

Educational Psychology and Religious Learning Assessment: Measuring Spiritual, Cognitive, and Moral Development in Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the relationship between religious learning assessment and the spiritual, cognitive, and moral development of students in Islamic Religious Education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot. The research employed a Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods approach conducted in two stages. Quantitative data were collected as the primary phase and subsequently enriched with qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the statistical findings. Quantitative data were obtained through Likert-scale questionnaires, learning achievement tests, and instruments measuring students' religious development involving tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students. Quantitative analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics and correlation tests to identify the relationship between learning assessment and student development. The qualitative phase was conducted through in-depth interviews, observations of religious activities within the madrasah environment, and documentation of assessment practices implemented by Islamic Religious Education teachers. The findings indicate that religious learning assessment functions not only as a tool for measuring academic achievement but also contributes significantly to the development of students' spiritual and moral character. The religious culture of the madrasah, teachers' exemplary behavior, and habitual worship practices were found to strengthen the internalization of Islamic values in students' daily lives. Nevertheless, the study also revealed that the assessment of affective and moral dimensions continues to face challenges related to objectivity and has not been fully supported by standardized evaluation instruments.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic education in the era of social and digital transformation requires educational institutions not only to produce academically

competent students but also individuals possessing strong spiritual and moral maturity (Afandy et al., 2026; Firghol et al., 2026). Within the context of modern society, ethical crises, increasing individualistic behavior, and the weakening of religious awareness among adolescents indicate that religious education plays a strategic role in maintaining balance between intellectual intelligence and character formation (Acetylena & Zaironi, 2026; Azaim et al., 2025). Islamic Religious Education serves an important function as a medium for internalizing Islamic values capable of shaping students' social behavior sustainably (Rohanita et al., 2026; Subairi & Zaironi, 2025). However, the success of religious education cannot be measured solely through cognitive achievement reflected in examination scores, but also through the development of students' spiritual attitudes and moral behavior in everyday life (Mufarrohah & Zaironi, 2026; Zaironi & Acetylena, 2026). Therefore, research concerning educational psychology and religious learning assessment becomes essential to understand how learning evaluation processes contribute to the holistic and sustainable formation of students' religious character within the madrasah environment.

The general problem currently faced by society is closely related to the increasingly complex moral challenges experienced by younger generations amidst globalization and the rapid development of information technology (Herak, 2025; Nia Hasanah, Muchammad Syamsul Ma'arif, Nurul Ma'rifah, 2025). Various phenomena such as declining communication ethics, intolerant behavior (Ni & Zaironi, 2026), increasing juvenile delinquency, and weak social responsibility demonstrate that formal education has not fully succeeded in balancing intellectual intelligence with character maturity (Fahrurrosi et al., 2026; Luluk Ananta, Fajriah, 2025). In practice, Islamic Religious Education learning in many educational institutions still tends to emphasize memorization of subject materials and academic achievement (Hasbiyalloh et al., 2025; Zaironi & Husni, 2026), while affective dimensions and students' spiritual development receive insufficient proportional attention (Azizah et al., 2026; Fakhridana et al., 2026). This condition causes religious learning assessments to frequently fail in representing students' actual behavioral transformation in religious life. Consequently, the success of religious education is often measured more through report card scores than through the internalization of Islamic values in students' social lives. This situation highlights the urgent need for more comprehensive, humanistic, and character-oriented models of religious learning assessment.

Empirical phenomena observed at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot demonstrate efforts to integrate academic learning with religious character development through a madrasah culture grounded in Islamic values. Activities such as congregational prayer, habitual Qur'anic recitation, kitab studies, and moral character strengthening constitute important components of students' daily lives. Nevertheless, Islamic Religious Education teachers continue to face challenges in objectively and systematically assessing students' spiritual and moral development. Affective assessments often depend on teachers' personal observations without the support of standardized evaluation instruments. Furthermore, there are students who achieve high academic performance in religious subjects but do not consistently reflect religious behavior within daily social interactions. This condition indicates a gap between cognitive learning achievement and the process of internalizing Islamic values. Therefore, this research is important for understanding the relationship between religious learning assessment and students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development within the madrasah environment comprehensively.

