

Humanistic Active Learning as a Student-Centered Approach to Improving Academic Achievement in Islamic Religious Education

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ABSTRACT : The integration of humanistic learning theory and active learning has become increasingly important in promoting student-centered instruction within Islamic Religious Education (IRE). However, empirical evidence regarding how these complementary approaches improve students' academic achievement and classroom engagement in authentic school settings remains limited. This study investigates the implementation of humanistic theory integrated with active learning and examines its contribution to improving students' learning experiences and academic achievement in Islamic Religious Education. A qualitative case study was conducted at a public junior secondary school in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Participants included the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, and students who were purposively selected based on their involvement in the instructional process. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The credibility of the findings was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking. The findings indicate that integrating humanistic principles with active learning creates a more democratic, interactive, and supportive learning environment that promotes student participation, self-confidence, conceptual understanding, collaboration, and academic achievement. Teacher pedagogical competence, positive classroom interaction, and learner-centered instructional practices emerged as important supporting factors, while limited instructional time, differences in students' readiness, and inadequate learning facilities remained major challenges. This study contributes to contemporary Islamic education by demonstrating that integrating humanistic learning with active learning provides an effective pedagogical framework for enhancing both academic achievement and holistic student development. The findings also offer practical guidance for teachers and educational policymakers seeking to strengthen student-centered learning in Islamic Religious Education.

Keywords: Humanistic Theory, Active Learning, Islamic Religious Education Learning, Achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam [PAI]) is a strategic component of Indonesia's national education system that plays a crucial role in fostering students' character, moral values, and spiritual development. However, the

current implementation of PAI at the junior secondary school level remains largely conventional, with learning activities dominated by teacher-centered instruction, lectures, and rote memorization rather than meaningful understanding. This instructional approach has contributed to low levels of student motivation, classroom participation, and academic achievement. Integrating humanistic learning theory, which emphasizes individual potential and personal growth, with active learning approaches that position students as active participants in the learning process is expected to transform PAI instruction into a more meaningful, interactive, and contextually relevant educational experience (Azra, 2021; Muhaimin, 2022).

Humanistic learning theory, primarily developed by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, emphasizes self-actualization, meaningful learning, and the optimal development of individual potential. Within the context of Islamic Religious Education, this perspective is highly relevant because it aligns with the Islamic concept of *fitrah*, which views human beings as possessing intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical capacities that should be developed holistically. Islamic humanistic education, rooted in the prophetic mission of Muhammad (peace be upon him) as *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (a mercy to all creation) (Qur'an 21:107), promotes the principles of humanization, liberation, and transcendence. These principles affirm that Islamic education should contribute to the well-being of humanity while encouraging active participation, dialogue, and holistic personal development. Consequently, humanistic theory provides a strong philosophical foundation for developing learner-centered and interactive approaches to PAI instruction (Langgulong, 2020).

The Qur'an also provides theological support for humanistic educational practices. Qur'an 4:9 emphasizes the responsibility of educating future generations so that they become intellectually, morally, and spiritually strong individuals. Likewise, Qur'an 16:125 instructs educators to invite others with wisdom, sound instruction, and respectful dialogue, principles that closely correspond to humanistic teaching practices. According to Ibn Kathir (2003), educational approaches that respect individual potential, encourage dialogue, and promote active participation are fully consistent with Islamic teachings. These scriptural foundations strengthen the legitimacy of integrating humanistic learning theory with active learning strategies in Islamic Religious Education.

From a legal perspective, Indonesia's National Education System Law (Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 1, Paragraph 1) states that education should actively facilitate students' personal development and maximize their potential. Furthermore, the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 16 of 2022 emphasizes that learning should be interactive, inspiring, enjoyable, challenging, and motivating while encouraging students' active participation according to their

developmental characteristics. These policies support the implementation of learner-centered humanistic approaches and active learning strategies in Islamic Religious Education, shifting the emphasis from memorization toward meaningful understanding and practical application of Islamic values in everyday life (Hamalik, 2015).

Preliminary observations conducted at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja revealed several challenges in the implementation of PAI instruction. Classroom learning remains dominated by conventional lecture-based methods, resulting in limited student engagement and average academic performance below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). Approximately 70% of instructional time is devoted to teacher explanations, while only 30% is allocated to student participation. In addition, educational resources such as multimedia projectors and library facilities are underutilized. These conditions contribute to students' perceptions that PAI is monotonous and lacks relevance to their daily lives, despite its essential role in developing moral values, character, and spiritual awareness (Mulyasa, 2021).

