



Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Efforts to Overcome Students' Academic Anxiety Through an Islamic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the increasing phenomenon of academic anxiety experienced by junior high school students, such as fear of exams, lack of confidence during presentations, and pressure in completing academic assignments. These conditions can affect students' concentration, motivation, and academic results, so an approach that can touch the psychological and spiritual aspects of students is needed. This study aims to describe the forms of academic anxiety in students and analyze the efforts of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in overcoming academic anxiety through an Islamic approach. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Research informants included the principal, PAI teachers, and ninth-grade students. The results showed that students' academic anxiety appears in the form of nervousness, fear of failure, lack of confidence, and physical symptoms such as trembling hands and feelings of restlessness when facing exams or presentations. PAI teachers play an important role in overcoming these conditions through an Islamic approach that is manifested in the habit of praying before learning, reading the Qur'an, providing motivation, religious advice, and instilling the values of tawakal (religious trust), patience, and ikhtirah (independence). This approach can create a more comfortable learning atmosphere, increase students' emotional calm, and help students become more confident in facing academic demands. This study shows that the Islamic approach has a positive contribution in supporting mental health and character formation of students in the school environment.

Keywords: PAI teacher, academic anxiety, Islamic approach



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons have a strategic role in shaping the character, spirituality, and psychological health of students in schools.(Dea Resti Anggela, 2025). Amidst increasingly complex academic demands, education no longer focuses solely on cognitive achievement, but also on students' mental and emotional development. One crucial issue emerging in today's education world is academic anxiety. It has been found that some students show signs of anxiety when teachers give individual assignments and ask them to present their results in front of the class. Some students also appear to lower their heads, avoid eye contact with the teacher, and hesitate to raise their hands when given the opportunity to ask or answer questions. This situation indicates a psychological condition characterized by feelings of fear, anxiety, and stress when facing assignments, exams, or learning demands. Academic anxiety that is not handled properly can negatively impact student concentration, learning motivation, and achievement. In this context, Islamic Religious Education teachers have a crucial position because Islamic Religious Education learning not only teaches religious knowledge but also instills the values of inner peace, faith, and an attitude of trust (Tawakal) that are relevant in managing students' academic anxiety.(Akip et al., 2025).

Academic anxiety can be understood as a negative emotional response that arises from learning pressure, achievement demands, and fear of failure. Academic anxiety can be explained through the theory put forward by Charles D. Spielberger, who states that anxiety is an emotional state characterized by feelings of tension, worry, and increased activity of the autonomic nervous system. Spielberger distinguishes anxiety into two forms: state anxiety (situational anxiety) and trait anxiety (anxiety as a personality trait). In the context of education, academic anxiety experienced by students is more related to state anxiety, namely the emotional response that arises when individuals face certain situations such as exams, assignments, or high learning demands.(Nuriyyatiningrum et al., 2023)This condition is often experienced by junior high school (SMP) students, who are in the early adolescent developmental phase and are vulnerable to psychological stress. From an educational psychology perspective, academic anxiety can hinder thinking processes, lower self-confidence, and weaken students' motivation and resilience in learning.(Mutiara Harahap & Saiful Akhyar Lubis, 2025). Therefore, an approach is needed that is not only technical-pedagogical, but also touches the spiritual and emotional aspects of students,



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such as teachers can provide a short time to listen to students' complaints and provide calming advice based on Islamic values, so that students feel emotionally supported and more confident in facing academic demands. An Islamic approach that emphasizes the values of faith, patience, gratitude, and trust in God has great potential to help students develop peace of mind and a positive attitude in facing academic challenges.

Junior high schools, as formal educational institutions, have a significant responsibility in fostering the academic and psychological development of students. At this level, students begin to face a more rigorous evaluation system, high academic achievement targets, and demands and expectations from parents and the school community. The reality on the ground shows that many junior high school students experience academic anxiety, whether in the form of fear of exams, anxiety when asked by teachers, or worry about not being able to meet established grade standards. This condition often results in decreased learning participation, the emergence of avoidance behavior, and even a decline in overall academic achievement.

