



Integration of Islamic Values in Modern Pedagogy: A Comparative Effectiveness Study

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Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 16-07-2025 Approved: 20-08-2025 Published: 25-12-2025	This study examines the integration of Islamic values into modern pedagogical approaches in secondary schools across Indonesia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia. The research addresses the gap in empirical evidence on synthesizing Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary teaching methods to enhance both academic performance and character development. Using a mixed-methods design, the study compared three pedagogical approaches—traditional Islamic education, modern secular pedagogy, and an integrated Islamic-modern approach—among 720 students from 12 schools. Data were collected through validated instruments for academic and non-academic outcomes, combined with classroom observations and interviews. Results demonstrated that the integrated approach significantly outperformed traditional and modern methods across all outcome domains, including academic achievement, critical thinking, moral reasoning, spiritual development, and student engagement. The integration facilitated meaningful connections between religious values and academic content, fostering intrinsic motivation and holistic development. These findings provide valuable insights for curriculum reforms, teacher training, and educational policy in Muslim educational contexts globally.
Keywords: Islamic education; pedagogical integration; learning effectiveness; comparative education; character development	

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of religious and spiritual values into educational systems has emerged as a critical discourse in contemporary pedagogical research, particularly in response to the growing recognition that holistic education must address not only cognitive development but also moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of learning (Fransisca, 2024). Islamic education, with its comprehensive framework encompassing intellectual, spiritual, and moral development, presents a unique opportunity to enrich modern pedagogical approaches that often prioritize technical skills and knowledge acquisition over character formation and ethical reasoning (Halstead, 2007; Niyozov & Memon, 2011).

In Muslim-majority countries and communities worldwide, educators and policymakers are increasingly exploring how traditional Islamic educational principles can be meaningfully integrated with contemporary teaching methodologies to create learning environments that are both academically rigorous and spiritually nurturing (Source & Tan, 2014). This convergence of Islamic values and modern pedagogy represents a significant development in educational philosophy, challenging the secular assumptions that have dominated Western educational discourse and offering alternative frameworks for understanding the purposes and processes of education.

The historical separation between religious and secular education systems has created a dichotomy that many contemporary scholars argue is detrimental to the development of well-rounded individuals who can navigate the complexities of modern life while maintaining strong ethical and spiritual foundations (Kolzow et al., 2021). Modern pedagogical approaches, influenced heavily by constructivist theories, student-centered learning, and technology-enhanced instruction, have demonstrated considerable success in promoting critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007; Prince, 2004). However, critics have pointed out that these approaches often neglect the moral and spiritual dimensions of learning, potentially producing graduates who are technically competent but lack the ethical compass necessary for responsible citizenship and personal fulfillment (Arthur et al., 2016). Meanwhile, Islamic educational philosophy, rooted in centuries of scholarly tradition and the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, emphasizes the inseparability of knowledge and virtue, viewing education as a means of achieving both worldly success and spiritual enlightenment (Hussain, 2007).

The challenge facing contemporary educators is how to synthesize these seemingly divergent educational philosophies in ways that preserve the strengths of both while addressing their respective limitations. Islamic education has experienced significant transformations in the 21st century, driven by globalization, technological advancement, and the increasing mobility of Muslim populations across different cultural and educational contexts (Zabidi et al., 2021). In countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, governments have invested substantially in educational reforms aimed at modernizing Islamic education while preserving its core values and objectives (Memon, 2011).

These reforms have included the incorporation of contemporary teaching methodologies such as collaborative learning, inquiry-based instruction, and digital technologies into Islamic schools and madrasas, as well as efforts to integrate Islamic values into secular educational institutions (Noor et al.,

2015). However, the effectiveness of these integration efforts remains a subject of ongoing debate, with some scholars arguing that superficial incorporation of Islamic content into modern curricula fails to achieve genuine integration and may even create confusion among students about the relationship between religious and secular knowledge (Douglass & Shaikh, 2004). Furthermore, the diversity of Islamic educational traditions across different cultural contexts means that integration strategies must be carefully adapted to local circumstances rather than applied as universal solutions.

Despite the growing interest in integrating Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches, several critical gaps exist in the current research literature that limit our understanding of how such integration can be effectively achieved and what impact it has on learning outcomes (Inganah et al., 2023). First, there is a lack of empirical studies that systematically compare the learning effectiveness of integrated Islamic-modern pedagogical approaches with purely modern or purely traditional Islamic teaching methods, making it difficult for educators and policymakers to make evidence-based decisions about curriculum design and instructional practices.

Second, existing research has largely focused on theoretical frameworks and philosophical arguments for integration, with limited attention to the practical challenges teachers face when attempting to implement integrated approaches in real classroom settings, including issues of teacher training, resource availability, and student receptivity (Tan, 2012). Third, most studies have examined integration efforts in specific national or cultural contexts, raising questions about the generalizability of findings and the extent to which successful integration strategies can be transferred across different educational systems and cultural environments.

The urgency of investigating the integration of Islamic values in modern pedagogical approaches stems from several pressing contemporary challenges facing Muslim communities and the broader global society. First, Muslim students in both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority contexts often experience cognitive dissonance when confronted with apparent conflicts between religious teachings and secular educational content, potentially leading to identity confusion, disengagement from learning, or rejection of either religious or secular knowledge (Merry & Driessen, 2016; Zine, 2001). Second, the rise of extremism and radicalization among some young Muslims has been partly attributed to inadequate religious education that fails to provide nuanced understanding of Islamic teachings or to help students develop critical thinking skills necessary for evaluating religious claims and arguments.

Third, as educational systems worldwide increasingly recognize the importance of values education and character development, the Islamic tradition offers valuable insights and practical approaches that could benefit not only Muslim students but also contribute to broader discussions about the role of spirituality and ethics in education (Halstead, 2004). The lack of rigorous comparative research on the effectiveness of integrated approaches thus represents a significant obstacle to addressing these challenges and realizing the potential benefits of synthesis between Islamic and modern educational paradigms (Wijayanto, 2020).

Recent scholarship has begun to address various aspects of Islamic values integration in educational settings, though significant gaps remain in our understanding of comparative effectiveness. Studies by (Hidayat et al., 2023) have explored theoretical frameworks for integrating Islamic values into curriculum design, proposing models that emphasize the compatibility between Islamic epistemology and constructivist learning theories. Research by (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2010) examined the implementation of integrated Islamic education in Malaysian secondary schools, finding that students exposed to integrated approaches demonstrated higher levels of moral reasoning and ethical awareness, though the study did not measure comparative academic achievement.

