

Measuring Faith with Numbers: Can Islamic Religious Education Exams Assess Spiritual Understanding?

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Abstract

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This study aims to evaluate whether numerical results from IRE exams can accurately reflect students' overall spiritual comprehension. Through both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the study finds that relying solely on test scores is insufficient to assess students' faith and spiritual insight. Significant differences in learning outcomes between schools suggest that variations in teaching methods and assessment systems contribute to these disparities. Interviews with students and teachers reveal that IRE exams, which tend to emphasize memorization, fall short in uncovering deeper understanding of religious values. In contrast, assessment approaches that are more relevant to everyday life, encourage reflection, utilize narrative methods, and observe student behavior are perceived as more effective. Therefore, an ideal model for assessing Islamic Religious Education should integrate both cognitive evaluation and spiritual reflection through a comprehensive, holistic approach. By combining written assessments with contextual inquiry, personal reflection, and behavioral observation, educators can gain a more accurate and authentic picture of students' religious understanding. Such a multifaceted evaluation system not only enhances the relevance of PAI but also supports the formation of students who genuinely embody Islamic values in their daily lives.

Keywords: Faith, Spiritual Understanding, Assessment

INTRODUCTION

Faith is a fundamental foundation in the life of a Muslim, encompassing the conviction of the heart, behavior, and spiritual understanding.¹ The Qur'an

¹ Nurhikmah and Eko Prayetno, "Equilibrium of Faith and Logic : Integration of Islamic Moral Values and Mathematics Education at the Junior High School Level in Various Contexts," *IJEMR: International Journal of Education Management and Religion* 1, no. 2 (2024): 127–44; Jop Koopman, "Subawe, Traditional Knowledge, and Faith-Based Organisations Promoting Social Capital and

and Hadith, as the primary sources of Islamic guidance, provide comprehensive directions on how to measure and manifest faith. However, in formal education, particularly in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), a fundamental question arises: *Can IRE exams, which often rely on numerical assessment, truly evaluate one's spiritual understanding in a holistic way?* Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

"O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware"².

This verse emphasizes that a person's dignity in the sight of Allah is not determined by social status, economic standing, or academic achievement, but by their piety (*taqwa*). *Taqwa* is a real manifestation of deep faith, encompassing both the vertical relationship with Allah (*hablun min Allah*) and the horizontal relationship with fellow human beings (*hablun min al-nas*). This leads to the question: *Can such piety and faith truly be assessed through numerical scores in IRE exams?*

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also explained the essence of faith in a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim:

الْإِيمَانُ بِضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ شُعْبَةً، فَأَفْضَلُهَا قَوْلُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَدْنَاهَا إِمَاطَةُ الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ
وَالْحَيَاءُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

Disaster Preparedness: A Lombok, Indonesia Case Study," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 94 (2023): 103837, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2023.103837>; Sudipta Roy, Samia Huq, and Aisha Binte Abdur Rob, "Faith and Education in Bangladesh: A Review of the Contemporary Landscape and Challenges," *International Journal of Educational Development* 79 (2020): 102290, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102290>; Shkuria Mahmoud Khallaf, "The Role of Scientific Miracles in Defending the Islamic Faith," *Bilad Alrafidain Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 1 (2023), <https://www.iasj.net/iasj/article/283810>; Subiyantoro, "Faith and Social Character Education of Sociological Education Perspective: An Implementation of Classroom Management in Islamic School," *MANAGERIA Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 2 (2017).

² Kemenag RI, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya, Lajnah Pentansihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an*, Badan Litbang Dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, vol. 11, 2019.

"Faith has over seventy branches. The highest of them is the declaration that there is no god but Allah, and the lowest is removing something harmful from the road. Modesty is also a branch of faith" (Narrated by Muslim).

This hadith illustrates that faith is dynamic and multidimensional, encompassing belief, speech, and action. So, how can something so complex be quantitatively measured through number-based examinations? The interpretation of the verse and hadith above indicates that *faith and piety are inner and spiritual in nature*, and difficult to objectively measure through conventional tests. IRE exams may assess students' understanding of religious knowledge, such as Islamic laws, history, or rituals of worship³. However, is that truly sufficient to reflect one's spiritual depth and level of piety?

