

Learning Islamic Civilization: Between Academic Theory and Classroom Practice in Students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze the relationship, suitability, and gap between the academic theory of Islamic Civilization learning and classroom learning practices in students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI).

Methodology: This descriptive qualitative research used classroom observation techniques, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of RPS documents and teaching materials. Data collection involved 31 PGMI students. Data analysis used observation guideline instruments, interview guidelines, field notes, Likert scale, and Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive analysis models which included data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion verification.

Main Findings: Islamic Civilization Learning received positive responses for material understanding (66.5%), learning methods and media (66.5%), and the integration of theory and practice (69.7%). The relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers received the highest positive response (74.2%). Responses outside the positive category were 33.5% for learning methods and media and 30.3% for the integration of theory and practice.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study contributes a novel theory–practice perspective by examining how constructivist and cognitivist principles are translated into Islamic Civilization classroom practices among PGMI students. It goes beyond evaluating specific methods or media by identifying the theory–practice gap, implementation barriers, and pedagogical implications for strengthening the preparation of prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Learning the History of Islamic Culture (SKI) has an important position in Islamic education because it is not only oriented towards mastering historical facts and chronology, but also on the ability of students to understand the intellectual, social, political, cultural, and values that make up Islamic civilization. In the context of higher education, especially in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI), learning Islamic civilization has a more complex dimension because students are not only prepared to understand the substance of history, but also to have pedagogical abilities in transforming this knowledge into meaningful

learning for students at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level. Thus, learning Islamic civilization should not stop at mastering historical material, but being able to bring together academic theories about learning with pedagogical practices in the classroom.

The development of SKI learning studies shows a change in orientation from conventional learning to more active, interactive, collaborative, and innovative learning. Siti Norhidayah et al. [1] through bibliometric analysis, found an increase in publications on SKI learning methods from 2021 until reaching its peak in 2023. These developments show a shift from the use of conventional methods such as stories and discussions to more interactive methods, including role playing, team quizzes, and recitations. These findings show that academically there is a stronger awareness of the importance of innovation in Islamic history learning. However, changes at the level of theory and academic studies do not necessarily automatically result in the same changes in classroom practice.

The problem of the gap between theory and practice of learning is also found in a broader study of constructivist approaches. Saragih et al. [2] show that constructivist approaches have strong empirical evidence in increasing student engagement, higher-level thinking skills, and meaningful learning outcomes. However, its application in the classroom is still inconsistent because it is influenced by curriculum inalignments, cultural resistance, and various conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, political, and technological problems. This shows that ideal learning theory cannot always be fully applied in the reality of the classroom. In other words, there is a space between what is academically seen as good learning and what educators can practically do in certain learning situations.

In SKI learning in higher education, this gap is becoming increasingly important to be studied. Trias Andika MS [3] found that the lecture method is still predominantly used in teaching SKI in universities, although this method is considered less effective in encouraging active student involvement. Another problem is the low interest of students because the material is often perceived as memorization, the limited resources of multimedia-based interactive learning, and the lack of competence of lecturers in adapting educational technology. The study recommends learning innovations through flipped classrooms, the use of case studies that connect history with modern social reality, and the improvement of lecturers' digital competence. These findings are relevant for learning for PGMI students because prospective teachers need learning experiences that at the same time strengthen their mastery of historical material and provide a model of learning practices that they can apply when they become teachers.

This condition is also seen in the research of Khofia and Anugera [4] regarding the use of information technology in SKI learning at PTKI East Kalimantan. The study showed that students' perception of the use of information technology was still in the low category with an overall score of 43.2%; the aspect of lecturers' skills in using technology obtained a score of 40.7%, the availability of facilities and infrastructure 46.3%, and the integration of technology in learning 42.7%. Thus, the problem of SKI learning is not solely related to the choice of methods, but also concerns the readiness of educators, facilities, and the ability to integrate technology into the learning process.

On the other hand, various studies have shown that Islamic history learning can be developed through more active and contextual strategies. Samoda [5], for example, found that the application of mind mapping in SPI learning at IAIN Ponorogo was able to increase students' understanding of the material. Students became more active through reading activities, mind mapping preparation, video presentations, and discussions, while lecturers acted as facilitators, motivators, and evaluators. Meanwhile, Sahgianor and Jasiah's research [6] shows that YouTube-based learning media can increase students' interest, motivation, engagement, and independence in SPI learning; around 75% of students in the study view SKI learning as monotonous due to the dominance of lectures and texts, while 82% of students stated that they are more motivated to use video than conventional lecture learning.

