

Students' Perceptions of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning in Elementary Schools (SD) and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI)

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Abstract: The learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role in shaping the religious and moral character of students from elementary school age. Therefore, an analysis of students' perceptions is needed as one of the indicators of learning success. This study aims to analyze students' perceptions of PAI learning among elementary school (SD) and Islamic elementary school (MI) students in Kebumen Regency. The type of research used is descriptive quantitative with a total of 52 SD/MI respondents. Data collection was conducted using questionnaires, while data analysis was performed using quantitative descriptive methods in the form of percentages. The results of the study show that MI students' perceptions of PAI learning reach 83.3%, while SD students' perceptions are 73.1%.

Keywords: Student perception, PAI learning, Elementary School/ MI.

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is one of the subjects that plays an important role in shaping students' personalities so that they possess noble character and are able to practice religious teachings comprehensively in their daily lives. In the context of national education, PAI is not only oriented toward cognitive knowledge but also emphasizes the development of attitudes (affective) and skills (psychomotor) based on Islamic values. The goal of PAI learning is to develop students' faith and piety toward Allah SWT through the delivery (Kemenag RI), internalization, and practice of Islamic teachings so that these teachings become their life guidance. PAI is expected to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also well mannered and moral in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith.

Meanwhile, according to the (Minister of Education and Culture), PAI learning has a

strategic function in shaping students' character to become faithful, pious, and noble. Religious education in schools serves to instill moral, social, and spiritual values that become the foundation of life in society, the nation, and the state. In other words, PAI does not merely provide students with religious knowledge but also shapes personalities that are disciplined, responsible, and full of integrity. Therefore, the presence of PAI as a subject at every level of education holds a very fundamental position and cannot be separated from the goals of national education.

At the Elementary School (SD) and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) levels, PAI learning is part of the curriculum designed to instill Islamic values from an early age. The elementary school period is known as a golden age for children's character development. During this stage, students tend to easily imitate behaviors and values taught by their teachers (Rahmawati, 2018). Therefore, PAI learning in SD and MI needs to be designed in such

a way that it can effectively cultivate values of faith, worship, and morality within learners. PAI learning at the elementary level is usually carried out through classroom instruction, worship practices, teacher role modeling, and religious activities such as congregational prayers, memorizing daily prayers, and commemorating Islamic holidays.

However, in practice, the success of PAI learning does not only depend on teaching methods or instructional materials but is also influenced by students' perceptions of the learning itself. Perception is a process in which an individual interprets or understands an object, event, or experience based on observation and comprehension (Waligito, 2017). Students' perceptions of PAI learning are crucial because they determine the extent to which students feel interested, comfortable, and motivated to participate. Students who have positive perceptions tend to be more enthusiastic, actively engaged, and appreciative of the religious values being taught. Conversely, negative perceptions may lead to decreased interest and participation.

The importance of perception is also closely related to students' emotions, their relationship with teachers, and the perceived benefits of the lessons. Positive emotions such as happiness, comfort, and feeling valued strengthen interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, fostering a conducive learning environment. Many articles discuss student perceptions. For example, (Lestari, Reza, and Syaiful Bastari's) article titled "Students' Perception of Mathematics Subjects **A Case Study of Grade VI Students at SD Negeri 03 Gumay Ulu**" published in *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 3.1 (2024): 21–28 found that the majority of students misunderstood mathematics, largely due to teachers' reluctance to modify their teaching approach into more enjoyable methods. Another study by (Diah Royani Meisani) titled "Students' Perception of the Implementation of English as a Local Content Subject in Elementary Schools" in *Didaktika* 1.2 (2021): 243–253 revealed that almost all students 82 respondents (84.54%) expressed that they liked English lessons taught at school. Many studies have focused on student related topics;

therefore, we examine how students perceive PAI learning. When students feel respected and understood, they tend to develop positive views toward PAI. This indicates that the success of PAI learning cannot be measured solely through exam results but also through how students interpret and internalize learning experiences in their daily lives.

Previous research shows that students' perceptions of learning are an important indicator in assessing education quality. However, studies specifically examining students' perceptions of PAI learning remain relatively limited, especially at the SD and MI levels. Most previous studies have focused on the effectiveness of teaching methods, learning outcomes, or students' motivation (Hidayat & Maulida, 2021), while the aspect of perception is often overlooked. In fact, students' perceptions can provide a comprehensive picture of how the learning process is understood, felt, and experienced by learners.