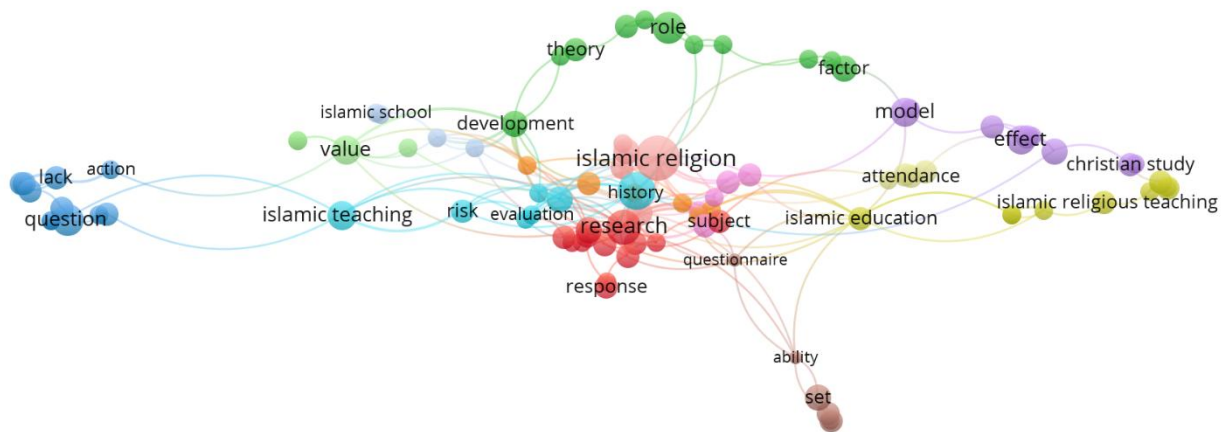


Figure 1. VOSviewer Results

Using VOSviewer, a bibliometric analysis was conducted on 300 journal articles published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on keywords such as

³ E Nurhidin, "Tolerance Education and Rejuvenation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Learning on Independent Curriculum," *Jurnal At-Tarbiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* (scholar.archive.org, 2023), <https://scholar.archive.org/work/yiy4qzenprbmpe7wyaqz6lkbcy/access/wayback/https://jurnal.staiannawawi.com/index.php/At-Tarbiyat/article/download/717/436>; L F M van Summeren, A J Wiczorek, and ..., "Community Energy Meets Smart Grids: Reviewing Goals, Structure, and Roles in Virtual Power Plants in Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands," *Energy Research* & ... (Elsevier, 2020), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214629619304335>; A H Nasaruddin and S Ladiqi, "Digital-Based Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Learning Model at Senior High School," ... *Journal of Islamic Education* ..., 2023, <https://ejournal.uit-lirboyo.ac.id/index.php/ijies/article/view/3525>.

"*measuring faith*", "*numbers*", "*Islamic Religious Education (IRE) exams*", "*spiritual understanding*", and "*assessment*." The results revealed several research trends and patterns related to the study's title. The analysis indicates that previous research has largely concentrated on the quantitative aspects of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), particularly in relation to examinations. However, affective and spiritual dimensions being more subjective are often overlooked. Much of the existing research tends to assess only cognitive and factual knowledge about religion, revealing a significant gap in exploring more holistic and in-depth measures of spiritual understanding.

This study introduces a novel approach by proposing a more inclusive model for assessing faith, one that integrates both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Furthermore, it offers a new perspective in evaluating how effective IRE examinations are as tools for measuring spiritual understanding, by incorporating factors such as spirituality, self-control, and mastery of religious content in a more balanced manner. As a result, this research is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the development of broader and more contextually relevant assessment approaches in religious education.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the extent to which IRE exams are capable of assessing students' spiritual understanding. Do the numerical scores produced by such exams genuinely reflect levels of faith, or do they obscure the essence of true belief? Through a critical analysis of the concept of *iman* (faith) as presented in the Qur'an and Hadith, alongside an evaluation of current assessment practices in religious education, this article seeks to offer a fresh perspective on how faith can be meaningfully assessed and nurtured within the context of modern education.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed methods approach with an explanatory sequential design to gain an in-depth understanding of how Islamic Religious Education (IRE) examinations assess students' comprehension of spiritual

aspects⁴. The research was conducted at SDN Karangtanjung 2, MI Muslimin Bojongranca, MI Sukarasa, SDN Litasembada, SDN Karangtanjung 1, and SDN Saapan—schools located in West Bandung Regency, West Java Province. The population consisted of all students enrolled in these schools. The sample included 26 students from SDN Karangtanjung 2, 21 from MI Muslimin Bojongranca, 54 from MI Sukarasa, 33 from SDN Litasembada, 59 from SDN Karangtanjung 1, and 28 from SDN Saapan, totaling 221 students, selected using purposive sampling techniques. The research instruments included tests and interviews. The quantitative method was used to compare more than two independent groups based on a single factor namely, the students' school of origin⁵. Meanwhile, the qualitative method aimed to explore students' learning outcomes through interviews and observations⁶.

For data analysis, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS version 26⁷. Descriptive statistics were used to present an overview of the data, while inferential statistics were employed to test hypotheses and draw generalizable conclusions. The inferential statistical procedures began with normality tests using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, as well as Levene's Test to examine homogeneity of variances. If the data were normally distributed, parametric tests such as one-way ANOVA were used. If not, non-parametric tests such as the Kruskal-Wallis test were conducted. When significant differences were found through ANOVA, a Post Hoc Test was performed to determine which groups differed significantly. The Bonferroni test was used for homogeneous data, and the Games-Howell test was applied when the data were not homogeneous.

⁴ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2021).

⁵ Alan Bryman and Duncan Cramer, *Quantitative Data Analysis with IBM SPSS 17, 18 & 19: A Guide for Social Scientists* (Routledge, 2012); Christer Thrane, *Doing Statistical Analysis: A Student's Guide to Quantitative Research* (Routledge, 2022).

