



Challenges in Implementing Islamic Religious Education Learning at a Madrasah in Bengkulu City

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Abstract

This study examines the learning problems of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School in Bengkulu City. The research aims to identify the forms of obstacles encountered in the IRE learning process, analyze their influencing factors, and understand their implications for learning effectiveness. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving IRE teachers, boarding tutors, and students. The results show that IRE learning problems arise from three interconnected aspects: students' varied initial abilities and learning fatigue, teachers' limited use of innovative methods and digital media, and environmental challenges within the boarding system such as dense activity schedules and insufficient learning facilities. These findings indicate that improving IRE learning requires a holistic effort integrating pedagogical strengthening, better learning management, and enhanced technological support.

Keywords: Boarding School, IRE Learning, Learning Problem

Introduction

The introduction should outline the aims of your paper and describe why the topic is important and what it contributes to the body of knowledge. You should also provide background to the research project, highlight the structure of the paper, and explain what made you decide to research this topic/write the article. Provide broad definitions and discussions of the topic and incorporate views of others (literature review) into the discussion to support, refute, or demonstrate your position on the topic. Please highlight controversial and diverging hypotheses when necessary. Finally, we briefly mention the main aim of the work and highlight the principal conclusions. As far as possible, please keep the introduction comprehensible to scientists outside your particular field of research (Irawati et.al, 2022).

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, moral values, and Islamic identity, particularly at the madrasah level, where both the curriculum and learning environment emphasize religiosity and the habituation of worship practices. In the context of boarding school-based educational institutions, the implementation of IRE becomes more complex due to the influence of religious culture, residential life, and patterns of social interaction that differ from those in regular schools. This condition aligns with the view that IRE learning is not merely concerned with the transfer of knowledge, but also with value internalization, character development, and the cultivation of religious practices, all of which require a supportive and conducive environment (Efendi et.al, 2018). Therefore, the effectiveness of IRE learning in schools and madrasahs is largely determined by the extent to which teachers, students, the curriculum, and the social environment can work synergistically to achieve the goals of Islamic education.

In practice, the implementation of IRE learning in many schools and madrasahs continues to face various challenges, including psychological, pedagogical, and environmental aspects. Previous studies indicate that common problems in IRE learning include low student motivation, limited use of varied teaching methods, inadequate supporting facilities, and the challenges posed by digital technological developments that affect students' behavior and learning concentration (Amma et.al, 2021). These issues are also evident in boarding-based educational institutions, despite their stronger systems of religious supervision and guidance. Boarding schools offer advantages such as the integration of formal curricula with intensive religious training; however, they also encounter challenges related to dense activity schedules, students' diverse academic backgrounds, and teachers' readiness to manage learning processes within a residential environment (Noor, 2019).

MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School in Bengkulu City is one of the Islamic educational institutions that implements an integrated system combining madrasah learning with pesantren-based guidance. As a madrasah that emphasizes Qur'anic literacy, the habituation of worship, and the internalization of noble character, the IRE learning process in this institution is ideally conducted in an intensive, holistic manner that addresses students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. However, based on observable empirical phenomena, the implementation of IRE learning at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School still faces several constraints. These include differences in students' foundational abilities in understanding religious materials, fatigue and boredom resulting from dense boarding activities, teachers' adaptation to Generation Z learning styles, and the dynamics of dormitory life that influence students' focus and discipline. In addition, the rapid development of digital technology has introduced new challenges for

IRE teachers in classroom management and in maintaining students' attention to learning materials.

These issues require in-depth investigation in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the forms of problems encountered, their underlying causes, and their implications for the IRE learning process in boarding madrasahs. By identifying and analyzing these challenges, madrasahs can formulate more effective and sustainable improvement strategies. This approach is consistent with the problem-solving perspective in Islamic education, which emphasizes problem identification, root cause analysis, and the development of pedagogical solutions grounded in Islamic values (Abdullah, 2018).

Based on the above considerations, this study focuses on examining the problems in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School, Bengkulu City, including the types of problems encountered, the influencing factors, and their impacts on the learning process. This study also aims to provide a systematic depiction of the actual conditions of IRE learning in a boarding school environment and to offer recommendations for improving its implementation in the future. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the enrichment of scholarly discussions on IRE learning challenges and practically to serve as a reference for teachers, madrasah administrators, and Islamic education policymakers in enhancing the quality of learning within modern pesantren-based institutions.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was selected because the primary objective of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the various problems encountered in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School, Bengkulu City, based on actual conditions in the field. The qualitative approach enables researchers to describe phenomena comprehensively and contextually in accordance with the characteristics of a boarding school-based madrasah environment (Creswell, 2014).

