INTEGRATION OF STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS IN THE DESIGN OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING DESIGN AT AL BAROKAH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MOJOLEGI GADING, PROBOLINGGO

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Keywords:	**Abstract**
Learning Design, Student Characteristics, Student Engagement, Teaching Methods, Islamic Education.	*This study examines the integration of student characteristics in designing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SD Al Barokah Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo. The research aims to describe how teachers adapt learning designs according to students' cognitive abilities, learning styles, and interests, and to assess the impact on learning processes and outcomes. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, using observations, interviews with teachers, school principals, and selected students, as well as documentation of lesson plans and learning materials. The findings indicate that teachers effectively integrate student characteristics by employing varied methods such as group discussions, role-playing, and visual media, as well as providing flexible individual and group tasks. As a result, students show increased engagement, better understanding of PAI materials, and improved religious attitudes. This study implies that adapting learning designs to student characteristics enhances the effectiveness of PAI learning and fosters both cognitive and affective development in primary school students.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping the character, morals, and religious attitudes of students from an early age. Effective PAI learning emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects, enabling students to understand, internalize, and practice the values of Islamic teachings in their daily lives. However, the reality on the ground shows that the diversity of student characteristics presents a challenge for teachers in optimally delivering PAI material. Each student has different abilities, interests, and learning

styles, so that uniform learning is often ineffective and results in low student understanding and active participation (Hakiki & Sofa, nd) .

This problem becomes even more apparent when teachers fail to systematically integrate student characteristics into their learning design. This situation results in some students quickly grasping the material, while others lag behind, feel uncomfortable, and participate less actively in the learning process. Furthermore, limited learning media and the variety of methods used by teachers also influence the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in elementary schools. This demonstrates the need for an adaptive and learner-centered learning approach to ensure optimal student engagement (Sita & Sofa, 2025) .

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of an adaptive and student-centered learning approach. Research by Setiawan shows that implementing a differentiation method based on student ability can improve student understanding and active engagement. Another study by Mulyasa confirms that the use of varied learning media and engaging learning activities can improve students' learning motivation and the quality of their religious attitudes. However, research on the comprehensive integration of student characteristics in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design at the elementary school level, particularly at SD Al Barokah Mojolegi Gading, remains very limited. This represents a significant gap that encourages the need for more in-depth research in a local and applicable context (Yunus et al., 2025) .

The urgency of this research is increasing considering the challenges of education in the modern era, where teachers are required to be able to develop learning strategies that are innovative, creative, and responsive to the individual needs of students. By understanding the characteristics of students comprehensively, teachers can design learning that not only instills religious knowledge, but also forms harmonious religious attitudes, character, and social skills. This research is important because it can provide a practical understanding of how the integration of student characteristics can be applied in the design of effective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, while also serving as a reference for other teachers in elementary schools in improving the quality of religious education. The purpose of this study is to describe how Islamic Religious Education teachers integrate student characteristics in designing learning designs, evaluate their impact on the learning process and outcomes, and identify effective strategies to improve students' religious understanding and attitudes at SD Al Barokah Mojolegi Gading (Sholeha & Sofa, 2025) .

THEORETICAL STUDY

This theoretical study emphasizes the importance of understanding student characteristics in designing effective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning designs. Students have diverse characteristics, both in terms of cognitive abilities, interests, attitudes, and learning styles. According to Piaget, students' cognitive abilities vary according to their respective stages of intellectual development, while Vygotsky emphasized the importance of *the zone of proximal development,* namely abilities that students can achieve with teacher guidance. In the perspective of Islamic education, every child has a unique nature and potential according to the principle *"Allah does not burden a person but according to his ability"* (QS. Al-Baqarah: 286), so the diversity of student characters is a natural thing and must be the basis for learning design (Muzdalifah & Sofa, 2025) .

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Learning design is a systematic step to achieve educational goals effectively. Dick and Carey's theory explains that learning design includes analyzing student characteristics, determining objectives, selecting strategies, implementing them, and evaluating them. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), learning design emphasizes not only mastery of material but also the development of religious attitudes, morals, and social skills. By understanding student characteristics, teachers can choose appropriate methods and strategies, such as discussions, religious practices, the use of visual media, and role-playing (Wijaya & Sofa, 2025).