⁶ John W Creswell, "Research Design: Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan Metode Campuran," *Diterjemahkan Oleh Achmad Fawaid, Edisi Ke-3. Cet. Ke-1. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Setia*, 2010.

⁷ Ni Putu Rizky Arnani, *Statistika Non Parametrik Konsep Dan Aplikasi SPSS* (Lakeisha, 2024).

For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. This method allowed for the extraction of meaning from interviews, observations, and documentation by classifying information into specific themes⁸. It is commonly used to explore experiences, perceptions, and meanings behind a phenomenon precisely the focus of this study. The steps in thematic analysis included: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the final report of the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine and visualize the characteristics of the independent and dependent variables without making inferences about the population. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a general overview of the data under investigation, as presented in the following table.

Tabel 1. Descriptive Statistics

School	$\bar{x}$	s	n
SDN Karangtanjung 2	83.42	2.996	26
MI Muslimin Bojongranca	81.71	3.608	21
MI Sukarasa	84.33	1.566	54
SDN Litasembada	76.88	3.664	33
SDN Karangtanjung 1	81.73	3.823	59
SDN Saapan	82.25	6.665	28
Total	81.90	4.426	221

Based on the table above, the average scores of students in the Islamic Religious Education exam at SDN Karangtanjung 2, MI Muslimin Bojongranca, MI Sukarasa, SDN Litasembada, SDN Karangtanjung 1, and SDN Saapan were 83.42, 81.71, 84.33, 76.88, 81.73, and 82.25 respectively, with an overall average of 81.90. The corresponding standard deviations were 2.996, 3.608, 1.566, 3.664,

⁸ Adriani Susanty et al., *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Malang: CV. Future Science, 2023).

3.823, and 6.665, with a combined standard deviation of 4.426. These values were obtained from research samples in each school, comprising 26, 21, 54, 33, 59, and 28 students respectively, for a total of 221 students.

The mean values represent the central tendency of the data set, providing a general overview of the data and allowing for comparisons across differentiated groups. In contrast, the standard deviation measures the extent to which the data values deviate from the mean. In other words, the larger the standard deviation, the greater the data variability from the central point; conversely, a smaller standard deviation indicates that the data points are closer to the mean. Thus, the standard deviation helps indicate the degree of variation in the data and aids in understanding the consistency and uncertainty within the data used for analysis.

