



Synergy of Indoor and Outdoor Learning in Islamic Education: A Holistic Qualitative Design for Strengthening Spiritual and Contextual Dimensions in Secondary Schools

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 28-07-2025

Revised 19-09-2025

Accepted 24-09-2025

Keyword:

PAI Learning Synergy, Dual Learning Space, Indoor-Outdoor Approach, Contextual Learning, Islamic Pedagogy

ABSTRACT

This study aims to address the gap in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) research, which has predominantly emphasized cognitive aspects within classroom settings while underexploring the integration of contextual learning experiences outside the classroom. The focus of this research is to develop an innovative instructional design framework for PAI through the synergy of indoor and outdoor approaches, fostering a holistic learning experience that strengthens both spiritual and contextual dimensions. Employing a qualitative literature review method with comparative thematic analysis of religious literature, scholarly journals, textbooks, and educational reports, this study explores the conceptual void in existing PAI learning models that can bridge theoretical understanding with socio-spiritual practice. The findings reveal that indoor learning provides a structured theoretical foundation, while outdoor learning enriches the process through direct experiences such as nature contemplation (*tadabbur alam*) and social projects. The integration of both approaches results in a hybrid learning model that not only enhances student engagement and retention but also cultivates transformative awareness of Islamic values within social contexts. The novelty of this research lies in formulating a conceptual framework for PAI based on a dual learning space synergy—the Dual Learning Space Framework—which serves as a pedagogical reference for educators to strengthen the implementation of a more contextual and inclusive PAI curriculum. Consequently, this study expands the horizon of Islamic pedagogy from classroom-centered instruction to applicable spiritual practices.



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is often confined to conventional classroom methods, where most activities are conducted formally and structurally without utilizing the potential of outdoor learning, which can provide richer and more meaningful educational experiences. The dominance of indoor learning methods sometimes results in decreased student engagement in the learning process. This is primarily due to the one-way lecture method, which fails to create an interactive and stimulating learning environment for students. This fact is supported by reports indicating that higher levels of student engagement can be achieved through more varied approaches, including outdoor learning (Sya'bana et al., 2024).

However, despite numerous studies exploring the potential of outdoor learning, the focus on PAI instruction remains limited. Many previous studies have tended to emphasize outdoor learning in science education or character education, as demonstrated by Harianto et al. (2019). Ahmad's (2021) research, for instance, mainly centered on indoor methods for Qur'an memorization, while Rahman (2020) focused on outdoor learning in religious extracurricular activities rather than in the core PAI curriculum itself (Sya'bana et al., 2024).

A review of these studies reveals a similar pattern: the majority remain partial in scope and fail to offer a conceptual synthesis explaining how physical learning spaces (indoor) and social-experiential

spaces (outdoor) can be integrated within a unified pedagogical framework. In other words, previous research has largely remained at the descriptive level—merely distinguishing between the two learning approaches without examining the dialectical relationship between them in the context of religious education.

Furthermore, much of the literature neglects the epistemological dimension of PAI learning, which demands a balance between theoretical knowledge (*'ilm*) and existential experience (*'amal*). This gap underscores the need for a synthetic approach that not only explains what and how indoor–outdoor learning can be implemented but also why such integration is essential for students' spiritual and social transformation.

The innovation proposed in this study lies in developing a learning design framework based on the dialectical integration between the cognitive (indoor) and empirical (outdoor) learning spaces to enhance the meaningfulness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction. Approaches of this kind, previously applied in other subjects such as history, have demonstrated significant improvements in students' learning motivation (Lugg & Quay, 2020). However, such a hybrid model has not yet been conceptually or practically tested in the context of PAI, which possesses a unique character due to its integration of spiritual, moral, and social dimensions (Ratinen, Sarivaara, & Kuukkanen, 2021).

Accordingly, this study contributes a new theoretical framework that combines reflective–theoretical and participatory–empirical principles within religious education. This approach is not merely technical but also epistemological, aiming to construct a more holistic and contextual paradigm of Islamic pedagogy.

Through this research, the author seeks to address a key question: “How can an effective PAI learning design be developed by integrating indoor and outdoor approaches?” This question arises from an urgent need, as a needs analysis conducted in ten schools revealed that 80% of PAI teachers desire more varied learning models, though they struggle to design them effectively (Yuningsih, Azahra, & Kalfin, 2024).

This study aims to formulate a model that not only provides pedagogical guidance for educators but also improves the quality of PAI learning outcomes through the integration of classical and innovative approaches. Thus, this research positions itself as a conceptual bridge between traditional Islamic educational theory and contemporary experience-based pedagogical approaches.

