

THE ROLE OF INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC STUDIES IN STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL AWARENESS

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Abstract

Keywords:

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This study examines the role of the Introduction to Islamic Studies course in fostering students' spiritual and intellectual awareness among undergraduate students of the English Education Department (TBI) and postgraduate students of the Master's Program in Islamic Education (S2 PAI) at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo. The study is motivated by the persistent gap in Islamic higher education, where learning is often dominated by cognitive transfer and lacks integration between spiritual values and intellectual development. Previous studies have discussed integrative Islamic education; however, limited attention has been given to how foundational courses such as Introduction to Islamic Studies contribute simultaneously to spiritual and intellectual awareness across different academic levels. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach involving purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The informants included students, lecturers, and key institutional figures, namely Dr. H. Imam Bukhori., M.Pd and Dr. Ainur Rofiq Sofa., M.Pd., Data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with triangulation techniques to ensure validity. The findings reveal that the course plays a significant role in shaping students' spiritual awareness through value internalization and reflective learning, while also enhancing intellectual awareness through critical thinking, dialogue, and contextual analysis of Islamic teachings. The study concludes that the Introduction to Islamic Studies course functions as an integrative learning space that bridges revelation and reason, contributing to the formation of students who are both spiritually grounded and intellectually competent..

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INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic higher education in the contemporary era is confronted with rapid social, cultural, and technological changes (Sa'diya et al., 2026). Globalization and digitalization not only provide broad access to information but also bring serious challenges, including a crisis of meaning, moral degradation, and a growing tendency toward pragmatic and materialistic thinking among students (Zainal & Sofa, 2026). In this context, Islamic education is required not merely to transfer religious knowledge cognitively, but also to cultivate deep spiritual awareness alongside critical and reflective intellectual awareness (L. Hasanah & Sofa, 2026). The balance between *spiritual awareness* and *intellectual awareness* is essential in shaping a holistic Muslim personality, as reflected in the concept of *insan kamil* within Islamic educational tradition (Sofa, 2026). Therefore, Islamic higher education institutions bear a strategic responsibility to design integrative learning systems that harmonize revelation and reason, faith and knowledge, as well as values and the realities of modern life (Sofa & Qamariyah, 2026).

Within this framework, the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course holds a fundamental position as an entry point for students to understand Islam in a comprehensive, systematic, and contextual manner (Subekti et al., 2026). This course not only introduces the basic concepts of Islamic teachings but also serves as a gateway to developing scientific and critical approaches in studying Islam as an academic discipline (Fillah & Sofa, 2026). Through an interdisciplinary approach encompassing theological, historical, philosophical, and sociological perspectives, students are encouraged to perceive Islam not merely as a normative doctrine but as a dynamic system of values embedded in social realities (Saputra & Sofa, 2026). Consequently, this course is expected to function as an integrative platform bridging spiritual and intellectual dimensions within the learning process in higher education (Khomsiyah & Sofa, 2026).

However, in practice, the implementation of this course often tends to be reduced to a predominantly theoretical and cognitive knowledge transfer (Fansuri & Sofa, 2026). Learning activities are frequently conducted in a one-directional manner, providing limited opportunities for students to engage in critical reflection and deep internalization of Islamic values (Muchlis & Sofa, 2025). As a result, students' spiritual awareness is not optimally developed, while their intellectual capacity to analyze and contextualize Islamic teachings remains underdeveloped. This condition indicates a gap between the ideal objectives of the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course and its actual implementation in the classroom (Laili & Sofa, 2025).

This phenomenon is also evident among students of the English Education Department (TBI) and the Master's Program in Islamic Education (S2 PAI) at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo. TBI students, whose academic orientation is more focused on language and modern education, generally demonstrate strong intellectual abilities in analytical and communicative aspects but often require reinforcement in spiritual depth and comprehensive Islamic understanding. In contrast, S2 PAI students typically possess a stronger religious background; however, they still face challenges in developing critical, systematic, and contextual intellectual approaches in Islamic studies. These differing characteristics highlight the importance of the

Introduction to Islamic Studies course as an integrative space capable of harmonizing both dimensions in a balanced and sustainable manner.