In addition to the issue of methods and technology, the learning of Islamic civilization also needs to be directed at the development of critical thinking skills, the connection between knowledge and real life, and the internalization of values. Pratama and Romadhon [7] emphasized the importance of integrating multicultural educational values such as tolerance, equality, democracy, and justice in SPI learning. These values can be found in the history of Islam from the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH to the development of Islam in the archipelago and can be a means to build multicultural awareness and inclusive attitudes of students. The same can be seen in the research of Sutrisno and Agustina [8] who developed a SKI module based on multicultural values by utilizing Project-Based Learning, Inquiry-Based Learning, Cooperative Learning, and Gallery Walk. The model not only increases participation and understanding of history, but also curiosity, love for knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the ability of students/students to connect historical material with daily life.

Theoretically, these developments are in line with constructivist and cognitivist views that place students as active subjects in building and processing knowledge. Fuad et al. [9] explain that constructivism has become the foundation for the development of various innovative learning models that are student-centered, increasing engagement, motivation, concept understanding, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Meanwhile, Ni'amah and Hafidzulloh [10] show that cognitivist theory provides an important basis for learning

design by paying attention to the internal processes of students in obtaining, understanding, processing, and storing knowledge. Thus, academic theory has actually provided various conceptual frameworks for developing Islamic history learning that is active, meaningful, contextual, and in accordance with the cognitive development of students.

However, based on these studies, there is still an important research space. Some of the previous research focused more on the effectiveness of a specific method or media, such as mind mapping, video, digital technology, constructivism, or certain learning models. Other studies discuss the problem of SKI learning in general, but have not specifically examined how academic theories about learning Islamic civilization deal with the real practice of learning in PGMI students. In fact, PGMI students have different characteristics and needs because they are prepared as prospective madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers. They need not only knowledge of Islamic history, but also experience of how this knowledge is constructed, discussed, contextualized, and transformed into learning practices.

Based on these conditions, this study is directed to examine the learning of Islamic civilization by placing the relationship between academic theory and classroom practice as the main focus. The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type to obtain an in-depth picture of the learning process, the form of application of theory in classroom practice, student responses and involvement, and various obstacles that arise during learning. Data analysis refers to the Miles and Huberman interactive model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand learning phenomena in their entirety based on experiences and dynamics that occur in the classroom, rather than simply measuring learning success based on numbers.

The new value of this research lies in the effort to bring together the realm of academic theory with the pedagogical reality of learning Islamic civilization in PGMI students. The research not only asks about what learning methods are effective, but further analyzes how the learning concepts that develop in academic literature are translated by teachers into classroom practice, how students experience the process, and what factors support or hinder the connection between theory and practice. This focus is important because previous studies have shown that learning innovations have often developed theoretically, but their implementation in the classroom still faces various obstacles. Thus, this research is expected to produce a more contextual understanding of the learning form of Islamic civilization that is not only academically scientific, but also pedagogical, participatory, contextual, and relevant to the needs of prospective MI teachers in the 21st century education era.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research is directed to understand in depth the learning process of Islamic Civilization as it takes place in the classroom context, especially regarding the relationship between academic concepts or theories and learning practices experienced by students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI). Qualitative research allows researchers to understand educational phenomena based on the experiences, views, actions, and interactions of the research subjects in their natural context. The descriptive qualitative design is used because the research is not directed to test hypotheses or measure the relationship between variables statistically, but to systematically describe the form of learning, strategies used, student experiences, and the suitability between theoretical foundations and learning practices.

To complement the qualitative data, a questionnaire was used as a supporting descriptive instrument to identify students' responses to the Islamic Civilization learning process. The questionnaire data were presented descriptively using percentages and were not used for inferential statistical analysis or hypothesis testing. The questionnaire findings were used to complement and support the interpretation of data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation.

This research was carried out in the learning of the Islamic Cultural History (SKI)/History of Islamic Civilization course for students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI). The researcher is positioned as an internship student of the Master of Islamic Religious Education (MPAI) who is directly involved in the learning process. This position provides an opportunity for the researcher to directly observe the learning process, lecturer-student interaction, learning strategies, media use, student responses, and forms of application of learning theory in classroom practice. However, the researcher's involvement is still directed reflexively so that personal experience does not dominate the interpretation of research data.

