

Enhancing Students' Critical Reasoning Ability Through Integration of Imam Mawardi's Educational Concepts in Islamic Education Learning: a Case Study at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

Islamic Education;
Critical Reasoning; Imam
Mawardi; PAI Learning;
High School.

The background of this research is based on the urgent need for *PAI* education that is not only oriented toward dogmatic aspects but also able to equip students with critical thinking skills relevant in the global era. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness and implementation strategy of Imam Mawardi's educational concept in learning *Islamic Religious Education (PAI)* to increase students' critical reasoning power at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali. Qualitative research with a case study approach uses data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews with *PAI* teachers, classroom observations, and analysis of Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) documents and student work. The results of the study show that the integration of Imam Mawardi's thoughts, especially from the book *Adab ad-Dunya wa ad-Din*, can be applied effectively through learning methods such as analytical discussions, problem-based learning, and contemporary case studies. This implementation successfully stimulates students to evaluate information, relate religious values to social issues, and formulate logical arguments. It was concluded that Imam Mawardi's educational concept proved to be relevant and applicable in shaping the profile of students who are not only religious but also globally minded and possess strong critical reasoning, in line with the vision of education today.

INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology in the era of globalization requires the education system to produce a generation that is not only cognitively intelligent, but also has critical reasoning, solid morality, and strong religious character (Amin, 2020). The challenge of education today is no longer just to transfer knowledge but to cultivate critical, analytical, and reflective thinking skills in dealing with social, moral, and spiritual problems (Aziz et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in shaping the personality of students who have faith, noble character, and rational thinking based on Islamic values (Zulfa & Hidayat, 2021). However, the reality in the field shows that PAI learning is still often normative, dogmatic, and has not fully directed students to develop critical reasoning skills toward the religious teachings and phenomena they are facing (Rahmawati & Fadhli, 2022). Strengthening critical thinking in PAI requires learner-centered approaches that encourage inquiry and problem-solving aligned with Islamic epistemology (Suprpto et al., 2020). The integration of character education and higher-order thinking skills is crucial so that students can adapt to the complexities of modern life without losing their spiritual identity (Nurdin, 2019). Therefore, PAI must transform learning strategies to promote interpretation, analysis, and contextual understanding of religious values among students (Setiawan, 2024).

The limitations of the critical approach in PAI cause many students to understand religious teachings textually without being able to relate them to dynamic social and humanitarian contexts (Dalimunthe & Siregar, 2023). In fact, Islam as a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin encourages its people to use common sense ('aql) optimally in understanding the revelation and reality of life (Khosiin, Tobroni, & Khozin, 2023). In this case, the ability to think critically is not only an intellectual skill but also part of the spiritual responsibility of human beings as caliphs on earth (Hasibuan, 2025). Therefore, it is important for PAI teachers to present a learning model that combines rationality, moral values, and Islamic spirituality (Isnaini, 2024).

One of the inspirational sources in the Islamic intellectual tradition that is relevant to be integrated into the learning of PAI is the concept of education put forward by Imam al-Mawardi (d. 1058 AD), a great scholar and thinker in the fields of Islamic politics, ethics, and education (Huzain, 2017). In his work *Adab al-Dunya wa al-Din*, Imam Mawardi emphasized the importance of holistic education, which is education that not only develops intellectual aspects but also moral and social aspects (Gusti Ayu, Nurdiani & Marisa, 2022). He emphasized that reason ('aql) is the gift of Allah which is the main means for humans to know the truth, distinguish between good and bad, and weigh every action based on the principles of justice and benefit (Khosiin, Tobroni & Khozin, 2023). Thus, according to Imam Mawardi, education must be directed to form human beings who are knowledgeable, civilized, and have wisdom in making decisions (Dalimunthe & Siregar, 2023).

Imam Mawardi's concept of education has high relevance to the needs of 21st-century learning, which emphasizes critical thinking, problem solving, and moral reasoning (Arif & Aziz, 2022). The integration of this concept into PAI learning can be a strategy to improve students' critical reasoning power through a balanced approach between reason and heart, as well as between knowledge and values. In the context of high school, especially at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali, the integration of Imam Mawardi's thought values has the potential to provide a new color in PAI learning practices, which have tended to be teacher-centered and less stimulating of students' critical thinking.

In addition, education based on classical Islamic values as initiated by Imam Mawardi can strengthen the character of students in facing the challenges of modernization and digital disruption. Many social phenomena such as intolerance, consumptive behavior, and moral crises are rooted in students' low ability to think critically about the information and values they receive from the environment and digital media. The integration of Imam Mawardi's educational concept can provide an ethical framework that allows students to weigh each phenomenon rationally and based on Islamic values, so that they are not easily influenced by biased and destructive information flows.

