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Concepts And Paradigm Of Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an essential component of the national education system, serving to shape the personality of students, fostering faith, piety, and noble character. This article aims to examine the basic concepts and paradigm shifts in Islamic Religious Education through a library research approach. The study's findings indicate that PAI cannot be understood in a single context, but rather encompasses various paradigms, ranging from the normative-doctrinaire paradigm that emphasizes the textual transmission of religious values, the humanistic paradigm oriented toward developing student potential, the interdisciplinary-integrative paradigm that combines religious knowledge with general knowledge, to the critical-transformative paradigm that promotes PAI as an instrument of social change. These paradigm shifts are influenced by social and cultural dynamics and the demands of the times, including the development of digital technology. This study recommends the need for a more contextual, integrative, and adaptive reorientation of the PAI paradigm to address the challenges of contemporary education without losing its Islamic roots.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, educational paradigm, Islamic educational concept, humanistic, integrative

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental process in human life that serves to develop an individual's full potential, including intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. In the context of Muslim society, education cannot be separated from Islamic values, which serve as the foundation for

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character and personality development. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) exists as a response to this need, namely as a conscious and planned effort to prepare students to believe in, understand, internalize, and practice Islamic teachings through guidance, teaching, and training (Halstead, 2004; Mustofa dkk., 2025).

Historically, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has undergone a long development in line with the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the Muslim community. In its early days, Islamic education emphasized the doctrinal transmission of religious knowledge through traditional institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), surau (prayer rooms), and mosques. However, with the development of science and technology, and the introduction of modern educational discourse, the concept and paradigm of PAI have undergone a significant shift. PAI is no longer understood simply as the transfer of religious knowledge, but rather as a holistic and integrative character-building process involving various other disciplines (Supriyanto & Amrin, 2022; Sutiono & Ridho, 2023).

The fundamental issue that then arises is the diversity of perspectives or paradigms in understanding and implementing Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Some groups still adhere to a normative-doctrinal paradigm that emphasizes textual adherence to Islamic sources, while others develop a more humanistic, critical, and even transformative paradigm. These differing paradigms have implications for the orientation, methods, materials, and evaluation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at various levels of education (Idris dkk., 2018; Şahin, 2018). This phenomenon is interesting to study in more depth, given that the paradigm adopted will significantly determine the direction and quality of the output of religious education itself.

Furthermore, the challenges of the digital era and globalization have placed new pressures on the existence and relevance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The rapid flow of information, changes in the lifestyles of the younger generation, and the emergence of diverse religious beliefs in the digital space require PAI to adapt without losing its essence and value orientation (Wijaya & Sabda, 2023). Therefore, a study of PAI concepts and paradigms is crucial to provide a clear mapping of the various evolving perspectives and to formulate a direction for PAI development that is more relevant to the needs of the times.

Based on this background, this article aims to examine in-depth the basic concepts of Islamic Religious Education and the various paradigms that have developed within it, including the factors influencing these paradigm shifts (Supriyanto dkk., 2022). This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) scholarship and practical contributions for educators and policymakers in designing more contextual and adaptive

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religious education policies and curricula.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach with a library research approach. This approach was chosen because the study's focus is conceptual and theoretical, namely examining the concepts and paradigms of Islamic Religious Education based on relevant written sources, including books, scientific journals, previous research results, and educational policy documents (Ruiz-Eugenio dkk., 2024). A library study is deemed appropriate because it allows researchers to conduct in-depth analysis of various expert perspectives and ideas without being bound by the spatial and temporal constraints of field data collection.

The data sources in this study consist of two types: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include scientific works and the thoughts of Islamic education experts that directly address Islamic Religious Education concepts and paradigms, such as works on Islamic educational philosophy, Islamic educational science, and Islamic Religious Education curriculum policies (Bellerose dkk., 2022). Secondary sources include journal articles, research findings, and other relevant supporting documents that can strengthen the analysis, including government regulations regarding religious education in Indonesia.

Data collection techniques were conducted through searching, collecting, and recording data from various literature relevant to the research theme. This process began with identifying key keywords, namely the concept of Islamic education, the paradigm of religious education, and the Islamic Religious Education paradigm shift. This was followed by a search for sources through academic databases, digital libraries, and catalogs of accredited scientific books and journals (Panda dkk., 2021). The collected data was then classified based on key themes to facilitate the analysis process.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and a descriptive-analytical approach. Through this method, researchers not only describe Islamic Education concepts and paradigms as proposed by experts but also critically analyze the similarities, differences, and interrelationships between existing paradigms (Vasileiou dkk., 2018). Furthermore, a comparative approach was used to compare classical and contemporary Islamic education paradigms to more clearly demonstrate patterns of paradigm shift.