Active learning in Islamic Religious Education encompasses collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and other student-centered instructional strategies that encourage learners to explore, analyze, reflect upon, and apply Islamic values within authentic contexts. Integrating Islamic humanistic principles with active learning is expected to enhance students' intrinsic motivation while promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. More importantly, this approach supports the holistic development of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, enabling religious knowledge to be transformed into meaningful attitudes and everyday Islamic practices (Lickona, 2013; DePorter & Reardon, 1999).

UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja possesses considerable potential for implementing humanistic and active learning approaches. The school employs qualified Islamic Religious Education teachers holding bachelor's and master's degrees, provides adequate educational facilities, and serves students who predominantly come from practicing Muslim families. These conditions create favorable opportunities for developing innovative, participatory, and humanistic approaches to PAI instruction. Therefore, this study adopts a multiple-case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of how humanistic learning theory and active learning are implemented in Islamic Religious Education, as well as the factors influencing their successful implementation at the junior secondary school level (Daradjat, 2015).

This study aims to identify an effective instructional model for improving students' academic achievement and character development through Islamic Religious Education. It also contributes to the theoretical development of integrating humanistic

learning theory with active learning while providing practical recommendations for PAI teachers in designing more innovative, learner-centered, and humanistic instructional strategies. Furthermore, the study supports the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes differentiated instruction and the development of individual potential, thereby enabling students to achieve self-actualization while embodying Islamic values in both academic and everyday life.

METHODS

This study was conducted at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research site was selected because it was easily accessible and considered representative for obtaining relevant data concerning the implementation of humanistic theory and the active learning approach in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). The selection of the site was based on substantive theoretical considerations formulated in the working hypothesis, with the aim of obtaining an in-depth understanding of how humanistic principles and active learning are implemented in the teaching and learning process. A qualitative research method was employed because the phenomenon under investigation involves social dynamics, educational interactions, and human behavior that cannot be adequately measured using numerical data but require a holistic and interpretive understanding of real-life contexts (Nasution, 2003).

The study was conducted from November 2025 to February 2026, allowing sufficient time for comprehensive data collection and repeated observations to enhance data credibility. As a qualitative field study, the research was carried out directly within the natural school environment to capture the authentic experiences of students, teachers, and the broader educational setting. The research adopted a multidisciplinary perspective, incorporating pedagogical, legal, sociological, and psychological approaches. The pedagogical perspective examined instructional practices, the legal perspective explored compliance with national educational policies, the sociological perspective investigated interactions within the school community, and the psychological perspective analyzed the behaviors and learning experiences of both teachers and students (Mulyasa, 2021).

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through direct interaction with the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, and students using interviews and classroom observations. Secondary data were collected from official school documents, including the school's history, vision and mission statements, organizational structure, and information regarding educational facilities and infrastructure. The integration of

these two types of data facilitated triangulation and strengthened the credibility and comprehensiveness of the research findings (Azra, 2021).

In qualitative research, the researcher served as the primary research instrument (human instrument), responsible for determining the research focus, selecting participants, collecting and interpreting data, and drawing conclusions. Interview guides and observation protocols were used as flexible reference tools, enabling the researcher to adapt to the dynamics of the field while gaining a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives and the educational interactions occurring during the learning process. This approach allowed the researcher to explore meanings and experiences that could not be adequately captured through standardized questionnaires alone (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted systematically with the informed consent of participants to examine classroom interactions and learning activities. Semi-structured interviews provided participants with opportunities to express their perspectives openly and comprehensively. Documentation included written reports, lesson plans, photographs, and other records related to Islamic Religious Education instruction, school facilities, and the use of educational technology to support learning. These complementary data collection techniques enabled a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of humanistic and active learning practices (Nasution, 2003; Mulyasa, 2021).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019), consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, relevant information was selected, categorized, and organized according to emerging themes and patterns. Data displays were then developed to facilitate interpretation, identify relationships among findings, and compare the results with existing theories and previous studies. Conclusions were drawn inductively from the collected evidence to generate both theoretical insights and practical recommendations regarding the implementation of humanistic theory and active learning in Islamic Religious Education.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and time triangulation. Member checking was also conducted to verify that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected the participants' intended meanings. Triangulation involved comparing information obtained from different participants, data collection methods, and observation

periods, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Through this methodological approach, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of humanistic theory and the active learning approach in Islamic Religious Education, identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing its implementation, and formulate practical recommendations for developing more humanistic, participatory, and effective instructional practices at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja. Furthermore, the study is expected to contribute to the advancement of contemporary Islamic educational theory by promoting a holistic and practice-oriented perspective on teaching and learning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

