in real situations. This approach is highly effective in making lessons more meaningful for them."

The teachers prioritize relevance and real-life experiences to make religious values more profound and impactful for students.

The implementation of this integrated learning involves developing more flexible and goal-oriented lesson plans, where each lesson plan features a different theme related to Islamic values, such as honesty, discipline, and tolerance. In a "Cooperation and Responsibility" lesson, the teacher plans activities around group tasks that require each student to contribute actively to achieve a common goal, such as working together on a class project. Here, students learn the importance of each individual's responsibility in a group setting. When discussing honesty, teachers relate Islamic Religious Education discussions to situations students may encounter in family or school settings, such as facing a dilemma between telling the truth or lying to avoid consequences. The integrated learning in class is further supported by activities like group discussions, case simulations, and hands-on practices within the school environment, designed to instill religious values through interactive learning.

This approach is further supported by group discussions, case simulations, and hands-on practice within the school environment, designed to instill religious values through interactive learning. Another teacher interviewed noted, "Group discussions and simulations are essential. These activities allow students to interact with each other and practically explore themes. In a discussion on tolerance, students are encouraged to share their thoughts and listen to others' perspectives, directly practicing these values." Teachers view discussions and simulations as effective methods for engaging students in active learning while helping them apply religious values in social contexts.

This integrated learning model also includes educational media, such as videos and supplementary reading materials that feature stories or illustrations from everyday life related to Islamic values. During a lesson on "Environmental Stewardship," the teacher uses a documentary video that showcases community efforts to protect the environment, which aligns with Islamic principles of care and responsibility for nature. Students are encouraged to discuss and reflect on how they can apply these principles in their surroundings. An eighth-grade student commented, "I enjoy it! The videos and stories make it easier for me to understand the topics. Sometimes, we watch examples of people facing real-life situations related to the lesson. It's more engaging than just reading, and I can remember the values taught more easily." Visual media and stories help enhance students' understanding and engagement, making the learning process more appealing and memorable.

As a result, students feel more motivated to participate in Islamic Religious Education, seeing the material as directly relevant to their lives outside the classroom.

The principal also highlighted the significance of this approach, saying, "Integrated learning allows students to see Islamic values as part of everyday life, not merely abstract concepts. This approach also develops essential life skills, such as critical thinking and empathy, as students learn to understand diverse perspectives." The principal recognizes the advantages of the integrated approach in shaping students' character and equipping them with skills relevant to daily life.

Teachers also employ various evaluation methods to assess students' grasp of religious values and their real-life application. At the end of each lesson, teachers use reflective assessments, such as journal entries or short essays, where students describe how they applied a specific value, such as honesty or cooperation, in their interactions. Additionally, teachers conduct informal observations during class activities to see how students demonstrate these values in group settings. This comprehensive evaluation approach helps teachers gauge students' understanding and ability to embody Islamic values in various contexts.

This model boosts student motivation and encourages them to actively engage in Islamic Religious Education, viewing it as a relevant and essential part of their everyday lives.

2. The Impact of Implementing Integrated Learning on Students' Understanding of Religious Values

This research found that implementing the integrated learning model in the Islamic Religious Education subject at SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung significantly enhances students' comprehension of religious values. The following insights were obtained from observations and interviews with six participants: three seventh- and three eighth-graders and two teachers.

Four out of six students reported that the integrated learning model encouraged greater active participation in classroom discussions. They felt more confident in articulating their opinions and sharing experiences related to applying religious values in daily life. This was corroborated by the two teachers, who observed that students exhibited heightened enthusiasm and engagement when the learning process bridged theoretical concepts with practical, real-world scenarios. However, two students admitted to occasionally struggling with abstract concepts, mainly when the material was delivered rapidly.

In terms of understanding religious values, five students noted that the integrated approach deepened their grasp of principles such as honesty, tolerance, and cooperation. Teachers remarked that students found it easier to internalize the lessons when religious values were explicitly connected to their everyday experiences. Moreover, three students highlighted that they had become more consistent in practicing worship after recognizing the importance of discipline, a concept reinforced through the integrated learning model.