Research concerning Islamic educational psychology and religious learning evaluation has been conducted by numerous researcher with diverse focuses (Nuraini Maulidia, Sabrina Nurhaliza, Ramadhanti Syifa Salsabila, 2025; Tirta & Zaironi, 2025). Some studies have highlighted the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education learning in improving students' cognitive achievement, while others have examined the influence of religious school culture on students' character formation (Antika et al., 2026; Azizah et al., 2026; Tirta & Zaironi, 2025). In addition, several studies have discussed the importance of educational psychology approaches in understanding students' emotional and spiritual development within Islamic educational institutions (Arisih & Muhammad, 2026; Bisri et al., 2026; Rahmania & Kurnia, Fitri Ayu, 2026). These findings indicate that religious educational environments can contribute positively to the formation of students' social and moral behavior. However, most previous studies still position religious learning assessment merely as an instrument for measuring academic achievement (Horwitz, 2021; Poncini, 2023). Spiritual and moral evaluation aspects are frequently discussed conceptually without being supported by integrated measurement models (Luluk Ananta, Fajriah, 2025; Sobirin & Zaironi, 2025). Consequently, studies concerning the relationship between religious learning assessment and students' psychological development have not yet

received sufficient attention within contemporary Islamic education research comprehensively and systematically.

Moreover, previous studies generally employed either quantitative or qualitative approaches separately, making them insufficient in explaining the relationship between statistical data and social realities comprehensively. Quantitative studies tend to produce numerical data concerning students' religiosity or character levels but are unable to explain the process of value formation occurring within madrasah life. Conversely, qualitative studies mainly describe students' religious culture and spiritual experiences without demonstrating empirical relationships between learning assessment and character development. These limitations indicate a significant research gap within Islamic educational psychology studies, particularly regarding the integration between religious learning evaluation and students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development. Additionally, limited research has been conducted within pesantren-based madrasah aliyah contexts possessing distinctive religious educational characteristics. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap through a Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory approach enabling integration between statistical analysis and in-depth interpretation of religious educational phenomena within the madrasah environment comprehensively and contextually.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to integrate Islamic educational psychology perspectives with religious learning assessment in measuring students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development holistically. This study does not focus solely on students' academic achievement but also positions religious character development as an essential component of successful Islamic Religious Education learning. Furthermore, the use of the Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory approach contributes methodologically because it systematically connects quantitative findings with qualitative explanations. Another distinctive contribution of this study appears in the research context conducted within a pesantren-based madrasah aliyah culture, allowing the emergence of new understandings regarding the relationship between institutional religious culture and religious learning evaluation processes. This research also offers a new perspective concerning the importance of developing affective assessment instruments that are more objective, measurable, and compatible with Islamic educational characteristics. Therefore, this study is

expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic Religious Education evaluation in Indonesia.

Based on these considerations, this research seeks to answer the question of how religious learning assessment contributes to students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot. The study is grounded in the argument that the success of Islamic Religious Education cannot be measured solely through mastery of subject content but must also include changes in students' religious behavior and comprehensive character formation. Religious learning assessment is viewed as a strategic instrument functioning not only to evaluate learning outcomes but also to shape students' spiritual awareness, moral responsibility, and social attitudes. This study further argues that the madrasah's religious culture and teachers' exemplary conduct significantly influence the effectiveness of religious learning assessment. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more integrative, humanistic, and contextually relevant models of Islamic Religious Education evaluation capable of responding to the challenges of contemporary Islamic education in the modern era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design (Bowen et al., 2017; Wipulanusat et al., 2020), a mixed research approach conducted through two consecutive stages beginning with the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by an in-depth qualitative investigation. The selection of this design was based on the research objective of obtaining empirical evidence regarding the relationship between religious learning assessment and students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development while simultaneously exploring the process of religious character formation comprehensively. The quantitative approach was utilized to identify objective relationships among variables, whereas the qualitative approach functioned to explain meanings, contexts, and social dynamics influencing the research findings. Consequently, the integration of both approaches produced a more comprehensive understanding of the educational phenomena investigated within the study.

The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot because the institution possesses distinctive characteristics of Islamic education integrating formal academic learning with pesantren-based religious culture. The selection of this research site was based on the consideration that the madrasah implements

various spiritual and moral development programs, including congregational prayers, habitual Qur'anic recitation, kitab studies, and character strengthening activities integrated into students' daily routines. Furthermore, the institution applies an Islamic Education assessment system that evaluates not only academic achievement but also students' religious behavior and moral conduct. These conditions made the research location highly relevant for examining the relationship between religious learning assessment and students' character development from a holistic educational perspective within the context of Islamic secondary education comprehensively.

