

Islamic Religious Education and Student Academic Achievement and Motivation: A Systematic Review of Pedagogical Strategies and Value Internalization Mechanisms

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is mandatory in Indonesia's national curriculum, yet how it shapes academic achievement and motivation remains poorly understood. This systematic review synthesises the pedagogical strategies and mediating factors through which PAI influences these outcomes among Indonesian learners. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, we searched Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Garuda for peer-reviewed studies published January 2015 and April 2026; of 312 records, 47 met inclusion criteria after dual independent screening (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.84$), with quality appraised using CASP and MMAT and findings synthesised through Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. Three mechanisms emerged: intrinsic motivation grounded in religious meaning-making (*thalabul 'ilm*), non-cognitive competencies cultivated through character-based instruction, and academic identity formed through value internalisation. The review grounds these in a framework linking al-Ghazali's anthropology (*nafs, qalb, ruh, 'aql*) with Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory; the convergence between *ikhlas* and autonomous motivation is especially productive, as both describe the same inner orientation. Active learning, technology integration, and curricular coherence amplified these mechanisms; teacher quality and institutional leadership moderated their impact on measurable gains. Limitations include restriction to English and Indonesian sources, a ten-year window that underweights foundational work, and the inability to estimate effect sizes. Future meta-analyses, longitudinal studies, and multilingual reviews would address each of these. When pedagogically rigorous and institutionally supported, PAI is a meaningful driver of academic outcomes, not merely a doctrinal subject at the margins of the curriculum, but rather a framework for reform grounded in the Islamic ideal of *insan kamil*.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Academic Competitiveness; Pedagogical Implementation.

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Introduction

Islamic Religious Education is compulsory at every level of formal schooling in Indonesia and is designed to develop students' intellectual abilities alongside their religious formation.¹ It's expected to do more than transmit religious knowledge; the broader aim is to build cognitive, affective, and motivational capacities that support academic engagement.² Whether it actually does this is less clear. Most research has focused on specific teaching techniques or teacher competencies without tracing how religious instruction connects to academic performance.

Achievement and motivation are two of the most studied outcomes in educational research. Achievement means measurable results: grades, subject mastery.³ Motivation is what gets students engaged and keeps them there.⁴ Self-Determination Theory treats motivation as a continuum from external pressure to genuine internal drive, arguing that students who feel autonomous, competent, and relationally connected engage in ways that produce lasting learning rather than short-term performance.⁵ Achievement Goal Theory introduces a practical distinction: mastery orientation pushes toward deep understanding,⁶ While performance orientation focuses on demonstrating ability relative to others.⁷ Both frameworks identify motivation as the channel through which instruction produces outcomes, making them directly relevant to evaluating what PAI actually does in the classroom.⁸

Islamic educational philosophy offers its own frameworks for thinking about motivation and achievement. Thalabul 'ilm, the pursuit of knowledge as a religious duty,

¹ R Razali, L Sundana, and R Ramli, "Curriculum Development in Higher Education in Light of Culture and Religiosity: A Case Study in Aceh of Indonesia," *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language* 12, no. 1 (2024): 39–55, <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscsl.2023.2010108.3144>.

² A Faqihuddin, E Suresman, and M Abdullah, "Overcoming the Spiritual Emptiness of Students in the Modern Era through the Integration of Al-Ghazali's Human Concepts in the Islamic Religious Education Learning Model," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2497147>.

³ Idi Warsah, "Religious Educators: A Psychological Study of Qur'anic Verses Regarding Al-Rahmah," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 4, no. 2 (November 12, 2020): 275, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v4i2.1762>.

⁴ Ryan Rm, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25 (2000): 54–67.

⁵ Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013).

⁶ Carole Ames, "Classrooms: Goals, Structures, and Student Motivation.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 84, no. 3 (September 1992): 261–71, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.84.3.261>.

⁷ Andrew J Elliot and Holly A McGregor, "A 2×2 Achievement Goal Framework.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80, no. 3 (2001): 501.

⁸ Ediansyah Ediansyah et al., "Using Problem-Based Learning in College: Mastery Concepts Subject Statistical Research and Motivation," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 8, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 446, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v8i3.20243>.

frames academic effort as an act of devotion. The ideal of insan kamil extends this further: human excellence is intellectual, moral, and spiritual at once, not just cognitive.⁹ Al-Ghazali's account of the self identifies four interrelated dimensions: *nafs*, *qalb*, *ruh*, and *'aql*, and holds that genuine education develops all four rather than training the intellect alone.¹⁰ His principle of *ikhlas*, sincerity of intention, aligns with Self-Determination Theory's autonomous motivation: both treat sustained engagement as an internal rather than externally driven process.¹¹ The implication is that when PAI addresses intellectual, moral, and spiritual development together, religious conviction can carry academic effort further than grades or rewards alone.¹²

In practice, PAI pedagogy has moved away from rote memorisation toward cooperative learning, project-based approaches, and digital tools.¹³ Active learning methods show genuine effects on critical thinking and conceptual understanding.¹⁴ Technology integration, AI-assisted content, and augmented reality are showing early promise in motivation and performance, though the evidence base remains thin.¹⁵ The bigger problem is inconsistency. Urban and rural schools implement these approaches very differently, and whether any of them work depends heavily on how well teachers are prepared to use them.¹⁶ That gap is what makes it genuinely difficult to specify the conditions under which PAI reliably improves academic outcomes, which is what this review tries to do.