The phenomenon of academic anxiety demonstrates the need for comprehensive and sustainable mentoring efforts in schools. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have a strategic opportunity to act as both educators and spiritual guides for students. Through PAI learning, teachers can instill an understanding of the meaning of life, that failure is not the end of everything, and that every effort must be accompanied by prayer and trust in Allah SWT. An Islamic approach, when applied appropriately, can help students interpret the learning process more positively, so that academic pressure is no longer seen as a daunting burden but rather as a means for self-development. (Adzima & Hisaaniah, 2024).

The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in addressing students' academic anxiety is not only evident in the delivery of lesson material, but also reflected through their attitudes, role models, and interaction patterns with students. Teachers who are empathetic, calming, and provide spiritual reinforcement can create a safe and psychologically comfortable learning environment. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values such as dhikr (remembrance of God), prayer before studying, motivation based on verses from the Quran and Hadith, and advice that fosters hope can be effective strategies in reducing students' academic anxiety levels. (Safrudin et al., 2023) A religious and supportive classroom environment also contributes significantly to building students' emotional well-being.



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In today's modern era, educational challenges are increasingly complex, driven by rapid technological developments, a competitive culture, and rising social pressures. Students are not only required to excel academically but also to cope with the various psychological pressures that accompany the learning process. In this context, Islamic education is required to play a more active role in providing comprehensive solutions to student challenges. The Islamic approach to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is becoming increasingly relevant because it integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects within a single educational process.

Numerous studies have addressed academic anxiety and the role of teachers in addressing it, but studies specifically highlighting the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through an Islamic approach are relatively limited. Each school has unique student characteristics, school culture, and learning patterns, necessitating contextual studies to understand how PAI teachers design and implement strategies tailored to student needs. Therefore, research on PAI teachers' efforts to address academic anxiety in junior high school students is crucial.

This research focuses not only on describing the forms of academic anxiety experienced by students but also on analyzing the efforts made by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to address it through an Islamic approach. This research seeks to explore in depth how Islamic values are integrated into the PAI learning process, how teachers provide spiritual guidance to students, and how students respond to this approach when facing academic pressure.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach which aims to describe in depth the efforts of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in overcoming students' academic anxiety through an Islamic approach. (Wahidah & Barokah, 2024) A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on understanding the phenomenon contextually, particularly regarding the processes, strategies, and interactions that occur between teachers and students in the learning environment. Through this approach, researchers attempt to uncover the reality that occurs in the field naturally without any manipulation of variables. This research emphasizes exploring the meaning of the actions of Islamic Religious Education teachers in providing guidance, motivation, and strengthening Islamic values as an effort to reduce students' academic anxiety. In addition, this study also aims to identify factors that support and hinder the implementation of an Islamic approach in the learning process. Thus, the results of this study are



expected to provide a systematic and comprehensive picture of the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in helping students cope with academic stress through an integrated spiritual approach in learning activities at school.

This research uses three data collection techniques, namely interviews, observation, and documentation studies. (Wiyanda Vera Nurfajriani, 2024) Data collection was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences, perspectives, and strategies implemented by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in addressing students' academic anxiety through an Islamic approach. Research informants included Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, students experiencing academic anxiety, and school officials involved in the implementation of guidance. Observations were conducted to directly observe the learning process, teacher-student interactions, and spiritual guidance activities carried out in the school environment. Meanwhile, documentation studies were used to examine supporting data such as learning activity records, religious guidance programs, school activity archives, and other documents relevant to the research focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of an interview with the Principal of SMP T (44 years old), information was obtained that academic anxiety is a fairly real phenomenon that occurs in the school environment and becomes a challenge in the educational process. Academic anxiety is evident through student behavior that shows a lack of confidence when facing exams, assignments, and other learning demands. This condition is deemed to require serious attention because it can affect students' mental readiness, the learning process, and the academic results achieved. In this context, the school views that teachers not only play a role as a deliverer of learning materials, but also as a companion who has the responsibility to help students' psychological development. Therefore, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is very important in building emotional and spiritual calm in students so they are able to better cope with academic pressure.