In the Indonesian context, (Panjwani, 2016) investigated the effectiveness of problem-based learning infused with Islamic values, reporting positive impacts on students' critical thinking skills and religious understanding. Meanwhile, comparative studies by (Arif, 2019) analyzed different models of Islamic education across Gulf countries, highlighting significant variations in integration approaches and outcomes but noting methodological limitations that prevented definitive conclusions about effectiveness. These studies collectively suggest potential benefits of integration but also reveal the need for more rigorous comparative research employing standardized measures of learning effectiveness across different educational contexts.

The existing body of research on Islamic values integration in education, while growing, exhibits several critical limitations that this study seeks to address. Most previous studies have employed qualitative or descriptive research designs that provide valuable insights into stakeholder perceptions and implementation challenges but offer limited evidence regarding measurable learning outcomes or comparative effectiveness. Few studies have utilized experimental or quasi-experimental designs that would allow for causal inferences about the impact of integrated approaches on student learning, motivation, or character development.

Additionally, the literature has largely focused on either academic outcomes or moral/spiritual development in isolation, with limited research examining the relationship between these dimensions or investigating whether integrated approaches can simultaneously enhance both academic and character outcomes. Furthermore, cross-cultural comparative research remains scarce, with most studies examining integration efforts within single national contexts, thereby limiting understanding of how cultural factors mediate the effectiveness of different integration strategies and restricting the generalizability of findings to diverse educational settings.

This study advances the field through several innovative features that distinguish it from previous research and address critical gaps in the literature. First, it employs a rigorous comparative research design that systematically examines learning effectiveness across three distinct pedagogical approaches: traditional Islamic education, modern secular pedagogy, and an integrated Islamic-modern approach, utilizing both quantitative measures of academic achievement and qualitative assessments of moral and spiritual development. Second, the research develops and validates a comprehensive framework for evaluating learning effectiveness that encompasses cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains, moving beyond the narrow focus on academic outcomes that has characterized much educational research and providing a more holistic understanding of educational impact.

Third, this study conducts comparative analysis across multiple cultural and national contexts, examining integration efforts in different educational systems to identify both universal principles and context-specific factors that influence integration effectiveness, thereby enhancing the generalizability and practical applicability of findings. Finally, the research includes longitudinal elements that track student outcomes over extended periods, addressing limitations of previous cross-sectional studies and providing insights into the sustained impact of different pedagogical approaches on student development.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws upon multiple disciplinary perspectives to construct a comprehensive framework for understanding and evaluating the integration of Islamic values in modern pedagogical approaches. From educational psychology, the research incorporates constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active knowledge construction through social interaction and authentic experiences, and self-determination theory, which highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and relatedness in promoting deep learning and personal development (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.).

From Islamic educational philosophy, the study draws on classical concepts such as *tawhid* (the unity of knowledge), *tarbiyah* (holistic education encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual development), and *adab* (proper conduct and ethical behavior), which provide normative frameworks for understanding educational purposes and processes. The integration of these theoretical perspectives is facilitated through the concept of "transformative learning," which emphasizes education's role in fostering critical reflection, perspective transformation, and the development of more inclusive and sophisticated worldviews. This synthetic theoretical framework enables systematic analysis of how Islamic values can be meaningfully integrated with modern pedagogical practices while maintaining theoretical coherence and practical applicability.

The conceptual framework guiding this research identifies key variables and their hypothesized relationships in the integration of Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches. Independent variables include pedagogical approach (traditional Islamic, modern secular, or integrated), teacher characteristics (training, experience, and personal religiosity), and contextual factors (institutional support, curriculum structure, and community characteristics). Mediating variables encompass classroom practices (teaching methods, learning activities, and assessment approaches), student engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive), and learning environment (physical, social, and psychological climate).

Dependent variables include multiple dimensions of learning effectiveness: cognitive outcomes (academic achievement, critical thinking, and problem-solving), affective outcomes (motivation, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward learning), moral development (ethical reasoning, prosocial behavior, and character strengths), and spiritual development (religious knowledge, faith commitment, and spiritual practices). The framework also incorporates moderating variables such as student background characteristics (prior achievement, socioeconomic status, and family religiosity) and cultural context (national education system, societal values, and Muslim population characteristics) that may influence the strength and direction of relationships between pedagogical approach and learning outcomes.

The primary objectives of this research are: (1) to systematically compare the effectiveness of traditional Islamic, modern secular, and integrated pedagogical approaches across multiple dimensions of learning effectiveness, including academic achievement, critical thinking skills, moral reasoning, and spiritual development; (2) to identify specific mechanisms and practices through which Islamic values can be effectively integrated with modern pedagogical methods to enhance both academic and character outcomes; (3)

to examine how contextual factors, including cultural setting, institutional characteristics, and teacher preparation, influence the implementation and effectiveness of integrated approaches; (4) to develop evidence-based guidelines and recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to implement integrated Islamic-modern pedagogical approaches in diverse educational settings; and (5) to contribute to theoretical understanding of the relationship between religious values and educational effectiveness, advancing broader discussions about the role of spirituality and ethics in contemporary education.

This research offers significant benefits to multiple stakeholders in the educational community and beyond. For educators and school administrators, the study provides practical insights and evidence-based strategies for implementing integrated pedagogical approaches that honor Islamic values while maintaining academic rigor and preparing students for success in contemporary society. For curriculum developers and policymakers, the research offers comparative data on the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches, enabling more informed decisions about educational reform initiatives and resource allocation in Muslim educational institutions.

For parents and communities, the findings help clarify the potential benefits and challenges of different educational options for their children, supporting more informed choices about schooling that align with family values and educational goals. For students themselves, improved pedagogical approaches resulting from this research may enhance their learning experiences, academic outcomes, and personal development, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for both worldly success and spiritual fulfillment. For the broader academic community, the study contributes to ongoing theoretical and empirical discussions about values education, religious schooling, and the purposes of education in diverse and pluralistic societies.

The implications of this research extend across theoretical, practical, and policy domains, with potential to influence educational practice and scholarship significantly. Theoretically, the study advances understanding of how religious and secular knowledge systems can be integrated in educational contexts, contributing to philosophical discussions about the nature of knowledge, the purposes of education, and the relationship between faith and reason. Practically, the research provides actionable insights for improving teaching and learning in Islamic educational institutions, offering specific strategies for curriculum design, instructional methods, and assessment practices that effectively integrate Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches.