⁹ Masturin, "Religious Education in Agricultural Environments: Integrating Islamic Teachings and Agricultural Practices for Holistic Student Development," *Religious Education*, 2023, 1–18.

¹⁰ Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din* (T. J. Winter, Trans.) (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, n.d.).

¹¹ Hosaini Hosaini et al., "Tawheed-Based Pedagogy: Empowering Islamic Education Through Community Engagement And Pesantren Tradition," *Journal Of Human And Education (JAHE)* 4, no. 4 (August 14, 2024): 844–52, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jh.v4i4.1110>.

¹² Muhammad Gafarurrozi et al., "Dynamics of Motivation in PAI Learning Study of McClelland's Theory of Motivation and Its Application in Improving Student Achievement," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (2024): 233–42.

¹³ Warsah, "Religious Educators: A Psychological Study of Qur'anic Verses Regarding Al-Rahmah."

¹⁴ M Parhan et al., "DEVELOPING A CONTEXTUAL LEARNING MODEL IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION TO IMPROVE APPLICABLE KNOWLEDGE AND FOSTER KNOWLEDGE-BASED VIRTUES," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 75–86, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i1.35205>.

¹⁵ A S A Matari, L Patimah, and A.S.A.A. Nasywa, "Can AI-Optimized YouTube Videos Enhance Islamic Religious Education? A Quantitative Study on Student Learning Outcomes," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 22, no. 1 (2025): 175–94, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v22i1.11100>.

¹⁶ MI Sholeh et al., "The Role of Teachers in Increasing Students' Learning Motivation in Islamic Religious Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (2024): 421–41, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.8846>.

Value internalisation is the core mechanism. Self-Determination Theory identifies four stages: external, introjected, identified, and integrated regulation, with deeper internalisation generally producing more durable motivation.¹⁷ As Muzayaroh¹⁸ et Mahmud et al.¹⁹ have argued, PAI aims for the deepest stage: taking religious ideals that come from outside and making them genuinely part of who a student is. Farrah Camelia,²⁰ Further note that virtues like *ikhlas*, *istiqamah*, *amanah*, and *tawadu'* aren't abstract moral decoration; they give students something to hold onto when outside pressures and social comparisons start doing their work. What nobody has worked out yet is how any of this actually shows up in academic results.

Three persistent gaps emerge from the existing literature. *First*, Latipah²¹ and Budiyan²² observe that studies tend to examine PAI in disaggregated components, a pedagogical technique here, a teacher trait there, a curricular element elsewhere, without integrating these components into a coherent explanatory model linking instruction to outcomes. *Second*, Firdaus and Fatah²³ argue that the dialogue between classical Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary motivation research remains underdeveloped, with most studies drawing on one tradition or the other rather than both. *Third*, Kamila,²⁴ Muzaki, Nurhayati, and Patria each note that comparative scholarship across Muslim-majority contexts, Malaysia, Turkey, the Middle East, and Indonesia, has remained in disciplinary and geographic silos, limiting the transferability of local findings.

¹⁷ Richard M Ryan and Edward L Deci, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25, no. 1 (2000): 54–67.

¹⁸ A Muzayaroh, "Strengthening Religious and Character Education in Madrasah Diniyah Ali Maksum Yogyakarta," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* 20, no. 2 (2021): 245–74, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol20.iss2.art3>.

¹⁹ Lia Alfi Kamila, Afif Syaiful Mahmudin, and Rihab Wit Daryono, "Self-Intention in Mediating Self-Competence and Memorization Methods on Intensity of Memorizing the Qur'an: PLS-SEM Approach," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 2 (2024): 121–36.

²⁰ Farrah Camelia, "Implementasi Kebijakan Program Tahfidz Alquran Sebagai Upaya Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Di Pondok Pesantren Alquran Putri Ibnu Katsir Jember," *Jurnal Islamika* 20, no. 1 (2020): 4.

²¹ E Latipah, N Hasan, and M A Rokhimawan, "Curriculum Reconstruction: Alignment of Profile, Body of Knowledge, and Learning Outcomes of the Indonesian Islamic Education Study Program," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 1 (2023): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i1.7756>.

²² Umiarso Umiarso, "HUMAN TRANSFORMATION INTO THE 'GOD': Study of Critic–Elaborative Axiology of Islamic Education with Philosophical Sufism," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 17, no. 1 (2019): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v17i1.589>.