It is hypothesized that the combination of indoor and outdoor learning will significantly enhance PAI learning outcomes. Indoor learning provides a strong and structured theoretical foundation, while outdoor learning offers direct experiences that deepen students' understanding (Liu, 2023). Previous research in other subjects has shown that integrating these two approaches can improve students' memory retention levels (Irwandi et al., 2023). Therefore, this study argues that integrating these approaches can serve as an effective solution to enhance the quality of PAI learning, offering students a more meaningful and transformative educational experience.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a library research design with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was selected because the study does not aim to measure empirical variables, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings, principles, and epistemological values underlying the practice of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. A qualitative literature review enables the researcher to perform conceptual interpretation and thematic analysis across various sources of literature, thereby producing a reflective and comprehensive theoretical synthesis.

This design was also chosen because a literature-based qualitative approach can identify the scientific gap between Islamic pedagogical theory and its practical implementation in the field, without being constrained by the limitations of a single empirical context. Through the literature review, the researcher analyzed various documents, including books, journals, religious manuscripts, and online publications. This approach facilitates the identification of gaps between theory and practice and supports the development of innovative learning models based on existing literature synthesis.

The inclusion criteria for literature in this study include:

1. Academic sources published between 2015 and 2024;
2. Articles discussing PAI learning, indoor–outdoor approaches, or the integration of Islamic pedagogy with social contexts;
3. References with recognized academic credibility, such as Scopus- or DOAJ-indexed journals, or academic books from reputable publishers; and
4. Religious manuscripts relevant to Islamic learning principles.

Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria include:

1. Popular sources, opinion pieces, or publications not subjected to peer review;
2. Articles that discuss general education without relevance to PAI; and
3. Literature that is duplicative or redundant in thematic content.

By selecting literature based on credibility and relevance, this study seeks to ensure that the analysis is grounded in valid and representative sources, thereby strengthening the reliability and scholarly rigor of the research findings.

The sources of information in this study include written texts such as religious manuscripts and classical Islamic books (e.g., tafsir, hadith, and educational fiqh) that serve to explore the foundational principles of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). In addition, academic journals and textbooks discussing PAI pedagogy and indoor–outdoor learning methods form an integral part of the analysis. Moreover, online news articles and educational policy reports are also reviewed to provide relevant contextual insights into the implementation of PAI learning in schools. When necessary, expert respondents, such as PAI teachers and Islamic education scholars, may be engaged as expert validators to assess the consistency and relevance of the synthesized findings.

The data analysis process was conducted through several systematic stages, beginning with data condensation. At this stage, the researcher selected and filtered relevant data, extracting information related to indoor–outdoor learning in PAI. This was followed by data reduction, which involved categorizing the data by themes and developing coding schemes to facilitate analysis. During the data presentation stage, the information was displayed in matrices, tables, or descriptive narratives to enhance interpretability, comparing pedagogical frameworks between classical Islamic educational literature and contemporary approaches. Finally, data verification was carried out to ensure the consistency of findings through triangulation among multiple sources—including classical texts, academic journals, and expert interviews.

The analytical methods employed include:

1. Content analysis, to examine textual patterns across relevant literature;
2. Discourse analysis, to investigate how discussions surrounding indoor–outdoor PAI learning are constructed; and
3. Interpretative analysis, to derive meaning from findings, particularly those emerging from religious texts.

This triadic approach not only identifies what the literature contains but also explains how and why pedagogical ideas are relevant within the context of modern PAI learning.

Through this comprehensive analytical framework, the study aims to formulate an integrative and effective PAI learning design, contributing to the development of a holistic Islamic Religious Education curriculum. In conclusion, this research methodology is grounded in a strong theoretical justification for the use of qualitative, literature-based methods—emphasizing rigorous source selection criteria and multi-layered analysis to ensure that the findings are valid, comprehensive, and contributive to the advancement of contextual Islamic pedagogy.

RESULTS

1. Characteristics of Indoor and Outdoor Learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

The analysis of literature indicates that indoor learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) focuses on the mastery of cognitive knowledge and the understanding of theoretical religious concepts. This activity typically takes place in a classroom setting equipped with structured learning facilities such as whiteboards, projectors, and textbooks. Sources from Mahbuddin (2020) and Prabowo & Nisa (2022) suggest that indoor learning is effective for supporting the analysis of religious texts, such as Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) and hadith studies, as well as for strengthening conceptual understanding through interactive lectures and thematic discussions.

Conversely, outdoor learning emphasizes the reinforcement of affective and psychomotor dimensions through direct experiential engagement. A synthesis of various sources (Anggraeni, 2024; Qisthi et al., 2024; Taqwan, 2019) shows that activities such as tadabbur alam (nature contemplation), mosque visits, and community service projects expand the contextual application of Islamic values. The literature data affirm that outdoor approaches significantly enhance learning retention and spiritual motivation compared to conventional methods.

The integration of both approaches creates a balance between conceptual understanding and practical experience. The study by Sugiyanto & Arifin (2022) supports that a hybrid approach—combining classroom-based instruction on zakat theory with field-based social practice—effectively strengthens the internalization of students' spiritual values.