To ensure data validity, this study applies the principle of source triangulation, comparing and confirming information from different sources of literature discussing the same theme. Furthermore, source selection also takes into account the credibility of the author and publisher,

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the year of publication, and their relevance to the context of contemporary Islamic education, particularly in Indonesia. Therefore, the study results are expected to have an adequate level of academic validity and reliability.

DISCUSSION

Basic Concepts of Islamic Religious Education

Etymologically, the term "education" in Arabic can refer to several words, including tarbiyah, ta'lim, and ta'dib. Tarbiyah implies a gradual process of nurturing and developing potential. Ta'lim emphasizes the transfer of knowledge, while ta'dib emphasizes the instilling of manners and morals (Suparjo & Hidayah, 2023). These three terms complement each other in forming a comprehensive understanding of Islamic education, namely a process that is oriented not only toward the transfer of knowledge but also toward the formation of attitudes, morals, and personality in accordance with Islamic values.

Islamic Religious Education can be conceptually understood as a conscious and planned effort to prepare students to recognize, understand, internalize, and believe in the teachings of Islam, accompanied by demands to respect followers of other religions in harmonious relations between religious communities to realize national unity. This definition emphasizes that Islamic Religious Education has two main dimensions (Abdullah, 2022; Nadliroh, 2024): a vertical dimension, namely the relationship between humans and God, and a horizontal dimension, namely the relationship between humans and their environment.

The concept of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is also inseparable from the three main domains of education: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive domain relates to students' understanding of Islamic teachings, including theology, law, and history. The affective domain relates to the appreciation and internalization of Islamic values into students' attitudes and personalities (Hasan dkk., 2026). The psychomotor domain relates to students' ability to practice Islamic teachings in daily life, such as performing religious duties and practicing noble morals.

Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is essentially a comprehensive educational process, not merely transferring religious knowledge cognitively but also shaping a faithful, pious, and noble personality through a continuous process of internalizing values (Wahidin, 2026; Yandi dkk., 2023). This concept forms the basis for the development of various paradigms within Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which will be discussed further in the following section.

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Philosophical and Legal Basis of Islamic Education

The philosophical foundation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) stems from the Islamic view of the nature of humans as creatures endowed with an innate desire to believe in Allah SWT. Humans are viewed as caliphs on earth with moral and social responsibilities, making education a means to actualize this innate potential (Ma'arif dkk., 2023; Nurhadi, 2019). This philosophical perspective gives rise to the goals of Islamic education, which are not only oriented toward worldly life but also toward happiness in the afterlife, ensuring a holistic and balanced education between worldly and afterlife aspects.

In addition to its philosophical foundation, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also has a strong legal basis within Indonesia's national education system. This foundation is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, and various derivative regulations that specifically regulate the implementation of religious education, including Islamic Religious Education, in both formal and non-formal educational institutions (Muliatul, 2024; Nurhadi, 2019). This legal basis makes Islamic Religious Education a compulsory subject that must be taught to Muslim students at every level of education.

This legal basis also emphasizes that religious education, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI), aims to develop students' abilities in understanding, appreciating, and practicing religion, thus developing them into individuals who believe in and fear God Almighty and possess noble character. With a solid philosophical and legal foundation, PAI has strong legitimacy to continue developing and adapting to the demands of the times without losing its essence and purpose (Adnan, 2018; Saleh dkk., 2025).

Aims and Functions of Islamic Religious Education

The primary goal of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is to shape students to have strong faith and devotion to Allah SWT, as well as noble morals in their personal, social, national, and state lives. This goal is long-term and oriented toward the development of a complete Muslim personality (insan kamil), namely, individuals who are able to balance the spiritual, intellectual, social, and emotional aspects of their lives (Amaly dkk., 2023; Zubair, 2025).

In addition to these objectives, Islamic Religious Education also has several strategic functions in the education system, including the development function, namely increasing students' faith and piety to Allah SWT which has been instilled in the family environment; the value instillation function, namely providing life guidelines to achieve happiness in this world and

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the hereafter; the mental adjustment function, namely helping students adapt to the environment, both physical and social, and being able to change their environment in accordance with Islamic teachings; and the improvement function, namely correcting students' mistakes, deficiencies, and weaknesses in their beliefs, understanding, and practice of Islamic teachings in everyday life (Amran & Bidaula, 2024; Saleh dkk., 2025).

Another equally important function is the preventive function, which is to ward off negative things from the environment or other cultures that can harm students and hinder their development towards becoming whole human beings; the teaching function, which is to convey religious knowledge systematically; and the channeling function, which is to channel students who have special talents in the field of religion so that they can develop optimally (Adnan, 2018). All of these functions emphasize that Islamic Religious Education has a multidimensional role in the overall educational process.

