

Constructivist and Humanistic Learning Theories in Islamic Religious Education (IRE): Student-Centered Learning Approaches

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the application of constructivist and humanistic learning theories in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) through a student-centered learning approach. Constructivist theory posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through experience, reflection, and environmental interaction, while humanistic theory emphasizes the holistic development of human potential encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, aligned with the Islamic concept of humans as vicegerents on earth. The integration of these theories in IRE pedagogy creates an interactive and meaningful learning environment that honors individual uniqueness. Within this framework, teachers function as facilitators, mediators, and motivators who guide students toward self-actualization through contextual and collaborative learning activities. The constructivist-humanistic approach demonstrates significant advantages in enhancing learner autonomy, critical thinking skills, and the formation of religious character. However, its implementation faces substantial challenges, including limitations in teacher competency, instructional time constraints, and availability of contextual learning resources. Therefore, professional development initiatives for educators and the development of adaptive IRE curricula are essential to ensure effective implementation of both theoretical frameworks in learning practice.

Keywords: Constructivism, Humanism, Student-Centered Learning, Islamic Religious Education, Pedagogical Approach

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental pillars in character building and human resource quality. In the context of Islamic education, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has a strategic role in shaping the personality of students who are faithful, pious, and have noble character. However, the practice of IRE learning in various educational institutions still faces various challenges, especially related to the methods and approaches used.

The reality shows that many IRE lessons still apply conventional teacher-centered methods. In this type of learning pattern, students tend to become passive objects who only receive knowledge transfer from teachers without being given the opportunity to develop their potential optimally. This condition contradicts the essence of education, which should humanize humans and develop the full potential of students holistically (Solichin, 2018).

Paulo Freire, a figure in liberation education, strongly criticized educational models that treat students as objects and place teachers in a position of oppression. In inhumane educational practices, students lose the opportunity to actualize themselves and become independent individuals. Similar criticism also applies in the context of PAI learning, which often emphasizes only the cognitive aspect of memorizing material without providing space for students to think critically, creatively, and develop a deep understanding of Islamic values (Umam, 2019).

Amidst these various problems, there is a need for a new paradigm in PAI learning that pays more attention to the uniqueness and potential of each student. Two learning theories that are very relevant to addressing this challenge are humanistic and constructivist learning theories.

Based on the above background, this study focuses on the following research questions:

1. How are the theoretical concepts of constructivist and humanistic learning theories applied in the context of PAI learning?
2. What are the characteristics and principles of implementing these two theories in PAI learning?
3. What are the advantages and challenges in applying the constructivist-humanistic approach in PAI learning?
4. What are the psychological implications of applying these two theories on students' cognitive, affective, and learning motivation development in PAI learning?

Based on the above research questions, this study aims to:

1. Analyze the theoretical concepts and philosophical foundations of constructivist and humanistic learning theories in PAI learning
2. Identify the characteristics and principles of implementing both theories in the practice of PAI learning
3. Evaluate the advantages and challenges in applying the constructivist-humanistic approach in PAI learning
4. Examine the psychological implications of both theories on students' cognitive, affective, and learning motivation aspects

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. The research data was obtained from various academic literature sources published between 2018 and 2024, including textbooks, accredited scientific journals, and academic articles relevant to constructivist and humanistic theories in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

The primary data sources in this study were scientific journal articles published in accredited national and reputable international journals. Secondary data sources include learning theory textbooks, dissertations, and education policy documents. Literature inclusion criteria include: publications from 2018 to 2024, focus on constructivist and humanistic learning theories, relevance to PAI or Islamic education, publications in Indonesian or English, and availability in full text.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and thematic review methods, and triangulation was performed by comparing perspectives from various sources to ensure the validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature analysis shows that constructivist and humanistic learning theories have fundamental similarities in positioning students as active subjects in learning. However, the two have different but complementary focuses and emphases.