2.2. Focus and research subject

The focus of the research is directed at four main aspects, namely: (1) the understanding and use of academic theory in the learning of Islamic Civilization; (2) the form of learning practice that takes place in the classroom; (3) the relationship or gap between learning theory and classroom practice; and (4) the direction of

the development of Islamic Civilization learning that is relevant to the characteristics of PGMI students and the demands of 21st century learning. The research was conducted in the Islamic Cultural History (SKI)/History of Islamic Civilization course in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI). The population consisted of 93 PGMI students from the 2025 cohort, while the participants in this study were 31 students from Class B. Participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the Islamic Civilization learning process that constituted the focus of the research.

The researcher was positioned as an internship student of the Master of Islamic Religious Education (MPAI) who was directly involved in the learning process. This position enabled the researcher to observe classroom activities, lecturer–student interactions, learning strategies, use of learning media, and student responses. The researcher maintained a reflexive position throughout the research process to minimize the influence of personal experience on data interpretation.

Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the Islamic Civilization learning process and their relevance to the research objectives. The 31 students from Class B were the main participants, while information from the teaching lecturer was used as supporting data to strengthen the interpretation of classroom learning practices when relevant.

2.3. Data collection sources and techniques

Research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the learning process and research participants through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire administered to 31 students of Class B. The questionnaire was used as a supporting descriptive instrument to identify students' responses to the Islamic Civilization learning process. Secondary data were obtained from documents related to learning, such as the Semester Learning Plan (RPS), modules or teaching materials, presentation materials, student assignments, assessment instruments, photographs of learning activities, and other relevant documents.

Data collection was carried out through four techniques, namely observation, interviews, questionnaire, and documentation. First, observation was conducted directly during the SKI learning process. The aspects observed included the opening of learning, the delivery of learning objectives, strategies and methods used, lecturer-student interaction patterns, student activities, the use of media and learning resources, discussions or presentations, assignments, assessments, and learning reflections. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and, when relevant, the teaching lecturer. Interviews with students were directed to obtain information about their learning experiences, understanding of the material, perceptions of learning methods, level of involvement, difficulties faced, the use of media and technology, and their views on the relevance of Islamic Civilization materials to the needs of prospective MI teachers. Interviews with lecturers focused on considerations in choosing methods, the use of learning theories, learning planning, strategies for overcoming classroom obstacles, and evaluation of learning objectives. Third, a questionnaire consisting of 20 statements was administered to the 31 participating students. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Somewhat Agree (CS), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS). The questionnaire covered students' understanding of the material, learning methods and media, the relationship between theory and practice, and the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers. The questionnaire results were analyzed descriptively and used to complement the qualitative findings. Fourth, documentation was used to complement and verify the data obtained from observation, interviews, and the questionnaire. The documents analyzed included the RPS, teaching materials, PowerPoint presentations, modules, student worksheets, student work, assessment instruments, photographs of learning activities, and other relevant documents. Document analysis was used to compare the planned learning activities with their implementation in the classroom.

2.4. Research instruments

To assist in the data collection process, the researcher used supporting instruments in the form of observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guidelines, a questionnaire, documentation sheets, and field notes. The researcher functioned as the main instrument in collecting and interpreting qualitative data, while the supporting instruments were used to guide the data collection process. The observation guidelines were used to record classroom learning activities, including learning methods, lecturer-student interactions, student activities, use of learning media, discussions, presentations, assignments, assessments, and learning reflections. The semi-structured interview guidelines were developed based on the research focus to explore students' learning experiences, understanding of the material, perceptions of learning methods, involvement, difficulties, and views on the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning to the needs of prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements and was administered to 31 students of Class B. It used a five-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Somewhat Agree (CS), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS). The questionnaire covered four aspects: students' understanding and mastery of Islamic Civilization material; learning methods, media, and learning processes; the relationship between theory, practice,

and contextualization; and the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers. The questionnaire served as a supporting descriptive instrument, and its results were analyzed using descriptive percentages to complement the qualitative findings. Documentation sheets and field notes were used to record and organize relevant information obtained during the research process. The instruments were used complementarily to obtain information from different sources and to support the interpretation and verification of the research findings.

2.5. Research Procedure

The research was carried out chronologically through several stages, namely preparation, data collection, data organization, data analysis, data validity testing, and drawing conclusions. In the preparation stage, the researcher identified the learning problems of Islamic Civilization, conducted a literature review, determined the research focus, prepared the observation and interview instruments, developed the questionnaire, determined the research participants, and prepared the necessary documents.