²³ Raudlotul Firdaus and Binti Fatah, "Educational Philosophy in Islam in The Curriculum Design of Integrated Islamic Education in Malaysia," *HIKMATUNA: Journal for Integrative Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.28918/hikmatuna.v5i1.1855>.

²⁴ Kamila, Mahmudin, and Daryono, "Self-Intention in Mediating Self-Competence and Memorization Methods on Intensity of Memorizing the Qur'an: PLS-SEM Approach."

To address these gaps, this systematic review is organised around three questions: (1) What theoretical foundations support the link between PAI and student academic motivation and success? (2) Which teaching methods most reliably improve academic performance in PAI settings? (3) What institutional, educator-related, and value-internalisation factors are involved? The review covers peer-reviewed literature published between 2015 and 2025, following PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The review makes a few contributions that the existing literature has not. It brings al-Ghazali's holistic educational framework into direct conversation with Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory, a pairing that has not been seriously attempted. It also applies systematic review protocols to a body of research that has largely gone unsynthesised. The practical aim is to give PAI teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers something concrete to work with, evidence that religious education can function as a genuine driver of academic excellence, not an afterthought.

Method

Research Design

This study follows the PRISMA 2020 protocol page²⁵ to synthesize research on the relationship between PAI and students' academic outcomes and motivation. The review uses qualitative thematic synthesis rather than meta-analysis. The aim is to understand *how* and *why* PAI affects students, not to calculate an average effect size.

Five criteria determined inclusion: studies had to be peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters from reputable publishers, or systematic reviews; published between January 2015 and April 2026; written in English or Indonesian; focused on PAI or Islamic education in formal schooling; and concerned with pedagogy, teacher competency, curriculum, or academic outcomes. Studies were excluded if they covered non-Islamic religious education without meaningful comparative relevance, appeared in non-indexed journals, or could not be accessed in full text.

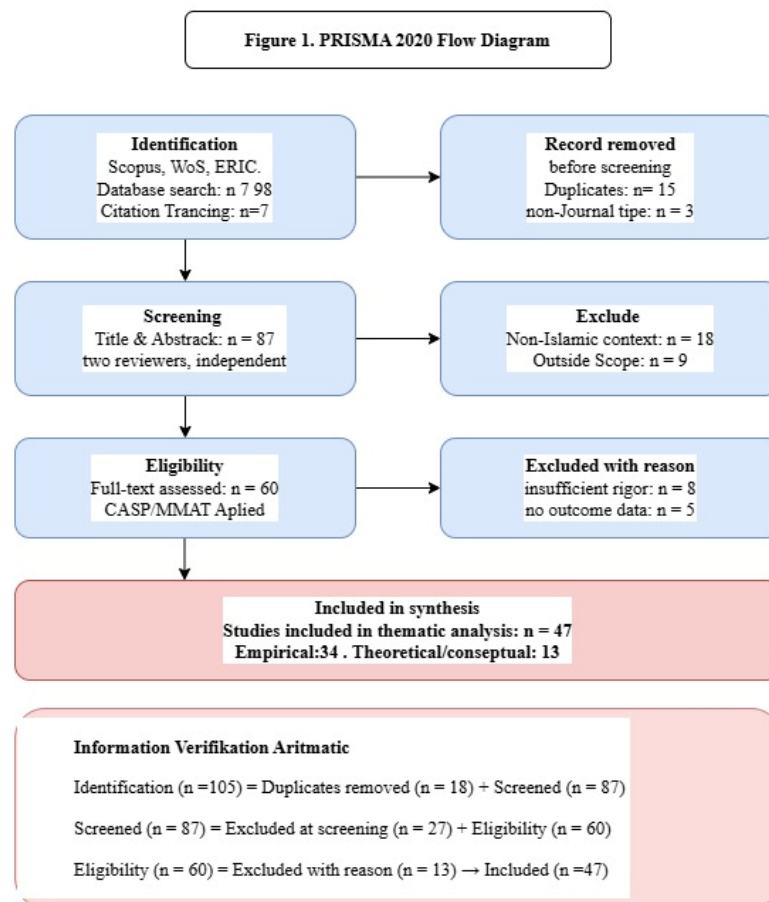
Search Strategy

The last search was conducted in April 2026, across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and the Indonesian academic database Garuda. Six search strings were used to get a broad

²⁵ Matthew J Page et al., "Updating Guidance for Reporting Systematic Reviews: Development of the PRISMA 2020 Statement," *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 134 (2021): 103–12.

view of the review by combining PAI terms with academic result structures and theoretical frameworks. Additional searches focused on classical Islamic educational philosophy by using terms like *thalabul 'ilm*, *insan kamil*, and Al-Ghazali together with words linked to education. We used backward and forward citation tracing on the ten most-cited papers in the first dataset.