Various Paradigms in Islamic Religious Education

A paradigm can be understood as a fundamental perspective or framework of thought used to understand and explain a phenomenon, including educational phenomena. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), a paradigm determines how educators understand the nature, objectives, materials, methods, and evaluation of Islamic religious learning. Based on a literature review, there are at least four main paradigms developing in PAI: the normative-doctrinal paradigm, the humanistic paradigm, the interdisciplinary-integrative paradigm, and the critical-transformative paradigm (Hasan dkk., 2026).

First, the normative-doctrinal paradigm views Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as a process of transmitting absolute and inviolable religious teachings. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of students' adherence to religious texts, namely the Quran, Hadith, and the opinions of scholars, without providing much room for critical dialogue or contextualization. Learning within this paradigm tends to be one-way, with educators as the primary source of religious authority and students as passive recipients (Hasan dkk., 2026). The advantage of this paradigm is that it maintains the purity of religious teachings, but its weakness is the limited space for students to think critically and contextually about contemporary issues.

Second, the humanistic paradigm views students as subjects with their own potential, needs, and uniqueness. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of a humanizing educational process, where students are given space to develop their potential optimally through a dialogical and participatory process. (Aziz dkk., 2021) In the humanistic paradigm, educators act as

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facilitators, helping students discover and develop their own religious meaning, rather than simply memorizing doctrine. This approach is relevant to the needs of students in the contemporary era, which demands more participatory and meaningful learning.

Third, the interdisciplinary-integrative paradigm seeks to integrate Islamic studies with general knowledge, such as science, technology, sociology, and psychology. This paradigm emerged in response to the dichotomy between religious studies and general knowledge, which has been considered a hindrance to the advancement of Islamic education. Through the integrative paradigm, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is no longer taught in isolation but is instead linked to various other disciplines, enabling students to understand the relevance of Islamic teachings to various contemporary life issues, including issues of science, the environment, and technology (Ma'arif dkk., 2023).

Fourth, the critical-transformative paradigm views Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an instrument of social change that encourages students to develop a critical awareness of social inequality and injustice. This paradigm is inspired by critical educational thought, which emphasizes the importance of education as a practice of liberation. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this paradigm encourages students to not only understand Islamic teachings textually but also to contextualize them in efforts to achieve social justice, equality, and societal well-being (Dayusman & Nazaruddin, 2025).

These four paradigms are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other and can be applied in combination according to the educational context and needs (Ma'arif dkk., 2023). A comprehensive understanding of these four paradigms is essential for educators to design Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning that is more varied, contextual, and tailored to student characteristics.

The Paradigm Shift of Islamic Education from Traditional to Contemporary

The paradigm shift in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) did not occur suddenly, but rather was the result of a long process influenced by various social, cultural, political, and intellectual factors. During the classical period, Islamic education in the archipelago was largely provided through Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) with a traditional learning system, emphasizing memorization of the yellow texts and students' complete obedience to the kiai (Islamic teacher) as the source of scholarly authority. The dominant paradigm during this period was the normative-doctrinal paradigm (Adnan, 2018).

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Entering the modern era, particularly with the introduction of the colonial education system and the idea of Islamic educational reform, efforts began to integrate the Islamic boarding school (pesantren) education system with the modern education system, such as the establishment of madrasas (Islamic schools) that combined religious and general curricula (Zubair, 2025). This change marked the beginning of a shift toward an interdisciplinary-integrative paradigm, although in practice the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge remains quite strong.

In the contemporary era, a paradigm shift is increasingly evident with the emergence of various humanistic Islamic educational ideas that emphasize the importance of a more humanizing learning approach for students. Furthermore, a discourse on critical-transformative Islamic education is developing, encouraging Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to be more sensitive to issues of social justice, human rights, and religious moderation (Saleh dkk., 2025). This shift is also driven by national education policies that increasingly emphasize active, contextual, and competency-based learning approaches, as reflected in various religious education curricula that are continually being refined (Nurhadi, 2019).

This phenomenon demonstrates that the Islamic Religious Education paradigm is dynamic and continues to evolve in line with changing social contexts and the needs of the times (Rozi dkk., 2025). However, this paradigm shift does not necessarily eliminate the normative-doctrinal paradigm, but rather involves a process of accumulation and synthesis between complementary paradigms in contemporary Islamic religious education practices.

Implementation of Paradigms in Islamic Education Curriculum and Learning

The paradigm adopted by an educational institution will significantly influence how the Islamic Religious Education curriculum and learning process are designed and implemented. In institutions that still predominantly adhere to the normative-doctrinal paradigm, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum tends to be structured textually, emphasizing memorization and literal understanding of Islamic sources (Sarnoto dkk., 2022). The learning methods used also tend to be lecture-based and memorization-based, with evaluations focusing solely on cognitive aspects.

In contrast, educational institutions that adopt a humanistic paradigm tend to design Islamic Religious Education curricula that are more flexible and student-centered. They employ a more varied learning method, such as discussions, case studies, and project-based learning, with evaluations that emphasize not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects

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of students (Yandi dkk., 2023). This approach provides greater opportunity for students to develop meaningful and contextual religious understanding.