A. Implementation of Humanistic Theory Through an Active Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja, Enrekang Regency

Based on the initial classroom observations, the learning environment of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja, Enrekang Regency, was generally conducive, orderly, and supportive of the instructional process. Interaction between teachers and students was largely two-way, although several learning sessions remained predominantly teacher-centered. Teachers demonstrated a friendly, approachable, and open attitude while striving to establish flexible communication, enabling many students to feel comfortable during classroom activities. Nevertheless, open communication had not yet been fully achieved, as some students remained passive and tended to wait for teacher direction before participating. Interviews with the school principal confirmed that creating a positive classroom climate and encouraging open communication were key priorities in IRE instruction, although greater efforts were still needed to increase active participation among all students.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers revealed that they attempted to create a classroom atmosphere that was both relaxed and academically focused. Teachers encouraged dialogue through question-and-answer sessions and group discussions while providing additional support to students who experienced difficulties understanding the lesson content. Another teacher explained that building closer relationships with students helped them feel respected and appreciated, although classroom participation continued to be dominated by only a small number of learners. The guidance and counseling teacher further noted that adopting a non-judgmental approach enabled students to feel more secure in expressing themselves,

despite the fact that some students still lacked confidence in speaking during classroom discussions. Students from Grades VII through IX also described the learning environment as comfortable and communicative; however, several admitted that they remained hesitant to express their opinions publicly. Overall, these findings indicate that IRE instruction has begun to reflect the principles of humanistic education by fostering a safe, respectful, and supportive classroom environment, although active participation has yet to be evenly distributed among all learners.

From the perspective of instructional management, Islamic Religious Education teachers demonstrated considerable effort in adapting lesson delivery to classroom conditions. Teachers presented learning materials gradually, repeated concepts that students found difficult to understand, and showed concern for differences in students' learning abilities. Nevertheless, these adaptations remained relatively general rather than individualized. Whole-class instructional strategies continued to dominate classroom practice, meaning that the diverse learning needs of individual students were not yet fully accommodated. Interviews with the principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and homeroom teachers confirmed that teachers consistently attempted to adjust their instructional approaches according to students' characteristics, although limited instructional time and available resources constrained the implementation of more individualized learning strategies.

Classroom observations and interview data also revealed the implementation of active learning through small-group discussions, collaborative learning activities, and interactive question-and-answer sessions. Students were given opportunities to present the outcomes of their group discussions orally before their classmates. However, the application of active learning remained limited and inconsistent. Learning activities such as contextual case studies, reflective discussions, and deeper exploration of Islamic values were not conducted regularly. Interviews with students across Grades VII, VIII, and IX confirmed that while interactive learning experiences had been introduced, the range of instructional methods remained relatively limited. These findings suggest that although active learning has been incorporated into Islamic Religious Education instruction, its implementation requires greater variety, consistency, and systematic planning to provide more meaningful learning experiences.

Student engagement during Islamic Religious Education lessons varied considerably. Cognitive engagement was reflected in students' responses to teachers' questions and their participation in classroom discussions, while social engagement was evident through collaboration in small-group activities. However, affective engagement and students' willingness to express personal opinions remained uneven across the classroom. Islamic Religious Education teachers acknowledged that while

some students participated actively, others consistently remained passive. Consequently, more adaptive pedagogical strategies are needed to ensure balanced participation and meaningful involvement among all learners.

The implementation of humanistic educational principles was clearly evident throughout the instructional process. Teachers consistently encouraged students to express their ideas, respected every response regardless of correctness, and provided positive reinforcement through praise, encouragement, and motivational feedback. They also connected Islamic Religious Education content with students' everyday experiences, thereby making learning more meaningful and relevant to real-life situations. Interviews with the principal, the vice principal for student affairs and curriculum, and homeroom teachers indicated that educators had made significant efforts to implement student-centered learning by valuing students' perspectives and encouraging active participation. Nevertheless, students' confidence levels continued to vary considerably. These findings demonstrate that humanistic educational principles have been meaningfully integrated into classroom practice, although additional pedagogical strategies are necessary to ensure that every student can participate confidently, reflectively, and inclusively.