At the data collection stage, the researcher observed the learning process, recorded important events in field notes, conducted semi-structured interviews with research participants, administered the questionnaire to 31 students of Class B, and collected relevant learning documents. Data collection was carried out in stages and was flexible. If the observation results showed a phenomenon that required further clarification, the researcher developed interview questions to obtain deeper explanations from students or the teaching lecturer. The questionnaire was used as a supporting descriptive instrument to obtain information about students' responses to the Islamic Civilization learning process.

The next stage was data organization. The interview data were transcribed, observation notes were organized, questionnaire responses were tabulated, and learning documents were classified based on their type and relevance to the research focus. All qualitative data were then coded to facilitate the grouping and interpretation process, while the questionnaire responses were organized according to the five-point Likert scale and the research indicators. Furthermore, qualitative data analysis was carried out interactively by referring to the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) model. The model places data analysis as a process that takes place interactively and iteratively, rather than as an activity conducted only after all data have been collected. This model consists of three main components, namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, focused, simplified, abstracted, and transformed the raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Data that were not related to the research focus were set aside, while data related to learning theory, classroom practices, student involvement, methods, media, assessment, and theory-practice gaps were coded and grouped. The questionnaire data were not subjected to qualitative coding but were summarized descriptively to identify the distribution of student responses.

At the data display stage, the condensed qualitative data were compiled in the form of narrative descriptions, matrices, categorization tables, and interthematic relationships. The data display was directed to show patterns between the theories used and the learning practices found in the classroom. For example, data could be presented in the categories of "learning theory", "learning practice", "student response", "barrier", and "theory-practice gap". The questionnaire results were presented descriptively using percentages to complement the qualitative findings.

At the stage of drawing and verifying conclusions, the researcher identified patterns, relationships, similarities, differences, and trends that emerged from the data. Conclusions were not established based on a single finding but were verified continuously by comparing observation data, interview results, questionnaire findings, and relevant documents. Thus, the final conclusions were based on an interpretation supported by evidence from different data sources.

2.6. Data validity testing

Data validity testing is carried out to ensure that research findings truly describe the learning phenomenon being studied. Data validity testing is carried out through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained from students with information from lecturers or learning documents. For example, when students state that learning has used a discussion approach, the statement is compared with the results of observations and learning tools. Triangulation techniques are carried out by comparing information obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. If the three techniques show the same tendency, then the data has stronger support. Member checking is carried out by reconfirming the results of the interview or initial interpretation to the informant to ensure that the researcher's meaning does not deviate from the experience intended by the informant. In addition, the researcher conducted a re-examination of field notes, interview transcripts, codes, categories, and provisional conclusions.

2.7. Data analysis and interpretation

Data validity testing was conducted to ensure that the research findings accurately represented the learning phenomenon being studied. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from students with information from the teaching lecturer and relevant learning documents. For example, when students stated that learning used a discussion approach, the statement was compared with classroom observation findings and the available learning documents.

Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The questionnaire findings were used as supporting descriptive evidence and were compared with qualitative findings from the other data collection techniques to identify consistency or differences in the findings. Member checking was conducted by reconfirming relevant interview results or initial interpretations with the informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation accurately reflected the experiences intended by the informants. In addition, the researcher re-examined field notes, interview transcripts, codes, categories, questionnaire summaries, and provisional conclusions before drawing the final conclusions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Questionnaire Results: Students' Responses to Islamic Civilization Learning

The results of the Islamic Civilization learning questionnaire were obtained from the responses of 31 students to 20 statements that covered several aspects, namely the understanding of materials, learning methods and media, the relationship between theory and practice, and the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers. Each statement uses a Likert scale with five answer choices, namely Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Strongly Agree (CS), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS). The results of student responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Student Responses to Islamic Civilization Learning

No	Indicators/Statements	SS	S	CS	TS	STS
1	The material of Islamic civilization taught is easy for me to understand	6	19	6	0	0
2	The lecturer explained the concepts of Islamic civilization systematically	5	18	8	0	0
3	I understand the development of Islamic civilization from the ancient to modern times	3	16	12	0	0
4	The references used in learning help me understand the material	5	12	14	0	0
5	I am able to explain the material I have learned back to others	1	18	11	1	0
6	Lecturers use a variety of learning methods	4	16	11	0	0
7	Learning encourages students to actively discuss	11	10	10	0	0
8	Group presentations helped me understand the material of Islamic civilization	9	10	12	0	0
9	Learning in the classroom provides an opportunity to think	4	18	8	1	0
10	The learning media used by lecturers helps the learning process	6	15	10	0	0
11	The theoretical material taught is in accordance with the learning practice in the classroom	4	20	7	0	0