Figure 1 outlines the four-stage selection process. Two reviewers independently screened titles and abstracts against the inclusion criteria. Articles that cleared this stage were read in full and assessed for methodological quality: qualitative studies using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tools, and mixed-methods studies using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). Studies scoring below 50 percent on the applicable criteria were dropped. Theoretical and conceptual articles were assessed differently with respect to whether the argument held together and whether it actually addressed the research questions.



Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction followed a standardised form covering bibliographic details, study setting, methodology, theoretical framework, principal findings, and identified mechanisms. Synthesis followed the six-phase thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke:²⁶ familiarisation, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and report generation. Three frameworks shaped the analysis: Self-Determination Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and al-Ghazali's holistic model. Where studies converged, patterns were noted; where they conflicted or left things unresolved, those tensions were kept in view rather than smoothed over.

Reliability and Constraints

Assertions were cross-verified across multiple independent studies, and an audit trail recorded analytical decisions throughout the process. Three limitations deserve honest acknowledgment. Restricting sources to English and Indonesian almost certainly excludes relevant work published in Arabic, Turkish, and Malay, a real blind spot given how much scholarship on Islamic education originates in those languages. The ten-year window keeps the review current, but it does exclude older theoretical work that still matters. And because this is a qualitative synthesis, the review cannot say how large PAI's effect on academic outcomes actually is, only that the effect appears to exist and that certain conditions seem to shape it.

Results and Discussion

Overview of Included Studies

Thematic synthesis across 47 studies points to three mechanisms through which PAI shapes student academic achievement and motivation: (1) intrinsic motivation grounded in religious meaning-making; (2) non-cognitive academic competencies developed through character-based instruction; and (3) resilient academic identity formed through value internalisation. None of these operates independently. They work together, and the extent to which they do so depends heavily on pedagogical strategies, teacher competence, and institutional leadership. What follows examines each mechanism in

²⁶ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis," *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 589–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>.

turn, drawing on empirical and conceptual findings from the included studies and situating them within Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Achievement Goal Theory (AGT), and al-Ghazali's holistic model of education.

The Motivational Mechanism through Religious Meaning and Intrinsic Engagement

One mechanism shows up repeatedly in the PAI literature: the link between academic effort and religious meaning. Masturin,²⁷ Jenuri et al.,²⁸ and Salaeh²⁹ converge on a similar finding. When PAI instruction frames knowledge-seeking as *thalabul 'ilm*, students describe studying as meaningful in itself rather than merely as a pathway to a grade. Solichin³⁰ pushed the argument onto firmer empirical ground, reporting a significant correlation between religiosity and achievement motivation among Islamic education students. That finding suggests religious commitment can sustain motivation even after external rewards drop away. Solichin, writing in the *International Journal of Instruction*, took the question further. They showed that learning motivation mediated the relationship between social support, self-regulated learning, and academic outcomes. SDT would predict something similar: motivation is the variable that carries educational inputs through to achievement.

The convergence between al-Ghazali's principle of *ikhlas* (sincerity of intention) and SDT's autonomous motivation represents a theoretically important insight. As noted by Sutria Rahayu, Khasawneh, and Mohammad,³¹ both frameworks locate sustainable engagement in internally endorsed rather than externally imposed commitment. Within al-Ghazali's anthropological model, authentic learning engages the *'aql* (intellect) while simultaneously purifying the *qalb* (heart) through proper intention, a conjunction that contemporary motivational psychology recognizes as the hallmark of intrinsically

²⁷ Masturin, "Religious Education in Agricultural Environments: Integrating Islamic Teachings and Agricultural Practices for Holistic Student Development."

²⁸ Jenuri et al., "Overcoming the Spiritual Emptiness of Students in the Modern Era through the Integration of Al-Ghazali's Human Concepts in the Islamic Religious Education Learning Model," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (December 31, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2497147>.

²⁹ A.; Saha Salaeh N.; Khair, N.; Djabir, D. A.; Hamed, P. K., "Character Education Concepts Based on Al-Ghazali's Perspective in Ihya' Ulumuddin," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 2 (2023): 231–41, <https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/105001524333?origin=resultslist>.

³⁰ Mohammad Muchlis Solichin and Achmad Muhlis, "Correlation between Religiosity and Student Achievement Motivation in Islamic Education Science Students," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change. Www. Ijicc. Net* 11, no. 1 (2020): 406–20.