The principal further explained that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a strategic role in helping students overcome academic anxiety through an approach based on Islamic values. This approach is not only aimed at improving students' cognitive abilities but also at developing strong mental and character building. In practice, PAI teachers strive to instill



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religious values through the practice of prayer before lessons, providing motivation, and consistently strengthening spirituality throughout teaching and learning activities. According to informants, this approach, which emphasizes spiritual elements, provides a sense of calm for students, preventing them from feeling overwhelmed when facing academic demands.

Furthermore, the Islamic approach implemented by Islamic Religious Education teachers is realized through various religious habituation activities within the school environment. Activities such as reading the Quran before class, group tadarus (recitation of the Koran), providing advice based on faith values, and cultivating the habit of worship are important parts of the student development process. The principal believes these activities have a positive influence on students' psychological well-being by creating a calmer and more conducive learning environment. Students who previously appeared tense or lacking in confidence gradually showed changes in attitude, becoming calmer, more prepared to participate in learning, and more optimistic in facing exams and school assignments.

The school's support for the implementation of the Islamic approach is considered quite optimal. The school provides various support programs related to religious activities and student character development. These programs include communal prayer, Quranic recitation, regular religious activities, and character development involving the entire school community. According to the principal, institutional support is essential for teachers to implement the Islamic approach in a sustainable and targeted manner. With this support, Islamic Religious Education teachers have greater scope to provide mental and spiritual development to students as part of efforts to reduce academic anxiety.

However, implementing an Islamic approach to addressing academic anxiety is not without challenges. One major obstacle is the vastly different characteristics of students, which means that not all students can immediately accept or respond to the teacher's approach. Some students readily open up and accept advice, while others require more time to adapt. To address these challenges, schools maintain intensive coordination between Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers to ensure optimal student management. Teachers are also encouraged to remain patient, consistent, and continue to provide support to students in a step-by-step manner.



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Interviews with two Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, LF (36 years old) and A (42 years old), revealed that academic anxiety is understood as a psychological condition related to students' drive to achieve optimal academic achievement. Students' desire to achieve good grades often creates internal pressure that leads to feelings of anxiety. In some situations, students appear nervous when facing exams, are afraid of making mistakes during presentations, and experience difficulties in completing academic assignments. Teachers believe that this condition generally arises when students feel unprepared or are afraid of the learning outcomes they will achieve.

According to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, academic anxiety is influenced by interrelated internal and external factors. Internal factors include low focus, difficulty understanding course material, and a lack of self-confidence. Meanwhile, external factors stem from environmental pressures, such as the demand for high grades, parental expectations, and academic competition at school. Teachers explain that excessive anxiety can disrupt students' concentration, resulting in decreased academic performance. In some cases, even students who have studied well still experience difficulties during exams due to excessive anxiety, which prevents them from thinking optimally.

In an effort to address academic anxiety, Islamic Religious Education teachers employ various pedagogical and psychological strategies. Motivation is the primary step teachers take with students, especially those who show signs of low self-confidence. Teachers also pay special attention to students experiencing learning difficulties or behavioral problems. Furthermore, teachers strive to create a comfortable, relaxed, and more communicative learning environment so students feel safe during the learning process. This approach is implemented through learning methods that involve discussion, problem-solving, and more open interpersonal communication between teachers and students.

An Islamic approach is an integral part of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies to help students manage academic anxiety. Teachers incorporate religious activities such as reciting the Yasin (the recitation of the Quran), prayers, and group prayer, as well as providing advice linked to the exemplary practices of past scholars. Values such as trust (Tawakal), patience, gratitude, and endeavor (ikhtirah) are consistently instilled in the learning process and daily interactions. Teachers strive to foster an understanding that success is determined not only by



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the final result, but also by effort and spiritual closeness to Allah SWT. This approach is applied situationally, especially when students show signs of anxiety or emotional distress.

In terms of impact, Islamic Religious Education teachers assess that the Islamic approach has brought positive changes to students' psychological well-being. Students have become calmer, more confident, and better able to control their emotions when facing exams and academic assignments. Teachers have also observed an increase in students' discipline and responsibility in learning. Although these changes did not occur instantly, through consistent practice and guidance, students have begun to show improvement. Teachers hope that the Islamic approach can continue to be developed to support students' mental health while simultaneously developing their character with noble morals.