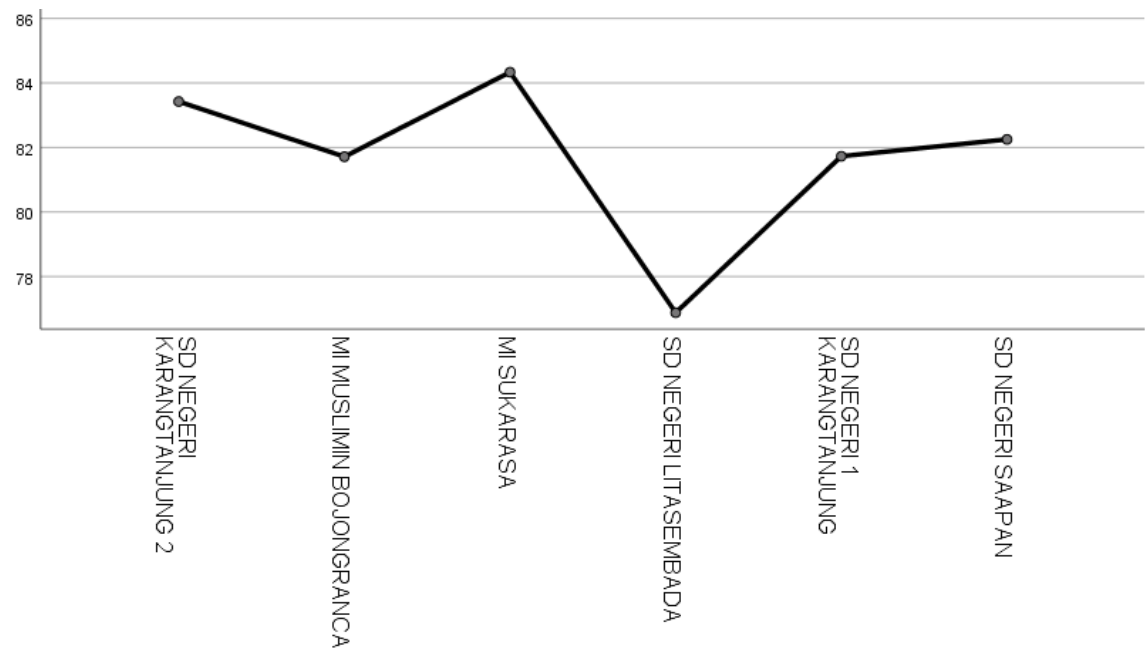


Figure 3. Estimated Marginal Means

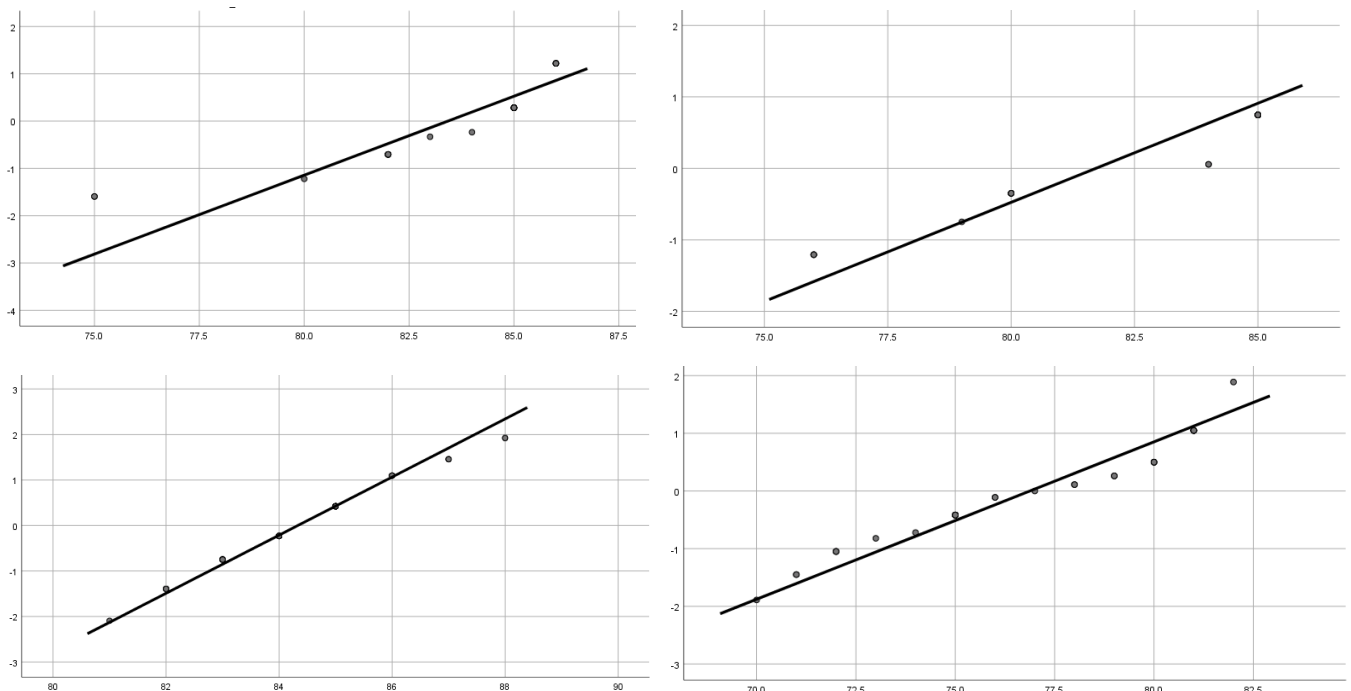
Based on the figure above, it can be observed that the highest average score in the Islamic Religious Education exam was achieved by students at MI Sukarasa, followed by SDN Karangtanjung 2, SDN Saapan, SDN Karangtanjung 1, and MI Muslimin Bojongranca. The lowest average score was recorded at SDN Litasembada.

Tabel 3. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
SDN Karangtanjung 2	.278	.000	.749	.000
MI Muslimin Bojongranca	.261	.001	.787	.000
MI Sukarasa	.169	.001	.947	.019
SDN Litasembada	.167	.021	.912	.011
SDN Karangtanjung 1	.200	.000	.894	.000
SDN Saapan	.235	.000	.872	.003

Based on the table above, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test statistics for the Islamic Religious Education exam results at SDN Karangtanjung 2, MI Muslimin Bojongranca, MI Sukarasa, SDN Litasembada, SDN Karangtanjung 1, and SDN Saapan were 0.278, 0.261, 0.169, 0.167, 0.200, and 0.235, and 0.000, 0.000, 0.019, 0.011, 0.000, and 0.003, respectively. The significance values were $0.000 < 0.05$, $0.001 < 0.05$, $0.001 < 0.05$, $0.021 < 0.05$, $0.000 < 0.05$, and $0.000 < 0.05$ for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and $0.000 < 0.05$, $0.000 < 0.05$, $0.019 < 0.05$, $0.011 < 0.05$, $0.000 < 0.05$, and $0.003 < 0.05$ for the Shapiro-Wilk test.

According to the decision criteria, these significance values indicate that the data do not follow a normal distribution. This conclusion is further supported by the data distribution patterns shown in the Normal Q-Q plots below.