³¹ OAAMHQ Mohammad, Ali Khasawneh, and A H al-Ghazālī, "The Educational Philosophical Thoughts of Abu Hamid Al Ghazali (1058-1111) And John Dewey (1859-1952): A Comparative Study," *Jordan Journal of Educational Sciences* 19, no. 2 (2023): 505–19.

motivated behavior. Ahmed's influential conceptualization of *tarbiyah for shakhsiyah* extends this insight pedagogically, arguing that culturally coherent Islamic pedagogy cultivates not merely cognitive skills but an integrated religious-academic identity that drives sustained learning effort.³²

Empirical research on active learning in PAI contexts provides converging evidence for the motivational mechanism. Warsah, in the most-cited study in the dataset, demonstrated that collaborative learning strategies in Islamic educational settings significantly enhance students' critical thinking and engagement.³³ Ediansyah found that problem-based learning in higher education contexts improves both learning motivation and subject mastery. At the same time, Handrianto identified religious meaning-making as a key factor influencing motivation and comprehension in PAI. Integrating contemporary technology further amplifies motivational outcomes.³⁴ Mustafa et al. (2025) reported significant motivational gains from augmented reality applications in the UAE secondary PAI,³⁵ Matari,³⁶ while Kholiq et al.³⁷ documented the positive effects of AI-optimized, web-based PAI content on student engagement. Collectively, these findings support the proposition that motivational benefits of PAI are not automatic but emerge when pedagogical strategies actively engage students as meaning-making agents rather than passive recipients of doctrinal content.

³² Farah Ahmed, "Tarbiyah for Shakhsiyah (Educating for Identity): Seeking out Culturally Coherent Pedagogy for Muslim Children in Britain," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 42, no. 5 (September 2012): 725–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2012.706452>.

³³ Idi Warsah, "Islamic Integration and Tolerance in Community Behaviour; Multiculturalism Model in The Rejang Lebong District," *Khatulistiwa* 9, no. 1 (2019): 15, <https://doi.org/10.24260/khatulistiwa.v9i1.1269>.

³⁴ Ciptro Handrianto et al., "Exploring the Factors Influencing Motivation and Understanding in Islamic Religious Education: A Mixed-Methods Study in Urban and Rural Areas," *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies* 20, no. 3 (2025): 75–94, <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-011X/CGP/v20i03/75-94>.

³⁵ Fekra Mustafa et al., "The Practice of Augmented Reality in Islamic Education and the Level of Motivation Among UAE Secondary School Students," *Social Sciences* 14, no. 2 (January 31, 2025): 80, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14020080>.

³⁶ Matari, Patimah, and Nasywa, "Can AI-Optimized YouTube Videos Enhance Islamic Religious Education? A Quantitative Study on Student Learning Outcomes."

³⁷ Abdul Kholiq et al., "Web-Based Learning to Promote Intrinsic Motivation in Islamic Education during Covid-19 Pandemic: A Study on Elementary School Students in Indonesia," 2023, 090022, <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0153024>.

Mechanisms of Non-Cognitive Competency via Character-Based Instruction and Academic Virtues

The second mechanism operates through the development of non-cognitive competencies, character dispositions, and self-regulatory capacities that empirical research consistently identifies as among the strongest long-term predictors of academic achievement. Al-Ghazali's educational framework,³⁸ articulated most comprehensively in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, positions character formation not as an adjunct to intellectual development but as its foundation.³⁹ The virtues cultivated through authentic PAI *ikhlas* (sincerity), *istiqamah* (perseverance), *amanah* (trustworthiness and academic integrity),⁴⁰ and *tawadu'* (intellectual humility) function not as abstract moral categories but as operative academic resources that stabilize engagement over time.⁴¹

Empirical studies document this mechanism in varied educational contexts. Mahmud examined character formation grounded in *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and community members. He found that character-based Islamic instruction has measurable effects on student behavior and academic engagement.⁴² Alimni, in a study published in the *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, demonstrated that PAI teachers play a significant role in fostering students' emotional intelligence, a non-cognitive competency directly linked to academic self-regulation and achievement.⁴³ Briki, in a structural equation modeling study published in *PLoS ONE*, found that self-control mediated by religiosity significantly predicts well-being outcomes among Muslim populations, extending the pattern beyond educational

³⁸ Salaeh N.; Khair, N.; Djabir, D. A.; Hamed, P. K., "Character Education Concepts Based on Al-Ghazali's Perspective in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*."

³⁹ N Nurhikmah, "Character Education Islam from the Views of Imam Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Al Burhan* 4, no. 1 (2024): 53–66, <https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/105004297981?origin=resultslist>.

⁴⁰ Muzayaroh, "Strengthening Religious and Character Education in Madrasah Diniyah Ali Maksum Yogyakarta."

⁴¹ S.; Arshad Siraj A. M., "Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali Viewpoints on Children's Character Development and Education," *Psychology of Education*, 2009, 53–72, <https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/105001531784?origin=resultslist>.

⁴² Salami Mahmud et al., "Building Students' Character Based on Maqāṣid Al-Shari'ah: Perspectives of Parents, Teachers, and Community Members in Banda Aceh," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 3 (November 30, 2023): 1803, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.17708>.