Meanwhile, interviews with two ninth-grade students, MF (15 years old) and ZA (14 years old), showed that academic anxiety was a common experience, especially when facing exams and school assignments. Anxiety usually arises before exams because students are afraid of not being able to answer the questions well or are worried about getting an unsatisfactory grade. The symptoms felt are not only fear and nervousness, but also appear in physical forms such as cold hands, trembling, and feelings of restlessness. These conditions indicate that academic anxiety has an impact on students' mental readiness to participate in the learning evaluation process.

According to students, Islamic Religious Education teachers play a significant role in reducing their anxiety. Teachers are seen as capable of creating a calmer atmosphere through a communicative, persuasive, and empathetic approach. Students feel comfortable when teachers offer advice gently without pressure, and provide motivation that touches on their emotional aspects. Teachers also frequently remind students not to focus too much on fear or failure, but to keep trying and believing in their own abilities. This approach provides psychological reinforcement that makes students feel better prepared to face academic pressure.

The Islamic approach implemented by Islamic Religious Education teachers is also felt to have a positive impact on students' emotional well-being. Praying before studying and before exams makes students feel calmer and mentally prepared. Furthermore, reciting verses from the Quran provides a sense of comfort and helps reduce tension. Islamic Religious Education teachers also consistently instill values such as trust (Tawakal), patience, ikhtiar (effort), and self-confidence through advice that is easy to understand and relevant to students' daily lives. These



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values help students understand that every difficulty can be overcome with effort, prayer, and faith in Allah SWT.

Overall, interviews with the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students indicate that an Islamic approach plays a significant role in helping students overcome academic anxiety. This approach not only serves as a strategy to reduce emotional stress but also as a means of character building and spiritual strengthening. Through familiarization with religious activities, motivation, and empathetic mentoring, students demonstrate positive changes, both in terms of emotional calm, self-confidence, and readiness to face academic demands. Therefore, the Islamic approach is considered relevant for continued development as part of efforts to create an educational environment that supports students' mental health and holistic character development.

Documentation:



1.1 Interview with Islamic Education teacher



2.2 Learning in class



3.3 Interviews with students



Discussion:

Based on interviews with the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students, and supported by observational data, it was found that students' academic anxiety tends to arise in evaluative situations, such as exams and presentations. This finding aligns with educational psychology studies that explain the concept of test anxiety, a state of cognitive and emotional stress experienced when individuals face academic assessments. (Syafii et al., 2024) The principal confirmed that some students exhibited a lack of self-confidence, while the Islamic Religious Education teacher identified symptoms such as nervousness and tension. This was reinforced by observations showing fidgeting, avoiding eye contact, and fear when asked to answer questions. Thus, academic anxiety is not only internal but also manifests itself in students' behavior in the classroom. These findings confirm existing theories and add to the empirical evidence that academic anxiety is a multidimensional phenomenon involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. (Zaky Setiawan et al., 2026).

Furthermore, interview results indicate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a strategic role in addressing students' academic anxiety. The principal emphasized the importance of teachers' role in mental and spiritual development, while the PAI teachers themselves stated that they not only teach but also provide motivation and emotional support. This finding aligns with the theory of the teacher's role as a facilitator and guide, which emphasizes the importance of affective support in learning. (Fahreza et al., 2025) Observations also showed that teachers were patient, non-judgmental, and provided personalized attention to students experiencing anxiety. This reinforces previous research findings that suggest positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students can reduce anxiety levels. (Agung Madani & Iskandar Yusuf, 2024) Compared with conventional learning approaches, the approach used by Islamic Religious Education teachers in this study emphasizes empathy and emotional closeness, thus creating a more conducive learning atmosphere.

The following findings indicate that the Islamic approach applied in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a positive impact on students' psychological well-being. The principal mentioned changes in students' attitudes, leading to greater calm and confidence, while students reported feeling more comfortable after participating in religious activities such as prayer and reading the Quran. The PAI teacher also emphasized that values such as tawakal (religious



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devotion), patience, and ikhtiar (effort) are important components of learning. Observations supported this, with the teacher consistently inviting students to pray and providing motivation based on Islamic values, and students demonstrating behavioral changes, leading to greater calm and courage to participate. These findings align with religious coping theory, which suggests that religious practices can help individuals manage stress and anxiety. Thus, the Islamic approach has proven to be not only theoretically relevant but also practically effective in the context of classroom learning. (Kumala, 2024).

