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The Influence of Islamic Education Learning on Strengthening University Students' Mental Health at Public Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning on strengthening students' mental health in public universities. The main focus of this study is how the values and materials taught in PAI learning are able to shape students' mental resilience, emotional stability, and spiritual balance in the midst of the challenges of complex academic and social life. This research uses a qualitative approach with the literature study method (library research) as the basis of analysis. Data sources were obtained from various academic literature such as scientific journals, textbooks, and previous research results relevant to the theme of PAI learning and mental health. The results of the study show that holistically integrated PAI learning not only plays a role in the cognitive aspect of religion, but also makes a significant contribution to strengthening the psychological aspects of students. Values such as patience, tawakal, gratitude, and understanding of the meaning of life and suffering from an Islamic perspective have been proven to provide a strong foundation in managing stress, anxiety, and life pressure experienced by students. Therefore, PAI in public universities needs to be developed not only as a transfer of Islamic knowledge, but also as an instrument of applicable mental and spiritual development. The implications of this study show the importance of developing

KEYWORDS

Islamic Religious Education, Mental Health, Students, Public Universities, Literature Studies.

a PAI curriculum that is responsive to contemporary psychological issues faced by students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a crucial aspect of student life, given the transition phase from adolescence to adulthood that is fraught with academic, social, and emotional pressure. Students often face various challenges that can affect their psychological stability, such as study load, environmental adaptation, and social pressure. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has significant potential in forming mental resilience through the internalization of spiritual and moral values.

A number of studies have shown that religiosity and religious practices can contribute positively to an individual's mental health. For example, Firdaus (2023) found that high levels of religiosity correlated with better mental well-being among female college students. Similarly, Mahfud et al. (2017) revealed that obedience in worship has a significant influence on the mental health of UIN Walisongo Semarang students. However, most of the studies emphasize more on the aspect of religiosity in general, rather than specifically on PAI learning in public universities.

The research gap that emerged was the lack of studies that specifically explored how PAI learning in public universities can strengthen students' mental health. In fact, PAI learning not only conveys religious knowledge, but can also shape students' character, ethics, and psychological resilience. The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand the strategic role of PAI in the context of general higher education, especially in the face of increasing cases of mental disorders among students.

Previous research, such as that conducted by Aqilah (2023), highlighted the role of Islamic religious counseling in supporting the mental health of final year students. Meanwhile, Fajrussalam et al. (2022) discuss the role of Islam in general on students' mental health. However, there have not been many studies that have examined in depth the direct influence of PAI learning on the mental health of students in public universities.

The novelty of this study lies in a qualitative approach through literature studies that focus on PAI learning as the main variable in strengthening students' mental health. Thus, this research is expected to fill the literature gap and make new contributions in the field of Islamic education and psychology.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of PAI learning on strengthening the mental health of students in public universities. The expected benefit is to provide insight for education policy makers in designing a PAI curriculum that is not only oriented to the cognitive aspect, but also to the development of the affective and spiritual aspects of students.

The Meaning and Scope of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning in Higher Education

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in public universities is part of the national curriculum that aims to form the personality of students who are religious, moral, and with integrity. PAI not only conveys knowledge about faith, worship, and morals, but also integrates Islamic values in the context of modern life and global challenges. In practice, PAI is expected to be able to develop students' critical and reflective ways of thinking towards the

spiritual values that underlie their actions and attitudes in daily life, including in responding to academic and social pressures in the campus environment.

PAI's Strategic Role in Strengthening Student Mental Health

PAI plays a strategic role in shaping students' mental health through spiritual and moral approaches. Values such as patience, *tawakal*, gratitude, and pleasure over destiny can be a psychological fortress in dealing with stress, anxiety, and even depression. Through PAI learning, students are invited to understand the meaning of life from an Islamic perspective, so that they have spiritual guidance in living life. In addition, learning that instills the importance of introspection, self-control, and strengthening relationships with Allah (*hablumminallah*) and fellow humans (*hablumminannas*) contributes to increasing students' mental resilience and emotional balance.