Data collection techniques combined quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain comprehensive and in-depth information (Ahmad et al., 2019; Wallwey & Kajfez, 2023). Quantitative data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires, Islamic Education learning achievement tests, and instruments measuring students' spiritual and moral development administered to tenth, eleventh, and twelfth-grade students. Meanwhile, qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with Islamic Education teachers, the principal, and students, as well as observations of religious activities within the madrasah environment. The study also utilized documentation data, including teachers' assessment journals, students' report cards, and character development programs, as supporting evidence. The combination of these data collection techniques strengthened the validity and triangulation process, enabling the researcher to produce more credible and comprehensive findings regarding the influence of religious learning assessment on students' religious character formation within the madrasah context effectively.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify the relationship between religious learning assessment and students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development. The data were analyzed through correlation and simple regression tests to determine the level of influence among the research variables. Subsequently, qualitative data analysis was performed through stages of data reduction, data presentation, thematic categorization, and conclusion drawing based on interviews, observations, and research documentation (Ravindran, 2019). The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was carried out during the final interpretation stage by connecting statistical results with field findings. This integrative analytical process produced a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of religious

learning assessment in shaping students' religious character within the Islamic educational environment of the madrasah comprehensively and systematically.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Religious Learning Assessment as a Medium for Spiritual and Moral Development

In this study, educational psychology and religious learning assessment were conceptualized as an evaluation process within Islamic Education that measures not only students' academic mastery but also their spiritual development, moral growth, and social behavior. The operational definition of the findings in the field indicated that religious assessment at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot was implemented through a combination of cognitive evaluation, observation of religious attitudes, habituation of worship practices, and assessment of students' daily moral conduct. Islamic Education teachers evaluated students' spiritual development through their consistency in performing worship, participation in religious activities, and ability to apply Islamic values within social interactions. Meanwhile, moral development was measured through indicators such as responsibility, honesty, and ethical behavior within the madrasa environment. The study also found that students' cognitive development remained an important indicator; however, it was no longer positioned as the sole measure of success in religious learning because affective and spiritual dimensions were considered highly influential in shaping students' religious character.

Table 1. Interview Excerpt

Assessment Aspect		Finding Indicator	Percentage/Category
Spiritual Development		Consistency in worship and participation in religious activities	86% (High)
Moral Development		Honesty, discipline, and social responsibility	81% (Good)
Cognitive Development		Understanding of Islamic Education materials	84% (Good)
Teachers' Assessment	Affective	Use of observation and behavioral journals	73% (Moderately Optimal)
Teacher Role Modeling		Influence on students' religious behavior	88% (Very High)
Madrasa Culture	Religious	Strengthening students' spiritual character	90% (Very High)

The table demonstrates that the madrasa's religious culture and teachers' role modeling exerted dominant influence on students' spiritual and moral

development. The high percentage within the religious culture aspect indicates that consistent habituation of religious activities successfully created an educational environment supporting the internalization of Islamic values. From the perspective of educational psychology, these conditions illustrate that religious learning becomes more effective when students directly experience continuous religious habituation within their social environment. The findings further reveal that students' spiritual development was influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by social interaction, institutional culture, and teachers' exemplary behavior in daily life. Therefore, religious learning assessment cannot be understood merely as an academic instrument but rather as part of a broader process of developing students' religious consciousness through psychological and social experiences within the Islamic educational environment.

Furthermore, the data indicate that teachers' affective assessment remained only moderately optimal compared to other aspects. This finding suggests that Islamic Education teachers still faced challenges in objectively and systematically measuring students' moral and spiritual development. Assessment of religious attitudes largely depended on teachers' personal observation, potentially resulting in subjectivity during evaluation processes. These conditions demonstrate that religious learning assessment systems within the madrasa still require the development of more structured and measurable evaluation instruments. On the other hand, the high level of students' cognitive achievement indicates that academic learning processes had functioned effectively. However, this study emphasizes that the success of Islamic Education cannot be measured solely through students' ability to understand religious concepts but also through observable changes in their religious behavior. Therefore, integrating academic assessment with character evaluation becomes an essential requirement in developing contemporary Islamic education systems.

Observational findings showed that the madrasa's religious culture was integrated comprehensively into students' daily activities. The researcher observed that students regularly participated in congregational prayers, recited the Qur'an before classes began, and attended religious studies guided by teachers and madrasa supervisors. Interactions between teachers and students also reflected educational relationships emphasizing moral role modeling and spiritual discipline. In several situations, teachers not only provided academic evaluation but also offered direct guidance concerning students' social behavior

and religious ethics. The researcher interpreted these conditions as strengthening the internalization process of Islamic values because students obtained practical and repetitive religious experiences within their educational environment. The observations further demonstrated that the madrasa's social environment significantly contributed to shaping students' moral awareness. Consequently, the effectiveness of religious learning assessment was strongly influenced by institutional culture supporting consistent religious character development among students.

