



Research Article

Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education Instruction

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the deep learning approach in Islamic Religious Education instruction at MTs Al-Khoirot, the factors supporting and hindering its application, and its impact on students' understanding and religious attitudes. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation related to the Islamic Religious Education learning process at MTs Al-Khoirot. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the deep learning approach is implemented through three principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. Mindful learning is realized through reflection and inquiry-based questioning; meaningful learning is achieved by connecting the material to students' experiences and daily lives; and joyful learning is fostered through discussions, case studies, simulations, and practical activities. Supporting factors include teacher competence, a religious madrasa environment, and student engagement, while hindering factors include time constraints, variations in students' prior knowledge, and habits of rote learning. The application of the deep learning approach has a positive impact on students' understanding of the

material, active participation, critical thinking skills, and religious attitudes. This study demonstrates that the deep learning approach offers an alternative method for Islamic Religious Education that is more meaningful and contextual, while fostering the development of both knowledge and religious attitudes among students.

Keywords: deep learning, Islamic Religious Education, meaningful learning, MTs Al-Khoirot, religious attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Advancements in science and technology during the era of globalization require the education sector to innovate in ways that address the challenges of the times (Pendidikan et al. 2021; Rahimi, Ramy A., and Grace S. Oh. 2024). The shift toward a knowledge-based society and the progress of the digital age demand that learners possess critical thinking, creative, and communicative skills, as well as the ability to adapt to change (Putra et al. 2025; Fischer et al. 2023; Fitroh, I. and Aslan 2026). In this context, learning can no longer focus merely on memorization or the reproduction of information; instead, it must be directed toward developing deep, reflective, and contextual thinking skills (Di and Mataram 2025). These demands are particularly crucial in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as PAI instruction aims not only for the mastery of religious knowledge but also for learners' ability to understand, internalize, and practice Islamic values in their daily lives (Rahman, N. C., Arsyad, L., and Mantau 2026). One approach relevant to these needs is "deep learning."

Deep learning is an educational paradigm that emphasizes a profound (Muvid and Surabaya 2024) and meaningful understanding of the subject matter, rather than mere rote memorization or "surface learning." This approach encourages learners to connect new knowledge with prior experiences (Globe and Journal 2024), think critically, solve problems, and apply learned values in real-life situations (Zebua 2025). From a modern pedagogical perspective, deep learning also focuses on the emotional, social, and spiritual engagement of learners throughout the learning process (Alhebaishi, Stone, and Ameen 2025). Consequently, learning becomes not just a cognitive activity but also a process of shaping a holistic personality and character (Deep, Dalam, and Pendidikan 2025). In practice, the deep learning approach can be realized through three main pillars—mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning—which emphasize learner awareness, the connection of material to real-life experiences, and the creation of an active, enjoyable learning atmosphere (Haryati 2025). These three pillars provide a pedagogical foundation for shifting instruction from mere information transfer to a process of constructing deep, meaningful understanding (Mukmin 2025). Within the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the application of deep learning is crucial because religious education demands not only cognitive engagement but also the internalization of spiritual and moral values within the learner (Muna et al. 2025). Deep learning-based PAI is expected to integrate intellectual engagement, moral-spiritual cultivation, and aesthetic appreciation (Fatimah 2024), enabling students not only to understand

Islamic teachings textually but also to internalize and practice them in real life (Alfarizi 2024). Previous studies indicate that the deep learning approach is being adopted across various Islamic educational contexts. Khotimah and Abdan, for instance, examined the deep learning approach to enhance PAI instructional effectiveness, highlighting the importance of active student engagement and reflective capabilities (Abdan 2025). Other research has explored deep learning-based PAI models as a means to foster instruction that is more profound and learner-centered (Mukmin 2025). Regarding Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) instruction, research by Ifadah, Koiroh, and Musyafa has also demonstrated the application of deep learning at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary school) level (Ifadah, Koiroh, and Musyafa 2026). Nevertheless, these studies have not yet provided a comprehensive empirical picture of how the deep learning approach is implemented throughout the entire PAI instructional process particularly concerning the application of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, teacher-student interactions, and the process of internalizing Islamic values.