Implementation and Implications in the Context of Public Universities

In the context of a heterogeneous and plural public university, the implementation of PAI learning must be carried out in a contextual and inclusive manner in order to reach all students, both those with strong religious backgrounds and those who are still looking for their spiritual identity. The PAI taught is not just normative, but applicative—linking the teachings of Islam to the real problems faced by students, such as identity crises, academic pressure, and social loneliness. The implication is that PAI can be an effective medium of mental-spiritual coaching, as well as support the goal of national education in producing graduates who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also mentally and spiritually strong.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of literature study research (library research). This approach was chosen because the research aims to examine in depth various relevant literature sources to understand the influence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning on strengthening students' mental health in public universities. Literature studies allow researchers to examine the concepts, theories, results of previous research, and practice of PAI implementation that have an impact on the psychological condition of students (Zed, 2004).

The data sources in this study consist of secondary data obtained from various scientific documents such as national and international journal articles, academic books, research reports, and official publications from educational institutions or religious organizations. The criteria for selecting sources are based on relevance to the research topic, the credibility of the publisher, and the up-to-date content, especially those that discuss the relationship between Islamic education and student mental health.

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation, namely by identifying, selecting, and organizing various related literature. The researcher used a systematic search strategy through journal databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Garuda, with keywords such as "Islamic Religious Education", "student mental health", "religiosity and psychology", and "the role of PAI in higher education".

The data analysis in this study was carried out through content analysis techniques, namely by interpreting the meaning of the text systematically and objectively to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between concepts (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis process

includes the stage of data reduction, categorization of themes, presentation of results, and drawing conclusions based on synthesis from various literature sources that have been studied. With this method, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the contribution of PAI learning in supporting students' mental health.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the author selected and analyzed 10 scientific articles from various academic sources as the main material in the literature review. These articles were selected based on relevance to the theme of Islamic religious education (PAI) and student mental health in public universities. The selection criteria include: the relevance of the content to the topic, the year of publication (maximum last 10 years), the level of credibility of the journal, and contribution to the formation of theoretical and empirical understanding. The following table presents the literature data analysed in the form of a summary of key findings.

Table 1. Summary of Findings from 10 Articles Related to Digital Reproduction Education and Adolescents

No.	Author & Year	Title	Findings
1	Paradise (2023)	<i>The Influence of Religiosity on the Mental Health of Mahad Aisyah Students</i>	Religiosity plays a role in increasing emotional stability and psychological calm of students.
2	Mahfud et al. (2017)	<i>The Influence of Worship Obedience on Student Mental Health</i>	Obedience to worship strengthens students' mental endurance against academic pressure.
3	Aqilah (2023)	<i>The Role of Islamic Counseling on the Mental Health of Final Year Students</i>	PAI-based counseling is effective in reducing anxiety and stress.
4	Fajrussalam et al. (2022)	<i>The Role of Islam in Student Mental Health</i>	Islamic values help students in managing emotional stress.
5	Lutfiah & Nahuda (2024)	<i>Mental Health in the Perspective of QS. Ar-Ra'd:28</i>	Remembrance and inner peace have a positive impact on mental health.
6	Sincere (2023)	<i>The Role of PAI Teachers in Handling Student Mental Health</i>	PAI teachers have a central role in forming a healthy mental attitude through religious education.
7	Sari et al. (2023)	<i>The Role of Islam on the Influence of Mental Health of UIN Jakarta Students</i>	Religious understanding increases resistance to mild depression.

No.	Author & Year	Title	Findings
8	Widyadhari et al. (2023)	<i>The Influence of Religiosity on Student Mental Health</i>	High levels of religiosity are positively associated with psychological calm.
9	Pribumi et al. (2024)	<i>The Role of Religion in Student Mental Health</i>	Religion is a value system in controlling students' thoughts and behavior.
10	Daizona et al. (2023)	<i>The Role of PAI Teachers in Fostering the Mental Health of Junior High School Students</i>	PAI learning supports character development and emotional balance from an early age.