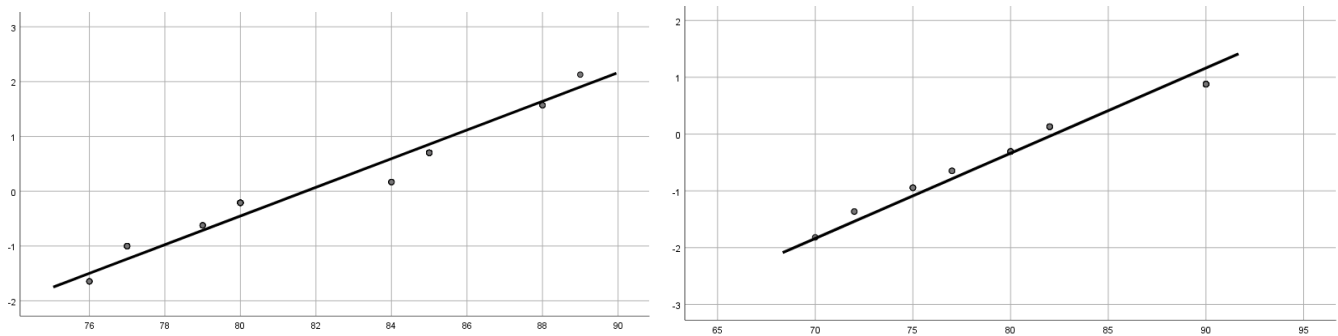


Figure 4. Normal Q-Q Plot of Values

Based on the figure above, it can be observed that the data points do not align closely around the diagonal line; rather, they predominantly deviate from it. This indicates that the distribution of students’ Islamic Religious Education exam scores, when analyzed by school of origin, does not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, a non-parametric statistical test, specifically the Kruskal-Wallis test, was subsequently employed.

Tabel 4. Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances^{a,b}

	Levene Statistic	Sig.
Based on Mean	21.799	.000
Based on Median	13.315	
Based on Median and with adjusted df	13.315	
Based on trimmed mean	22.585	

Based on the table above, the significance value for 'based on mean' is 0.000 < 0.05, indicating that the Islamic Religious Education exam scores of students, when analyzed by school of origin, do not have equal variances and thus are not homogeneous.

Tabel 5. Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistics^{a,b}

	Nilai
Kruskal-Wallis H	59.746
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Based on the table above, the significance value obtained from the non-parametric statistical test using the Kruskal-Wallis test is 0.000. This indicates that

the significance value is less than 0.05, and according to the decision-making criteria, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in students' Islamic Religious Education exam scores based on their school of origin. Therefore, to identify the specific differences between each school, a Post Hoc test was conducted as follows.

Tabel 6. Multiple Comparisons

School	School	Std. Error	Sig.
SDN Karangtanjung 2	MI Muslimin Bojongranca	.982	.515
	MI Sukarasa	.625	.693
	SDN Litasembada	.867	.000
	SDN Karangtanjung 1	.770	.253
	SDN Saapan	1.390	.957
MI Muslimin Bojongranca	MI Sukarasa	.816	.040
	SDN Litasembada	1.013	.000
	SDN Karangtanjung 1	.931	1.000
	SDN Saapan	1.485	.999
MI Sukarasa	SDN Litasembada	.672	.000
	SDN Karangtanjung 1	.541	.000
	SDN Saapan	1.277	.586
SDN Litasembada	SDN Karangtanjung 1	.809	.000
	SDN Saapan	1.412	.006
SDN Karangtanjung 1	SDN Saapan	1.354	.999

Based on the table above, it can be observed that the significance values between SDN Karangtanjung 2 and SDN Litasembada is 0.000; between MI Muslimin Bojongranca and MI Sukarasa and SDN Litasembada are 0.040 and 0.000 respectively; between MI Sukarasa and SDN Litasembada and SDN Karangtanjung 1 are both 0.000; and between SDN Litasembada and SDN Karangtanjung 1 and SDN Saapan are 0.000 and 0.006 respectively. These

significance values are all less than 0.05, indicating, based on the decision-making criteria, that there are statistically significant differences in students' Islamic Religious Education (IRE) exam results among these schools.

In contrast, for other schools such as SDN Karangtanjung 2 and MI Muslimin Bojongranca, MI Sukarasa, SDN Karangtanjung 1, and SDN Saapan, no significant differences in IRE exam results were observed. This is evidenced by significance values of $0.515 > 0.05$, $0.693 > 0.05$, $0.253 > 0.05$, and $0.957 > 0.05$, respectively. Additionally, comparisons between MI Muslimin Bojongranca and SDN Karangtanjung 1 and SDN Saapan yielded significance values of $1.000 > 0.05$ and $0.999 > 0.05$, while comparisons between MI Sukarasa and SDN Saapan, and SDN Karangtanjung 1 and SDN Saapan, showed values of $0.586 > 0.05$ and $0.999 > 0.05$. These results suggest, based on the established decision criteria, that there are no statistically significant differences in students' IRE exam results among these schools.

To support the quantitative findings, interviews were conducted with students and teachers from each school to explore how the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) exams influences students' understanding of spiritual values within religious learning.

At SDN Karangtanjung 2, the IRE exam approach emphasized memorization of religious material. Several students admitted that while they could recall various Islamic concepts, they had yet to grasp the deeper meanings behind those values. One student stated:

"I can memorize the pillars of faith and Islam, but I don't necessarily understand their meaning. The questions usually ask 'mention' or 'how many', rather than what it means in life."