Modern learning theories, such as *learner-centered learning* and Tomlinson's *differentiated instruction,* emphasize that learning must adapt content, processes, and products to students' readiness, interests, and learning styles. This approach makes students more active, motivated, and able to understand the material more deeply. Previous research supports this; Setiawan showed that implementing methods tailored to student characteristics improves understanding and active participation, while Mulyasa found that the use of varied learning media and interesting activities can increase students' motivation and the quality of religious attitudes. Rahmawati emphasized that teachers who adapt learning strategies to student characteristics can increase engagement and the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education learning in the classroom (Sofa, Harifah, et al., 2025).

Based on previous theory and research, the integration of student characteristics in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design is an important foundation for this research. Teachers who understand the differences in student characteristics can design adaptive and responsive learning, so that all students can be optimally involved. Thus, this theoretical study provides a scientific and practical basis for research to describe how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Al Barokah Mojolegi Gading Elementary School integrate student characteristics in learning design and evaluate its impact on student learning processes and outcomes (Fuadah & Sofa, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, which aims to understand in depth how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Al Barokah Mojolegi Gading Elementary School integrate student characteristics in designing learning designs, as well as examine their impact on student learning processes and outcomes. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore educational realities contextually and comprehensively, prioritizing understanding of experiences, perceptions, and interactions that occur in the classroom (Hamidah & Sofa, 2025).

The research subjects consisted of the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students participating in Islamic Religious Education learning in the target classes. Subject selection was conducted purposively, considering that these parties have a direct role in the learning process and can provide rich and relevant information. The research location was Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo, which is known for implementing active and innovative Islamic Religious Education learning (Qudsiyah et al., 2025).

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques. First, observation, to observe classroom learning activities, teacher-student interactions, and the implementation of the methods and media used. Second, in-depth interviews with

the principal, teachers, and several students to obtain information related to their perceptions, experiences, and responses regarding the integration of student characteristics in learning. Third, documentation, in the form of lesson plans, teaching materials, evaluation notes, and other relevant supporting evidence. The research instruments, in the form of interview guides and observation sheets, were tested for validity and reliability. The test results indicated that the instruments were quite valid and could produce credible and accountable data.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive qualitative methods, through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by sorting and selecting information relevant to the research focus, so that only significant data were analyzed further. Data presentation was carried out in the form of a descriptive narrative, connecting field findings with theory and previous research. Conclusions were drawn inductively, based on the interrelationships between data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation.

The research model emphasizes the relationship between student characteristics as the primary variable, Islamic Religious Education learning design as a variable designed to accommodate these characteristics, and learning impacts, which include student engagement, understanding of the material, and religious attitudes. Student characteristics include cognitive abilities, interests, and learning styles; learning design encompasses methods, media, and strategies; while learning impacts reflect the outcomes achieved by students in the learning process, as illustrated in the following diagram:

Model Penelitian Integrasi Karakteristik Peserta Didik dalam Pembelajaran PAI

Karakteristik Peserta Didik

Kemampuan kognitif, minat, dan gaya belajar

Desain Pembelajaran PAI

Metode dan strategi yang digunakan guru

Dampak Pembelajaran

Hasil yang dicapai siswa dalam proses belajar
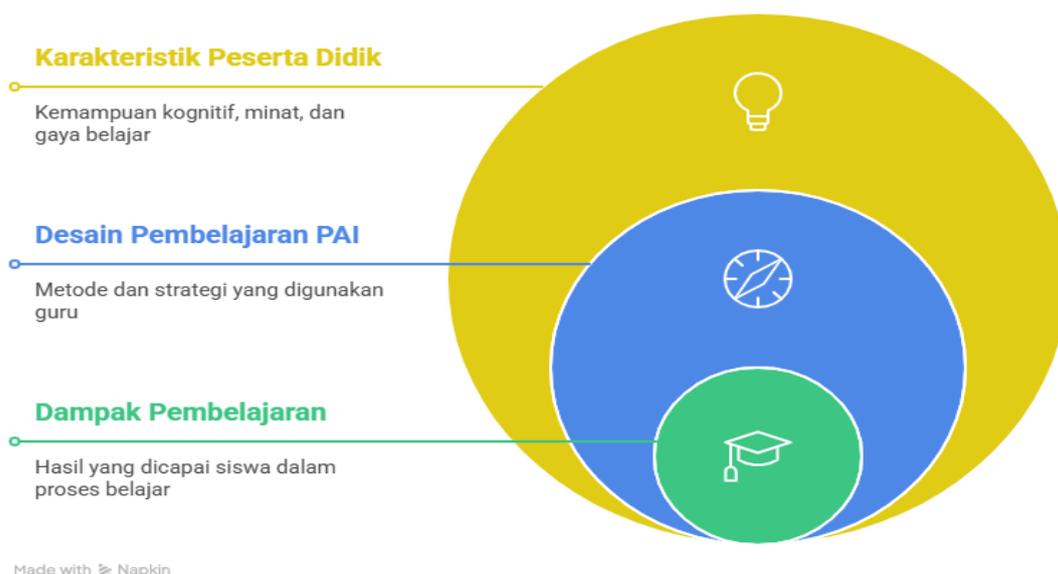
Made with ⚡ Napkin

Diagram 1. Research Model for Integration of Student Characteristics

With this approach, the research is able to provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the practice of integrating student characteristics in Islamic Religious Education learning, while also providing a basis for strategic recommendations for improving the quality of education at the elementary school level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were obtained through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation conducted at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo. The research focused on integrating student characteristics into the design of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Data were collected from the principal, PAI teachers, and students as key informants to obtain a comprehensive picture of the actual conditions of PAI learning at the school.

Characteristics of Students in Islamic Religious Education Learning

Based on the research results, it was found that students at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo, have highly diverse characteristics, both in terms of cognitive abilities, attitudes (affective), and learning styles. This diversity is a reality faced by Islamic Religious Education teachers in implementing the learning process in the classroom. Not all students have the same learning speed and style in understanding Islamic Religious Education material.

The school principal, Saimatus Sakdiyah, S.Pd., stated that differences in student characteristics are unavoidable and must be addressed wisely by teachers. He explained that in a class, some students grasp the material quickly, while others require intensive guidance and repetition.

> *"Every student has a different character and abilities. Some grasp lessons quickly, while others require more guidance. Therefore, teachers must recognize their students' personalities from the start."*

Echoing the principal's statement, Islamic Religious Education teacher Sulaiman, S.Pd., explained that differences in student characteristics are evident in how they respond to learning. He noted that some students understand material easily through verbal explanations, while others learn better through visual media or hands-on practice.

> *"In a class, not all students are suited to the lecture method. Some understand better through pictures, while others need hands-on practice to truly understand."*

Interviews with students revealed that they tend to prefer learning that involves engaging activities and media. Ummu Nadhifatil Aini said she found it easier to understand Islamic Religious Education lessons when teachers used images and stories relevant to everyday life.

> *"I find it easier to understand Islamic Education lessons if they are explained with pictures or stories,"*

Meanwhile, Erik Iqbal Maulana revealed that learning accompanied by practice and role-playing made it easier for him to understand the material.

> *"If there is practice or role-playing, I understand more quickly and don't get bored,"*

These findings indicate that the characteristics of students at SD Al Barokah Mojolegi Gading Probolinggo are not homogeneous, thus requiring a learning approach that is adaptive and responsive to individual differences.

The research results, which show the diverse characteristics of students at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo, strongly align with Islamic educational theory. In Islam, students are viewed as creatures of God, created with varying innate qualities, potentials, and abilities. These differences are God's decree (*sunnatullah*) and must be respected and used as a basis for the educational process.

This concept is in line with the words of Allah SWT:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"Allah does not burden a person but according to his ability."
(QS. Al-Baqarah: 286)

This verse emphasizes that each individual has different limits to their abilities. Research findings regarding students who quickly grasp material and those who require more guidance demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning must be tailored to the capacity and character of each student, in line with the principle of Islamic education, which rejects coercion in the learning process (Sofa & Munawaroh, 2025) .