⁴³ Alimni Alimni, Alfauzan Amin, and Dwi Agus Kurniawan, "The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Emotional Intelligence," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 11, no. 4 (December 1, 2022): 1881, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v11i4.22116>.

contexts and providing robust quantitative evidence for the religiosity–self-regulation relationship.⁴⁴

The classical Islamic educational tradition provides conceptual resources for understanding why character formation translates into academic benefit. Siraj and Arshad,⁴⁵ In their comparative analysis of Ibn Miskawayh and al-Ghazali, they articulate a developmental model in which moral refinement and intellectual development proceed as integrated rather than parallel processes. Salaeh documents how al-Ghazali's method of habituation, gradual cultivation of virtues through consistent practice, produces durable character dispositions that manifest in academic persistence.⁴⁶ This classical insight aligns with contemporary research on non-cognitive skills, which identifies conscientiousness, grit, and self-regulation as stronger predictors of long-term academic success than cognitive ability alone. Budiyantri provides contemporary empirical support, demonstrating that the *Ulû al-Ilm* model, explicitly grounded in Islamic conceptions of the educated person, produces measurable improvements across six domains of student learning outcomes.⁴⁷

The Identity Formation Mechanism through Value Internalization and Academic Resilience

The third mechanism is the least theorised in the empirical literature and probably the most consequential. SDT distinguishes four levels of value internalisation: external regulation, driven by compliance; introjected regulation, driven by internal pressure; identified regulation, based on personal endorsement; and integrated regulation, where values cease to be rules and become part of who someone is. The difference matters. Dedi Saputra⁴⁸ and Muzayaroh⁴⁹ have shown that interventions that only reach external or

⁴⁴ Walid Briki et al., “Trait Self-Control, Identified-Introjected Religiosity and Health-Related-Feelings in Healthy Muslims: A Structural Equation Model Analysis,” ed. Malte Friese, *PLOS ONE* 10, no. 5 (May 11, 2015): e0126193, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0126193>.

⁴⁵ Siraj A. M., “Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali Viewpoints on Children’s Character Development and Education.”

⁴⁶ Salaeh N.; Khair, N.; Djabir, D. A.; Hamed, P. K., “Character Education Concepts Based on Al-Ghazali’s Perspective in Ihya’ Ulumuddin.”

⁴⁷ N Budiyantri et al., “Impact Of the Ulû Al-Ilm Model on Six Domains of Student Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 113–24, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i1.33225>.

⁴⁸ Dedi Saputra, “Peran Filsafat Pendidikan Islam Dalam Mengembangkan Kurikulum Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Spiritual Dan Moral Di Abad Ke 21,” *Jurnal Komunitas Literasi* 1, no. 3 (2025): 7–10.

⁴⁹ Muzayaroh, “Strengthening Religious and Character Education in Madrasah Diniyah Ali Maksum Yogyakarta.”

introjected regulation produce motivation that works only until it breaks under pressure, dependent on surveillance or guilt. Identified and integrated regulation produces something sturdier: engagement that persists because the student genuinely owns it. Ahmed's⁵⁰ The concept of *tarbiyah* for *shakhsyah*, educating for identity, names this goal directly. PAI's real contribution isn't transmitting information. It's shaping students whose academic drive is inseparable from their understanding of themselves as Muslims.

Jenuri et al.⁵¹ developed a PAI learning model grounded in al-Ghazali's four-dimensional anthropology (*nafs, qalb, ruh, 'aql*) and reported substantial gains in students' spiritual understanding (N-gain=0.85, $p < 0.01$). Their core argument is that conventional PAI models remain too theoretical and insufficiently relevant to modern life. Their starting premise is that current PAI models are "too theoretical, insufficiently relevant to modern life, and lack focus on deep spiritual experiences". Much of the reviewed literature reaches a similar verdict, Ahmed.⁵² Masturin⁵³ makes a parallel argument for Tawhid-based learning built around the *insan kamil* ideal, in which intellectual, moral, and spiritual development are treated as a single task rather than three.⁵⁴ approaches the question from the wider field of religious education and arrives at a complementary point: a well-formed religious identity can protect students whose academic surroundings pull in the opposite direction.

This kind of integrated identity formation matters for academic life in two ways. *First*, when religious values become part of who a student is rather than a set of rules imposed from outside, academic effort starts to feel like an expression of that identity rather than a demand to be satisfied. Motivation of this kind holds up better when external rewards dry up or when peer comparison turns discouraging, exactly the conditions that

⁵⁰ Ahmad Sofyan and Abuddin Nata, "Curriculum Development Evaluation of the Islamic Education Study Program in the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training," n.d.

⁵¹ Faqihuddin, Suresman, and Abdullah, "Overcoming the Spiritual Emptiness of Students in the Modern Era through the Integration of Al-Ghazali's Human Concepts in the Islamic Religious Education Learning Model."

⁵² Charles Kivunja and Ahmed Bawa Kuyini, "Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts," *International Journal of Higher Education* 6, no. 5 (2017): 26, <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n5p26>.

⁵³ Masturin, "Religious Education in Agricultural Environments: Integrating Islamic Teachings and Agricultural Practices for Holistic Student Development."