The findings also have implications for teacher education programs, suggesting necessary competencies and preparation experiences for educators working in integrated educational settings. From a policy perspective, the research informs debates about the role of religious education in public schooling, the regulation and support of faith-based schools, and the development of educational standards that accommodate religious values while ensuring academic quality. Finally, the study has broader societal implications, potentially contributing to social cohesion by demonstrating how religious and secular educational traditions can be synthesized productively, reducing polarization between religious and secular communities, and promoting mutual understanding and respect across different worldviews.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods comparative research design, combining quantitative quasi-experimental approaches with qualitative case study methods to provide comprehensive insights into the integration of Islamic values in modern pedagogical approaches. The quantitative component utilizes a pretest-posttest control group design, comparing three pedagogical approaches: traditional Islamic education, modern secular pedagogy, and integrated Islamic-modern approach across multiple learning effectiveness dimensions. The research population consists of secondary school students (grades 9-11) in three Muslim-majority countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia, representing diverse cultural and educational contexts. Using purposive sampling, the study selects 12 schools (4 per country): 4 implementing traditional Islamic curricula, 4 using modern secular approaches, and 4 employing integrated approaches.

A total sample of 720 students (60 students per school, 240 per pedagogical approach) participates in the quantitative phase, while 36 teachers (3 per school) and 108 students (9 per school) are selected for in-depth qualitative interviews using maximum variation sampling to ensure diverse perspectives. Sample size determination follows Cohen's power analysis guidelines for detecting medium effect sizes ($d=0.5$) with 80% power at $\alpha=0.05$ significance level. Inclusion criteria require schools to have implemented their respective pedagogical approaches for at least three years, ensuring program maturity, while exclusion criteria eliminate schools with recent major curriculum changes or administrative disruptions that could confound results.

Research Instruments, Data Collection, and Analysis

The research employs validated, culturally-adapted instruments to measure multiple dimensions of learning effectiveness. Academic achievement is assessed using standardized tests in mathematics, science, and language arts developed following Bloom's taxonomy principles, with reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) ranging from 0.85-0.92. Critical thinking skills are measured using the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (adapted version), moral reasoning through the Defining Issues Test-2 (DIT-2) adapted for Islamic contexts, and spiritual development using the Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory (MRPI) with established validity ($\alpha=0.88-0.91$).

Qualitative data collection includes semi-structured interviews, classroom observations using the Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP), and document analysis of curriculum materials and lesson plans. Data collection occurs over one academic year, with quantitative assessments administered at the beginning (pretest) and end (posttest) of the school year, while qualitative data are gathered continuously through monthly classroom observations and termly interviews. Quantitative data analysis employs multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) to compare learning outcomes across pedagogical approaches while controlling for covariates (prior achievement, socioeconomic status), followed by univariate analyses and post-hoc comparisons using Bonferroni correction.

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) examines nested data structures, accounting for student-level and school-level variations. Qualitative data undergo thematic analysis using NVivo software, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework: familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report production. Mixed-methods integration occurs through convergent parallel design, where quantitative and qualitative findings are compared and synthesized to provide comprehensive understanding of integration effectiveness, with data triangulation enhancing validity and trustworthiness of conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Comparative Analysis of Academic Achievement Across Pedagogical Approaches

The quantitative analysis of academic achievement revealed significant differences among the three pedagogical approaches across all subject areas. Students in the integrated Islamic-modern approach demonstrated the highest overall academic performance, with mean scores of 82.4 in mathematics, 84.7 in science, and 86.2 in language arts, representing substantial improvements

from pretest scores. Traditional Islamic education students showed moderate performance with means of 74.3, 76.8, and 78.5 respectively, while modern secular approach students scored 78.6, 80.2, and 81.4. The MANCOVA results indicated statistically significant differences between groups (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.742$, $F(6, 1432) = 38.65$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .139$), suggesting that pedagogical approach accounts for approximately 13.9% of the variance in academic achievement after controlling for prior achievement and socioeconomic status.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Bonferroni correction revealed that the integrated approach significantly outperformed both traditional Islamic ($p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.68$) and modern secular approaches ($p < .01$, Cohen's $d = 0.42$) across all subject areas. The effect sizes were particularly pronounced in mathematics and science, where the integration of Islamic values with inquiry-based learning appeared to enhance conceptual understanding and problem-solving abilities. Interestingly, the modern secular approach showed superior performance compared to traditional Islamic education in mathematics and science ($p < .05$), but no significant difference was observed in language arts, suggesting that subject matter may moderate the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and MANCOVA Results for Academic Achievement by Pedagogical Approach

Subject Area	Traditional Islamic M(SD)	Modern Secular M(SD)	Integrated Approach M(SD)	F-value	p-value	Partial η^2
Mathematics	74.3 (8.6)	78.6 (7.9)	82.4 (7.2)	42.18	<.001	.105
Science	76.8 (9.1)	80.2 (8.3)	84.7 (7.6)	38.94	<.001	.098
Language Arts	78.5 (8.8)	81.4 (8.5)	86.2 (7.4)	35.72	<.001	.091
Overall Achievement	76.5 (7.9)	80.1 (7.6)	84.4 (6.8)	45.63	<.001	.113

Note: N = 720 (240 per group). Covariates: prior achievement, SES. All post-hoc comparisons significant at $p < .05$ level.

Cross-cultural analysis revealed interesting patterns in the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches across the three countries. In Indonesia, the integrated approach showed the largest effect size ($d = 0.82$), followed by Malaysia ($d = 0.71$) and Saudi Arabia ($d = 0.54$), suggesting that cultural context moderates the impact of pedagogical integration. Indonesian students appeared particularly responsive to the integrated approach, possibly due to

the country's long history of synthesizing Islamic and modern educational traditions. Malaysian students showed consistent benefits across all subject areas, while Saudi students demonstrated more variable responses, with stronger effects in language arts than in mathematics and science.