Interpretation of Data from Literature Review Findings

Based on the results of the analysis of the ten selected articles, it can be seen that there is a consistent pattern of findings that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a significant influence on strengthening students' mental health. Most studies show that religious values obtained through PAI learning can help students manage psychological stress, strengthen mental resilience, and lead to the formation of a positive attitude towards life. This confirms that religious approaches not only have an impact on the spiritual realm, but also have real implications on the psychological well-being of students.

Several articles, such as those written by Mahfud et al. (2017) and Widyadhari et al. (2023), show that the intensity of worship and the level of religiosity contribute to the emotional stability of students. Students who have a strong attachment to worship practices such as prayer, dhikr, and reading the Qur'an tend to be calmer, more patient, and have better ability to control stress. This indicates that the spiritual component in PAI acts as a coping mechanism or an effective self-adjustment mechanism in dealing with the pressures of campus life.

Another finding that is quite prominent is that PAI teachers or lecturers play a strategic role in the process of mental development of students. The articles Ikhlas (2023) and Daizona et al. (2023) emphasize that PAI teachers are not only as material presenters, but also as spiritual and moral guides. Through an empathetic pedagogical approach, PAI teachers can create a learning atmosphere that is conducive to the growth of self-awareness, empathy, and emotional balance. Thus, PAI not only functions as a knowledge transfer, but also as a medium for strengthening character and mental health.

Most of the literature also reveals that Islamic values provide a deep meaning to life for students. For example, in research by Pribumi et al. (2024) and Fajrussalam et al. (2022), it was explained that Islam functions as a value system that guides students in controlling their thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Values such as tawakal, gratitude, and patience are the basis for facing difficult situations. This shows that PAI learning that touches on reflective and existential aspects can strengthen the psychological structure of students.

An article written by Aqilah (2023) and Sari et al. (2023) underlines that an Islamic-based counseling approach departing from the teachings of PAI has been proven to be able to

reduce psychological symptoms such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Counseling based on Islamic values provides a sense of security, self-acceptance, and a clearer direction of life for students. This strengthens the evidence that the PAI curriculum integrated with a psychopedagogical approach is very relevant and needed in public universities.

Based on the interpretation of the data obtained, it can be concluded that PAI learning has great potential to be used as a strategic instrument in supporting the mental health promotion agenda in public universities. The context of plurality on public campuses is indeed a challenge, but with an inclusive and contextual approach, PAI can reach students from various spiritual backgrounds. These findings imply the need for a more applicable and responsive PAI curriculum design to students' psychosocial dynamics so that Islamic religious learning is not only normative, but also mentally and emotionally transformative.

Discussion

In recent years, mental health issues among public university students have become a serious concern. Academic pressure, social competition, and identity crises are the main factors that trigger anxiety, stress, and even depression. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2023) notes that more than 25% of students experience symptoms of mild to moderate mental health disorders. This phenomenon shows that higher education needs to develop a more holistic approach, including through the strengthening of spiritual values as part of preventive and promotive strategies for mental health.

Findings from the literature analysis show that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a significant influence on the formation of students' mental resilience. PAI not only teaches normative knowledge about religion, but also forms spiritual awareness, tawakal attitudes, and the ability to reflect on oneself. As emphasized by Mahfud et al. (2017) and Firdaus (2023), students who are active in religious activities tend to have better stress management skills and stronger psychological resilience.

In this context, Islamic values such as patience, gratitude, ridha, and tawakal are important instruments in shaping the emotional balance of students. Viktor Frankl's (1963) theory of logotherapy, which states that the search for the meaning of life can strengthen mental resilience, is very relevant to be associated with the teachings of Islam conveyed through PAI learning. Islam offers a complete system of meaning, which, if understood and internalized properly, will form emotionally and spiritually resilient students.

From the pedagogical side, PAI also provides a space for students to do spiritual reflection and strengthen moral values. Articles from Aqilah (2023) and Sari et al. (2023) even show that Islamic counseling approaches based on PAI values are effective in dealing with students who experience anxiety disorders. This reinforces the view that PAI can serve as a form of faith-based psychological intervention that contributes to healing and improved mental well-being.