Table 1. Comparison of Constructivist and Humanistic Learning Theories

Aspect	Constructivist	Humanistic
Main Focus	Construction of knowledge through experience	Development of self-potential and actualization
Role of Students	Active knowledge builders	Holistic development of subjects
The Role of Teachers	Learning facilitator	Facilitator and motivator
Emphasis	Cognitive Processes and Social Interaction	Affective aspects and personal development
Objectives	Deep and meaningful understanding	Self-actualization and independence
Evaluation	Authentic and process-based	Reflective and formative

Understanding Constructive Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory is one of the most influential learning theories in the development of modern education. Etymologically, the word "constructivist" comes from the English word "constructive," which means to assemble or create a structure. In the context of learning, constructivism refers to the view that knowledge is the result of an individual's own construction or formation, not something that can be transferred from teacher to student. Constructivism views learning as an active process in which learners construct new knowledge based on their previous experiences and knowledge. Knowledge is not a collection of facts that can be transferred from the teacher's mind to the student's mind, but rather the result of a mental construction process carried out by the student themselves through interaction with their environment (Novrizal et al., 2023).

Some experts provide more specific definitions of constructivism. Woolfolk defines constructivism as learning that emphasizes the active role of students in building understanding and giving meaning to information or events that are perceived. Meanwhile, Donald states that constructivism is a way of learning (learning and teaching) that focuses on student understanding. One of the important figures in constructivism theory is Jean Piaget, who developed cognitive development theory. According to Piaget, human knowledge is formed through a process of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation means that the mind absorbs new information, while accommodation means rearranging existing mental structures due to new information obtained (Masgumelar & Mustafa, 2021).

From the various definitions above, it can be concluded that constructivist learning theory is a theory that views knowledge as being actively constructed by learners through mental processes based on experience and interaction with the environment. In constructivist learning, teachers no longer act as providers of knowledge, but as facilitators who help students construct their own knowledge.

Characteristics of Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory has a number of characteristics that distinguish it from other learning theories. These characteristics reflect the epistemological view of constructivism about how knowledge is formed and how learning should take place. The following are the main characteristics of constructivist learning theory:

1. **Student-Centered Learning.** The most fundamental characteristic of constructivist learning is that learning must be student-centered, not teacher-centered. Students play an active role as subjects who construct their own knowledge, while teachers act as facilitators who assist and guide the construction process.
2. **Knowledge is Built Based on Experience.** In the constructivist view, knowledge is not something that can be simply given or transferred from teacher to student. Knowledge must be constructed by learners themselves through active experience and interaction with the environment. Learning provides opportunities for students to construct new knowledge through direct interaction in the real world.
3. **Learning is a Process of Integrating New Knowledge with Old Knowledge.** Constructivist learning views new knowledge as not separate from previously acquired knowledge. Instead, new knowledge is integrated with old knowledge through a process of assimilation or accommodation. Thus, learning is a continuous process in which knowledge continues to develop and deepen.
4. **Appreciating Diversity of Views.** Constructivist learning appreciates that each learner has different perspectives and understandings. Differences of opinion among learners are valued as a tradition in the learning process. This diversity of views enriches discussion and helps learners see an issue from various perspectives.
5. **Encouraging Exploration and Discovery.** In the learning process, learners are encouraged to discover various possibilities and synthesize them in an integrated manner. Inquiry-based learning is one method that is very suitable for the constructivist approach because it provides opportunities for students to explore, ask questions, and find answers on their own.
6. **Problem-Based Learning.** Constructivist learning often uses problems as a starting point for learning. The problem-based learning process encourages students to engage in inquiry. When faced with problems that are authentic and relevant to their lives, students will be motivated to find solutions and, in the process, build new knowledge.
7. **Emphasis on Collaborative Learning.** The learning process encourages cooperation and competition among students in an active, creative, innovative, and enjoyable manner. Through collaboration with peers, students can share ideas, discuss their understanding, and together build richer and deeper knowledge.