Previous studies have shown that the integration of Islamic values with scientific approaches in learning can enhance students' understanding while fostering moderate, inclusive, and adaptive character traits (Qumariyah & Sofa, 2025). Reflective, dialogical, and contextual approaches in Islamic studies have also been proven effective in encouraging students not only to comprehend Islamic teachings textually but also to internalize them in daily life (Fitriah & Sofa, 2025). Furthermore, the integrative-interconnective paradigm in contemporary Islamic studies provides a broader framework for linking religious and general sciences (Sholihah & Sofa, 2025). Nevertheless, research specifically examining the role of the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course in fostering both spiritual and intellectual awareness across different academic levels undergraduate (TBI) and postgraduate (S2 PAI) remains limited, particularly within the context of pesantren-based Islamic higher education such as Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo.

Based on this background, this study is grounded in the assumption that the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course holds significant potential as a transformative instrument in developing students' spiritual and intellectual awareness (Ramadani & Sofa, 2025). However, this potential requires empirical investigation to assess its actual implementation and the factors influencing its effectiveness (U. Hasanah & Sofa, 2025). Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the role of the course in fostering spiritual and intellectual awareness among TBI and S2 PAI students at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo (Sholeha & Sofa, 2025b).

This research aims to identify the forms of instructional implementation in the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course, analyze its contribution to the development of students' spiritual and intellectual awareness, and propose an effective and integrative learning model within the context of Islamic higher education (Sholeha & Sofa, 2025a). The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic education studies, particularly in integrating spiritual and intellectual dimensions in learning processes. Practically, this study is expected to serve as a reference for lecturers and academic administrators in designing more innovative, reflective, and transformative learning strategies. Ultimately, Islamic higher education is expected to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also spiritually grounded, intellectually mature, and morally committed in addressing the challenges of modern life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of contemporary Islamic education studies reflects a significant shift from a purely normative-doctrinal approach toward an integrative paradigm that harmonizes spiritual and intellectual dimensions. In this regard, the concept of knowledge integration has become a central discourse in modern Islamic studies. M. Amin Abdullah emphasizes that the integrative-interconnective approach bridges the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences, thereby producing a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of Islam (Umaidah & Sofa, 2025). This perspective is highly relevant to the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course, which requires the integration of revelation and reason as a foundation for fostering students' spiritual and intellectual awareness (Isnaini & Sofa, 2025).

Spiritual awareness in Islamic education is generally understood as the ability of individuals to internalize divine values into their attitudes and daily behavior (Sultan & Sofa, 2025). According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, spirituality in Islam is inseparable from intellectuality, as both dimensions complement each other in shaping a holistic human consciousness (Mh & Sofa, 2025). Recent studies in international journals indicate that reflective and spiritually oriented learning significantly enhances students' depth of understanding and strengthens their moral commitment (Arifin & Sofa, 2025). This suggests that spirituality is not merely an additional component but a core element in the process of Islamic education (Qamariyah & Sofa, 2025).

On the other hand, intellectual awareness refers to the ability to think critically, analytically, and reflectively in understanding both reality and Islamic teachings in a contextual manner. Fazlur Rahman highlights the importance of a historical-critical approach in Islamic studies, enabling students to interpret religious texts dynamically and in line with contemporary developments (Anwar & Sofa, 2025). Supporting this view, recent findings in accredited national journals reveal that dialogical and problem-based learning approaches in Islamic studies significantly improve students' critical thinking skills (Silvia & Sofa, 2025). Thus, strengthening intellectual awareness is essential in shaping students who are not only religiously committed but also rational and adaptable (Sita & Sofa, 2025).

The *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course plays a strategic role as a foundational subject in developing these two dimensions. Recent international research shows that integratively designed foundational Islamic courses can enhance both religious literacy and critical thinking skills among students (Sofa et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies conducted in Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions indicate that the effectiveness of this course is strongly influenced by teaching methods, such as reflective learning, interactive discussions, and the integration of digital technology (Nafila & Sofa, 2025).

In the context of students from different academic backgrounds, such as English Education (TBI) and the Master's Program in Islamic Education (S2 PAI), differences in academic orientation significantly influence the learning process. TBI students tend to focus on language mastery and global communication, while S2 PAI students emphasize deeper engagement with Islamic sciences. Recent studies suggest that integrative and contextual learning approaches can bridge these differences by creating a dialogical space between diverse academic perspectives (Mardiyah & Sofa, 2025). This highlights the urgency of developing adaptive learning models in the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course that accommodate diverse student needs (Salsabela & Sofa, 2025).