⁵⁴ M. Fatih Genç, Ina Ter Avest, and Siebren Miedema, "Religious Education in Two Secular Multicultural Societies: The Turkish and Dutch Case Compared," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 15 (2011): 801–5, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.03.188>.

tend to damage performance during difficult transitions.⁵⁵ *Second*, the pedagogical consequences are harder to sidestep than they look. Effective PAI has to create the conditions that make this kind of internalisation possible: space for honest reflection, teachers whose own lives students can actually learn from, and classrooms where trust and shared commitment to Islamic values are the norm rather than the aspiration. PAI that stops at surface-level doctrine does not produce any of this. It produces compliance, which is a different thing entirely, and compliance alone will not carry a student through the long academic road ahead.

Mediating Factors in Education through Pedagogy, Teachers, and Institutions

The three mechanisms explain what PAI contributes to academic outcomes. The literature also identifies three categories of factors that determine how well those mechanisms actually function. The pedagogical strategy sits closest to the outcome. PAI has moved away from rote memorization, largely replacing it with cooperative learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and contextual approaches that link Islamic content to students' real lives. Technology appears to reinforce all three mechanisms: web-based platforms,⁵⁶ AI-optimized content,⁵⁷ and augmented reality.⁵⁸ All show early evidence of this. But the effect is conditional. Yudiawan found that online PAI during COVID-19 worked where infrastructural readiness and system quality were already in place, not simply because the technology was available.⁵⁹

Teacher quality is probably the most consequential variable in PAI outcomes, full stop. Sholeh et al. found that it directly shapes student motivation.⁶⁰ Alumni traced its effects on the development of emotional intelligence.⁶¹ Dzul added a useful layer,

⁵⁵ Alimni, Amin, and Kurniawan, "The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Emotional Intelligence."

⁵⁶ Dani Pradana Kartaputra, Muhmmad Ramdani Nugraha, and Ahmad Lukman Nugraha, "Website Development as an Information and Material-Sharing Platform for Fiqh of Worship," *Jurnal Bangkit Indonesia* 14, no. 2 (2025): 15–20.

⁵⁷ Neneng Sulastris et al., "Deep Learning-Based Planning Model for Islamic Education in Indonesian Integrated Schools," *EDUKASIA Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 5, no. 2 (2024): 645–58.

⁵⁸ WMKFW Khairuldin et al., "An Augmented Reality (AR) Approach in Educational Integration of Du'a in Islam," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 8, no. 1 (2019): 32–39.

⁵⁹ Akhmad Habibi et al., "Mapping Instructional Barriers during Covid-19 Outbreak: Islamic Education Context," *Religions* 12, no. 1 (2021): 50.

⁶⁰ Sholeh et al., "The Role of Teachers in Increasing Students' Learning Motivation in Islamic Religious Education."

⁶¹ Alimni, Amin, and Kurniawan, "The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Emotional Intelligence."

professional learning communities help PAI teachers build the self-efficacy and trust that eventually translate into better instruction.⁶² Maujud and Syaharuddin mapped this onto four competency dimensions (pedagogical, personal, social, professional) in their Arabic language teacher framework, and those dimensions apply equally well to PAI.⁶³ What makes PAI distinctive, though, is the weight placed on *uswah hasanah* the teacher as model, not just instructor. A PAI teacher who visibly embodies intellectual curiosity, consistent study habits, and real religious commitment does something a textbook can't: shows students what it actually looks like when Islamic values and academic life fit.

Institutional design sets the floor. Razali et al. showed that a curriculum grounded in a local cultural and religious context produces coherent learning rather than a patchwork of disconnected subjects. Their Aceh case study makes this concrete.⁶⁴ Faisal examined how KKNi, SNPT, and integration-interconnection frameworks get embedded into Islamic higher education curricula, and how those structural choices shape what PAI can actually do.⁶⁵ Alainati, make the case for competency-based frameworks that name cognitive, affective, and volitional outcomes explicitly rather than assuming they'll emerge on their own.⁶⁶ But the ceiling is set by school leadership. Principals who position PAI as a genuine academic priority, rather than something squeezed between more serious subjects, are, according to Rahmi et al., the single highest-level factor in determining whether PAI delivers on its academic potential.⁶⁷

Contested Findings and Theoretical Tensions

Not everything in this literature points in the same direction. The positive effects of PAI on academic outcomes are real, but their magnitude and consistency vary

⁶² Paisun Paisun and Mowafg Masuwd, "Investigating the Relationship between Teacher Self-Efficacy and Student Achievement," *Andragogi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 4, no. 2 (2024): 94–108.

⁶³ Erma Fatmawati, "Reconceptualizing Assessment in Islamic Education: A Critical Review of Madrasah Evaluation Practices in the 21st Century," *Journal of Quality Assurance in Islamic Education (JQAIE)* 5, no. 2 (2025): 109–19.

⁶⁴ Razali, Sundana, and Ramli, "Curriculum Development in Higher Education in Light of Culture and Religiosity: A Case Study in Aceh of Indonesia."