Overall, the implementation of humanistic theory through an active learning approach in Islamic Religious Education at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja, Enrekang Regency, has contributed to the development of a positive, interactive, and supportive classroom environment. Teachers have made continuous efforts to adapt instructional methods to students' individual characteristics and learning abilities while fostering respectful classroom interactions and meaningful learning experiences. Despite these achievements, student participation remains uneven, and the implementation of active learning strategies is still relatively limited. Therefore, more adaptive, innovative, and diverse pedagogical approaches are needed to strengthen students' participation, self-confidence, and overall learning experiences in Islamic Religious Education.

B. The Impact of Implementing Humanistic Theory Through an Active Learning Approach on Students' Learning Achievement in Islamic Religious Education at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja, Enrekang Regency

Based on the initial classroom observations, students responded positively to Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction that incorporated humanistic theory through an active learning approach. Most students demonstrated attentiveness during teachers' explanations and showed enthusiasm when participating in discussions and question-and-answer sessions. Nevertheless, learning motivation was not evenly distributed across the classroom. Some students remained passive during the initial stages of instruction and became engaged only after teachers provided

stimulating questions or examples related to their everyday experiences. Interviews with the school principal indicated that interactive learning activities attracted students' attention more effectively than traditional lecture-based instruction, although sustained efforts were still required to strengthen students' learning motivation. Similarly, the vice principals for student affairs and curriculum emphasized that active learning improved students' concentration and confidence, while acknowledging that continuous motivational support was necessary to maintain these positive responses consistently.

Student participation during Islamic Religious Education lessons varied considerably. Students with stronger communication skills and greater self-confidence were more likely to ask questions, answer teachers' inquiries, and express their opinions during classroom discussions. In contrast, some students remained passive and primarily assumed the role of listeners. Collaborative group discussions promoted social participation; however, contributions within each group were often uneven and tended to be dominated by only a few students. Interviews with teachers and the school principal confirmed that although student participation had gradually improved, further efforts were required to encourage more balanced and inclusive classroom engagement. Students from different grade levels also reported that they still lacked confidence in expressing their opinions before the entire class, whereas small-group discussions made them feel more comfortable participating. These findings suggest that although active learning has increased student engagement, more inclusive pedagogical strategies are needed to encourage meaningful participation from all learners.

Classroom observations further revealed that many students were able to understand and verbally explain Islamic Religious Education concepts after participating in active learning activities. Students who were actively engaged in the instructional process demonstrated a greater ability to relate lesson content to real-life situations. However, their ability to organize and communicate ideas in written form remained inconsistent. Although conceptual understanding had begun to develop, additional guidance and instructional support were still necessary to strengthen students' written expression. Interviews with teachers, the principal, and the vice principals supported these findings, indicating that active learning enhanced students' oral comprehension and discussion skills, while their written academic performance required further improvement to achieve more consistent learning outcomes.

Beyond conceptual understanding, the implementation of humanistic and active learning approaches also contributed to positive changes in students' learning behaviors. Students became increasingly willing to express their opinions,

demonstrated greater self-confidence, and developed stronger collaborative skills during group activities. Nevertheless, independent learning responsibility continued to vary across individuals and grade levels. Interviews with teachers, the principal, and homeroom teachers confirmed noticeable improvements in students' confidence, cooperation, and sense of responsibility, although these behavioral changes had not yet become consistently evident among all students.

Early indicators of improved academic achievement in Islamic Religious Education were reflected in the increased relevance and accuracy of students' responses, deeper conceptual understanding, and more successful attainment of instructional objectives. Students demonstrated a stronger ability to explain Islamic values within the context of everyday life, although written assessment results continued to vary among individuals. Interviews with teachers, the principal, vice principals, and homeroom teachers consistently indicated that the implementation of humanistic theory through an active learning approach made a positive contribution to students' academic achievement. However, achieving more equitable learning outcomes across all students requires the consistent application of effective instructional strategies.

Overall, the findings indicate that implementing humanistic theory through an active learning approach has had a positive impact on students' learning achievement in Islamic Religious Education at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja, Enrekang Regency. The approach has enhanced students' attention, classroom participation, conceptual understanding, self-confidence, collaborative abilities, and oral communication skills. Despite these encouraging outcomes, improvements in learning motivation, academic writing skills, and active participation among all students remain necessary. Therefore, more adaptive, inclusive, and consistently implemented pedagogical strategies are essential to maximize and equalize students' academic achievement in Islamic Religious Education.

C. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Humanistic Theory Through an Active Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja, Enrekang Regency

1. Supporting Factors

a. Teachers' Pedagogical Competence and Orientation in Islamic Religious Education

The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers possess a fundamental understanding of the principles of humanistic education and active learning. Teachers consistently strive to create a communicative learning environment by encouraging students to ask questions, express their opinions, and actively participate in classroom discussions rather than

positioning themselves as the sole source of knowledge. Common instructional strategies include question-and-answer sessions and small-group discussions that promote student interaction and engagement. Teachers also adapt their instructional approaches according to students' characteristics and learning abilities by providing additional explanations for students who require further assistance, organizing heterogeneous learning groups, and offering gradual instructional guidance. Although the implementation of humanistic principles and active learning has become a regular component of classroom practice, it remains partial and requires further strengthening to become more systematic and comprehensive.

b. A Safe, Democratic, and Supportive Classroom Climate

A positive classroom climate emerged as another important supporting factor. Teachers foster a learning environment that is comfortable, safe, and respectful toward students. The consistent use of polite language, positive reinforcement, and a non-judgmental teaching approach enhances students' sense of security and encourages them to express their ideas with greater confidence. Two-way communication between teachers and students, as well as peer interaction among students, has been established, although the level of participation varies among individuals. Overall, this supportive classroom atmosphere provides favorable conditions for implementing both active learning and humanistic educational practices.

c. Compatibility of the Active Learning Approach with the Nature of Islamic Religious Education

The characteristics of Islamic Religious Education itself strongly support the application of active learning. Since the subject emphasizes values, attitudes, moral development, and religious understanding, it naturally aligns with interactive instructional approaches. Teaching methods such as classroom discussions, question-and-answer activities, simple case studies, and reflective learning based on students' personal experiences enable learners to interpret and internalize Islamic values within the context of everyday life. Although these strategies have proven effective in facilitating meaningful learning, their implementation still requires greater consistency across different grade levels.

2. Inhibiting Factors

a. Limited Instructional Time

One of the primary challenges identified in the study is the limited instructional time allocated to Islamic Religious Education. The restricted class periods often prevent teachers from conducting comprehensive active learning activities such as extended discussions, reflective exercises, and collaborative

problem-solving tasks. Consequently, teachers frequently prioritize the completion of curriculum content, leaving less opportunity for meaningful student participation. To address these limitations, teachers employ efficient instructional strategies, including focused question-and-answer sessions, brief group discussions, careful time management, and follow-up assignments completed outside regular classroom hours.

b. Differences in Students' Abilities, Motivation, and Self-Confidence

Variations in students' academic abilities, motivation, and confidence also present significant challenges to implementing active learning effectively. Students with stronger academic performance and higher self-confidence tend to participate more actively in classroom discussions, whereas those with lower confidence or weaker academic abilities often remain passive. To encourage broader participation, teachers gradually involve quieter students by asking scaffolded questions, organizing small-group discussions, assigning specific responsibilities within groups, and providing positive reinforcement. These findings indicate that classroom participation is influenced not only by students' academic competence but also by psychological factors such as motivation, confidence, and willingness to engage.

c. Limited Educational Facilities and Instructional Support

Another obstacle concerns the limited availability of educational facilities and instructional resources. Classroom layouts and learning media do not always adequately support collaborative activities or diverse active learning strategies. As a result, teachers frequently rely on relatively simple instructional methods, reducing opportunities to implement a wider variety of student-centered learning experiences. Participants emphasized the need for improved educational facilities, more diverse instructional media, continuous professional development for teachers, strengthened curriculum planning and instructional supervision, and school policies that consistently promote student-centered learning. These improvements are considered essential for optimizing the implementation of humanistic theory and active learning in Islamic Religious Education.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of humanistic theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja reflects an educational approach that emphasizes respect for students' individuality, the development of their potential, and the creation of a supportive learning environment. The findings indicate that teachers strive to establish a classroom atmosphere characterized by openness, mutual respect, and positive interaction, enabling students to express their ideas without fear

of judgment. Nevertheless, student participation remains uneven, as some learners continue to demonstrate limited confidence during classroom discussions. These findings are consistent with Lickona (2013) and Mulyasa (2018), who argue that character education becomes more effective when learning environments recognize students as unique individuals with diverse learning needs. Similarly, Al-Ghazali (2011) emphasized that effective Islamic education should nurture learners holistically by considering their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development.

The implementation of the active learning approach is evident through classroom discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and collaborative group activities that encourage students to engage directly with learning materials. However, classroom observations revealed that these strategies have not yet been implemented consistently in every lesson, primarily because of limited instructional time and curriculum demands. These findings support the perspectives of DePorter and Reardon (1999), Hamalik (2015), and Bruner (1966), who emphasize that meaningful learning occurs when students actively construct knowledge through participation, inquiry, and reflection. Teachers acknowledged that balancing curriculum coverage with active learning activities remains a significant challenge, often reducing opportunities for reflective discussions and contextual problem-solving.