Islamic Religious Education aims not only to transmit knowledge regarding Islamic teachings but also to cultivate the spiritual, moral, and social awareness of students, enabling them to practice Islamic values in their daily lives (Yusri et al. 2024). However, in practice, instruction in Islamic Religious Education across various educational institutions tends to remain oriented toward cognitive aspects and rote memorization (Sholeh et al. 2025). Students are often not encouraged to grasp the meaning behind religious teachings in a reflective and contextual manner. A similar situation is observed in the teaching of Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) a component of Islamic Religious Education where studies indicate a prevalence of lecture-based methods, rote memorization, and teacher-centered instruction, potentially resulting in superficial understanding (Khadijah 2025). Consequently, there is scope for research to examine how such approaches are applied in Islamic Religious Education instruction, including the facilitating and inhibiting factors, as well as their contribution to students' religious understanding and attitudes.

Based on these phenomena and research gaps, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the "deep learning" approach in Islamic Religious Education, focusing on the application of mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning within the instructional process, student activities and engagement, and the contribution of these methods to the understanding and practice of Islamic values. This study employs a qualitative approach to obtain a contextual overview of instructional practices based on the experiences of teachers and students, gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. The study is premised on the argument that implementing deep learning in Islamic Religious Education represents not merely a change in teaching methods, but a shift in pedagogical orientation moving away from instruction centered on knowledge transfer and rote memorization toward learning that is mindful, meaningful, enjoyable, reflective, and focused on the internalization of values. Thus, this research is expected to complement existing studies by providing an empirical account of how the deep learning approach is implemented in Islamic Religious Education and its contribution to shaping students' religious understanding and attitudes.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design conducted at MTs Al-Khoirot. It aims to understand the implementation of the "deep learning" approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction specifically the application of mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. The study participants included PAI teachers and students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation to gather information on the instructional process, student activities, and the factors supporting or hindering the implementation of deep learning (Waruwu 2024). Data analysis involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Sa'diyah 2024). Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation (Asbui 2024). The analysis focused on the practical application of deep learning and its contribution to the students' understanding and practice of Islamic values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education

Research findings indicate that the implementation of the deep learning approach in Islamic Religious Education at MTs Al-Khoirot is carried out contextually, adapting to the characteristics of the students and the madrasa environment. This approach is applied through three key principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. In practice, teachers do not merely deliver material to ensure knowledge mastery; they also guide students to grasp the meaning of the material, connect it to their daily life experiences, and engage actively in the learning process. This pattern reflects a shift from content-oriented instruction to a more student-centered learning model. This aligns with research by Aziz, Napitupulu, and Windari (2025), which suggests that implementing a character-oriented curriculum requires providing students with the opportunity to construct values through relevant learning experiences.

The application of mindful learning is evident in the teachers' efforts to foster student awareness regarding the purpose and significance of the lesson before delving into the content. Teachers pose stimulating questions, encourage reflection, and link Islamic Religious Education material to values and issues encountered in daily life. Consequently, students do not simply receive information; rather, they are guided to understand the rationale for studying specific material and how the associated values can be applied. This approach is crucial in Islamic Religious Education, as the learning process aims not only for conceptual mastery but also for the cultivation of religious awareness and character. Research by Aziz, Napitupulu, and Windari (2025) further demonstrates that instruction integrated with Islamic values can serve as a means to strengthen student character. Furthermore, meaningful learning is implemented by connecting instructional material to the students' real-life experiences. Teachers go beyond theoretical explanations by providing examples of religious issues relevant to the students' immediate environments. In Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) lessons, for

instance, the material can be linked to acts of worship and socio-religious issues that students encounter within their families, communities, or pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). This process enables students to more easily grasp the connection between the concepts being studied and their real-life applications. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education instruction moves beyond mere rote memorization, encouraging students to understand, apply, and reflect upon the knowledge they have acquired.

Meanwhile, "joyful learning" is realized through interactive instructional activities that actively engage students. Teachers employ group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, case studies, simulations, and practical exercises as integral parts of the learning process. These activities provide students with opportunities to express their opinions, collaborate, ask questions, and solve problems related to the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. This fosters a more dynamic and enjoyable learning atmosphere without compromising the depth of the subject matter. Direct student engagement also supports the development of social skills and character—aligning with research by Aziz, Napitupulu, and Windari (2025), which identifies learning experiences as a crucial element in shaping student character. Research findings further indicate that teachers play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the deep learning approach. Teachers no longer act merely as conveyors of information but as facilitators who design learning experiences, pose thought-provoking questions, guide discussions, and help students connect the material to their own lives. This role renders the learning process more dialogic, creating space for students to construct their own understanding. Thus, the implementation of deep learning at MTs Al-Khoirot demonstrates that this approach is viable for Islamic Religious Education, utilizing activities that integrate knowledge, experience, reflection, and practice.