⁶⁵ Faisal Faisal, Marhamah Syarif, and Muh Asy'ari Akbar, "Penerapan Model Pembelajaran PAI Berbasis Proyek Dalam Meningkatkan Nilai Karakter Dan Sikap Religius Siswa," *Hartaki: Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1–12.

⁶⁶ Shaikhah J Alainati, "Towards an Effective Competency-Based Education and Training Model," *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)* 23, no. 11 (2021): 31–40.

⁶⁷ Agus Mita Rahmi, "The Application of Problem-Based Learning Model to Improve Students' Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education Class X SMK PP Negeri Padang Overcome," *BiCED Proceeding* 1 (2024): 239–44.

considerably across contexts. Urban schools, well-resourced institutions, and teachers with solid preparation tend to show stronger results. That variation matters because it means PAI's academic contribution isn't a fixed property of the subject.⁶⁸ It's contingent on how well it's implemented. There's also a live debate about what PAI should actually be doing. Teaching religious content as settled doctrine is a different enterprise from inviting students to think critically about it. Winkler, writing from a postcolonial standpoint, argues that religious education textbooks often embed exclusionary assumptions, and that critique applies here.⁶⁹ Curricula that prioritize doctrinal transmission may constrain the very intellectual development they claim to promote. Finally, the geographic scope of this literature is narrow. Most studies come from Indonesian contexts, and those findings don't transfer cleanly to Turkey, Malaysia, or the Middle East, where institutional structures differ markedly.⁷⁰ Moving the field forward means doing more than accumulating evidence of positive effects; it means investigating the conditions under which those effects actually appear.

Toward an Integrated Framework through Synthesis

The reviewed literature points to a framework in which PAI contributes to student achievement and motivation through three linked mechanisms: motivational, non-cognitive, and identity-based. These mechanisms work best when pedagogy is sound, teachers are competent, and institutions provide support. This answers the three research questions set out at the beginning. On theory (RQ1), the framework connects classical Islamic educational philosophy, especially al-Ghazali's four-dimensional anthropology and the principle of Ikhlas, with contemporary motivational theories, particularly SDT's continuum of regulation and AGT's mastery orientation. On pedagogy (RQ2), it identifies active learning, technology integration, and character-based instruction as strategies that activate these mechanisms. On structure (RQ3), it treats teacher competency and institutional leadership as the mediating factors that determine implementation quality.

⁶⁸ M S Sholehuddin, M A Ghufroon, and T Ningsih, "Integrating Javanese Philosophy into Islamic Education: A Case Study of Mikul Dhuwur, Mendhem Jero (Uplift the Dignity, Bury the Secret)," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 34, no. 1 (2026): 43–65, <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.34.1.03>.

⁶⁹ Kathrin Winkler and Stefan Scholz, "Subaltern Thinking in Religious Education? Postcolonial Readings of (German) Schoolbooks," *British Journal of Religious Education* 43, no. 1 (2021): 103–22.

⁷⁰ Michael D Driessen, "Public Religion, Democracy, and Islam: Examining the Moderation Thesis in Algeria," *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 2 (2012): 171–89.

The framework, therefore, shifts PAI away from a peripheral subject concerned with doctrinal transmission and treats it as a subject that can shape academic outcomes.

Conclusion

Across 47 studies, Islamic Religious Education appears to support student achievement and motivation through three related pathways: intrinsic motivation rooted in religious meaning-making, non-cognitive competencies developed through character-based instruction, and an academic identity shaped by the internalization of genuine values. Each of these depends heavily on how the subject is taught, who teaches it, and whether school leadership is behind it. The framework this review proposes links al-Ghazali's four-dimensional anthropology of *nafs*, *qalb*, *ruh*, and *'aql* to Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory. The most productive overlap here is between the classical principle of *ikhlas* and contemporary accounts of autonomous motivation, which turn out to describe a similar inner orientation in different vocabularies. The implication for practice is that PAI deserves to be treated as more than a doctrinal subject at the margins of the curriculum. It can shape academic outcomes directly and, in doing so, support the Islamic ideal of *insan kamil*.

Three limitations are worth naming. Only English and Indonesian sources were reviewed, which almost certainly leaves out relevant Arabic, Turkish, and Malay scholarship. The ten-year window skews toward recent work and underweights older foundational studies. And because the synthesis is qualitative, it cannot say how large PAI's effects on academic outcomes actually are. Each of these suggests an obvious next step. Multilingual reviews that incorporate Arabic and Turkish scholarship would make comparisons across Muslim-majority contexts more honest, and meta-analyses could begin producing actual effect-size estimates across pedagogical interventions. Longitudinal work is probably the most pressing need: we still do not know whether the three mechanisms identified here hold up over a student's full educational trajectory or fade once novelty wears off. Mixed-methods research would also help distinguish cases in which students genuinely internalize religious values from those in which they are simply complying.

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