Based on these considerations, this study is important to explore in depth how SD and MI students perceive PAI learning in Kebumen Regency. Kebumen is known for its religious community characteristics and its numerous Islamic educational institutions. This context makes the study interesting, as a strong socio religious environment may influence how students view and experience PAI learning at school. By understanding students' perceptions, teachers and educational institutions can improve and innovate learning practices to better suit students' needs and learning experiences.

This perception based inquiry is also conducted because perception strongly influences motivation and learning outcomes. A positive perception can shape a strong belief within students that PAI learning is meaningful, relevant, and beneficial for their lives. Conversely, a poor perception may lead students to view PAI as boring or purely theoretical (Arifin, 2022). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to understand and pay attention to students' perceptions as a foundation for designing effective, creative, and meaningful learning strategies.

Based on the explanation above, the purpose of this study is to analyze students' perceptions of

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning among SD and MI students in Kebumen Regency. This research is expected to contribute to improving the quality of PAI learning in elementary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyah, particularly in fostering positive perceptions toward religious education.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. How do SD students perceive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning?
2. How do MI students perceive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning?
3. What are the differences between SD and MI students' perceptions of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning?

Materials and Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach, which aims to measure and analyze students' perceptions of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning statistically. This approach enables researchers to collect numerical data that can then be analyzed to obtain valid and objective conclusions. The type of research used is descriptive quantitative research, which focuses on describing the characteristics of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs. In this context, the study aims to determine the perceptions of elementary school and madrasah ibtidaiyah students toward PAI learning in Kebumen Regency. This descriptive research provides a clear and systematic overview of students' perceptual tendencies regarding the learning process they experience at school. Data were collected using a questionnaire containing a series of statements. The questionnaire was distributed directly to 52 respondents, consisting of 23 students from MI KHR Ilyas Tanjungrejo and 29 students from SD Jeruk Agung Kebumen. By using this questionnaire, the researchers were able to obtain direct information from the respondents regarding their experiences and views of PAI learning in school.

This study involves one main variable students' perceptions of PAI learning which includes several aspects such as learning enjoyment, material comprehension, attitudes toward teachers, and the

relevance of PAI lessons to daily life. These indicators served as the basis for developing the questionnaire items. The research method used provides a clear framework for understanding students' perceptions of PAI learning. Through a quantitative approach and systematic data collection, this study is expected to offer an in depth description of how students interpret and experience the PAI learning process in their schools.

Procedure

The data in this study were measured using the Guttman scale, a type of scale used to obtain quantitative data on attitudes or perceptions with definitive answer choices: "Yes" (score 1) and "No" (score 0). This scale was chosen to ensure clarity and ease of understanding for elementary school students who served as respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 15 positive statements representing various aspects of PAI learning, such as comfort, comprehension, and students' learning interest. Through this approach, the researchers were able to determine the extent to which students hold positive perceptions of the PAI learning process in their schools.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study is descriptive quantitative analysis. This analysis was carried out by collecting, processing, and presenting the data as they are in order to provide a general overview of students' perceptions of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

The steps of the analysis are as follows:

Calculating the total number of "Yes" responses for each questionnaire item.

Calculating the response percentage using the formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Description:

P = percentage of responses,

f = number of respondents who answered "Yes,"

N = total number of respondents.

Determining the perception category is based on the total percentage obtained.

Table 1. Categorization of Students' Perceptions of PAI Learning.

Percentage	Perception Category
51% - 100%	Good
0% - 50%	Poor

In descriptive analysis, the data can be presented in the form of frequency tables, bar charts, or pie charts to illustrate the tendency of respondents' answers. Through this analysis, the researcher can determine the extent to which students hold positive perceptions of PAI learning in elementary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyah.

Results and Discussion

Result-1: Students' Perceptions of Enjoyment in Learning PAI

The findings of the study indicate that, in general, students have a positive perception of their

enjoyment in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This is reflected in their enthusiasm during lessons, the pleasant classroom atmosphere, and their interest in learning activities that utilize stories, pictures, and videos. Students feel that PAI learning provides enjoyable experiences and motivates them to actively participate in every session. Enjoyment in learning PAI can be seen through several indicators, such as feeling happy during lessons, the desire to have additional class hours, and a pleasant classroom environment. The majority of students also express happiness when achieving good grades and enjoy learning activities that involve engaging tasks. These results show that PAI learning is able to create a positive learning climate for students.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of Enjoyment in Learning PAI.