Despite numerous studies addressing the integration of spiritual and intellectual dimensions in Islamic education, there remains a research gap concerning the specific role of the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course in fostering these dimensions across different academic levels simultaneously. Most existing studies focus on a single level of education or emphasize only one dimension, either spiritual or intellectual. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by comprehensively analyzing the role of the course in fostering both spiritual and intellectual awareness among TBI and S2 PAI students at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo.

Based on the reviewed literature, it can be assumed that an integrative, reflective, and contextual approach in teaching the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course has

significant potential to enhance students' spiritual and intellectual awareness. Accordingly, this study proposes the hypothesis that the more effectively the course is implemented, the higher the level of students' spiritual and intellectual awareness. This hypothesis serves as the foundation for guiding the analysis and examining the relationship between instructional practices and student outcomes.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course in fostering students' spiritual and intellectual awareness (Zaini & Sofa, 2024). The qualitative design is selected to explore in depth the learning processes, experiences, and meaning-making constructed by students across undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This approach enables a holistic understanding of how integrative Islamic learning is implemented within the context of higher education (Sofa, 2024).

The subjects of this study consist of students from the English Education Department (TBI) and the Master's Program in Islamic Education (S2 PAI) at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo. The participants are selected using purposive sampling, focusing on students who have taken or are currently enrolled in the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course. In addition, key informants include Imam Bukhori as the Director of the Postgraduate Program and Dr. Ainur Rofiq Sofa, M.Pd as the Head of the Master's Program in Islamic Education. Their perspectives are essential in understanding institutional policies, curriculum design, and the strategic direction of the course. The data is summarized in the following diagram:

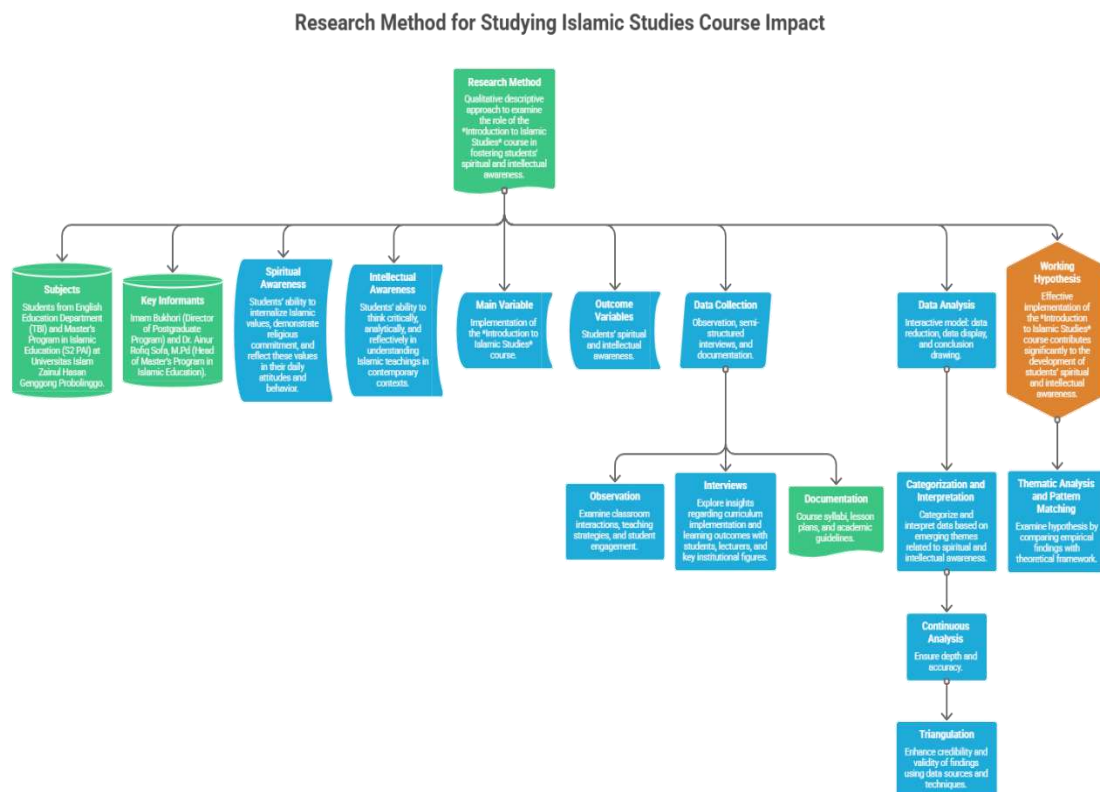


Diagram 1: Research Method For Studying Islamic Studies Course Impact

Spiritual awareness refers to students' ability to internalize Islamic values, demonstrate religious commitment, and reflect these values in their daily attitudes and behavior. Intellectual awareness refers to students' ability to think critically, analytically, and reflectively in understanding Islamic teachings in contemporary contexts. The main variable in this study is the implementation of the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course, while the outcome variables are students' spiritual and intellectual awareness (Hanafi & Sofa, 2024).