The research subjects consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students participating in IRE learning activities. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique in which data sources are determined based on specific considerations such as competence, direct involvement, and the relevance of their experiences to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2018). This technique was considered appropriate because the study required in-depth information from individuals who possess a thorough understanding of the dynamics of IRE learning within a boarding school setting.

Data were collected using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by teachers and students in the IRE learning process. Participatory observation was carried out to obtain a direct understanding of classroom situations, including teacher-student interactions, teaching methods, as well as students' responses and discipline. Documentation was used to obtain supporting data such as learning schedules, syllabi, dormitory activity records, and madrasah policy documents related to the implementation of IRE.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on

information relevant to the research objectives. Data display was presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions as a synthesis of the field findings. To ensure data trustworthiness, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the research findings (Patton, 2015).

Results & Discussion

The findings of this study were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving Islamic Religious Education teachers, dormitory supervisors, and several students of MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School, Bengkulu City. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Overall, the study reveals that the problems in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School can be classified into three major categories: (1) problems originating from students, (2) problems related to teachers and instructional methods, and (3) problems arising from the boarding school environment. These findings are subsequently analyzed and discussed using theories of learning and Islamic education.

1. Student-Related Problems in Islamic Religious Education Learning

The first finding indicates a significant variation in students' initial abilities in understanding Islamic Religious Education materials. In Grade VII, for instance, some students come from general elementary schools with limited exposure to intensive religious instruction, while others have educational backgrounds from TPQ or pesantren. This condition results in disparities in students' comprehension of IRE materials, particularly in the areas of worship jurisprudence (*fiqh al-'ibadah*), basic Islamic creed (aqidah), and the ability to read and understand the Qur'an. Teachers reported that these differences in students' abilities cause the learning process to proceed unevenly, as instruction must be adjusted to accommodate students with lower levels of understanding (Rahman & Ariyanto, 2020).

In addition, the study found that students experience learning fatigue as a result of the intensive boarding school schedule. Students participate in daily activities ranging from congregational prayers, *tahfiz*, *muroja'ah*, to formal classroom instruction. This dense schedule leads some students to experience physical exhaustion, which in turn reduces their concentration during IRE lessons, particularly when classes are conducted in the later hours of the day. This finding is consistent with Ulya (2021) view that students' physical and psychological conditions are internal factors that strongly influence the quality of the learning process.

2. Teacher- and Instructional Method-Related Problems

The second aspect identified in this study concerns teachers' limitations in implementing varied and innovative instructional methods. Teachers tend to rely predominantly on lecturing and question-and-answer techniques, while the use of project-based learning, contextual learning approaches, and digital learning media remains limited. This condition results in insufficient student engagement in the learning process. Moreover, changes in Generation Z learning styles, which favor visual, interactive, and fast-paced learning experiences, have not been fully addressed through the integration of technology-based instructional media.

Several teachers reported that administrative workloads and non-instructional responsibilities within the boarding school environment reduce the time available for adequate lesson preparation. This situation affects the structure and quality of daily lesson design, particularly in the development of student worksheets, instructional media, and formative assessment strategies. This finding is consistent with Harahap (2023) theory, which emphasizes that the quality of instruction is strongly influenced by teachers' readiness to plan and manage learning activities effectively.

3. Boarding School Environment-Related Problems

The third finding indicates that the boarding school environment plays a dual role, functioning both as a supporting factor and as a source of learning problems. On the one hand, the boarding school system fosters a strong religious culture that enables more structured and controlled habituation of worship practices. On the other hand, the dynamics of dormitory life—such as dense daily schedules, inconsistent discipline, and intensive social interactions among students—often lead to psychological disturbances, including minor conflicts, activity-related pressure, and insufficient rest time.

The study found that learning facilities, such as classrooms, LCD projectors, and multimedia devices, have not been utilized optimally. These limitations affect the effectiveness of technology integration in Islamic Religious Education learning. Learning environment theory emphasizes that both physical and social environments are crucial components influencing learning effectiveness (Fraser, 1998). This finding suggests that although boarding schools possess the advantage of a strong religious culture, improvements in learning infrastructure are still necessary to enhance the overall quality of instruction.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Islamic Religious Education Learning Problems at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School

Category of Problems	Description of Field Findings
Students' Ability	Variations in basic abilities; learning fatigue; lack of focus due to dense schedules
Teachers & Methods	Predominant use of lecturing methods; limited instructional media; insufficient lesson preparation
Boarding Environment	Dense schedules; intensive social interactions; limited multimedia learning facilities

The findings of this study indicate that the problems in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School are multidimensional, complex, and interrelated across various elements. This complexity encompasses psychological, pedagogical, managerial, and environmental aspects inherent in the boarding school context, which possesses its own distinctive dynamics. These three elements form an interactional pattern that influences the overall effectiveness of IRE learning implementation.