Furthermore, the research findings on differences in student learning styles align with the theory of *tanawwu' al-uslub* in Islamic education, which emphasizes the use of a variety of learning methods. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used various approaches to convey Islamic teachings, such as lectures, dialogues, stories, parables, and hands-on practice. This demonstrates that Islamic education has recognized differences in student character and learning styles from the beginning (Isabillah & Sofa, 2025) .

This conformity is strengthened by the words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW:
"Make things easy and don't make things difficult, give good news and don't make people run away." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith serves as a theoretical basis for the idea that religious instruction should be delivered using methods that are easy, engaging, and tailored to the learner's needs. Research findings showing that students understand material more easily through images, stories, practical exercises, and role-playing align with this principle.

Furthermore, findings regarding students' preference for activity-based and practice-based learning align with the concept of *ta'lim bil 'amal* in Islamic education, namely learning that integrates knowledge with practice. Islamic Religious Education aims not only to improve cognitive understanding but also to shape students' religious attitudes and behavior (Fitria & Sofa, 2025) .

Thus, the results of this study demonstrate a clear alignment with Islamic educational theory, both in terms of recognizing individual differences, using a variety of learning methods, and an educational orientation that emphasizes a balance between knowledge, attitudes, and practice. This alignment confirms that integrating student characteristics into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is not only a modern pedagogical requirement but also aligns with the fundamental values and principles of Islamic education.

Integration of Student Characteristics in Islamic Education Learning Design

The research results also show that Islamic Religious Education teachers have made efforts to integrate student characteristics into the design of Islamic Religious Education lessons. This integration occurs from the planning stage through to classroom implementation. The principal emphasized that the school actively encourages teachers to develop lesson plans that adapt to the conditions and needs of students.

The principal, Saimatus Sakdiyah, S.Pd., stated:

"We always remind Islamic Religious Education teachers to design learning according to the students' conditions, so that all children can follow the learning well."

Islamic Religious Education teacher Sulaiman, S.Pd., explained that when designing lessons, he considers students' initial abilities, learning styles, and interests. This is achieved through the use of a variety of learning methods, such as group discussions, Q&A sessions, religious practices, and the use of visual media.

"When designing lessons, I adapt methods and media to students' abilities. I use discussions, religious practices, and visual media to engage all children."

Furthermore, teachers provide flexible assignments, both individually and in groups, so students can learn at their own pace. Interviews with students revealed that the varied learning design makes them feel more comfortable and empowered to participate in learning activities.

Ummu Nadhifatil Aini said that Islamic Education learning becomes more enjoyable when done in groups and involves direct practice.

"Learning Islamic Education is more fun because there is group work and practice,"

Erik Iqbal Maulana expressed a similar sentiment, feeling that learning was no longer boring and made him more daring in asking questions.

"The lessons are not boring and I am more brave to ask questions,"

The research findings show that Islamic Religious Education teachers integrate student characteristics into their learning designs, strongly aligning with educational theories put forward by Indonesian educational figures. From a national education perspective, students are viewed as individuals with varying potential, interests, and abilities, so the learning process must be designed contextually and student-centered.

Ki Hajar Dewantara's thought emphasizes that education must guide all the natural strengths of children so that they can achieve the highest safety and happiness (Sofa & Erviana, 2025) . The principle of *"guiding, not demanding"* shows that teachers are obliged to understand the conditions and characters of students before determining learning strategies. Research findings that show that teachers adjust learning plans to student conditions are in line with this concept, where teachers act as guides who provide space for the development of student potential (Nafila & Sofa, 2025) .

In addition, the integration of student characteristics in Islamic Religious Education learning design is also in line with the concept of humanistic education developed by Indonesian education experts, such as Sukardjo and Tilaar, who emphasize that learning must respect the uniqueness of individual students. The use of varied learning methods, such as group discussions, questions and answers, religious practices, and visual media as found in research, demonstrates teachers' efforts in creating learning that is friendly to the differences in character and learning styles of students (Mardiyah & Sofa, 2025) .

Research findings related to flexible assignments also align with Suyanto's ideas about adaptive and contextual learning. According to him, effective learning is learning that adapts to the students' circumstances and their learning environment. Flexibility in assignments allows students to learn at their own pace and abilities, enabling their potential to develop optimally (Salsabela & Sofa, 2025) .