Based on the research findings, it can be understood that religious learning assessment at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot functioned both as a character-building instrument and as an academic evaluation tool. The data demonstrated that students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development were interconnected and influenced by the madrasa's religious culture as well as teachers' role modeling. In other words, the success of Islamic Education was reflected not only in students' ability to answer examination questions or understand religious concepts but also in changes in their religious behavior within daily life. This study confirms that the perspective of Islamic educational psychology plays a significant role in explaining how religious values are internalized through learning processes and social interaction within the madrasa environment. Therefore, religious learning assessment should be developed more holistically to objectively measure spiritual and moral dimensions while supporting the sustainable formation of students' religious character.

The research data reveal a strong relationship between the madrasa's religious culture, teachers' role modeling, and the effectiveness of religious learning assessment in shaping students' character development. The higher the intensity of religious habituation within the madrasa environment, the greater the students' spiritual and moral development. This pattern demonstrates that religious character formation does not occur instantly but develops through continuous social and psychological processes. Additionally, the data indicate that affective assessment remained the weakest aspect compared to cognitive evaluation. This finding suggests the necessity of developing more standardized assessment systems to measure students' spiritual and moral growth more objectively. The study further found that the success of Islamic Education was strongly influenced by the integration of academic learning, institutional religious culture, and interpersonal relationships between teachers and students within the madrasa's daily educational environment.

Table 2. The Influence of Islamic Religious Education Learning

Influencing Variable	Form of Ideal Influence	Impact on Students
Islamic Education Teacher Role Modeling	Consistency of teachers' religious and moral behavior	Improving students' spiritual discipline and morality
Madrasa Religious Culture	Habituation of worship and religious activities	Strengthening the internalization of Islamic values
Affective Assessment	Attitude evaluation based on structured observation	Developing students' moral awareness
Cognitive Islamic Education Learning	Contextual understanding of religious materials	Enhancing students' religious reflection ability
Islamic Social Interaction	Educational relationships between teachers and students	Developing polite social behavior

The second table demonstrates that the ideal influence within Islamic Education learning lies not only in students' mastery of academic material but also in the quality of the educational environment supporting the development of religious character. Teachers' role modeling occupied a central position because teachers' behavior became a psychological model directly imitated by students in daily life. Furthermore, the madrasa's religious culture functioned as a habituation space enabling Islamic values to be practiced concretely. These findings indicate that students' spiritual and moral development was more effectively formed through the combination of formal instruction and repeated religious social experiences. From the perspective of Islamic educational psychology, this process demonstrates that value internalization occurs not only through knowledge transfer but also through emotional and social experiences encountered by students within the educational environment.

The data also reveal a pattern indicating that affective assessment held a strategic position in developing students' moral awareness. Structured attitude assessment enabled teachers to understand students' character development more comprehensively compared to relying solely on academic evaluation. This study demonstrates that cognitive learning becomes more meaningful when integrated with spiritual guidance and Islamic social interaction. Therefore, the success of Islamic Education is strongly influenced by synergy among academic evaluation, religious culture, and psychological approaches within learning processes. This relational pattern illustrates that Islamic education in madrasas possesses a holistic characteristic positioning spiritual, moral, and intellectual development as interconnected dimensions. Consequently, developing an integrative religious learning assessment system becomes essential for

supporting the formation of Muslim generations who are not only intellectually competent but also spiritually mature and socially responsible.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that religious learning assessment at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot functions not merely as an academic evaluation tool but also as an instrument for shaping students' spiritual and moral character. These findings are consistent with Islamic educational psychology theories that position religious learning as a medium for value internalization, the formation of religious behavior, and the strengthening of spiritual awareness. Previous studies have explained that the success of Islamic Religious Education is strongly influenced by the religious culture of educational institutions and the quality of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students (Negara et al., 2024; Ramadhani & Faridah, 2025). This study reinforces such perspectives through empirical evidence demonstrating that religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and Islamic social interactions significantly influence students' moral development. Nevertheless, the study also reveals that religious learning assessment still faces limitations in measuring affective dimensions because most evaluations continue to rely heavily on teachers' subjective observations.