Data are collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Sukandarman & Sofa, 2024). Observations are conducted to examine classroom interactions, teaching strategies, and student engagement. Interviews are carried out with students, lecturers, and key institutional figures, including Imam Bukhori and Dr. Ainur Rofiq Sofa, M.Pd to explore their insights regarding curriculum implementation and learning outcomes. Documentation includes course syllabi, lesson plans, and academic guidelines. The instruments used consist of observation checklists, interview guides, and document analysis sheets.

Data analysis follows an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher categorizes and interprets data based on emerging themes related to spiritual and intellectual awareness. The analysis is conducted continuously to ensure depth and accuracy (Agustini & Sofa, 2024). Triangulation of data sources and techniques is applied to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings.

Although this study adopts a qualitative approach, it is guided by a working hypothesis stating that effective implementation of the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course contributes significantly to the development of students' spiritual and intellectual awareness. The hypothesis is examined through thematic analysis and pattern matching by comparing empirical findings with the theoretical framework established in the literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved undergraduate students from the English Education Department (TBI) and postgraduate students from the Master's Program in Islamic Education (S2 PAI) at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo. These two groups were selected due to their distinct academic orientations: TBI students are primarily oriented toward language mastery and modern education, while S2 PAI students are more focused on in-depth Islamic scholarly studies. This diversity provides a rich context for examining how the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course contributes to the development of both spiritual and intellectual awareness.

In addition, key informants were included, namely Imam Bukhori as the Director of the Postgraduate Program and Ainur Rofiq Sofa as the Head of the Master's Program in Islamic Education. Their perspectives provide institutional insights into curriculum design, academic policy direction, and the pedagogical objectives of the course. Their involvement strengthens the credibility of the findings by offering a macro-level understanding of how the course is conceptualized and implemented.

The findings reveal that the implementation of the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course goes beyond knowledge transmission and functions as a process of value transformation. Learning activities are conducted in a dialogical, interactive, and

reflective manner. Lecturers act as facilitators who guide students to construct meaning rather than merely receive information.

Observation data show that students actively participate in classroom discussions, case analysis, and reflection on contemporary socio-religious issues. This learning environment fosters an academic space where students are encouraged not only to understand “what Islam says,” but also to explore “how Islam is understood and applied in modern life.”

A TBI student stated:

"Before taking this course, I thought it was just basic theory, but now I realize that Islam is deeply connected to how we think and behave in daily life."

This statement indicates a shift from cognitive learning to meaningful awareness. This is reinforced by Imam Bukhori who emphasized:

"Introduction to Islamic Studies is a foundational course that shapes students' worldview by integrating spiritual values and intellectual reasoning."

Students' spiritual awareness develops through a reflective learning process that emphasizes the internalization of Islamic values. They begin to understand that knowledge is not only for comprehension but also for self-transformation and practice. The integration of Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and classical Islamic thought with contemporary life issues encourages deep reflection.

A postgraduate student expressed:

"I feel that every topic discussed always reminds me that knowledge should improve my relationship with Allah and my moral character."

This indicates that learning has reached the affective and spiritual dimension of students. They no longer perceive religion as abstract concepts but as lived values that shape behavior and worldview.

This finding aligns with the view of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who emphasizes that spirituality and intellectuality in Islam are inseparable dimensions of human consciousness (Nasr, 2023).

Furthermore, Dr. Ainur Rofiq Sofa stated:

"Our aim is not only academic understanding, but also spiritual consciousness that becomes part of students' identity and daily behavior."

In terms of intellectual awareness, students demonstrate improvement in critical, analytical, and reflective thinking skills. The use of discussion-based learning, case studies, and problem-based learning allows students to engage with Islamic concepts more deeply and critically. They are encouraged not only to accept ideas but also to question, analyze, and contextualize them.