On the other hand, research on the development of critical reasoning through Islamic religious education is still relatively limited, especially in the context of the implementation of the thought of classical Islamic figures. Most previous research has focused more on modern pedagogic approaches, such as student-centered learning, contextual teaching, and problem-based learning, without linking them to Islamic intellectual treasures rich in ethical and rational educational concepts. Therefore, this study tries to fill this gap by exploring the relevance of Imam Mawardi's educational concept in increasing students' critical reasoning power through PAI learning.

This research was carried out at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali, one of the secondary schools that has a program to strengthen religious and rational character for students. Through this case study, the research seeks to describe how PAI teachers integrate the concept of Imam Mawardi's education in the learning process, as well as how it affects the improvement of students' critical reasoning power. This research is expected not only to make a theoretical contribution in the field of Islamic education but also to provide a practical model for teachers in developing learning strategies that are able to foster critical and religious thinking at the same time.

Thus, the urgency of this research lies in the effort to re-present the values of classical Islamic education in a modern context that is full of superficial thinking challenges, hoaxes, and moral crises. Imam Mawardi's educational concept that emphasizes the balance between reason and morality can be an important foundation in building a PAI learning paradigm that is not only oriented to memorizing dogma but also fostering the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate life values. Such learning is believed to be able to form a generation of Muslims who are intelligent, moral, and have high critical reasoning power in facing the complexity of the times. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the concept of education according to Imam Mawardi, which is relevant to the development of students' critical reasoning power.

Several previous studies have examined efforts to strengthen critical reasoning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), but most still emphasize modern pedagogical strategies without deeply exploring the contribution of classical Islamic thought. Suhartono (2021) found that inquiry-based learning in PAI can improve students' analytical abilities, yet the study did not integrate Islamic philosophical foundations that guide ethical reasoning. Meanwhile, Rahmawati and Fauzan (2022) emphasized that contextual and reflective approaches in PAI enhance moral understanding but tend to lack intellectual depth because they separate rational reasoning from religious values. These two studies highlight a gap—namely, the absence of integration between classical Islamic concepts of education and modern learning frameworks in fostering critical reasoning.

The aim of this research is to analyze the implementation and impact of al-Mawardi's educational concept in developing students' critical reasoning abilities through an ethical-rational approach rooted in Islamic teachings. The expected benefits include providing theoretical enrichment for Islamic education by reconnecting classical intellectual heritage with 21st-century learning needs and offering practical insights for teachers to design PAI learning models that nurture both intellectual reasoning and moral-spiritual awareness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand the learning process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through integrating Imam Mawardi's educational concepts at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore the meanings, experiences, and dynamics of learning occurring naturally in the school environment. Case study methodology allowed for a comprehensive description of how Imam Mawardi's educational values were integrated and their effects on enhancing students' critical reasoning in PAI learning.

The study took place at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali, Central Java, selected purposively due to its active role in developing learning innovations based on religious values and character. The research subjects included PAI teachers, school principals, and grade XI students engaged in the PAI learning process. Informants were chosen purposively based on criteria such as direct experience in learning activities, active participation in class discussions, and reflective thinking on the material taught. The sample consisted of one main PAI teacher, one principal, and ten grade XI students, considered representative of the phenomenon.

Data collected comprised primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews, direct classroom observations, and reflection notes from teachers and students. Secondary data included syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), PAI textbooks, student learning records, and documents related to the school's religious activities. Primary data illustrated the informants' empirical experiences, while secondary data supported findings and provided contextual background.

Data collection employed participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation captured detailed teacher activities, student interactions, and instances of critical reasoning during PAI lessons incorporating Imam Mawardi's values. Interviews with teachers, students, and principals explored the application of educational concepts, learning strategies, and student perceptions of their critical reasoning development. Documentation review examined lesson plans, evaluation results, and records of religious activities to link theory with practice.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing with verification. Data reduction categorized interviews, observations, and documents by themes such as integration of rational values, teaching strategies for critical reasoning, and student responses. Data presentation organized findings into narratives and thematic tables illustrating conceptual relationships. Conclusions were drawn through reflection and triangulation to ensure consistency and validity.

To enhance data validity, triangulation of sources, methods, and time was applied. Source triangulation compared information from teachers, students, and principals. Method triangulation combined observations, interviews, and documents. Time triangulation involved data collection across different occasions to enhance stability. Member checks were conducted by sharing preliminary findings with informants to confirm accurate interpretation. These strategies increased the credibility and validity of the results.

Ethical considerations included obtaining official permission from the school before data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and benefits and provided informed consent. Researcher maintained confidentiality by using initials and remained neutral to preserve objectivity.