The findings further demonstrate that students' spiritual development is closely associated with the consistent implementation of the madrasa's religious culture in daily life. These results correspond with various studies in Islamic education emphasizing that religious educational environments strengthen the habituation of values and sustainable character formation among students (Hidayah et al., 2025; Sholikah et al., 2025). However, this study presents an important distinction from several earlier studies that primarily focused on the cognitive dimension of religious learning. In this research, the success of Islamic Religious Education is assessed not only through students' ability to understand learning materials but also through changes in religious behavior and moral quality within social life. This distinction indicates that religious learning evaluation requires a more holistic and multidimensional approach. Consequently, this study contributes a new perspective to the development of Islamic Religious Education assessment by integrating students' academic, spiritual, and social dimensions simultaneously within one comprehensive evaluative framework.

In addition, this study found that teacher role modeling occupies a strategic position in shaping students' religious behavior. These findings support social learning theory, which explains that individuals tend to learn behavior through observation and imitation of figures perceived as possessing social authority (Whiten, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2019). Within the context of Islamic education, Islamic Religious Education teachers function not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral and spiritual exemplars for students. The findings indicate that students internalize Islamic values more effectively when teachers demonstrate consistency between their words and daily behavior. This study also extends previous discussions in Islamic educational psychology, which have generally concentrated more on instructional methods than on the dimension of teachers' moral exemplarity. Therefore, the research highlights the importance of strengthening teachers' personal and spiritual competencies as an integral component of improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education in madrasas.

The theoretical implications of this study indicate that religious learning assessment should be understood as a holistic educational process rather than merely an academic evaluation mechanism. The findings strengthen the perspective of Islamic educational psychology, which views spiritual, moral, and intellectual development as interconnected dimensions within students' character formation processes (Syafii & Azhari, 2025; Warsah et al., 2024). Furthermore, the application of the Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods approach contributes methodologically by connecting statistical findings with social realities more comprehensively and deeply. The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of developing affective assessment instruments that are more objective, systematic, and compatible with the characteristics of Islamic education. Madrasas need to design evaluation models that measure not only students' cognitive achievement but also their spiritual development and social behavior. Therefore, religious learning assessment may function more effectively as a sustainable instrument for fostering students' religious character development.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education is strongly influenced by the integration of learning assessment, madrasa religious culture, and teacher role modeling in everyday educational life. This relational pattern indicates that the formation of students' religious character cannot be achieved solely through academic knowledge transfer but requires consistent social and spiritual experiences within educational environments. The

findings extend previous studies by positioning religious learning assessment as part of the psychological and social processes involved in shaping students' religious identity. This research also contributes to the development of a more humanistic, integrative, and character-oriented model of Islamic education. Therefore, strengthening spiritual and moral assessment systems becomes an essential necessity in addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic education so that madrasas are able to produce generations who are intellectually competent as well as spiritually and socially mature.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the assessment of religious learning in Islamic Education serves a broader function than merely measuring students' academic achievement. The most significant finding reveals that students' spiritual, moral, and cognitive development is shaped through the integration of the madrasah's religious culture, teachers' role modeling, and learning evaluation processes oriented toward character formation. The major insight gained from this research is that effective Islamic education should not only emphasize knowledge transmission but also foster religious experience and continuous moral habituation. Therefore, religious learning assessment should be understood as a medium for developing spiritual awareness and social behavior that supports students' holistic character development.

The strength of this study lies in its contribution to integrating the perspective of Islamic educational psychology with religious learning assessment in a holistic manner. This research contributes academically by strengthening the concept of Islamic Education evaluation that extends beyond cognitive achievement to include students' spiritual and moral development. Furthermore, the use of a Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory approach enabled the study to generate more comprehensive empirical data by connecting statistical findings with social realities within the madrasah environment. The study also enriches contemporary Islamic education discourse by highlighting the importance of religious culture and teachers' role modeling as psychological factors influencing the effectiveness of religious learning assessment in shaping students' character.

This study has several limitations because it was conducted only at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khoirot, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other madrasahs with different institutional characteristics. In addition, the assessment of students' spiritual and moral development remained influenced by teachers'

subjective evaluations despite the use of multiple assessment instruments. Future research is recommended to involve a wider range of Islamic educational institutions with diverse social and cultural backgrounds to obtain broader insights into the effectiveness of religious learning assessment. Further studies may also develop technology-based affective assessment instruments or employ longitudinal approaches to examine students' religious character development more comprehensively and sustainably.

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