A teacher from the same school also acknowledged that the IRE exam questions primarily focused on cognitive aspects due to limitations in objectively measuring spiritual dimensions. This is reflected in the teacher's comment:

"We still rely on memorization-based questions because it's difficult to assess students' faith through numbers. So most of the evaluation focuses on religious knowledge."

At MI Muslimin Bojong Ranca, the teacher attempted to implement a more

contextual approach by designing exam questions related to everyday life. This strategy helped students gain a more concrete understanding of Islamic teachings. One student noted:

"There was a question that asked, 'If you see a friend not praying, what would you do?' So I had to think not just memorize but understand why prayer is important."

The teacher at this school believed that spiritual values are more effectively assessed through students' thought processes and responses to real-life situations, rather than solely through objective answers. As stated:

"Occasionally, we present narrative questions that ask for students' opinions. The goal is not about right or wrong, but to gauge how deeply they understand Islamic values."

At MI Sukarasa, spiritual assessment was carried out through daily observation of student behavior rather than written exams alone. Teachers monitored actions such as honesty, empathy, and discipline as part of the evaluation process. One teacher explained:

"We also assess students' attitudes for example, whether they help one another, are honest, and show respect to teachers. These are also components of religious evaluation."

A student expressed:

"I'm afraid of making mistakes in exams, but the ustaz (teacher) said our religious grades are also based on our daily attitudes, not just exam scores."

At SDN Litasembada, the form of examination remained formal and often created pressure on students to achieve high scores. One student shared:

"We study to get good grades. But I wonder – does a high score mean I'm already a good Muslim child?"

The teacher at this school acknowledged that the current assessment model had not yet fully captured the spiritual dimension of students' understanding.

At SDN Karangtanjung 1, efforts were made to balance memorization with understanding of Islamic values. Teachers began to develop reflective questions that encouraged students to consider the application of religious teachings in everyday life. A teacher explained:

"We try to combine memorization with reflective questions. For instance, 'How do you emulate the Prophet's character in your daily life?'"

Students found this approach encouraged deeper reflection:

"When asked that kind of question, I start thinking it's not just about studying for exams, but also about becoming a better person."

At SDN Saapan, teachers implemented a narrative assessment method.

Students were asked to share personal experiences that demonstrated the practice of Islamic values. One student stated:

"I told a story about helping my grandmother with shopping. The teacher said it counts because it reflects Islamic values."

Teachers viewed this approach as a more meaningful way to assess the spiritual dimension:

"Faith cannot always be measured in numbers. But through students' stories and behavior, we can see how well they understand their religion."

Discussion

Based on the findings presented above, it is evident that the significant differences in Islamic Religious Education exam results across schools do not solely reflect students' religious understanding. Rather, these differences are largely influenced by the learning approaches and evaluation systems employed. Statistical analysis reveals significant disparities in PAI test scores between certain schools for example, between SDN Karangtanjung 2 and SDN Litasembada (significance value = 0.000). This supports the argument that instructional models and forms of assessment substantially affect students' cognitive achievements in religious education⁹.

However, in other schools, no significant differences were found, indicating the complexity of assessing religious education when it is reduced

⁹ Shiqing Wenren et al., "Reciprocal Effects between Reading Comprehension and Emotional Cognitive Ability," *Learning and Individual Differences* 109 (2024): 102398, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2023.102398>; D. A. Payne, *The Assessment of Learning Cognitive and Affective* (Lexington D. C.: Heath, 1974); Eva Hejnová et al., "Pupils' School Performance and Their Cognitive Abilities to Solve Problems," *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science* 17, no. 1 (2024): 55–66, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2024.170105>; Stephanie Elizabeth Randall, *Cognitive Conflict Levels between Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities and Students without Learning Disabilities* (Liberty University, 2022); Haris Pancawardana et al., "The Influence of Nonformal Education on Students' Cognitive Formation," *KOLOKIUUM Jurnal Pendidikan Luar Sekolah* 11, no. 2 (2023): 236–43, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24036/kolokium.v11i2.612>.

merely to numerical scores. Expert opinions reinforce these findings¹⁰. Value-based education, including religious education, cannot be comprehensively evaluated through conventional, score-based systems alone¹¹. Religious education assessment should be holistic, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This aligns with which argues that character education assessment must involve observation of students' real-life behaviors rather than relying solely on written tests¹². In this regard, SDN Karangtanjung 2, which emphasizes memorization, tends to produce students capable of recalling material, but not necessarily of comprehending or internalizing its values. On the other hand, the approaches adopted by MI Muslimin Bojong Ranca and SDN Saapan represent more contextual and narrative-based alternatives. At MI

¹⁰ Mohammad Sabarudin et al., "The Effect of Contextual Teaching and Learning Models on Al-Quran and Hadith Subjects," *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (2023): 129–42, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i2.43>; Mohammad Sabarudin et al., "Exploring the Foundations of Islamic Education: Insights from Ibn Sina and Ibn Khaldun," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 35, no. 1 (2024): 127–42, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v35i1.4266>; Murharyana Murharyana et al., "The Effects of Islamic Religious Education Learning on Students' Motivation," *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1–14, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v3i1.44>; Helmi Al Hafid Fauzi et al., "Work Stress Levels At Madrasah Tsanawiyah Arrukhshatul'ulum: The Challenges of Digitalization in Developing Islamic Educational Institutions," *Mudir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 7, no. 1 (2025): 19–27, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55352/mudir.v7i1.1469>.