12	The examples given by the lecturer help connect theory with reality	6	13	12	0	0
13	I can see the relevance of Islamic civilization to life today	6	16	8	1	0
14	The learning of Islamic civilization does not only focus on memorizing material	6	16	9	0	0
15	Learning helps syaa understand the values of Islamic civilization contextually	4	17	10	0	0
16	Learning Islamic civilization added to my Islamic insight	7	17	7	0	0
17	The material learned is useful for prospective madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers	11	13	6	1	0
18	Learning improves my historical thinking skills	10	12	9	0	0
19	Learning helps to form positive character and attitudes	8	14	9	0	0
20	I am motivated to learn more about Islamic history and civilization	7	16	8	0	0

Based on Table 1, students generally provided positive responses to Islamic Civilization learning. For the indicator of understanding and mastery of the material, 66.5% of the responses were in the Strongly Agree and Agree categories. The responses covered students' understanding of the Islamic Civilization materials, the systematic explanation of concepts, understanding of the development of Islamic civilization, the usefulness of references, and the ability to explain the material to others.

For the indicator of learning methods, media, and learning processes, 66.5% of the responses were in the Strongly Agree and Agree categories. The responses concerned the variety of learning methods, opportunities for active discussion, group presentations, opportunities to think, and the use of learning media. The remaining 33.5% of responses were in the Somewhat Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree categories.

For the indicator of the integration of theory, practice, and contextualization, 69.7% of the responses were in the Strongly Agree and Agree categories. The responses concerned the relationship between theoretical material and classroom learning practices, examples provided by the lecturer to connect theory with reality, the relevance of Islamic Civilization to contemporary life, learning that was not limited to memorization, and contextual understanding of Islamic Civilization values. The remaining 30.3% of responses were in the Somewhat Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree categories.

The indicator of the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers and the development of students' insight obtained the highest positive response, at 74.2%. The responses covered the contextual understanding of Islamic Civilization values, increased Islamic insight, the usefulness of the material for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers, improvement of historical thinking skills, character and attitude development, and motivation to learn more about Islamic history and civilization.

3.2. Observation Results

The classroom observations showed that Islamic Civilization learning involved discussions, group presentations, question-and-answer activities, and opportunities for students to express their understanding. The learning process also involved the use of learning media and supporting learning materials. The observations showed differences in student participation during the learning activities. Some students actively participated in discussions and presentations, while others participated less actively. The observed learning activities also included explanations of Islamic Civilization materials and opportunities for students to relate the material to examples and learning situations.

3.3. Interview Results

The interview data showed that students experienced Islamic Civilization learning through explanations of the material, discussions, presentations, and the use of learning media. Students described these activities as part of their classroom learning experiences. The interviews also showed differences in students' understanding and participation. Some students reported that they could follow the learning activities and understand the materials, while others experienced difficulties with certain materials or participated less actively in classroom activities. Regarding the relationship between theory and practice, students reported that the theoretical material was connected with classroom activities and examples. However, the interviews also indicated that the implementation of theoretical principles was not experienced equally in all learning activities.

3.4. Documentation Results

The documentation collected during the research consisted of learning plans, teaching materials, presentation materials, assignments, and other documents related to Islamic Civilization learning. These documents provided information about the planning and implementation of learning activities. The documented learning activities included materials and activities related to the Islamic Civilization course. The documentation also provided supporting information for the classroom activities identified through observation and interviews.

3.5. Summary of Findings

The findings from the questionnaire, observation, interviews, and documentation show several patterns in Islamic Civilization learning. The questionnaire indicated positive student responses in the four measured aspects, with the highest positive response concerning the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers. Observation and interview data showed that classroom learning involved discussions, presentations, student participation, learning media, and contextual examples. Documentation provided supporting evidence regarding the planned and implemented learning activities. The data also showed that the relationship between academic theory and classroom practice was present in the learning process, although student responses and classroom participation were not completely uniform. These findings provide the basis for the interpretation and discussion of the relationship between academic learning theories and classroom practice presented in the following section.