No	Steatment	SD (%)	MI (%)
1	I enjoy attending Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes.	75	88
4	I would like the number of PAI class hours to be increased.	70	82
5	I prefer learning PAI through storytelling.	78	85
6	I feel that learning PAI in class is enjoyable.	74	84
7	I feel happy when I get good grades in PAI.	79	87
9	I feel comfortable during PAI lessons.	72	80
10	I enjoy learning PAI using pictures or videos.	69	83
Average		73,10	83,33

Based on the data, it can be concluded that MI students show a higher level of enjoyment in learning (83.33%) compared to SD students (73.10%). This indicates that MI students enjoy the PAI learning process more, possibly due to more interactive teaching methods and the religious environment of the madrasah.

Result-2: Students' Perceptions of Understanding PAI Material

Understanding the learning material is one of the important aspects in assessing the effectiveness of PAI learning. Based on the questionnaire results,

most students show the ability to understand the lesson content well. They find it easy to follow the teacher's explanations and are able to relate PAI material to religious practices in their daily lives. Moreover, activities involving reading and understanding the Qur'an in PAI lessons also contribute to the improvement of students' cognitive abilities. The material delivered by teachers is perceived as appropriate for the comprehension level of elementary students. This shows that PAI learning does not merely focus on memorization but also fosters meaningful understanding.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Understanding PAI Material.

No	Steatment	SD (%)	MI (%)
3	I can easily understand the explanations given by the PAI teacher.	71	82
15	I enjoy learning to read the Qur'an in PAI lessons.	74	86
Average		72,5	84,0

Based on the table, it can be concluded that **MI students have a better understanding of PAI material (84.0%) compared to SD students (72.5%)**. This suggests that learning in madrasah is more effective in developing deeper religious comprehension through reading activities and religious discussions.

Result-3: Students' Perceptions of Attitudes Toward the Teacher

Teachers play a central role in creating a conducive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Based on the questionnaire, most students perceive their PAI

teacher as patient, friendly, and willing to provide opportunities for students to ask questions and express opinions. These positive attitudes foster good interaction between teachers and students. In addition, teachers also provide examples and role models that are easy for students to understand, both through their behavior and delivery of material. Assignments and memorization tasks are also considered helpful in improving students' understanding of the material taught in class. This reinforces the perception that PAI teachers serve not only as instructors but also as spiritual guides for students.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of Attitudes Toward the Teacher.

No	Steatment	SD (%)	MI (%)
2	My PAI teacher teaches patiently and politely.	76	85
11	I like when the PAI teacher assigns tasks or prayer memorization.	70	82
12	The PAI teacher gives us opportunities to ask questions.	74	87
14	The PAI teacher often provides examples that are easy to understand.	72	84
Average		73,0	84,5

Based on the results, **MI students have a more positive perception of their PAI teacher's attitude (84.5%) compared to SD students (73.0%)**. This suggests that teaching approaches based on role modeling and Islamic values are more strongly felt in the madrasah environment.

Result-4: Students' Perceptions of the Relevance of PAI to Daily Life

The aspect of relevance refers to how students perceive the usefulness of PAI in their daily lives.

Based on the results, students generally understand that the values taught in PAI such as morality, worship, and honesty play an important role in everyday behavior. They feel that after learning PAI, they better understand good conduct and the importance of applying religious teachings. Students also recognize that PAI helps them behave politely, respect teachers and parents, and increase their sense of responsibility. This shows that PAI learning not only enriches knowledge but also shapes the religious character of students.

Table 4. Students' Perceptions of the Relevance of PAI to Daily Life.

No	Steatment	SD (%)	MI (%)
8	I understand good morals better after learning PAI.	75	88
13	I feel that PAI lessons are important in daily life.	71	85
Average		73,0	86,5

Based on the data, it can be concluded that **MI students show a higher perception of the relevance of PAI (86.5%) compared to SD students (73.0%)**. This indicates that PAI learning in MI is more integrated with religious practices and daily character building.