¹¹ Muh Hanif, "Philosophical Review of Avicenna's Islamic Education Thought," *Asian Journal of Engineering, Social and Health* 2, no. 6 (2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46799/ajesh.v2i6.71>; Nurhikmah and Prayetno, "Equilibrium of Faith and Logic : Integration of Islamic Moral Values and Mathematics Education at the Junior High School Level in Various Contexts"; Jaja Sulaeman et al., "Islamic Religious Education Holistic-Integrative Learning in Elementary School," *International Journal of Social Science And Human Research* 6, no. 3 (2023): 1724–33, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i3-51>; Dito Anurogo et al., "Digital Literacy 5.0 to Enhance Multicultural Education," *Multicultural Islamic Education Review* 1, no. 2 (2023): 109–79, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.23917/mier.v1i2.3414>; Afif Anshori et al., "Dynamics and New Paradigm of Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 4, no. 2 (2022): 232–45.

¹² Arsyad Arsyad, Wahyu Bagja Sulfemi, and Tia Fajartriani, "Penguatan Motivasi Shalat Dan Karakter Peserta Didik Melalui Pendekatan Pembelajaran Kontekstual Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," *POTENSIA: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2020): 185, <https://doi.org/10.24014/potensia.v6i2.9662>; Hamruni, "Konsep Dasar Dan Implementasi Pembelajaran Kontekstual," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* XII, no. No. 2 (2015): 177–87; Romainur Romainur, Umar Fauzan, and Noor Malihah, "Characteristics of Islamic Religious Education in Boarding School Curriculum," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (2022): 197–207, <https://doi.org/10.21093/sajie.v4i2.4593>.

Muslimin Bojong Ranca, exam questions are linked to real-life scenarios, encouraging students to think critically and apply Islamic teachings in practical contexts. At SDN Saapan, students are assessed through personal narratives that reflect their lived experiences in practicing religious values, offering a more in-depth evaluation of their spirituality.

Such approaches resonate with the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara¹³, who emphasized the importance of character formation through role modeling, direct experience, and internalization of values¹⁴. In conclusion, assessing students' religious understanding should not rely solely on quantitative instruments such as written exams. Instead, it requires the integration of in-depth qualitative approaches. An ideal religious education evaluation system should combine memorization, contextual understanding, personal reflection, and the observation of students' daily behaviors¹⁵. This

¹³ Supala Supala, Dita Handayani, and Anwar Rifai, "Pendidikan Humanis Kh Ahmad Dahlan, Ki Hajar Dewantara Dan Paulo Freire," *THORIQOTUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 2 (2020): 94–115, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47971/tjpi.v3i2.287>; Cela Petty Susanti, Rosendah Dwi Maulaya, and Fifi Nur Lynda Febriyani, "Implementasi Konsep Sistem Among Ki Hajar Dewantara Dalam Dinamika Pendidikan Pesantren Modern," *Shibghoh: Prosiding Ilmu Kependidikan UNIDA Gontor* 1 (2023): 361–70, <https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/shibghoh/article/view/9509>; Ki Hajar Dewantara, *Ilmu Pendidikan* (Yogyakarta: Taman Siswa, 1961).

¹⁴ Mohammad Sabarudin, Ibnu Imam Al Ayyubi, and Rifqi Rohmatulloh, "Metode Project-Based Learning Untuk Menumbuhkan Nilai-Nilai Pancasila," *AlMaheer: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 02 (2023): 15–22, <https://journal.stitalazami.ac.id/index.php/almaheer/article/view/14>; Sabarudin et al., "The Effect of Contextual Teaching and Learning Models on Al-Quran and Hadith Subjects"; Mohammad Sabarudin et al., "The Effect of the SAVI Learning Model on Arabic Writing Skills: A Case Study at MTS Arrukhsatul 'Ulum, West Bandung," *Khulasah: Islamic Studies Journal* 5, no. 2 (2023): 102–11, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55656/kisj.v5i2.114>; Sabarudin et al., "Exploring the Foundations of Islamic Education: Insights from Ibn Sina and Ibn Khaldun"; Mohammad Sabarudin, Ibnu Imam Al Ayyubi, and Rifqi Rohmatulloh, "Strategi Pembelajaran PAI Berbasis Inkuiri Dan Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis Mahasiswa," *Kaffah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Sosio Keagamaan* 2, no. 2 (2023): 84–92, <https://jurnal.unmabanten.ac.id/index.php/kaffah/article/view/532>.