If examined more deeply, the emergence of academic anxiety can be explained through the interaction between internal and external factors. (Fitriani et al., 2022) Interviews revealed that anxiety stems from the pressure of exams, while Islamic Religious Education teachers highlighted factors such as lack of focus and low self-confidence. The principal also emphasized the influence of high academic demands. Observations showed that students experiencing anxiety tended to hesitate and avoid active participation in learning. This suggests that anxiety is influenced not only by academic ability but also by students' perceptions of the pressure they face. (Herawati et al., 2023) When students perceive assignments as threatening, their anxiety response increases. Therefore, an approach is needed that can shift this perception to a more positive one so students can face academic demands more calmly.

The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in overcoming academic anxiety can be explained through their ability to integrate pedagogical and psychological aspects. (Hikmatiar et al., 2026) Based on interviews, Islamic Religious Education teachers actively provide motivation, special attention, and create a comfortable learning environment. This is reinforced by observations that show teachers are patient, empathetic, and do not put pressure on students. These positive interactions allow students to feel more appreciated and understood, thereby increasing their self-confidence. Furthermore, the teachers' personal approach also helps students manage their emotions and reduce their fear of failure. (Mizan & Uce, 2025). Thus, the success of Islamic Religious Education teachers in overcoming academic anxiety is not only determined by the learning method, but also by the quality of interpersonal relationships built with students.

The effectiveness of the Islamic approach in overcoming academic anxiety can be explained through the process of internalizing values and habituating religious behavior. (Fitriati & Haris, 2025) Activities such as group prayer, reading the Quran, and providing religious advice repeatedly



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form positive habits that impact students' psychological well-being. Interviews revealed that students felt a sense of calm and increased self-confidence after receiving this guidance. This aligns with observations that showed a change in student attitudes, leading to greater relaxation and increased willingness to participate in learning. Values such as trust and patience serve as coping mechanisms that help students deal with academic pressure. Thus, the Islamic approach has the advantage of simultaneously addressing both the psychological and spiritual dimensions of students, providing a more comprehensive impact. (Alpin Maulana et al., 2025).

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to integrating Islamic religious education with students' mental health. Based on the results of interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the Islamic approach not only plays a role in character building but is also effective in addressing academic anxiety. These findings strengthen the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers as agents of change capable of integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects in learning. (Ridwan, 2022). Furthermore, this research also provides a theoretical contribution by expanding the study of the relationship between religiosity and mental health in an educational context. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for teachers in developing more holistic learning strategies oriented toward students' psychological well-being. Therefore, this research is expected to serve as a foundation for the development of more integrative learning models in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that students' academic anxiety is a real phenomenon and generally appears in evaluative situations, such as exams, assignments, and presentations. This anxiety is influenced by internal factors, such as low self-confidence and readiness to learn, as well as external factors such as demands for achieving grades and environmental pressures. The main findings of this study confirm that the Islamic approach implemented by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, through habituating prayer, providing motivation based on faith values, and instilling attitudes of trust (Takal), patience, and ikhtiar (pledge), has proven effective in helping students manage academic anxiety. This approach not only provides inner peace but also contributes to increased self-confidence and the development of positive student character.

The implications of this research indicate that the integration of religious values into the learning process significantly contributes to the development of students' mental health.



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Theoretically, this research strengthens the interdisciplinary study of Islamic education and educational psychology, particularly in the context of managing academic anxiety. Furthermore, the results confirm that the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers extends beyond cognitive aspects to affective and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, an Islamic approach can be used as a relevant alternative strategy for developing holistic, humanistic learning that is oriented toward students' psychological well-being.

However, this study has several limitations. It was conducted at a single educational institution, so the results cannot be widely generalized. Furthermore, the study subjects were limited to ninth-grade students, thus not reflecting a wider range of ages and educational levels. The approach used was also qualitative and descriptive, making it unable to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of the Islamic approach in reducing academic anxiety. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve a broader sample size, use a mixed methods approach, and examine the effectiveness of the Islamic approach in greater depth and measurability to obtain more comprehensive results.

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