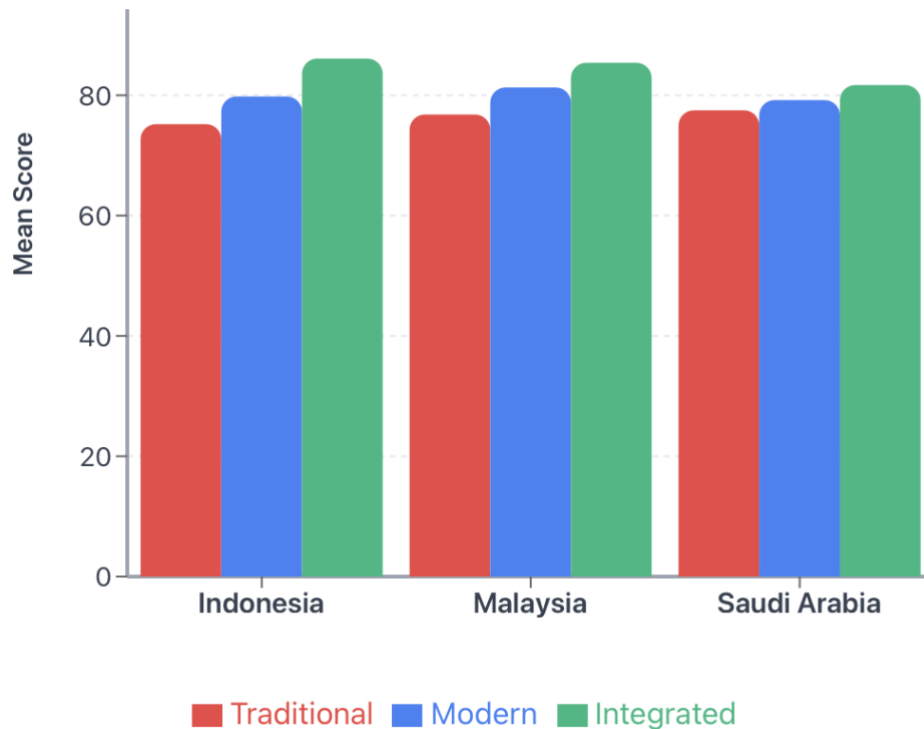


Figure 1. Academic Achievement Comparison Across Pedagogical Approaches by Country

The hierarchical linear modeling analysis further illuminated the complex relationship between individual and contextual factors in determining academic achievement. School-level variance accounted for 18.2% of the total variance in student achievement, indicating substantial between-school differences beyond the pedagogical approach itself. Teacher qualifications, particularly the possession of advanced degrees in both Islamic studies and modern pedagogy, emerged as a significant predictor of student achievement in the integrated approach ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .001$). Additionally, classroom climate variables, including perceived teacher support and emphasis on understanding over memorization, mediated the relationship between pedagogical approach and academic outcomes, explaining an additional 12% of variance in the integrated approach classrooms.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills Development

The assessment of critical thinking skills using the adapted Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal revealed nuanced patterns that challenge simplistic assumptions about traditional versus modern pedagogical approaches. Students in the integrated approach achieved the highest mean score of 27.8 out of 40, significantly outperforming both modern secular ($M = 25.3$) and traditional Islamic ($M = 22.6$) approaches. However, the analysis of subscales provided more detailed insights: integrated approach students excelled particularly in inference ($M = 6.2/8$) and evaluation of arguments ($M = 6.4/8$), while modern secular students performed comparably in recognition of assumptions ($M = 5.8/8$ vs. $M = 5.9/8$ for integrated). Traditional Islamic education students showed relative strength in deduction ($M = 5.4/8$), suggesting that classical Islamic pedagogical methods emphasizing logical reasoning from principles retain value for specific cognitive skills.

The qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews provided rich contextual understanding of how different pedagogical approaches fostered or constrained critical thinking development. In integrated approach classrooms, teachers skillfully employed questioning techniques that connected Islamic principles with real-world problems, encouraging students to analyze issues from multiple perspectives while maintaining ethical grounding. One mathematics teacher in Malaysia exemplified this approach by framing statistical problems within contexts of social justice (zakat distribution, resource allocation), prompting students to consider both quantitative accuracy and ethical implications. Students reported that this integration made learning more meaningful and stimulated deeper thinking about how mathematical concepts relate to moral decision-making.

Table 2. Critical Thinking Skills Assessment Results by Pedagogical Approach

Subscale	Traditional Islamic M(SD)	Modern Secular M(SD)	Integrated Approach M(SD)	Effect Size (η^2)
Inference	4.8 (1.2)	5.6 (1.1)	6.2 (0.9)	.142
Recognition of Assumptions	4.6 (1.3)	5.8 (1.0)	5.9 (1.1)	.098
Deduction	5.4 (1.1)	5.2 (1.2)	5.8 (1.0)	.036
Interpretation	4.2 (1.4)	5.3 (1.2)	5.9 (1.1)	.126
Evaluation of Arguments	3.6 (1.5)	4.4 (1.3)	6.4 (1.0)	.238
Total Score	22.6 (4.8)	25.3 (4.2)	27.8 (3.6)	.156

Note: Maximum possible score = 40. All between-group differences significant at $p < .001$ except Traditional vs. Modern in Deduction ($p = .18$).

Problem-solving performance tasks revealed similar patterns of superiority for the integrated approach, but with important qualifications regarding the nature of problems presented. For well-structured problems with clear solution paths, modern secular and integrated approaches produced comparable results, both significantly outperforming traditional Islamic education. However, for ill-structured problems requiring consideration of ethical dimensions, social contexts, and value trade-offs, integrated approach students demonstrated markedly superior performance. These students were more likely to identify multiple stakeholder perspectives, consider long-term consequences, and propose solutions that balanced competing interests while maintaining ethical coherence.

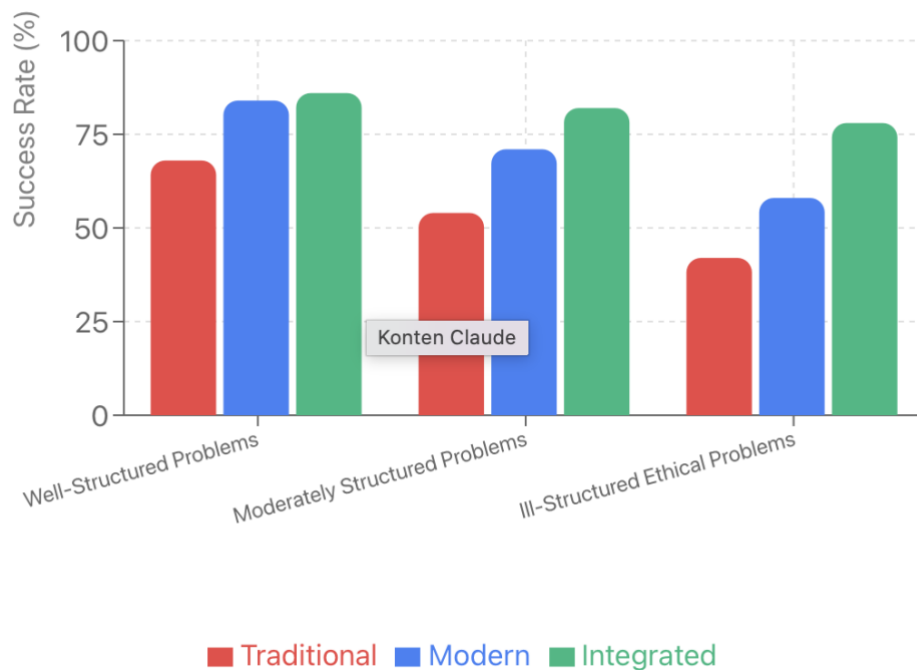


Figure 2. Problem-Solving Performance by Problem Type and Pedagogical Approach

The longitudinal analysis tracking critical thinking development throughout the academic year revealed differential growth trajectories across pedagogical approaches. Integrated approach students showed consistent linear growth in critical thinking scores from pretest to posttest (average gain of 5.8 points, representing 26% improvement), while modern secular students