Furthermore, the integration of student characteristics in Islamic Religious

Education (PAI) learning aligns with the PAIKEM (Active, Innovative, Creative, Effective, and Enjoyable Learning) concept developed by Mulyasa. Research findings showing that learning is designed in a varied manner and is able to increase students' comfort and courage in active participation reflect the application of PAIKEM principles in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning practices in schools (Sofa, Muarrifah, et al., 2025) .

Thus, the results of this study indicate that the practice of integrating student characteristics in designing Islamic Religious Education learning at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi, Gading, Probolinggo, strongly aligns with the theories and thinking of Indonesian educational figures. This alignment confirms that adaptive, humanistic, and student-centered Islamic Religious Education learning is a relevant and contextual approach to improving the quality of education in elementary schools.

Implications of Integrating Student Characteristics on Islamic Religious Education Learning

The research results show that integrating student characteristics into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design has a positive impact on the learning process and outcomes. This impact is evident in increased student engagement, improved understanding of the material, and positive changes in students' religious attitudes.

The principal, Saimatus Sakdiyah, S.Pd., said that after teachers adjusted learning to the students' characters, there were quite significant changes in students' behavior and learning attitudes.

"After the learning was adapted to the students' characters, quite positive changes were seen, both in terms of students' activeness and religious attitudes,"

The Islamic Religious Education teacher also revealed that students became more courageous in expressing their opinions and were more enthusiastic about participating in Islamic Religious Education learning.

"Students are more confident in expressing their opinions and are more enthusiastic about participating in Islamic Religious Education lessons."

From the student's perspective, Ummu Nadhifatil Aini stated that she felt more enthusiastic about participating in Islamic Religious Education learning.

"Now I am more enthusiastic about studying Islamic Education,"

Meanwhile, Erik Iqbal Maulana revealed that PAI learning that is tailored to students' characters helps him understand and apply the material in everyday life.

"I understand better and can apply Islamic Education lessons in my daily life,"

The results of the interviews and observations above are supported by the following documentation data:

Figure 1. Islamic Religious Education Learning Atmosphere at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo

The image above depicts the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning environment at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo. Students are seen engaging in the learning activities seriously and orderly in a green-colored classroom, signifying a fresh and calming learning environment. The teacher is seen assisting students at the front of the classroom, observing and guiding their learning activities.

This activity reflects the implementation of a student-centered learning design, where the teacher acts as a facilitator while students actively read, discuss, and comprehend the learning material. The group seating and direct interaction between the teacher and students demonstrate a contextual and collaborative approach tailored to the characteristics of the learners.

The presence of diverse student expressions also demonstrates differences in abilities, interests, and learning styles, as explained in the research findings that each student has unique characteristics that need to be considered in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design process. Therefore, this photo serves as concrete evidence that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at this school has been directed towards creating an inclusive, active, and religiously-valued learning environment.

The results of the study showed that Islamic Religious Education teachers at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo, integrated student characteristics into their learning design, which strongly aligned with modern (Western) learning theories, particularly *learner-centered learning theory*. This theory places students at the center of learning, so that learning planning and implementation must be tailored to the abilities, interests, and characteristics of students (Zummah & Sofa, 2025) .

Research findings showing that teachers consider students' initial abilities, learning styles, and interests when designing learning align with the constructivist theory proposed by Jean Piaget and developed by Lev Vygotsky. In the constructivist view, knowledge is actively constructed by students through meaningful learning experiences. The use of group discussions, religious practices, and visual media, as found in the research, are forms of learning that provide space for students to construct their own understanding (Astutik & Sofa, 2025) .

Furthermore, the integration of student characteristics into instructional design

aligns with Dick and Carey's instructional design model, which emphasizes that analyzing student characteristics is a crucial first step before determining learning objectives, methods, and evaluation. Research findings demonstrating that learning planning is tailored to student characteristics demonstrate that teachers have implemented the principles of systematic instructional design as outlined in the theory (Efendy & Sofa, 2025) .