8. Contextual Learning. The learning process is carried out contextually, where students are exposed to real-life experiences. Learning that is related to real-life contexts will be more meaningful for students because they can see the relevance of what they are learning to their daily lives.
9. Reflection as an Important Part of Learning. In constructivist learning, reflection is an important component. Students not only carry out learning activities, but are also asked to reflect on what they have learned, how they learned it, and what the learning means to them. Reflection helps students to become more aware of their learning process and deepen their understanding.
10. Authentic Evaluation. Evaluation in constructivist learning tends to be authentic, assessing students' abilities in real and meaningful contexts. Evaluation does not only measure the ability to memorize facts, but also the ability to apply knowledge in problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity (Syamsudin & Abdussahid, 2023).

The above characteristics show that constructivist learning is very different from traditional learning, which only emphasizes the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. Constructivist learning places learners as active builders of their own knowledge through experience, exploration, and reflection.

Implementation of Constructivist Learning Theory

The constructivist learning theory in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) emphasizes an active learning process in which students construct their knowledge through experience and social interaction. The implementation of this theory can be applied and carried out through the 5E learning cycle, which consists of five stages:

1. Engage: Students are invited to access prior knowledge and build curiosity through activities such as reading or demonstrations.
2. Explore: Students work in groups to explore concepts, explore ideas, and conduct investigations.
3. Explain: Students present their understanding, share ideas, and receive explanations from the teacher to deepen their understanding.
4. Elaborate: Students expand their understanding with additional projects or repetition of activities.
5. Evaluate: Students assess their understanding and teachers evaluate their learning progress (Liana, 2024).

This approach places students at the center of learning, while teachers act as facilitators and motivators. In the context of PAI, constructivism helps students internalize Islamic values through real experiences, group discussions, and problem solving. PAI teachers are also required to be role models in behavior, in addition to providing guidance to students. This is important because Islamic teachings emphasize the practice of religious teachings in daily life. The constructivist approach is also relevant for bridging textual religious teachings with the realities of modern life. Teachers must understand developments in science and technology (IPTEK) in order to provide contextual learning that is relevant to students' needs.

Although constructivist theory does not originate from Islamic thought, its application in PAI learning can provide great benefits for students and teachers.

Understanding Humanistic Learning Theory

Humanistic learning theory is a school of thought in educational psychology that has a basic philosophy about humanity. Etymologically, the word "humanistic" comes from the Latin word "humanus," which means human nature or in accordance with human nature. In the context of education, humanism can be interpreted as a perspective that places humans as the main focus by emphasizing the qualities and abilities of humans to develop their potential. In the context of learning, humanistic theory defines learning as a process that must originate from and culminate in humans themselves. Hamzah B. Uno explains that although humanistic theory strongly emphasizes the importance of the content of the learning process, in reality this theory talks more about education and the learning process in its most ideal form (Sultani et al., 2023).

In other words, this theory is more interested in the idea of learning in its most ideal form than learning as it can be observed in everyday life. The main objective of humanistic learning theory is to humanize humans. The learning process is considered successful if students understand their environment and themselves well. Learners in the learning process must strive to gradually achieve self-actualization to the best of their ability. Self-actualization is the highest level of human development where a person is able to realize their full potential (Hardi et al., 2023).

Several experts provide more specific definitions of humanistic learning theory. Abraham Maslow, one of the leading figures in humanistic psychology, states that humanism in education refers to a humanistic education system that emphasizes three important things: first, the promotion of freedom, faith, and human dignity; second, the teacher's job is to provide information to students, not to guide them; third, educators support students' self-actualization when they participate in community activities (Hamka, 2023). Meanwhile, Carl Rogers, another humanistic figure, believes that in implementing humanistic learning, teachers must pay attention to the principles of humanizing humans in the education and learning process. According to Rogers, the learning process can run well if students want to know their world. Therefore, the role of teachers in this case is as facilitators who play an active role in creating a conducive learning climate, so that students are able to optimize what they want in their learning goals in their own way and assess for themselves what they have gained from the learning process (Solichin, 2018).