3.6. Discussion

3.6.1. Students' Understanding of Islamic Civilization and Learning Theory

The findings indicate that students generally perceived their understanding of Islamic Civilization positively. Rather than interpreting this response simply as an indication of successful content delivery, the finding can be understood in relation to how students process, organize, and reconstruct historical knowledge. The questionnaire items addressed students' understanding of the material, systematic explanation of concepts, understanding of the development of Islamic civilization, the usefulness of references, and the ability to explain learned material to others. Finding is consistent with the cognitivist perspective, which emphasizes the internal processes through which learners acquire, organize, store, and use information. Ni'amah and Hafidzulloh explain that cognitivist learning emphasizes how learners process information rather than merely receive information from teachers. In Islamic Civilization learning, this perspective is relevant because historical knowledge involves relationships among events, social changes, political developments, intellectual developments, and cultural transformations [10]. The systematic presentation of historical material can therefore provide a structure through which students organize historical information into meaningful knowledge.

The finding is also related to constructivist learning principles. Fuad et al. explain that constructivism positions students as active subjects who construct knowledge through experience, interaction, and engagement. The questionnaire responses concerning students' ability to explain material and understand Islamic Civilization across historical periods suggest that learning involved more than simply receiving chronological information [9]. Aminuddin similarly emphasizes the historical and empirical dimensions of Islamic Civilization studies, which require students to examine Muslim societies within their social, political, intellectual, and cultural contexts [11]. However, the positive responses should not be interpreted as evidence that all students achieved the same level of understanding. Some responses remained in the Somewhat Agree category, and one Disagree response appeared in an item concerning students' ability to explain previously learned material. This variation is important because students' positive perceptions do not necessarily represent identical levels of historical understanding. Fakhrudin et al. similarly reported that prospective teachers generally demonstrated positive academic self-concepts and Islamic History literacy, while some dimensions of deeper historical understanding still required attention [12].

For PGMI students, this issue has an additional pedagogical dimension. They are not only learning Islamic Civilization as academic content but are preparing to teach learners at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level. Maryam et al. emphasize the relevance of self-directed learning materials for university students because such approaches can support academic learning and learning independence [13]. Therefore, the significance of Islamic

Civilization learning in PGMI lies not only in students' acquisition of historical knowledge but also in their developing ability to interpret, communicate, and later transform that knowledge into meaningful learning experiences.

3.6.2. Classroom Practices, Active Learning, and Learning Media

The findings concerning methods, media, and learning processes show that classroom learning already includes elements associated with active learning, particularly discussion, group presentation, opportunities to think, and the use of learning media. However, the presence of these activities does not necessarily mean that active learning is implemented consistently for all students. This finding is consistent with the development of Islamic history education identified by Siti Norhidayah and Junaidi, who reported increasing attention to interactive, collaborative, and innovative learning methods [1]. Such approaches provide opportunities for students to participate more actively in learning rather than relying exclusively on teacher explanations. At the same time, Trias Andika reported that lecture-based learning remains common in higher education Islamic Civilization learning [3]. This comparison suggests that the classroom practices found in the present study reflect a movement toward more participatory learning while also indicating that conventional practices may continue to coexist with active-learning activities. The use of particular methods should therefore be understood in relation to their implementation conditions. Samoda and Prayogi et al. for example, show that mind mapping can support information organization, discussion, creativity, analytical skills, and students' confidence in expressing ideas [5] [14]. However, the effectiveness of such methods can be affected by time, digital competence, and student readiness. Nurwahidah and Jamilah similarly emphasize learning approaches that provide students with greater opportunities to practice and develop knowledge [15].

Learning media constitutes another dimension of classroom practice. Sahgianor and Jasiah found that students may perceive Islamic history learning as monotonous when it relies heavily on lectures and textual materials, while Amaria and Muzaiyana highlight the potential of digital resources such as e-books, documentary videos, digital manuscripts, and online libraries [6] [16]. Nevertheless, technology should not be treated as an automatic solution to learning problems. Khofia and Anugera show that the use of information technology in Islamic Civilization learning may be constrained by lecturer competence, infrastructure, and the integration of technology into instruction [4]. Khunaivi similarly demonstrates that the use of innovative learning media can support student participation and develop students' learning skills, indicating that the selection of learning media should be accompanied by appropriate learning activities and instructional strategies [17]. This finding is also relevant to the implementation of meaningful and contextual learning. Farhan et al. found that Deep Learning approaches integrating Islamic values and historical content can support contextual learning, although their implementation requires adequate preparation, classroom and time management, teacher competence, and differentiated learning according to students' learning needs [18].

Thus, the present findings suggest that active learning should be understood more broadly than simply increasing the number of methods or media. Active learning also involves how students participate, organize knowledge, communicate ideas, receive feedback, and reflect on their learning. This interpretation is consistent with Hakim et al. who emphasize the importance of combining discussion, presentation, visual media, and assessment to support student participation and historical understanding [19]. For PGMI students, classroom activities are particularly important because the learning experiences they encounter at university may later become examples that they adapt in their own Madrasah Ibtidaiyah classrooms.