Discussion

1. Students' Perceptions of Enjoyment in Learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

The results of the study indicate that MI and SD students have a positive perception of their enjoyment in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI). MI students tend to enjoy the learning process more, with an average percentage of 83.33%, compared to SD students at 73.10%. This shows that the learning environment in madrasah is more conducive to fostering interest and enthusiasm in PAI learning. Enjoyment emerges because teachers are able to present the material using engaging methods such as storytelling, visual media, and applicable religious activities. These findings are consistent with Meisani (2021), who states that elementary school students are more likely to enjoy lessons delivered through interactive and enjoyable approaches. Similarly, the study by Lestari, Reza, & Bastari (2024) shows that students' positive perceptions of a subject are closely related to learning methods that are interesting and age appropriate. Therefore, the more creative the teacher is in delivering the material, the higher the students' level of enjoyment in learning PAI.

2. Students' Perceptions of Their Understanding of PAI Material

Students' understanding of PAI material in both MI and SD is categorized as high, with an average score of 84.0% for MI and 72.5% for SD. These results show that MI students tend to understand PAI content more easily, especially in aspects such as reading the Qur'an and understanding Islamic values in daily life. This condition is influenced by the characteristics of madrasah institutions, which place greater emphasis on religious practices such as tadarus, collective prayer, and daily worship habits. This study supports the findings of Rifky (2024), who explained that religion based learning

systems in madrasah are more effective in improving students' conceptual and spiritual understanding. In addition, Astuti (2021) emphasizes that learning strategies based on values and real life experiences can strengthen students' understanding of Islamic concepts. Thus, the success of understanding PAI material is strongly determined by the application of practical and contextual teaching methods.

3. Students' Perceptions of Attitudes Toward Teachers

The attitude of PAI teachers plays an important role in shaping students' positive perceptions of the learning process. The findings show that MI students have a higher perception score (84.5%) than SD students (73.0%) toward teachers who demonstrate patience, friendliness, and effective communication. Teachers who serve as role models and show empathy are more easily accepted by students, resulting in a strong emotional connection during the learning process. This finding is aligned with Chung et al. (2022), who highlight that students' learning motivation is significantly influenced by teachers' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom. Research by Saleh & Pitriani (2018) also emphasizes that positive teacher, student interaction creates an enjoyable learning environment and enhances students' internal motivation. In the context of PAI learning, teachers function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moral exemplars for students to emulate in their daily lives.

4. Students' Perceptions of the Relevance of PAI to Daily Life

The aspect of relevance between PAI lessons and daily life shows high results, with 86.5% among MI students and 73.0% among SD students. This indicates that students understand Islamic teachings not only as theory but also as guidelines for behavior and character. PAI learning in madrasah emphasizes the practical application of Islamic values such as discipline, honesty, and responsibility, enabling students to internalize religious teachings in their everyday lives. These findings align with Wiratama (2021), who states that value based religious learning can strengthen

students' character and personality. Additionally, Rifky, Yani, & Cahyani (2023) explain that contextual PAI learning helps students understand the connection between Islamic values and their social and cultural environments. Therefore, it can be concluded that the relevance of PAI learning plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of character and spiritual education in both elementary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyah.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that students' perceptions of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), both in elementary schools (SD) and madrasah ibtidaiyah (MI), fall into the positive category. Overall, MI students show a higher level of perception compared to SD students, with an average percentage of 83.33% versus 73.10%. These results illustrate that PAI learning in madrasah tends to be more effective in fostering enjoyment in learning, enhancing material comprehension, strengthening student teacher relationships, and instilling Islamic values in daily life. The four aspects examined learning enjoyment, material comprehension, attitudes toward teachers, and the relevance of PAI to everyday life demonstrate that religious education plays a significant role in shaping students' religious and spiritual character. The religious environment of madrasah, diverse teaching methods, and the exemplary behavior of teachers are key factors that contribute to students' positive perceptions of PAI learning. Based on the findings, it is recommended that PAI educators in elementary schools and madrasah continue to develop creative, contextual, and enjoyable learning strategies to foster deeper interest and understanding among students. Furthermore, future research is expected to broaden the scope by including additional variables such as learning motivation, the role of the family environment, and the influence of educational technology on shaping students' perceptions of Islamic Religious Education.

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