A TBI student explained:

"We are trained to think critically and not just accept one opinion, but to compare different perspectives."

A postgraduate student added:

"This approach helps me understand Islam more scientifically without losing its spiritual essence."

This reflects the idea of Fazlur Rahman, who emphasizes the importance of a historical-critical approach in Islamic studies to maintain relevance in contemporary contexts (Rahman, 2022).

Thus, students are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in knowledge construction.

The findings strongly confirm the theoretical framework proposed in the literature review. The integrative knowledge paradigm introduced by M. Amin Abdullah emphasizes the importance of connecting revelation and reason through an interconnective approach. The results of this study show that the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course has operationalized this paradigm through reflective, dialogical, and contextual learning strategies.

Students are no longer viewing Islam merely as a normative doctrine but as a living value system embedded in social reality. This confirms that Islamic higher education is shifting from a dichotomous model toward an integrative one that connects spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions.

Moreover, the findings on spiritual awareness support Nasr's theory regarding the unity of spirituality and intellectuality, while the development of intellectual awareness supports Rahman's critical-historical approach to Islamic interpretation. Therefore, this study not only confirms existing theories but also demonstrates their practical implementation in real educational settings.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course plays a strategic role in shaping students' holistic spiritual and intellectual awareness. Learning outcomes extend beyond knowledge acquisition to include transformation in worldview, attitude, and self-awareness (Wajdi et al., 2026).

This success is largely attributed to the integrative, reflective, and contextual learning approach adopted in the course. The lecturer's role as a facilitator is crucial in creating a meaningful and dialogical learning environment. Rather than merely delivering content, lecturers guide students to reflect deeply on Islamic values and their relevance to life (Alshehri et al., 2026).

However, the study also identifies several challenges, including differences in students' academic backgrounds, variations in prior knowledge, and the need for more innovative, technology-based, and experiential learning approaches. These challenges suggest that the integration of spiritual and intellectual dimensions requires continuous adaptation and pedagogical innovation (Akhmadovna, 2026).

Theoretically, this study strengthens the paradigm of integrative Islamic education that combines cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. Practically, it provides implications for curriculum development and teaching strategies in Islamic higher education institutions, particularly in producing graduates who are not only academically competent but also spiritually grounded, intellectually mature, and morally responsible in facing contemporary challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course plays a significant role in developing students' spiritual and intellectual awareness among undergraduate students of the English Education Department (TBI) and postgraduate students of the Master's Program in Islamic Education (S2 PAI) at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo. The findings indicate that the course functions not only as a medium of knowledge transmission but also as a transformative learning space that integrates spiritual and intellectual dimensions in a balanced way. Students demonstrate enhanced spiritual awareness, reflected in stronger religious understanding, improved moral attitudes, and the ability to reflect Islamic values in daily life. At the same time, their intellectual awareness develops through improved critical thinking,

analytical reasoning, and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings.

These findings strongly support the integrative paradigm of Islamic education proposed by M. Amin Abdullah, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of revelation and reason in educational processes. The results are also consistent with the views of Seyyed Hossein Nasr regarding the unity of spirituality and intellectuality, as well as the critical-historical approach of Fazlur Rahman in understanding Islam in a dynamic and contextual manner.

The practical implication of this study is that the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course should be continuously developed through integrative, reflective, and dialogical learning approaches. Lecturers are expected to function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators of meaning-making and value internalization. Learning strategies such as discussion-based learning, case studies, and contextual reflection should be strengthened to deepen both spiritual and intellectual dimensions of students.

This study has several limitations. First, it is limited to a single institution, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the number of participants is relatively limited and focuses only on two academic groups (TBI and S2 PAI). Third, the study relies primarily on qualitative data, so it does not measure changes in a quantitative manner. Fourth, it focuses only on one course, while other curriculum components that may also influence students' development were not examined.

Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the scope by involving multiple Islamic higher education institutions to obtain more comparative and comprehensive findings. Future studies are also encouraged to apply mixed-method approaches to provide both qualitative depth and quantitative measurement of spiritual and intellectual development. In addition, further research may explore the role of other courses and the integration of digital learning technologies in strengthening Islamic education in contemporary academic contexts.

Overall, this study concludes that the *Introduction to Islamic Studies* course has a strategic role in shaping students who are not only intellectually competent but also spiritually grounded and morally responsible in facing the challenges of modern life.

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