3.6.3. The Theory Practice Relationship in Islamic Civilization Learning

The central issue identified in this study is the relationship between academic learning theory and classroom practice. The questionnaire responses indicate that students generally perceived a relationship between theoretical material, classroom practice, examples, and real-life contexts. However, the presence of responses outside the positive category indicates that the relationship between theory and practice was not experienced uniformly. This finding is consistent with the concept of the theory–practice gap in teacher education. Phillips and Condry explain that theoretical knowledge obtained in higher education may not always be sufficiently connected with methodological, curricular, classroom-management, and disciplinary realities in practice [20]. The present study provides a contextual example of this issue in Islamic Civilization learning in PGMI. The findings do not indicate an absence of theory or classroom application; rather, they indicate that the translation of theoretical principles into students' learning experiences remains uneven.

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The present study provides a contextual example of this issue in Islamic Civilization learning in PGMI. The findings do not indicate an absence of theory or classroom application; rather, they indicate that the translation of theoretical principles into students' learning experiences remains uneven. Imran found that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Civilization learning can support more dynamic and relevant learning and encourage appreciation of Islamic values and character development, although its implementation still faces challenges related to curriculum disparities, teacher competence, and educational resources [21].

The role of the lecturer is important in this translation process. Ellis et al. emphasize that teacher educators need to combine professional knowledge with the ability to model teaching, facilitate learning, provide guidance, and support teacher development [22]. In Islamic Civilization learning, this means that learning theories such as cognitivism, constructivism, active learning, collaborative learning, and contextual learning become more meaningful when students experience these principles directly through classroom activities.

Contextualization is particularly important because historical learning can otherwise become dominated by factual and chronological information. Mohamed and Afifi argue that excessive reliance on memorization and textual transmission may limit students' ability to connect historical knowledge with contemporary social issues [23]. In the present study, students reported that examples provided by the lecturer helped connect theory with reality and that Islamic Civilization learning could be related to contemporary life. This provides an indication that contextualization was already present in the learning process. The contextual dimension can be further understood through Pratama and Romadhon, who discuss the integration of multicultural values such as tolerance, equality, democracy, and justice in Islamic Civilization learning [7]. Sutrisno and Agustina similarly demonstrate the potential of value-based learning combined with Project-Based Learning, Inquiry-Based Learning, Cooperative Learning, and Gallery Walk to support participation, critical thinking, and connections between historical materials and everyday life [8].

Previous studies also indicate that theory–practice integration benefits from authentic learning experiences. Resch and Schrittmesser emphasize Service-Learning as a way of connecting academic theory with real problems in schools and society, while Van Katwijk et al. highlight the role of research experiences in developing inquiry skills, reflection, understanding of field contexts, and connections between academic knowledge and teaching practice. In the context of Islamic Civilization learning, similar principles may be represented through historical-source analysis, case studies, mini-research projects, classroom observation, and projects related to contemporary social issues [24] [25]. The present study therefore extends the discussion of theory–practice integration by showing that the issue is not simply whether learning theories are introduced, but whether those theories become visible in students' actual learning experiences. This distinction is important because students may understand a theory conceptually without necessarily experiencing its principles in classroom practice. The research gap addressed by this study lies in examining this relationship specifically within Islamic Civilization learning among PGMI students rather than focusing only on the effectiveness of a particular method or learning medium.

3.6.4. Relevance, Novelty, and Pedagogical Implications for Prospective MI Teachers

The highest response concerned the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers. This finding is important because it indicates that students do not perceive the course solely as a subject for acquiring historical information. Rather, they associate it with Islamic insight, historical thinking, character and attitude development, and preparation for their future professional roles. This finding is consistent with Fakhruddin et al. who identify relationships among Islamic History literacy, academic perception, motivation, and teaching behavior among prospective teachers. Maryam et al. further emphasize the importance of independent learning for PGMI students, while Sari et al. highlight reflection, feedback, professional development, and implementation-oriented learning. These perspectives suggest that prospective teachers require learning experiences that connect subject knowledge with the ability to use and communicate that knowledge pedagogically [12] [13] [26].

The relevance of Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers also extends beyond the acquisition of historical knowledge. Ananda emphasizes that Islamic education integrates intellectual development with moral development, ethical awareness, social responsibility, and critical thinking [27]. In the context of prospective MI teachers, these dimensions are important because students are expected not only to understand Islamic Civilization but also to develop the intellectual and moral capacities needed to communicate historical knowledge and Islamic values meaningfully in future classroom practice. Thus, the relevance of Islamic Civilization learning lies in its potential to connect historical knowledge with the broader formation of prospective teachers' pedagogical and professional capacities.