A safe, democratic, and supportive classroom climate emerged as one of the strongest facilitating factors for implementing humanistic learning. Teachers consistently employed respectful language, encouraged student participation, and provided positive reinforcement for every contribution. Such practices help reduce students' anxiety and promote greater confidence during learning activities. These findings align with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory and Lickona's (2013) concept of positive classroom culture, both of which highlight the importance of supportive interpersonal relationships in enhancing student motivation and engagement. Despite these positive conditions, several students still exhibited hesitation in expressing their opinions, indicating the need for more inclusive pedagogical strategies that address differences in confidence and communication skills.

Another important finding concerns the compatibility of active learning with the characteristics of Islamic Religious Education. Since PAI emphasizes values, morality, and character formation, learning strategies such as discussion, questioning, and contextual examples effectively facilitate students' understanding and internalization of Islamic teachings. This finding is consistent with the views of Muhaimin (2022) and Banks (2015), who argue that experiential and participatory learning strengthens value formation by connecting theoretical concepts with real-life experiences. Teachers frequently related religious concepts to students' daily lives,

making learning more meaningful and applicable. Nevertheless, structured reflection and case-based learning remain relatively limited and should be expanded to deepen students' moral reasoning.

The study also identified several obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of humanistic and active learning approaches. Limited classroom facilities, insufficient instructional media, and restricted access to educational technology constrain teachers' ability to employ diverse learning strategies. These findings correspond with Ally (2019) and Deci and Ryan (1985), who emphasize that supportive learning environments and adequate educational resources are essential for maximizing student engagement and autonomous learning. Consequently, institutional support through improved facilities, professional development programs, and school policies that encourage student-centered learning is essential for sustaining educational innovation.

Differences in students' motivation, academic ability, and self-confidence also significantly influence participation during classroom activities. Students with higher academic achievement and stronger self-confidence tend to dominate discussions, whereas those with lower confidence often remain passive observers. This finding supports Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, which suggests that learners' beliefs in their own capabilities strongly affect their willingness to participate in learning activities. Teachers attempted to address this issue by organizing heterogeneous learning groups, providing gradual questioning techniques, and offering continuous positive reinforcement. Although these strategies have produced encouraging results, further refinement is needed to ensure that all students can participate actively regardless of their academic or psychological differences.

Overall, the implementation of humanistic theory integrated with active learning has positively influenced student engagement, conceptual understanding, and character development in Islamic Religious Education at UPT SMP Negeri 2 Anggeraja. Nevertheless, challenges related to instructional time, learning facilities, variations in student readiness, and consistency of implementation remain. Therefore, strengthening teacher professional development, improving educational infrastructure, and reinforcing school policies that support student-centered learning are recommended to optimize the effectiveness of this approach. With systematic and sustainable implementation, humanistic and active learning approaches have substantial potential to improve academic achievement, character development, and the overall quality of Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating humanistic learning theory with active learning provides an effective pedagogical approach for improving students' academic achievement and classroom engagement in Islamic Religious Education. The implementation of learner-centered instructional practices enabled teachers to create democratic, supportive, and interactive learning environments where students were encouraged to participate actively, express their opinions confidently, collaborate with peers, and connect Islamic values with authentic everyday experiences. These learning conditions contributed not only to improvements in students' conceptual understanding and academic performance but also to the development of self-confidence, responsibility, and positive learning attitudes.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the application of humanistic learning theory within Islamic Religious Education by demonstrating that its integration with active learning supports holistic student development across cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. The findings reinforce learner-centered education as a practical framework for transforming Islamic Religious Education from knowledge transmission into meaningful learning that promotes critical thinking, collaboration, and character development. Practically, the study suggests that schools should strengthen teacher professional development, encourage wider implementation of active learning strategies, improve instructional resources, and establish institutional policies that consistently support student-centered learning. These efforts are essential for creating sustainable improvements in both instructional quality and student learning outcomes.

This study is limited to a single qualitative case study conducted in one junior secondary school, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Future research is therefore recommended to investigate the implementation of humanistic active learning across diverse schools and educational levels using comparative or mixed-methods approaches. Further studies should also examine the long-term influence of this pedagogical integration on students' academic achievement, character formation, critical thinking, and lifelong learning competencies, thereby enriching the evidence base for learner-centered Islamic Religious Education.

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