The research process comprised three stages: pre-field, fieldwork, and analysis-reporting. Pre-field activities involved literature review, instrument preparation, and coordination with the school. Fieldwork included classroom observation, interviews, and documentation over one month of teaching and learning activities. The final stage involved data processing, interpretation, and preparation of reports for scientific publication. This research provided a comprehensive overview of integrating Imam Mawardi's educational values in PAI and its contribution to enhancing students' critical reasoning skills at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of PAI Learning at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali has been oriented towards strengthening students' character, morals, and critical thinking skills. PAI teachers in this school not only emphasize the cognitive aspect in the form of understanding verses and hadiths, but also relate them to the context of students' social and moral lives. For example, when discussing the theme of morality in modern life, the teacher invites students to analyze the phenomenon of social media and the behavior of the digital society with an approach to Islamic values.

From the results of interviews with PAI teachers, information was obtained that the learning approach applied tried to combine reasoning (logical reasoning) and reflection (reflection (contemplation of values)). Teachers try to present discussions that provoke students to think analytically, for example with questions such as "why is action good?" or "what is Islam's view of these social issues?". Approaches like this have been shown to increase students' active participation in the classroom. Students not only listen, but also provide diverse arguments based on postulates and logic.

In addition, the school also supports religious activities such as Friday studies, spiritual mentoring, and Islamic Character Day activities, which indirectly strengthen the understanding of Islamic moral and intellectual values. A religious and conducive school environment is the main supporting factor for the formation of critical and reflective thinking habits among students.

Forms of Integration of Imam Mawardi's Education Concept in PAI Learning

The results of the study show that PAI teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali integrate the concept of Imam Mawardi's education through three main approaches: (a) strengthening rationality in understanding religious teachings, (b) instilling moral values and manners of thinking, and (c) developing social responsibility in the context of Islam.

First, strengthening rationality is carried out by encouraging students to understand religious teachings through logical and contextual reasoning processes. The Master explained that the teachings of Islam are not only dogmatic, but also rational, as affirmed by Imam Mawardi in *Adab al-Dunya wa al-Din* that reason ('aql) is a gift that must be used to weigh every human action. In learning practice, teachers use the inquiry learning method by presenting contextual case studies, for example on Islamic business ethics or social justice. Through group discussion activities, students are asked to analyze problems and express opinions based on sharia postulates and logical arguments. This approach shapes students to not only receive information, but also to criticize and assess rationally.

Second, moral values and manners of thinking are applied through the habituation of ethics in opinions. Teachers exemplify wise behavior in discussing, respecting differences, and using polite language. This principle is in line with the concept of *ta'dib* in the thought of Imam Mawardi, who emphasizes the importance of education of manners before knowledge. The teacher explained to the students that critical thinking does not mean opposition, but seeks the truth in a polite and civilized way. For example, in a class debate activity themed "The role of Muslim youth in the digital era," the teacher directed students to use scientific evidence and

reasoning without judging the opinions of others. The results of the observation show that there is an increase in students' ability to formulate logical arguments while maintaining discussion ethics.

Third, the integration of the concept of social responsibility is carried out by associating Islamic teachings with the social reality of the surrounding community. Imam Mawardi in his concept emphasized that education must produce individuals who contribute to the benefit of the ummah. PAI teachers apply this value by inviting students to carry out social activities such as Ramadan donations, visits to orphanages, and Islamic digital literacy campaigns. Through this activity, students learn to reason religious values in real actions. The results of interviews with students show that this kind of activity fosters high moral awareness and empathy, as well as encourages them to think critically about socio-religious issues.

The Effect of Integration on Improving Students' Critical Reasoning

The integration of Imam Mawardi's educational concept in PAI learning has a positive impact on improving students' critical reasoning power. The results of the observation show that there is a change in the thinking pattern of students, from the original passive and textual to more analytical, reflective, and argumentative. Students begin to get used to asking the reasons behind a teaching, looking for the connection between the postulate and the context, and providing solutions to religious problems with mature logic.

Several indicators of increasing critical reasoning can be seen in learning activities, including:

1. students are able to identify social problems from an Islamic perspective,
2. students are able to formulate arguments based on postulates and rationality, and
3. Students are able to evaluate the moral value of an action based on the principles of justice and benefit.

For example, in one of the learning sessions with the theme of justice in Islam, the teacher brought up a case of differences in social status in society. Students are asked to study verses of the Qur'an related to justice, then relate them to current social conditions. The discussion was dynamic because students not only quoted texts, but also provided analysis of the application of justice in real life, according to the principles of Imam Mawardi which relates ethics, law, and morality as a whole.