The pedagogical implication is that Islamic Civilization learning in PGMI should integrate three dimensions: historical content, pedagogical experience, and contextualization. Historical content provides the foundation of Islamic History literacy; pedagogical experience enables students to transform knowledge into teaching practice; and contextualization allows historical knowledge to be connected with contemporary life. Toshtemirova et al. similarly indicate that integrative pedagogical models can support participation, higher-order

thinking, historical thinking, creativity, and moral-spiritual development [28]. This direction is also supported by Faizin et al. who emphasize the strategic role of Islamic educational institutions in strengthening character, integrating religious and general knowledge, and responding to curriculum modernization, teacher professionalization, and digital transformation [29].

The novelty of the present study lies in bringing these dimensions together through an examination of the relationship between academic learning theory and actual classroom practice in Islamic Civilization learning among PGMI students. Previous studies cited in this article have examined learning methods, learning media, Islamic history literacy, contextual learning, or particular instructional models. The present study instead focuses on how theoretical principles are experienced and translated into classroom learning and how this relationship is perceived by prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers. This contribution also has implications for the design of Islamic Civilization learning. Students should not only be asked to remember historical events but should also be provided with opportunities to analyze historical sources, discuss evidence, interpret historical events, connect historical values with contemporary issues, collaborate, reflect, and design learning activities. Such experiences can help students learn both Islamic Civilization and ways of transforming its content into meaningful teaching experiences.

Therefore, the development of Islamic Civilization learning should not be reduced to adding more methods or digital media. It requires a more integrated learning design in which content knowledge, pedagogical experience, contextualization, student participation, reflection, and appropriate learning resources work together. This direction is consistent with Nurdin et al. who emphasize adaptive, collaborative, individualized, and differentiated approaches, and with Cholid et al. who demonstrate the importance of adapting content, presentation, media, language, and instructional implementation to learner diversity [30] [31].

3.6.5. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the participants consisted of 31 students from Class B, selected from a population of 93 PGMI students from the 2025 cohort. The findings therefore represent one class within one study program and cannot automatically be transferred to other classes, cohorts, institutions, or disciplines. Second, the study focused specifically on Islamic Civilization learning in the PGMI context, meaning that the findings may differ in other educational settings. Third, although the study combined observation, semi-structured interviews, documentation, field notes, and a questionnaire, the questionnaire primarily captured students' perceptions and did not independently measure actual learning achievement or pedagogical competence. Finally, the researcher's direct involvement as an internship student may have influenced the observation and interpretation of classroom phenomena, although reflexive procedures, triangulation, and member checking were used to reduce this potential influence. These limitations indicate that the findings should be understood as a contextual description of Islamic Civilization learning rather than as a basis for broad statistical generalization.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic Civilization learning among students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI) generally demonstrates a positive relationship between academic theory and classroom practice. The findings show that students' understanding of Islamic Civilization is supported by learning activities that involve discussion, presentation, learning media, contextual examples, and opportunities for active participation. These practices reflect the application of cognitivist, constructivist, active, collaborative, and contextual learning principles, although their implementation is not yet fully consistent across all learning activities and students. Study also shows that the relationship between academic theory and classroom practice is present but remains uneven. Academic theories provide an important conceptual foundation, while classroom practice determines how these principles are applied, adapted, and experienced by students. Therefore, the main contribution of this study is to demonstrate that effective Islamic Civilization learning for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers should not separate content knowledge from pedagogical experience. Learning should integrate historical understanding, active participation, contextualization, reflection, and opportunities for students to experience teaching practices that they may later adapt in their own classrooms.

Study is limited by its focus on 31 students from one PGMI class and one institutional context. In addition, the questionnaire primarily reflects students' perceptions rather than independently measuring learning achievement or pedagogical competence, while the researcher's involvement in the learning process may have influenced observation and interpretation. These limitations restrict the transferability of the findings to other contexts. Future research should involve larger and more diverse participants across classes, cohorts, institutions, and study programs, while combining qualitative approaches with systematic measures of learning outcomes and pedagogical competence. Further studies may also develop and evaluate Islamic Civilization learning models that more explicitly integrate academic theory, contextual learning, digital resources, active participation, reflection, and authentic classroom experiences for prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers.

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