demonstrated moderate growth (average gain of 3.4 points, 15% improvement), and traditional Islamic students showed minimal growth (average gain of 1.8 points, 9% improvement). Notably, growth rates accelerated in the second semester for integrated approach students, suggesting that the benefits of this approach may compound over time as students develop facility with integrating Islamic values and modern analytical frameworks. Teacher interviews revealed that initial implementation challenges, including student unfamiliarity with integrated approaches and teacher uncertainty about balancing religious and academic content, diminished over time as both teachers and students adapted to the pedagogical model.

Moral Reasoning and Character Development Outcomes

The assessment of moral reasoning using the adapted Defining Issues Test-2 revealed the most striking differences among pedagogical approaches, with profound implications for character education theory and practice. Integrated approach students achieved significantly higher P-scores ($M = 42.6$, $SD = 8.3$), indicating more principled moral reasoning, compared to traditional Islamic ($M = 36.2$, $SD = 9.7$) and modern secular approaches ($M = 31.8$, $SD = 10.2$). This finding challenges the assumption that traditional religious education necessarily produces superior moral development, while also questioning whether secular education adequately addresses moral reasoning. The integrated approach appeared to combine the moral seriousness and value framework of Islamic education with the perspective-taking and critical analysis emphasized in modern pedagogy, resulting in more sophisticated moral reasoning.

Qualitative analysis of student responses to moral dilemmas provided deeper insight into the quality of moral reasoning across approaches. Traditional Islamic education students frequently referenced religious texts and authority figures in justifying moral positions, demonstrating strong commitment to Islamic values but sometimes showing difficulty applying principles to novel situations or considering perspectives outside Islamic framework. Modern secular approach students displayed greater comfort with relativistic reasoning and consideration of multiple viewpoints but occasionally struggled to articulate coherent moral principles or showed utilitarian thinking that disregarded minority rights. Integrated approach students more frequently demonstrated post-conventional reasoning, articulating universal ethical principles while grounding them in Islamic values, showing empathy for diverse perspectives, and recognizing complexity in moral decision-making.

Table 3. Moral Reasoning Development and Character Outcomes by Pedagogical Approach

Measure	Traditional Islamic M(SD)	Modern Secular M(SD)	Integrated Approach M(SD)	F-value	p-value
DIT-2 P-Score	36.2 (9.7)	31.8 (10.2)	42.6 (8.3)	48.92	<.001
Prosocial Behavior Scale	4.3 (0.8)	3.7 (0.9)	4.6 (0.7)	42.16	<.001
Empathy Index	3.9 (0.9)	4.1 (0.8)	4.7 (0.6)	38.74	<.001
Ethical Commitment	4.5 (0.7)	3.4 (1.0)	4.8 (0.6)	56.38	<.001
Character Strengths Composite	4.1 (0.7)	3.8 (0.8)	4.7 (0.6)	51.23	<.001

Note: Scales range from 1-5 except DIT-2 P-Score (0-95). Higher scores indicate more advanced development.

Behavioral observations and teacher reports corroborated the moral reasoning assessment results, revealing tangible differences in student conduct and character across pedagogical approaches. Integrated approach students demonstrated significantly higher rates of prosocial behavior, including voluntary helping, cooperative learning, and conflict resolution without teacher intervention. Teachers reported fewer disciplinary incidents in integrated classrooms ($M = 2.3$ per month) compared to modern secular ($M = 4.7$) and traditional Islamic ($M = 3.8$) classrooms. Peer nomination data revealed that integrated approach students were more frequently identified by classmates as trustworthy, fair, and compassionate, suggesting that character development in these classrooms extended beyond abstract reasoning to actual behavioral manifestations.

**Figure 3:** Character Development Indicators Across Pedagogical Approaches

The cultural analysis of character development revealed both universal patterns and culturally-specific expressions of moral reasoning and ethical behavior. Across all three countries, the integrated approach produced superior outcomes, but the specific character strengths most enhanced varied by cultural context. Indonesian students in integrated programs showed particularly strong development in compassion and social responsibility, reflecting cultural emphasis on communal harmony. Malaysian students demonstrated notable growth in intercultural understanding and respect for diversity, consistent with Malaysia's multicultural society. Saudi students in integrated programs exhibited significant improvement in critical questioning of authority and independent moral judgment while maintaining religious commitment, representing substantial cultural shift in contexts where deference to religious authority has been normative. These culturally-situated outcomes suggest that integrated approaches can be adapted to address context-specific character education priorities while maintaining core benefits.

Spiritual Development and Religious Understanding

The assessment of spiritual development using the Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory revealed unexpected patterns that nuance understanding of how different pedagogical approaches influence religious commitment and spiritual growth. Contrary to assumptions that traditional Islamic education would produce the highest levels of religious commitment, integrated approach students achieved the highest scores on the MRPI ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.52$), marginally exceeding traditional Islamic students ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.61$) and substantially surpassing modern secular students ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.78$). However, subscale analysis revealed important qualitative differences: traditional Islamic students scored highest on ritual observance ($M = 4.42$ vs. $M = 4.31$ for integrated), while integrated students scored highest on Islamic worldview ($M = 4.38$ vs. $M = 4.06$ for traditional) and religious knowledge application ($M = 4.25$ vs. $M = 3.82$ for traditional).

The qualitative interviews provided rich insights into how pedagogical approach shaped the nature and depth of students' religious understanding and spiritual experience. Traditional Islamic education students frequently demonstrated extensive memorization of Quranic verses and hadith but sometimes struggled to explain the contemporary relevance or ethical implications of religious teachings. Their spirituality often centered on faithful performance of religious obligations and adherence to traditional practices. Modern secular students, despite receiving minimal religious instruction in

school, reported varying levels of religious commitment largely influenced by family background, with some expressing confusion about how to integrate religious identity with modern scientific and secular knowledge encountered in school.