In institutions that adopt an interdisciplinary-integrative paradigm, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is designed by linking Islamic material with various other disciplines, such as science, technology, and social sciences. Learning is conducted through a thematic approach that allows students to see the connection between Islamic teachings and various real-life issues. In institutions that develop a critical-transformative paradigm, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is designed to encourage students to actively participate in social activities, advocacy, and religious moderation movements as a form of practicing Islamic values in a broader social context (Halstead, 2004).

The diversity of implementations of this paradigm demonstrates that there is no single model for Islamic Religious Education curriculum development and learning. Each educational institution needs to adapt its paradigm based on the socio-cultural context, student needs, and its vision and mission, while adhering to the basic principles of Islamic teachings.

Challenges and Prospects for Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Era

The rapid development of information and communication technology brings both challenges and new opportunities for the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) paradigms. On the one hand, the rapid flow of religious information on social media and other digital platforms has the potential to cause confusion and even conflicting understandings among students, especially if they are not equipped with adequate digital and religious literacy skills (Zubair, 2025). The emergence of both extreme and liberal religious ideologies in the digital space presents a unique challenge for PAI in fostering a moderate and balanced understanding of religion (wasathiyah).

On the other hand, the digital era also opens up significant opportunities for the development of more innovative and engaging Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methods and media, such as the use of online learning platforms, interactive videos, religious applications, and the use of artificial intelligence to support more personalized and adaptive learning processes (Saleh dkk., 2025). This use of technology aligns with the humanistic and interdisciplinary-integrative paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of contextual and meaningful learning for students.

To address these challenges, a more adaptive reorientation of the Islamic Religious Education paradigm is needed, one that combines normative-doctrinal strengths in maintaining

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the purity of teachings, humanistic aspects in humanizing students, interdisciplinary-integrative aspects in linking Islamic teachings with various disciplines, and critical-transformative aspects in fostering students' social awareness (Ma'arif dkk., 2023). This paradigm synthesis is believed to be capable of producing Islamic religious education that is relevant to the demands of the times without losing the roots of authentic Islamic values.

The future prospects for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) development depend heavily on the ability of educators, policymakers, and educational institutions to formulate appropriate paradigms tailored to the current context (Kuswandi, 2024). Continuous research and development support for innovative PAI learning models is also needed, so that PAI can continue to play a strategic role in shaping a generation of Muslims with character, intelligence, and the ability to face the challenges of life in the global era.

CONCLUSION

Based on the studies that have been described, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a comprehensive and multidimensional educational process, which is not only oriented towards the cognitive transfer of religious knowledge, but also on the formation of faith, piety, and noble morals of students through a continuous process of internalization of values. The concept of PAI is derived from a deep understanding of the nature of humans as creatures who have a religious nature and responsibility as caliphs on earth, and has a solid philosophical and legal foundation in the Indonesian national education system.

This study also shows that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) cannot be understood through a single perspective, but rather encompasses various complementary paradigms. The normative-doctrinal paradigm emphasizes the importance of maintaining the purity of religious teachings through the textual transmission of values. The humanistic paradigm emphasizes the importance of humanizing students as active subjects in the learning process. The interdisciplinary-integrative paradigm seeks to bridge the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge through a more holistic learning approach. The critical-transformative paradigm positions Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an instrument of social change that fosters critical awareness in students regarding issues of justice and equality in society.

The paradigm shift in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) from the traditional to the contemporary era occurred gradually and was influenced by various social, cultural, political, and intellectual factors. This shift did not completely eliminate the previous paradigm, but rather resulted in a process of accumulation and synthesis between complementary paradigms in

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contemporary Islamic religious education practices. The implementation of these paradigms in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula and teaching also varies according to the socio-cultural context, student needs, and the vision and mission of each educational institution.

The challenges of the digital era require Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to reorient its paradigm to be more adaptive, contextual, and integrative, while remaining steadfast in the fundamental principles of authentic Islamic teachings. The synthesis of normative-doctrinal, humanistic, interdisciplinary-integrative, and critical-transformative paradigms is believed to be able to produce an Islamic religious education model that is relevant to the demands of the times, capable of protecting students from the negative influences of digital information, while simultaneously utilizing technology positively to support a more meaningful learning process.

As a recommendation, educators, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers need to continue studying and developing Islamic Religious Education paradigm models that best suit the context of their respective educational institutions. Further empirical research is also needed to test the effectiveness of implementing these various paradigms in improving the quality of learning and student learning outcomes, so that Islamic Religious Education can continue to contribute optimally to shaping a generation of faithful, knowledgeable, and morally upright Muslims amidst the ever-evolving challenges of the times.

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