Research findings that demonstrate the use of varied learning methods align with Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. This theory states that students possess different levels of intelligence, including linguistic, visual-spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. The use of group discussions, visual media, and hands-on practice in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction demonstrates that teachers strive to accommodate students' diverse intelligences so that all students can be optimally involved in the learning process (Rosida & Sofa, 2025) .

The findings regarding flexible assignments, both individually and in groups, also align with the concept of differentiated instruction developed by Carol Ann Tomlinson. According to this theory, effective learning is one that adapts content, processes, and learning products to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Research shows that this approach increases students' comfort and confidence in active participation (Hasanah & Sofa, 2025) .

The positive implications of integrating student characteristics on student engagement, understanding, and attitudes are also consistent with humanistic learning motivation theories, particularly those of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. When students' psychological needs, such as feeling safe, valued, and involved, are met through learning that aligns with their character, their intrinsic motivation to learn increases. This is reflected in students' statements about feeling more enthusiastic, less bored, and more willing to ask questions during Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning (Sofa & Febrianti, 2025) .

Thus, the results of this study indicate that the practice of integrating student characteristics into Islamic Religious Education (ISE) learning designs is not only contextually relevant but also has strong theoretical alignment with modern Western educational theories. These findings confirm that adaptive, varied, and learner-centered Islamic Religious Education (ISE) learning is an effective approach to improving the quality of learning processes and outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is written concisely, answering the research objectives or problems by presenting the research results or testing the research hypothesis, without repeating the discussion. The conclusion is written critically, logically, and honestly, based on the existing research facts, and with caution when generalizing. The conclusions and recommendations section is written in paragraph form, without numbering or *bullet points*. This section also allows the author to provide suggestions or recommendations for action based on the conclusions. Similarly, the author is strongly encouraged to provide a review of the research limitations and recommendations for future research.

Based on research conducted at Al Barokah Elementary School, Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo, it can be concluded that students have highly diverse characteristics, encompassing cognitive, affective, and learning style aspects. This

diversity presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to design adaptive learning that meets the needs of each student. PAI teachers do not simply deliver material uniformly but also adapt methods, media, and learning strategies so that each student can understand the material and actively participate in learning activities.

The integration of student characteristics into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design has been systematically implemented, from the planning stage to classroom implementation. Teachers consider students' initial abilities, learning styles, and interests in determining learning methods, such as group discussions, question and answer sessions, religious practices, the use of visual media, and flexible assignments. This approach has been proven to increase student engagement, understanding of the material, and participation in learning. Students become more enthusiastic, comfortable, and confident in expressing opinions and asking questions during the learning process.

The results of this study also demonstrate strong alignment with various educational theories, from Islamic, Western, and Indonesian perspectives. From an Islamic perspective, the principle of education that adapts to students' potential and abilities is reflected in the word of God: *"Allah does not burden a person except according to his ability"* (QS. Al-Baqarah: 286). From a Western perspective, the theories of *learner-centered learning,* constructivism, multiple intelligences, and differentiated learning emphasize the importance of adapting learning to students' abilities, interests, and learning styles. Meanwhile, from an Indonesian educational perspective, Ki Hajar Dewantara's thinking about *"guiding, not demanding"* and the PAIKEM concept support adaptive, humanistic, and varied learning practices.

Based on these conclusions, several suggestions can be made. First, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to continue to recognize student characteristics and develop creative, innovative, and varied learning strategies to ensure learning remains engaging, enjoyable, and effective. Second, schools need to provide support in the form of adequate training, facilities, and learning resources so that teachers can implement adaptive and student-centered learning. Third, for future research, it is recommended to explore the integration of student characteristics with the use of technology media, project methods, or real-life experience-based learning approaches to improve students' religious understanding and attitudes. Fourth, parents are expected to support the learning process by understanding their children's characteristics and motivating them to learn, so that Islamic Religious Education can take place optimally both at home and at school.

Overall, these conclusions and recommendations emphasize that understanding student characteristics is key to designing effective, enjoyable Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning that fosters faithful, knowledgeable, and noble students. Integrating student characteristics not only improves the quality of learning but also builds overall student motivation, engagement, and positive attitudes.

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