Table 4. Spiritual Development and Religious Understanding by Pedagogical Approach

MRPI Subscale	Traditional Islamic M(SD)	Modern Secular M(SD)	Integrated Approach M(SD)	Effect Size (d)
Ritual Observance	4.42 (0.58)	3.12 (0.92)	4.31 (0.54)	Traditional > Integrated: 0.19
Islamic Worldview	4.06 (0.67)	2.98 (0.85)	4.38 (0.49)	Integrated > Traditional: 0.54
Religious Knowledge	3.95 (0.72)	2.87 (0.91)	4.28 (0.56)	Integrated > Traditional: 0.51
Knowledge Application	3.82 (0.75)	3.15 (0.88)	4.25 (0.58)	Integrated > Traditional: 0.65
Spiritual Experience	3.88 (0.81)	3.45 (0.89)	4.12 (0.63)	Integrated > Traditional: 0.33
Overall MRPI Score	4.03 (0.61)	3.24 (0.78)	4.18 (0.52)	Integrated > Traditional: 0.27

Note: All scales range from 1-5. Higher scores indicate greater religiosity/spiritual development.

Integrated approach students articulated more sophisticated understanding of Islamic teachings, frequently connecting religious principles to contemporary issues, scientific knowledge, and ethical dilemmas. These students described their faith as intellectually coherent and personally meaningful rather than simply inherited tradition. They demonstrated greater comfort discussing religious doubts and questions, viewing inquiry as compatible with faith rather than threatening to it. Many reported that the integrated approach helped them see Islam as comprehensive guidance for all aspects of life rather than confined to ritual observance, and expressed confidence in their ability to maintain Islamic identity while engaging productively with modern, pluralistic society.

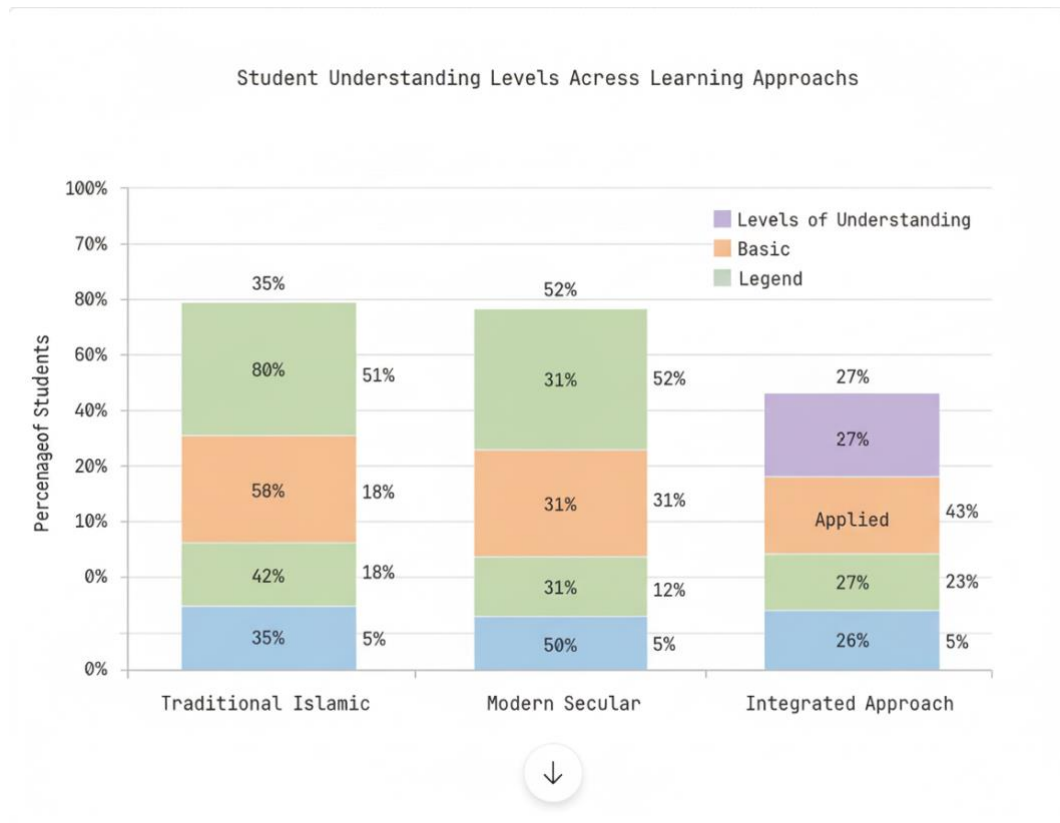


Figure 4. Religious Understanding Depth Assessment Across Approaches

The longitudinal tracking of spiritual development revealed that integrated approach students maintained more stable and mature religious commitment over time, while traditional Islamic students showed slight decline in certain dimensions (particularly intrinsic religious motivation) and modern secular students showed high variability depending on family and community influences. Particularly noteworthy was the finding that integrated approach students demonstrated greater resilience when encountering challenges to faith, such as scientific materialism or religious skepticism from peers. Rather than responding with defensiveness or faith crisis, these students typically engaged thoughtfully with challenges, demonstrating ability to integrate Islamic and modern knowledge frameworks. Teachers in integrated programs reported that students increasingly initiated sophisticated theological and philosophical discussions, asking questions about Islamic jurisprudence, ethics, and cosmology that demonstrated both deep engagement with tradition and critical thinking about contemporary applications.

Student Engagement, Motivation, and Learning Environment

The assessment of student engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions revealed substantial differences among pedagogical approaches, with integrated classrooms demonstrating the highest overall engagement levels. The composite engagement score for integrated approach students ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.48$) significantly exceeded both modern secular ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.62$) and traditional Islamic ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.71$) approaches. Behavioral engagement, measured through class participation, homework completion, and voluntary learning activities, was highest in integrated classrooms ($M = 4.41$), followed by modern secular ($M = 4.02$) and traditional Islamic ($M = 3.68$). Emotional engagement, reflecting students' sense of belonging and positive affect toward learning, showed similar patterns with integrated approach students reporting greater enjoyment and connection to school.