From interviews with PAI teachers, it is known that this integration also increases students' motivation to learn. They feel that learning becomes more relevant to life, not monotonous, and provides space for free thinking but still within the corridor of Islamic values. This proves that the combination of rationality and religiosity can create a challenging and calming learning environment. The teacher assessed that after the application of this approach for one semester, there was a significant improvement in the quality of students' arguments, both in writing and discussion.

Critical Analysis of the Concept of Imam Mawardi's Education and Its Implications

Imam Mawardi's concept of education emphasizes the balance between reason ('aql) and adab, as well as between knowledge and charity. This view is very relevant to the 21st century learning goals that emphasize critical thinking and character building. In the context of SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali, the integration of this concept was successful because teachers understood

the essence of Imam Mawardi's thought not as a classical doctrine, but as a principle of holistic education. Reason is placed as a tool of critical thinking, while adab is the moral control of the results of this thought.

This finding is in line with the opinion of Al-Attas (1999) who states that true Islamic education does not only aim to transfer knowledge, but also instill meaning and manners in the knowledge itself. In PAI learning, when students are invited to think critically with a moral foundation, they are not only skilled in reasoning, but also able to control the direction of their thoughts so that they remain oriented to the values of truth. This approach avoids students from a pattern of unlimited (liberal) free thinking as well as from a rigid dogmatic understanding.

Practically, the application of the concept of Imam Mawardi in learning also has implications for improving teachers' pedagogic competence. PAI teachers need to understand classical Islamic literature and be able to bring it down into the context of modern learning. For example, the principle of wisdom (wisdom) translates into the teacher's ability to choose the most effective method for the development of students' critical reasoning. Thus, PAI education is not only a space for the delivery of dogma, but also a laboratory of ethics and intellectuality.

Challenges and Factors Supporting Implementation

Although it showed positive results, the implementation of the integration of Imam Mawardi's educational concept also faced several challenges. The main challenge is the limited understanding of some teachers of classical Islamic educational thought. Many PAI teachers are not familiar with the literature of classical scholars such as Imam Mawardi, Al-Ghazali (2010) or Ibn Khaldun, so they need special training to understand their relevance in the context of modern learning. In addition, the high administrative burden of teachers sometimes limits the time for reflection and the development of learning innovations.

However, there are significant supporting factors, namely the support of the principal, a conducive religious environment, and student enthusiasm. The principal provides an open policy for teacher innovation in developing a learning model based on Islamic values. A religious school environment also makes it easier to internalize the values of manners and morals. Meanwhile, students' high enthusiasm for reflective learning is the key to the successful implementation of this approach.

With this support, PAI learning at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali shows that the concept of classical education can be revived in the contemporary context without losing its relevance. In fact, values such as ethical rationality, polite criticism, and useful knowledge are the basis for the formation of a religious and forward-thinking young generation.

Research Synthesis and Implications

Based on the overall results of the research, it can be concluded that the integration of Imam Mawardi's educational concept in PAI learning has succeeded in increasing students' critical reasoning power through three main aspects: logical reasoning of Islamic teachings, habituation of manners of thinking in discussions, and moral reflection on social reality. Learning processes that combine logic and spiritual values are able to shape students who not only think rationally, but also have an ethical sensitivity to action.

The implications of this research are quite broad, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study reinforces the view that the thought of classical Islamic scholars remains relevant to the demands of modern education, especially in establishing a balance between intellectuality and morality. Practically, the results of this research can be used as a reference for PAI teachers in other schools to design a learning model that fosters critical reasoning based on Islamic values.

Thus, this study confirms that the revitalization of Imam Mawardi's educational concept not only revives the intellectual heritage of Islam, but also becomes a strategic solution in dealing with the crisis of critical thinking in the modern era. Education that puts reason and morals in a balanced position will give birth to a generation that is not only intelligent, but also civilized — as Imam Mawardi's ideals are in building a knowledgeable, ethical, and just society.

CONCLUSION

The study found that integrating Imam Mawardi's educational concept, which balances reason (*'aql*) and ethics (*adab*), significantly enhanced students' critical reasoning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMA Negeri 3 Boyolali. This was achieved through strategies that strengthened rational understanding, cultivated respectful and argumentative thinking, and developed social responsibility by applying Islamic values in real-life contexts. Students demonstrated more analytical, reasoned, and socially aware mindsets, critically engaging with socio-religious issues while guided by teachers fostering civilized critical thinking. The integration's success was supported by a religious school environment, strong leadership, and student enthusiasm, though challenges remain due to teachers' limited background in classical Islamic educational literature, highlighting the need for focused training. The findings suggest that Imam Mawardi's approach is highly relevant for 21st-century education by promoting a balanced, progressive Islamic learning model that combines knowledge, ethics, and social action. Future research could explore adapting this integrated model in diverse educational settings and developing curricular frameworks to strengthen teachers' competencies in classical Islamic pedagogy.

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