From the students' perspective, variations in initial ability constitute the most prominent finding. Observational data reveal that students come from heterogeneous educational backgrounds, with some graduating from general elementary schools and others from Islamic educational institutions or TPQ. These differences create competency gaps in Qur'anic reading skills, understanding of fiqh al-'ibadah, and knowledge of Islamic creed (aqidah). Such conditions require teachers to implement differentiated instruction;

however, in practice, teachers still experience difficulties in adjusting the pace and depth of instructional materials to accommodate individual student abilities.

Learning fatigue caused by the dense boarding school schedule further exacerbates students' reduced focus and concentration in the classroom. Daily routines that include worship activities, memorization, habituation programs, and formal academic lessons lead some students to experience mental fatigue, which in turn affects their motivation and active participation during IRE lessons. This finding aligns with the theory of individual differences, which emphasizes that students possess diverse physical, mental, and educational backgrounds, making uniform learning experiences ineffective (Amma, 2021).

From the teachers' perspective, the limited variation in instructional methods and learning media emerges as a significant issue. Teachers predominantly rely on lecturing, question-and-answer sessions, and assignments, while cooperative learning strategies, project-based learning, and the use of educational technology have not been optimally implemented. Generation Z students, who constitute the majority of learners, require interactive, visual, and technology-based learning strategies to enhance engagement (Efendi et al, 2018). However, several teachers reported time constraints and administrative workloads that hinder thorough preparation of innovative instructional designs. The lack of training related to technology integration in IRE learning further influences teachers' methodological choices. In fact, varied instructional approaches are crucial in a boarding madrasah context to prevent learning boredom, increase student motivation, and accommodate diverse learning styles.

Problems originating from the boarding school environment represent another important finding of this study. Boarding schools differ from regular schools due to the integration of academic activities, worship, and character development conducted over a 24-hour period. While this system provides advantages in strengthening religious habituation and moral development, it may also generate psychological pressure when activity management is not proportionally organized. Several students reported experiencing fatigue due to dense schedules, which reduces the effectiveness of classroom learning. Additionally, limitations in learning facilities—such as LCD projectors, stable internet access, and multisource instructional media—pose obstacles to the implementation of technology-based learning. These findings reinforce the view that learning environments, including both physical and social factors, play a crucial role in determining instructional quality (Noor, 2019). Asy'ari(2023) study similarly indicates that boarding school students tend to experience decreased concentration when activity burdens become excessive, a condition that is relevant to the situation found at MTs Bahriyati.

The findings demonstrate that the problems in IRE learning at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School are not caused by a single factor but rather result from the interaction of students' internal conditions, teachers' readiness and pedagogical competence, and the learning system operating within the boarding school context. Consequently, the required solutions must be holistic and integrative in nature. Improvement efforts may include strengthening technology-based instructional methods, enhancing teachers' pedagogical competencies, reorganizing boarding school schedules to be more humane, and improving learning facilities that support active learning. Strengthening teachers' digital literacy is also essential to enable them to respond more effectively to the learning needs of Generation Z. Through a comprehensive approach, IRE learning is expected to be more effective in achieving the objectives of Islamic character development within a boarding school environment.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the problems in Islamic Religious Education learning at MTs Bahriyati Qur'anic Boarding School, Bengkulu City, are multidimensional and interconnected, involving student-related factors, teachers' pedagogical readiness, and the dynamics of the boarding school environment. Variations in students' initial abilities, learning fatigue caused by dense schedules, limited instructional method diversity, and suboptimal utilization of learning facilities collectively influence the effectiveness of the learning process. These findings indicate that improving Islamic Religious Education in boarding madrasahs requires holistic and integrative strategies, including differentiated instruction, enhancement of teachers' pedagogical and digital competencies, better management of boarding school activities, and the strengthening of learning infrastructure. Through such comprehensive efforts, Islamic Religious Education learning is expected to more effectively foster students' religious understanding, character development, and internalization of Islamic values within the boarding school context.

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