2. Main Patterns of Findings Based on Thematic Analysis

Based on content and discourse analysis of 45 relevant literature sources, four major themes were identified:

Cognitive Dominance in Indoor PAI Learning. Most studies emphasize conceptual understanding but tend to underexplore the dimension of religious experience. Indoor PAI learning remains largely focused on theoretical knowledge and text-based comprehension.

Limited Literature on PAI-Based Outdoor Learning. Research linking outdoor activities with Islamic values remains scarce and primarily descriptive, lacking a structured theoretical or pedagogical framework.

The Potential Synergy of the Two Approaches. Evidence from the literature suggests that integrating indoor and outdoor learning can reduce learning fatigue and increase student engagement through varied and experiential learning processes.

The Need for an Integrative Framework. Most sources recommend the development of a conceptual model that merges Islamic pedagogical theory with social practice to form a more holistic learning paradigm.

These findings highlight an epistemological gap—where PAI learning tends to focus more on the transmission of knowledge rather than the transformation of values and lived spiritual experience.

3. Evidence of Indoor and Outdoor Implementation in Empirical Contexts

The analysis of secondary data from implementation reports in ten PAI schools revealed the following findings:

80% of PAI teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of outdoor learning in enhancing student engagement (Yuningsih et al., 2024).

70% of students reported an increased understanding of Islamic values after participating in socially oriented activities based on religious teachings.

However, 90% of teachers indicated that they still lack a conceptual framework to systematically integrate the two approaches.

These secondary empirical findings reinforce the results of the literature analysis, emphasizing the urgent need to develop a structured and contextually grounded hybrid learning design for Islamic Religious Education.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a functional relationship between the cognitive and affective domains in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Indoor learning strengthens conceptual understanding, while outdoor learning provides opportunities for the internalization and practical application of religious values.

From a pedagogical perspective, the integration of these two approaches reflects the unity of knowledge (*'ilm*) and practice (*'amal*), which constitutes the epistemological foundation of Islamic education. This aligns with the view of Ratinen, Sariwaara, and Kuukkanen (2021), who emphasize that experience-based learning serves as an effective means of fostering reflective spiritual awareness.

The hybrid PAI learning model developed in this study has the potential to serve as a new paradigm in Islamic pedagogy. This model integrates the structured learning space (classroom) and the experiential learning space (field or community setting) to create a harmonious balance between rationality and spirituality in the educational process.

Research Implications

Theoretical Implications: This study enriches the body of literature by proposing a conceptual model of PAI learning that integrates both indoor and outdoor approaches, addressing the existing research gap in previous fragmented studies.

Practical Implications: The findings provide operational guidance for PAI teachers in designing contextual learning activities that integrate the study of Qur'anic texts with empirical and experiential learning, thereby enhancing both understanding and application of Islamic values.

Policy Implications: These findings may serve as a foundation for developing a more flexible and participatory national PAI curriculum, adaptable to diverse socio-cultural learning contexts and responsive to contemporary educational needs.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The primary limitation of this study lies in its qualitative literature-based nature, which has not yet been verified through empirical field data. Additionally, the school contexts analyzed remain limited in scope. Therefore, future research employing a mixed-methods approach is recommended to empirically test the effectiveness of the hybrid PAI learning model and to expand its applicability across more diverse cultural and demographic contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating indoor and outdoor learning approaches in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) offers an innovative solution for enhancing student engagement, deepening the internalization of Islamic values, and creating a holistic learning experience. Through a qualitative literature review, the study found that indoor learning provides a strong theoretical foundation, while outdoor learning enriches the affective and psychomotor dimensions through contextual experiences. This hybrid approach not only addresses educators' need for more varied teaching methods but also contributes to the development of a dynamic and relevant PAI pedagogy.

Practically, the study presents three key implications. First, for PAI teachers, the findings serve as a guide for designing lesson plans (RPP) that integrate classroom learning with field experiences such as *tadabbur alam* (nature contemplation), social projects, or visits to religious institutions. Second, for educational institutions, the research emphasizes the importance of providing structural support through school policies and facilities that enable the systematic implementation of outdoor learning activities. Third, for curriculum developers and policymakers, the study recommends adopting the hybrid approach as a thematic curriculum model that balances students' cognitive, spiritual, and social dimensions.

Concrete follow-up recommendations include: (1) Developing PAI learning modules based on indoor-outdoor integration with contextual activity guidelines; (2) Conducting teacher training on reflective-participatory instructional design that emphasizes the relationship between knowledge (*'ilm*)

and practice ('amal); and (3) Implementing experiential assessment policies to evaluate students' spiritual and social achievements

Moreover, this study recommends conducting further empirical research to test the effectiveness of the hybrid learning model in broader contexts, incorporating demographic, cultural, and technological variables. Thus, the results of this study are not only conceptual but also provide a practical foundation for transforming PAI learning toward a more contextual, reflective, and transformative paradigm of Islamic education.

Despite certain methodological and contextual limitations, this research establishes a foundation for future empirical studies aimed at supporting the development of an inclusive and effective PAI curriculum policy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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