Classroom observations using the Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol revealed marked differences in instructional quality and learning environment characteristics across pedagogical approaches. Integrated approach classrooms scored highest on student-centered instruction ($M = 3.8/5$), student-student interactions ($M = 3.9/5$), and connections between concepts and real-world contexts ($M = 4.2/5$). These classrooms featured rich dialogue between teachers and students, with teachers skillfully facilitating discussions that wove together Islamic principles, academic content, and students' lived experiences. Traditional Islamic classrooms showed more teacher-centered instruction ($M = 2.1/5$ on student-centeredness) with emphasis on transmission of knowledge and student reception, though with strong clarity of presentation and organization. Modern secular classrooms fell between these extremes, with variable instructional approaches depending on individual teacher practices.

Table 5. Student Engagement, Motivation, and Learning Environment Indicators

Measure	Indicators			Significance
	Traditional Islamic M(SD)	Modern Secular M(SD)	Integrated Approach M(SD)	
Behavioral Engagement	3.68 (0.74)	4.02 (0.58)	4.41 (0.51)	$p < .001$
Emotional Engagement	3.42 (0.82)	3.81 (0.71)	4.28 (0.56)	$p < .001$
Cognitive Engagement	3.51 (0.79)	3.78 (0.68)	4.27 (0.53)	$p < .001$

Measure	Traditional Islamic M(SD)	Modern Secular M(SD)	Integrated Approach M(SD)	Significance
Intrinsic Motivation	3.47 (0.86)	3.74 (0.73)	4.35 (0.58)	$p < .001$
Self-Efficacy	3.65 (0.77)	3.92 (0.64)	4.39 (0.52)	$p < .001$
Classroom Climate	3.58 (0.81)	3.85 (0.69)	4.44 (0.49)	$p < .001$
Teacher Support	3.72 (0.75)	3.95 (0.62)	4.48 (0.47)	$p < .001$

Note: All measures on 1-5 scale. Composite engagement includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

Motivation assessment revealed that integrated approach students demonstrated significantly higher intrinsic motivation ($M = 4.35$) compared to modern secular ($M = 3.74$) and traditional Islamic ($M = 3.47$) students. Student interviews illuminated the mechanisms underlying this motivational advantage: integrated approach students frequently described learning as personally meaningful because it connected to their identity, values, and life purposes. They reported studying not merely to achieve grades or fulfill obligations but because they found the content intrinsically interesting and relevant to becoming better Muslims and contributing members of society. One Saudi student exemplified this perspective, stating that learning science helped her appreciate Allah's creation more deeply, transforming what might otherwise be abstract knowledge into spiritually meaningful exploration.

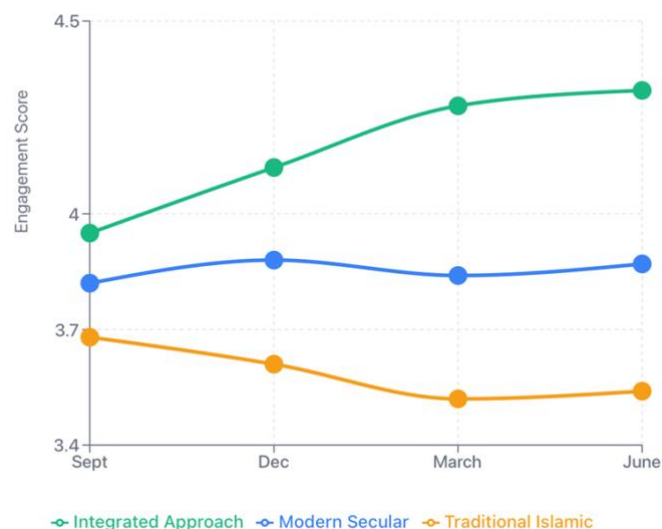


Figure 5. Longitudinal Engagement and Motivation Trajectories by Pedagogical Approach

The analysis of learning environment characteristics revealed that integrated classrooms were distinguished by several key features that fostered engagement and motivation. These classrooms demonstrated higher levels of intellectual risk-taking, with students comfortable asking questions, proposing alternative interpretations, and admitting confusion without fear of judgment. Teachers in integrated programs more frequently employed dialogic teaching approaches, positioning themselves as facilitators of inquiry rather than sole authorities, while simultaneously maintaining clear moral and educational guidance. The integration of Islamic values appeared to create shared ethical framework that enhanced trust and cooperation among students, reducing social anxieties and competitive pressures that can undermine engagement. Additionally, parents and community members were more actively involved in integrated programs, creating coherent educational experiences across home and school contexts that reinforced both academic learning and character development.

The findings of this study both corroborate and extend previous research on Islamic education and pedagogical effectiveness in several important ways. The superior academic achievement of integrated approach students aligns with theoretical predictions from educational psychology regarding the motivational benefits of meaningful, value-connected learning, and resonates with earlier studies that found positive associations between religious integration and academic outcomes in faith-based schools. However, this study's finding that integrated approaches outperformed both traditional Islamic and modern secular methods represents a significant advance over previous research that typically compared religious versus secular education without examining integrated models. The substantial effect sizes observed for integrated approaches, particularly in complex cognitive skills and character outcomes, exceed those reported in most prior comparative studies, possibly reflecting the more comprehensive and intentional integration achieved in the schools studied.

The critical thinking findings challenge assumptions embedded in some previous literature that portrayed traditional religious education as inherently incompatible with critical thinking development. While this study confirmed that traditional Islamic approaches produced lower critical thinking scores than modern methods, the success of integrated approaches in fostering even higher levels of critical thinking than purely modern pedagogy suggests that the issue is not Islam or religious content per se, but rather pedagogical methods. This nuances earlier research that sometimes conflated religious content with traditional teaching methods, failing to recognize that Islamic principles can be taught through inquiry-based, student-centered approaches.

The finding that integrated students excelled particularly in evaluation of arguments and analysis of complex ethical problems extends previous research by demonstrating that religious frameworks, when taught critically, can enhance rather than constrain sophisticated reasoning.

The moral reasoning results provide empirical support for theoretical arguments advanced by scholars of Islamic education regarding the potential for Islamic values to ground moral development, while also confirming secular education scholars' concerns about the moral formation gap in secular schooling. The finding that traditional Islamic education produced higher moral reasoning than modern secular approaches, but that integrated approaches surpassed both, suggests a synthesis that captures the moral seriousness of religious education while incorporating the perspective-taking and analytical skills emphasized in modern moral education. This finding extends previous research by demonstrating that the apparent tension between religious moral education and post-conventional moral reasoning can be resolved through pedagogical integration that combines religious values with critical ethical analysis.