Regarding interest in learning, three students acknowledged that this method made Islamic Religious Education more engaging and relatable. One student noted that the lessons felt more relevant, as the practical implications of the material were evident. Conversely, two students indicated they felt less motivated, citing the need for additional teacher support to better understand the interplay between theory and practice.

Five students exhibited positive behaviors on the practical application of religious values, including respecting peers, collaborating effectively in groups, and maintaining consistency in religious practices. One student, however, struggled to implement these values, particularly outside the school environment consistently. To

address this, teachers provided targeted guidance, illustrating the indispensable role of educators in ensuring the effective adoption of the integrated learning model. Overall, this study underscores that the success of the integrated learning model lies not merely in content delivery but in the educators' ability to inspire and mentor students, enabling them to embody and apply religious values in their everyday lives.

Supporting this data, interviews with teachers revealed that students more easily grasp religious concepts when presented through an integrated approach relevant to their daily experiences. For instance, when learning about the value of helping others, teachers related it to situations where students could assist peers with school tasks or projects. One teacher remarked, "Students understand religious concepts more easily when we connect them to their daily experiences, like relating the value of helping others to situations where they can assist classmates with school tasks, which makes the lesson more meaningful and applicable for them." Students acknowledged that this approach helped them better understand the meaning and application of the value in their lives.

Moreover, observational data showed that students more frequently engaged actively in discussions and shared their views on applying religious values. When asked about the concept of justice in Islamic teachings, students could relate it to their school and family lives, demonstrating a deep understanding and the ability to connect religious teachings with their social situations. This increased understanding was also reflected in students' assessment results, where approximately five students achieved high scores on evaluations related to the application of religious values after participating in integrated learning.

Islamic Religious Education teachers emphasized that integrating religious values with everyday life themes helps students internalize religious teachings more practically. Students memorize or cognitively understand and show awareness to practice these values. Thus, the integrated learning applied in Islamic Religious Education significantly shapes students' character and strengthens their religious understanding, which is expected to create a solid moral foundation.

3. **The Influence of Integrated Learning Models on Student Involvement in the Learning Process**

In addition to enhancing students' understanding of religious values, this research also shows that the integrated learning model positively impacts student engagement in the learning process. Observations during class sessions indicate that students are more motivated and enthusiastic about participating in integrated learning, including lecture-based methods and collaborative activities such as group discussions, role-play, and reflective exercises. Five students demonstrated higher engagement levels when integrated learning was implemented, especially when asked to share their opinions and discuss personal experiences related to the learning topic.

Interviews with students also revealed that they found Islamic Religious Education more engaging when the material was directly connected to their lives. One student expressed that integrated learning made the subject feel more "alive" because he could see religious values as rules to memorize and guidelines applicable in real life. Additionally, students felt more confident expressing their opinions in class, improving their communication and critical thinking abilities.

Teachers also reported that the integrated learning model made stimulating students' interest in learning easier, mainly through varied and enjoyable approaches. Compared to conventional teaching methods, integrated learning is more effective in

building a collaborative learning environment where students feel comfortable interacting, asking questions, and providing feedback. This suggests that the integrated learning model increases student engagement in the learning process and helps them develop essential social skills, such as collaborating and communicating effectively.

4. Challenges in Implementing Integrated Learning Models in Islamic Religious Education

Despite its many advantages, implementing the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung also faces several challenges. One of the main challenges is the time constraint in developing and executing lesson plans that integrate various relevant themes. Islamic Religious Education teachers reported that planning integrated learning requires more complex and in-depth preparation, especially in selecting appropriate and relevant themes to the subject matter and students' experiences. Additionally, some students found it difficult to understand material integrated with specific themes, mainly if unfamiliar with the context presented.

Teachers also face the challenge of balancing curriculum objectives with providing learning relevant to students' life experiences. To address this challenge, teachers collaborate with other teachers and the school's curriculum team in planning integrated learning, ensuring that the approaches used align with established academic standards. Nonetheless, these challenges do not diminish the effectiveness of the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education; instead, they encourage teachers to continue innovating in designing more applicable and meaningful learning experiences for students.