¹⁵ Anshori et al., "Dynamics and New Paradigm of Islamic Education in Indonesia"; Syamsul Aripin Syamsul Aripin and Nana Meily Nurdiansyah, "Modernization of Education: A New Approach and Method in Learning Islamic Religious Education," *TADRIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 1 (2022): 100–117, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v17i1.5916>; Wa Darma, "Discovery Learning Method in Improving Learning Outcomes of Islamic Religious Education (A Study at SMKN 1 Baubau)," *APLIKATIF: Journal of Research Trends in Social Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2022): 165–80, <https://doi.org/10.59110/aplikatif.v1i2.133>; Hilda Amalia Khasanah, Kustiono Kustiono, and Samsudi Samsudi, "Development of Power Point Macro-Based Interactive Multimedia in Learning Islamic Cultural History in Improving Student

integrated approach offers a more comprehensive and authentic picture of students' spiritual development and serves as a crucial foundation for designing a more humane and meaningful PAI assessment system¹⁶.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses, it can be concluded that assessing students' faith and spiritual understanding in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) cannot rely solely on exam scores. The variation in significance values across different schools indicates that teaching methods and assessment models contribute to differing learning outcomes. However, these numerical results do not fully capture the depth of students' spiritual comprehension. Quantitative measures may reflect students' ability to memorize, but they often fail to reveal how well students internalize and live out religious

Learning Outcomes," *Innovative Journal of Curriculum and Educational Technology* 12, no. 1 (2023): 37-47, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijcet.v12i1.71256>; Aidil Akhyar et al., "Impact of Teacher Welfare on Improving the Quality of Islamic Religious Education," *Ta Dib : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2021): 61-72, <https://doi.org/10.29313/tjpi.v10i1.7583>; Mustamin Mustamin et al., "Islamic Educational Values in Local Wisdom Traditional Tradition of Mappogau Sihanua Karampuang Sinjai District," *IJORER: International Journal of Recent Educational Research* 4, no. 2 (2023): 188-202, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.v4i2.326>; Muhammad Mirza Firdaus, "Challenges and Opportunities of Higher Education Based on Islamic Boarding Schools," in *Indonesian Proceedings and Annual Conference of Islamic Education (IPACIE)*, vol. 1, 2022, 437-44, <https://prosiding.uit-lirboyo.ac.id/index.php/psnp/article/view/108>; Reni Sasmita, "Character Education Method From the Lens of Al-Ghazali on Generation Z," *EDUSOSHUM: Journal of Islamic Education and Social Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2022): 121-30, <https://doi.org/10.52366/edusoshum.v2i3.47>; Eko Prayetno, Ibnu, and Deden, "Student Tolerance Attitudes in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education* 07, no. 02 (2024): 119-38; Murharyana et al., "The Effects of Islamic Religious Education Learning on Students' Motivation."

¹⁶ Murharyana Murharyana et al., "Behavior Change of Darul Falah Senior High School Students After Attending Tabligh Akbar," *Dirasah International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2023): 68-77, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59373/drs.v1i2.17>; Murharyana Murharyana, Ibnu Imam Al Ayyubi, and Rifqi Rohmatulloh, "Pendidikan Akhlak Anak Kepada Orang Tua Dalam Perspektif Al-Quran," *Piwulang: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 5, no. 2 (2023): 175-91, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.32478/piwulang.v5i2.1515>; Mumu Zainal Mutaqin et al., "Factors in Religious Culture to Increase Tolerant Attitude of Gen-Z Among Urban Muslims," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 29, no. 1 (2024): 73-86, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v29i1.9145>; Hadi Ahmad Bukhori and Ibnu Imam Al Ayyubi, "Hubungan Hasil Belajar Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Dengan Perilaku Siswa Di SMPN 3 Cihampelas KBB," *Al-Mubin; Islamic Scientific Journal* 6, no. 1 (2023): 17-30, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.51192/almubin.v6i01.425>; Murharyana et al., "The Effects of Islamic Religious Education Learning on Students' Motivation."

values. Interviews with students and teachers reveal that PAI assessments focused primarily on rote memorization are insufficient in uncovering meaningful understanding of Islamic principles. Many students perceive religious exams as disconnected from their daily experiences, which limits their ability to appreciate the practical relevance of what they learn. In contrast, more contextual and reflective forms of assessment—such as asking students to respond to real-life ethical scenarios—encourage deeper thinking about the purpose and implications of religious teachings.

Additionally, narrative-based assessments and behavioral observations have proven to be more effective in evaluating students' spiritual development. Schools that implement these methods, such as MI Muslimin Bojong Ranca and SDN Saapan, provide opportunities for students to articulate their lived experiences of practicing Islamic values. These approaches align with holistic educational philosophies, which emphasize character formation through direct engagement with moral experiences, rather than through abstract knowledge alone. Therefore, an ideal model for assessing Islamic Religious Education should integrate both cognitive evaluation and spiritual reflection through a comprehensive, holistic approach. By combining written assessments with contextual inquiry, personal reflection, and behavioral observation, educators can gain a more accurate and authentic picture of students' religious understanding. Such a multifaceted evaluation system not only enhances the relevance of PAI but also supports the formation of students who genuinely embody Islamic values in their daily lives.

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