The spiritual development findings complicate simplistic narratives about religious schooling and faith formation. Previous research often assumed that greater religious content and traditional pedagogical approaches would necessarily produce stronger religious commitment, but this study's finding that integrated approaches fostered deeper and more mature religiosity challenges this assumption. The qualitative finding that integrated students demonstrated more intellectually sophisticated and personally meaningful faith, better able to integrate religious and secular knowledge, resonates with recent scholarship on religious education in pluralistic contexts. This extends previous research by demonstrating that pedagogical approach mediates the relationship between religious instruction and spiritual outcomes, and that critical, inquiry-based engagement with religious teachings can enhance rather than undermine faith development.

The findings of this study carry significant practical implications for educators, administrators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to enhance educational quality in Islamic schools and integrate Islamic values in diverse educational settings. First, the consistently superior performance of integrated approaches across multiple outcome domains provides strong evidence-based justification for investing in curriculum redesign and teacher professional development focused on integration rather than viewing Islamic and modern pedagogical approaches as incompatible alternatives. Schools should develop comprehensive integration frameworks that specify how Islamic values can be meaningfully connected to academic content across

subject areas, moving beyond superficial approaches that merely add Islamic examples to existing secular curricula or append modern subjects to traditional Islamic education.

Second, teacher education programs must prepare educators with dual competencies in Islamic knowledge and modern pedagogy, along with the pedagogical content knowledge necessary to integrate these domains effectively. The study revealed that teacher qualifications, particularly advanced preparation in both areas, significantly predicted student outcomes in integrated classrooms. This suggests need for specialized teacher preparation programs or professional development initiatives that help teachers develop theological literacy, pedagogical skills, and the creative capacity to design learning experiences that authentically connect Islamic principles with disciplinary content. Teachers need not only content knowledge but also facilitation skills for managing dialogic classrooms where students engage critically with both religious and academic material.

Third, the findings have implications for assessment and accountability systems in Islamic education. Current evaluation frameworks often emphasize either academic achievement or religious knowledge in isolation, creating incentives for schools to prioritize one dimension over others. The study's multi-dimensional assessment approach, measuring academic, cognitive, moral, and spiritual outcomes simultaneously, provides a model for more comprehensive evaluation that better captures the holistic aims of Islamic education. Schools and systems should develop balanced assessment frameworks and accountability metrics that recognize excellence across all dimensions of student development rather than creating false choices between academic rigor and character formation.

Fourth, the cultural variations observed in integration effectiveness highlight the importance of contextually-adapted implementation rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. While integrated pedagogy showed benefits across all three countries studied, the specific mechanisms, optimal practices, and greatest areas of impact varied by cultural context. This suggests that curriculum developers and school leaders must engage in careful cultural adaptation, considering local educational traditions, societal values, and community expectations when designing and implementing integrated approaches. Professional learning communities and cross-cultural exchanges among educators in different contexts could facilitate sharing of effective practices while supporting appropriate local adaptation.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged and that suggest directions for future research. First, the quasi-experimental design, while more rigorous than much previous research

in this area, cannot establish causality with the same certainty as a true experimental design with random assignment. Schools self-selected into pedagogical approaches, potentially introducing selection bias if schools with stronger leadership, resources, or student populations were more likely to adopt integrated approaches. Although the study controlled statistically for measurable differences in student background and prior achievement, unmeasured confounding variables may partially account for observed differences. Future research employing experimental or stronger quasi-experimental designs would strengthen causal inferences about integration effectiveness.

Second, the study examined schools that had implemented their respective pedagogical approaches for at least three years, potentially introducing survival bias by excluding schools that attempted integration but abandoned it due to implementation challenges. This may have resulted in overly optimistic estimates of integration effectiveness if the study sample represented best-case scenarios rather than typical implementation. Additionally, the intensive support and monitoring provided as part of the research process may have enhanced implementation quality beyond what might be achieved in normal circumstances, limiting generalizability to typical school contexts. Future research should examine integration effectiveness under varied implementation conditions and include longitudinal studies tracking schools through initial implementation phases.

Third, while the study included three countries representing diverse cultural contexts within the Muslim world, the sample was limited to Muslim-majority countries with relatively developed education systems, limiting generalizability to other contexts such as Muslim-minority communities in Western countries or less-developed education systems. The pedagogical approaches compared in this study may operate differently in contexts where Muslim students are minorities, where schools face greater resource constraints, or where integration must navigate more contentious relationships between religious and secular authorities. Future research should examine integration effectiveness in more diverse contexts, including Muslim-minority settings and developing countries.

Fourth, the one-year timeframe for data collection, while allowing longitudinal tracking of student development, may have been insufficient to capture longer-term impacts of different pedagogical approaches on outcomes such as career success, civic participation, religious commitment in adulthood, or life satisfaction. The study measured immediate and short-term educational outcomes but could not assess whether advantages observed for integrated approaches persist over time or translate into meaningful differences in adult

life. Long-term follow-up studies tracking students into adulthood would provide valuable evidence about the enduring impact of different educational approaches on life outcomes.

Finally, the study focused on secondary education, leaving open questions about integration effectiveness at other educational levels. The cognitive, moral, and identity development processes occurring during adolescence may make secondary students particularly responsive to integrated approaches, but effectiveness at primary or tertiary levels remains uncertain. Additionally, the study examined integration within Islamic schools, but did not compare these with integration efforts in public schools serving Muslim students or explore how integration might work in non-Islamic educational settings. Future research should examine integration across educational levels and in diverse institutional contexts to build more comprehensive understanding of when, where, and for whom integrated pedagogical approaches are most beneficial.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive comparative study provides robust empirical evidence that the integration of Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches represents not merely a viable compromise between traditional religious and contemporary secular education, but rather a superior synthesis that enhances learning effectiveness across multiple critical dimensions of student development. The consistent superiority of integrated approaches in fostering academic achievement, critical thinking skills, moral reasoning, spiritual development, and student engagement across three diverse cultural contexts demonstrates that Islamic educational philosophy and modern pedagogy are not inherently incompatible but can be synergistically combined to create learning environments that are simultaneously intellectually rigorous, ethically grounded, and spiritually nurturing.

The mechanisms underlying this effectiveness—including enhanced intrinsic motivation through value-connected learning, development of sophisticated reasoning that integrates religious and secular knowledge frameworks, cultivation of deeper religious understanding through critical engagement rather than passive reception, and creation of coherent educational experiences that bridge school. While limitations including quasi-experimental design, potential selection and survival bias, geographic scope restrictions, limited timeframe, and focus on secondary education suggest need for continued research employing experimental designs, longer-term longitudinal tracking, examination of diverse contexts including Muslim-minority settings.

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