Factors Supporting and Hindering the Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach

The implementation of the deep learning approach at MTs Al-Khoirot is supported by several factors, notably teacher competence and creativity, a madrasa environment conducive to religious learning, and student engagement in the learning process. An educational environment with a religious culture offers teachers opportunities to connect Islamic Religious Education material with daily life practices. This context makes the subject matter easier to contextualize, thereby allowing the principles of meaningful learning to be applied more effectively. These findings align with research by Aziz, Napitupulu, and Windari (2025), which emphasizes the importance of the educational environment in fostering values and character through the learning process. Furthermore, the use of varied teaching methods and media serves as a supporting factor in creating an active and enjoyable learning experience. Teachers can integrate explanations, discussions, case studies, practical activities, and instructional media tailored to the specific characteristics of the material and the students. Varied instruction provides students with opportunities to gain learning experiences through diverse activities, moving them beyond a reliance on lectures and rote memorization. In the context of Islamic

Religious Education, such variety is crucial because the subject matter requires not only conceptual understanding but also the ability to apply Islamic values and teachings in real-life situations.

However, the study also identified several obstacles to implementing the deep learning approach. These include limited instructional time, disparities in students' prior knowledge, and the tendency of some students to cling to rote-learning habits. The deep learning approach requires relatively more time, as it involves a process of understanding, discussion, analysis, practical application, and reflection. Consequently, teachers must make adjustments to ensure that the approach achieves learning objectives within the available timeframe. The challenge of aligning teaching strategies with student characteristics remains a critical aspect of curriculum implementation and instruction in Islamic education.

The Impact of the Deep Learning Approach on Students' Understanding and Attitudes

Implementing the deep learning approach has positively impacted students' understanding within Islamic Religious Education lessons. Students are not only able to recall material but also demonstrate the ability to explain concepts in their own words, connect them to daily life, and apply their knowledge in relevant situations. This indicates a shift in learning from mere information mastery to a deeper level of comprehension. In the context of **Fiqh** (Islamic jurisprudence) lessons, for instance, students go beyond simply knowing the rules of an act of worship; they also grasp the underlying reasons, objectives, and practical applications in real life.

The deep learning approach also influences student engagement in the learning process. Activities such as discussions, case studies, simulations, and practical exercises encourage students to be more active in expressing their opinions and solving problems. These activities simultaneously provide opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These findings reinforce the view that Islamic Religious Education designed around student experiences and activities contributes not only to subject mastery but also to character development and social skills.

Regarding religious attitudes, deep learning encourages students to recognize the connection between religious knowledge and their daily behavior. The material studied is not viewed merely as knowledge to be mastered for academic purposes, but as a guide for conduct and action. Processes involving reflection, connecting material to real-life experiences, and practical activities allow students to grasp religious values in a more concrete manner. Consequently, the deep learning approach fosters a sense of responsibility, religious awareness, cooperation, and concern for the social environment.

Overall, these three findings demonstrate that implementing the deep learning approach at MTs Al-Khoirot has transformed the Islamic Religious Education learning process—particularly regarding how students comprehend material, their level of engagement during lessons, and the strengthening of their religious attitudes. The successful implementation has been supported by the roles of teachers and the **madrassa** environment, while challenges such as time constraints, varying student

abilities, and ingrained rote-learning habits remain to be addressed. Thus, the research findings address the three research questions, demonstrating that deep learning can be implemented through mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning; that its success is influenced by internal factors and the learning environment; and that its implementation has a positive impact on students' religious understanding and attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the deep learning approach in Islamic Religious Education at MTs Al-Khoirot is guided by the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. This approach involves encouraging students to grasp the essence of the material, connect it to their personal experiences and daily lives, and engage actively through discussions, case studies, simulations, and practical activities. Consequently, instruction focuses not merely on mastering content but also on fostering deeper understanding and the application of religious values. While this implementation is supported by teacher competence, a religious school environment, and active student participation, challenges such as time constraints, varying levels of prior knowledge, and a reliance on rote memorization have also been encountered. The application of deep learning has demonstrated positive effects on student comprehension, engagement, critical thinking skills, and religious attitudes. Therefore, the deep learning approach offers a viable alternative for enhancing the quality of Islamic Religious Education at MTs Al-Khoirot, as it effectively integrates knowledge acquisition, learning experiences, and the meaningful cultivation of religious attitudes.

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