Based on the results of this study, the implementation of the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level has proven effective in enhancing students' understanding of religious values and their engagement in the learning process. Integrated learning relevant to everyday life contexts encourages students to understand better and internalize religious teachings and helps them apply Islamic values in their lives. This model also provides teachers with opportunities to design more engaging and interactive lessons, which helps increase students' interest in learning.

The practical implications of these findings highlight the need for training for Islamic Religious Education teachers to effectively implement the integrated learning model, as well as support from the school in providing sufficient time and resources for preparing integrated learning. This way, schools can continue developing learning methods emphasizing cognitive aspects and promoting students' character development and practical understanding of religious values.

Overall, this research provides significant insights into the benefits of integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education, particularly in shaping students with a deep understanding of religion and strong social skills. These findings will encourage other schools to adopt the integrated learning model to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education and create a generation with spiritual awareness who can actively contribute to society.

E. Discussion

The integrated learning model has significantly impacted students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education, particularly regarding applying religious values. The theory of integrated learning suggests that this approach enables

students to see the connections between concepts across different subjects and real-life experiences, thereby fostering a deeper and more holistic understanding (Drake & Reid, 2018). In religious education, this method allows students to understand Islamic values as concepts to memorize and applicable principles in their daily lives (Hidayatullah, 2019).

The findings of this study are also consistent with research by Rahmawati & Salim, which shows that integrated learning helps students understand lessons more effectively because the material is presented contextually (Rahmawati & Salim, 2021). In this study, students in Islamic Religious Education demonstrated a deeper understanding of values such as honesty, discipline, and cooperation, taught through themes relevant to their lives. Through the integrated approach, students could connect Islamic Religious Education material with real-life situations, such as daily school activities and social interactions, significantly enhancing their understanding. As in constructivist theory, the connection between students' experiences and learning concepts helps them internalize and apply the material in various contexts (Muhibin & Hidayatullah, 2020; Schcolnik & Abarbanel, 2006).

At the elementary level, integrated learning is typically more straightforward and involves direct examples from students' immediate environments, such as lessons on the kindness shown through sharing with classmates or understanding responsibility by caring for school belongings. Elementary students usually engage in activities like storytime or drawing, which help them visualize and connect religious values to their surroundings. In contrast, the application of integrated learning in junior high school, as seen in SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung, includes more complex themes such as honesty and cooperation, integrated through projects, group discussions, and case simulations. This approach at the junior high level is more structured and goal-oriented, involving interactive media and collaborative planning among teachers to make the lessons more engaging and relevant to students' social interactions.

Additionally, research by Tirtoni further supports these findings, showing that integrated learning enhances students' ability to understand religious values within their social context (Tirtoni, 2017). The study mentions that when students face situations requiring the application of learned religious values, they are more capable of making decisions aligned with Islamic principles. Therefore, the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education aims to enhance students' cognitive knowledge and shape their character by applying religious values.

In senior high school, integrated learning tends to focus on critical thinking and ethical decision-making, where students are encouraged to explore religious principles in broader societal issues, such as justice or environmental responsibility. Lessons at this level may involve debates, presentations, or research projects that allow students to analyze and apply Islamic values in addressing social challenges. Teachers in high school often evaluate students through reflective essays or discussions that assess their ability to apply Islamic principles in complex real-world situations.

In addition to its impact on students' understanding, the integrated learning model also significantly influences student engagement in the learning process. Observations showed that students were more active and involved in class discussions when learning material was linked to their real-life experiences. A study by Andayani et al. indicates that an approach relevant to students' personal experiences encourages greater engagement because students feel closer to the

material (Andayani et al., 2022). In integrated Islamic Religious Education learning, students are encouraged to discuss religious concepts closely related to their daily lives, enhancing their motivation and engagement in learning.

Research by Maulana et al. emphasizes that integrated learning creates a more meaningful learning experience for students. This approach combines material from various disciplines and emphasizes the interconnections between topics, allowing students to see the direct relevance between classroom learning and their everyday lives (Maulana et al., 2022). In the context of Islamic Religious Education, students become more enthusiastic in discussing topics such as justice or mutual assistance related to real situations they experience, such as helping a friend or making fair decisions in a group. This follows the findings of this study, where students feel motivated to learn religious values because the material taught directly relates to their social environment.