In a public university environment that tends to be plural and secular, PAI learning has its own challenges, especially in reaching students with low religious backgrounds. However, with contextual and applicative approaches, such as life experience-based learning and discussion of contemporary psychosocial issues, PAI can still be a forum for strengthening the values of virtue and soul balance. The author is of the view that PAI should be developed as an inclusive space that is not only normative, but also empathetic to the psychological needs of students.

PAI lecturers or lecturers also have a key role as spiritual guides and moral mentors. An article from Ikhlas (2023) emphasizes that empathetic interaction between PAI lecturers and students can create a healing pedagogical relationship. In this context, lecturers are not only the presenters of the material, but also facilitators of mental recovery through a religious approach that calms and builds confidence.

The author argues that the PAI curriculum in higher education needs to be synergized with mental health strengthening programs. For example, the development of PAI modules that discuss anxiety, depression, or existential crises from an Islamic perspective can help students relate religious teachings to the reality of their lives. This not only makes PAI learning more relevant, but also more functional in answering the actual problems faced by students.

In Islamic psychological theory, the soul (nafs) has the potential to develop healthily if given proper spiritual guidance (Al-Attas, 1995). PAI learning is one of the media for strengthening the spiritual aspects of students (spirit), which in resilience theory functions as an internal support system in dealing with pressure. The values taught in PAI help students build self-awareness, self-control, and spiritual connectedness, all of which are important in building strong mental health.

The author also suggests that PAI should not only be limited to the classroom, but expanded in the form of extracurricular activities such as campus halaqah, spiritual mental development, and religious counseling training. This effort will expand the reach of PAI as part of the student support system on campus. In the long run, this strategy can lower the prevalence of mental disorders and create a campus culture that is emotionally and spiritually healthier.

In closing, the author emphasized that PAI learning has a significant contribution to strengthening the mental health of students in public universities. In the midst of increasing psychological pressure faced by the younger generation, PAI is present as an alternative solution based on values, spirituality, and meaning. Therefore, the integration between Islamic religious education and mental health strengthening strategies is not optional, but a necessity to create a generation of students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also psychologically and spiritually resilient.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a literature review of ten relevant scientific articles, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a significant influence on strengthening students' mental health in public universities. Islamic values taught through PAI such as tawakal, patience, gratitude, and sincerity make a great contribution to forming psychological resilience, reducing anxiety, and increasing students' inner peace in the face of various academic and social pressures.

PAI learning not only serves as a delivery of religious knowledge, but also as a space for spiritual reflection and character building. PAI lecturers or teachers play an important role as facilitators in creating a learning environment that is supportive of mental health. In addition, contextual learning materials and approaches based on students' psychosocial realities also strengthen the effectiveness of PAI as a means of recovery and mental strengthening.

The condition of a plural and dynamic public campus requires innovation in PAI learning to be more inclusive and relevant to the challenges of the times. Therefore, PAI learning should

continue to be developed integratively with modern psychological and pedagogical approaches, so as to be able to answer the needs of students both spiritually and emotionally.

Further Research Recommendations

This study suggests that future studies can conduct field-based empirical studies to directly evaluate the effectiveness of PAI learning on student mental health indicators, using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches. In addition, further research can explore the role of digital technology in PAI learning that is adaptive to the current generation of students. It is also recommended to expand the research population to various campus contexts, both public and private, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of spirituality and mental health in higher education settings.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

This article was prepared solely by the author in pursuit of advancing scholarly discourse on the intersection between Islamic Religious Education and student mental health in public university contexts. The perspectives and interpretations presented are based on a critical literature review and do not reflect the official position of any affiliated institution. No external funding was received for the preparation of this manuscript, and there are no conflicts of interest to declare. The author welcomes constructive feedback for the enhancement of future research endeavors in the fields of Islamic education and psychological well-being.

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