Another advantage of the integrated learning model is its ability to support student character formation. Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level aims to transfer religious knowledge and shape students' character to become individuals with good ethics and morals. In this study, teachers reported that integrated learning allowed them to emphasize religious values more effectively. The emphasis on incorporating religious values in real contexts helps students internalize these values following the principles of character education recommended in the national curriculum (Amini et al., 2017; Muhibin & Hidayatullah, 2020).

A study by Hidayat shows that education that emphasizes the integration of religious values with social aspects has a long-term impact on the formation of students' character (Hidayat, 2021). Integrated learning allows students to view Islamic values as rules to follow and guidance relevant to daily social challenges. Islamic Religious Education teachers in this study also observed that students engaged in integrated learning tend to have a more positive attitude toward religion, as they perceive religious values as beneficial aspects of their everyday lives.

Furthermore, according to research by Fadli, learning that focuses on the real-world application of religious values profoundly shapes students' character (Fadli, 2021). These findings are relevant to this study, where students involved in integrated learning in Islamic Religious Education demonstrated a deeper understanding of how Islamic principles can be applied in social interactions, such as sharing, helping, and taking responsibility for others. Thus, the integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education provides theoretical religious education and shapes students into individuals with noble character in line with Islamic teachings.

Although integrated learning offers many benefits, this study found challenges in its implementation at SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung. One of the main challenges is the difficulty in designing complex lesson plans and aligning diverse yet relevant themes. Teachers reported that planning integrated learning requires extra effort and time to ensure that each theme is well-integrated and straightforward to students.

In this regard, the study by Dewi et al. highlights the importance of training and teacher collaboration to implement integrated learning successfully (Dewi et al., 2022). With the cooperation between Islamic Religious Education teachers and teachers from other disciplines, the planning and implementation of integrated learning can proceed more smoothly. This solution is also applied at SMP Al Azhar 1, where teachers work together to determine relevant and engaging themes for Islamic Religious Education classes. This collaboration helps address time constraints and ensures students gain a more diverse and meaningful learning experience.

In addition, challenges in students' understanding of more complex material were also identified in this study. Some students struggled to follow lessons that integrated multiple topics, especially when those topics were unfamiliar. According to a study by Satria et al., using additional learning media, such as videos or simulations, can assist students in grasping more complex material (Koderi et al., 2023; Satria et al., 2024). Teachers in this study also utilized interactive learning media to help students connect religious concepts with real-life situations, significantly improving their understanding.

This research introduces an innovative approach to the learning model at SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung, where integrated learning not only aids students in understanding religious values but also in applying them in daily life. Practically, this model allows students to directly connect concepts such as honesty, discipline, and cooperation to real-life situations they encounter, such as helping peers with school tasks or making fair decisions in group activities. Students engaged in this learning model demonstrate a deeper internalization of religious values and consistently apply them outside the classroom, particularly in everyday social interactions.

Moreover, collaboration among teachers in designing relevant themes, combined with interactive media like videos and simulations, directly contributes to students' comprehension of more complex material. This approach makes students more active and enthusiastic participants in classroom discussions when content is presented in a context that resonates with their own experiences, in contrast to conventional methods that are typically more theoretical. These findings illustrate that integrated learning is not merely theoretical but enhances students' understanding and application of religious values in real-life settings.

F. Conclusion

The integrated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at SMP Al Azhar 1 Bandar Lampung positively influences students' understanding of religious values and engagement. By linking religious concepts with real-life contexts, the model enables students to internalize values like honesty, discipline, and cooperation through interactive activities and relatable media. Teachers find this model enhances the relevance and appeal of Islamic Religious Education lessons, though it requires more planning and collaboration. This approach supports character education by giving students practical ways to apply religious values daily. The research emphasizes the need for teacher support through training and cross-subject collaboration to maximize integrated learning's benefits. These findings may guide other schools in adopting integrated learning to strengthen students' character and prepare them to meet future challenges with strong Islamic values. Future research could explore the model's impact across different educational levels and investigate how technology might enhance the design of integrated learning experiences. Long-term studies are also recommended to assess sustained character development and quantitatively measure the model's impact on Islamic Religious Education.

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