From the various definitions above, it can be concluded that humanistic learning theory is a theory in learning that emphasizes how to humanize humans and help learners develop their potential optimally. This theory places learners as subjects who have the freedom to choose and develop themselves, not as objects who only passively receive knowledge transfer from teachers.

Characteristics of Humanistic Learning Theory

Humanistic learning theory has a number of characteristics that distinguish it from other learning theories. These characteristics reflect the philosophical view of humanism regarding

the nature of humans and how humans learn. The following are the main characteristics of humanistic learning theory:

1. Focus on Individual Subjective Experience. Humanistic theory emphasizes the importance of subjective experience and individual perception in the learning process. Each learner has a unique experience that influences how they understand and respond to learning material. Therefore, learning must pay attention to and respect the uniqueness of each individual's experience.
2. Student-Centered Learning. In humanistic theory, learners are at the center of the learning process. Humanism believes that the center of learning lies with the learner and that educators act only as facilitators. Learners have the freedom to choose what they want to learn and how they want to learn it according to their interests and needs.
3. Emphasis on Self-Actualization. One of the main goals of humanistic learning is to help learners achieve self-actualization, which is the fulfillment of a person's highest potential. Self-actualization is the highest need in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which includes the full realization of an individual's abilities, talents, and potential.
4. Process is More Important than Results. Humanistic theory emphasizes the learning process rather than the final results achieved. The most important thing is how students experience the learning process, how they understand themselves and their environment, and how they develop their potential during the learning process.
5. Integration of Cognitive and Affective Aspects. Humanistic learning not only pays attention to cognitive aspects (knowledge) but also strongly emphasizes affective aspects (emotions, feelings, values, and attitudes). In some ways, affective aspects are even considered more important because they are related to the formation of learners' character and personality.
6. Meaningful and Relevant Learning. Rogers distinguishes between two types of learning: cognitive (meaningfulness) and experiential (experience or significance). Meaningful learning occurs when students feel that the subject matter is relevant to their own life goals and purposes. Meaningful learning deeply involves the minds and feelings of students.
7. Freedom and Responsibility. Humanistic theory gives students the freedom to choose and determine the direction of their own learning. However, this freedom also comes with responsibility. Students must take responsibility for the choices they make and for the learning process and outcomes.
8. Safe and Supportive Learning Environment. Humanistic learning emphasizes the importance of creating a safe, comfortable, and threat-free learning environment. The best learning occurs when learners can explore, try new things, and even make mistakes without fear of criticism or punishment.
9. Self-Initiated Learning. Learning is most meaningful and effective when it comes from the learner's own initiative. When learners choose what they want to learn and have control over their learning process, their motivation to learn is higher and their understanding is deeper.
10. Appreciation for Individual Differences. Humanistic theory highly values the uniqueness and individual differences of each learner. Each individual has different

characteristics, needs, interests, and potential. Therefore, learning must be tailored to the characteristics of each individual, rather than using a uniform approach for all (Syafuruddin, 2022).

The characteristics above show that humanistic learning theory has a very optimistic view of human potential. This theory believes that every individual has a natural ability to learn and develop, and the task of education is to create conditions that allow this potential to develop optimally.

Implementation of Humanistic Learning Theory

The implementation of this theory in PAI learning can be described as follows:

1. Before the most basic needs (basic scientific materials) are met, learning should not proceed to the next stage (next material/chapter). For example, students cannot learn interpretation before they fully understand the basic sciences (reading, writing, grammar, and morphology).
2. Once students' basic needs have been met, according to Maslow, a sense of security is a need that encourages students to obtain peace, comfort, and order in the learning environment so that students can learn according to their respective talents, of course under the guidance and direction of a teacher who acts as a facilitator.
3. And when students are able to learn in a comfortable atmosphere, they will naturally develop a love for learning material that suits their talents.
4. Next, when students already have a sense of enjoyment for learning, that is when students unconsciously develop their potential. This potential certainly develops inseparably from the role of a facilitator (teacher), so it is not impossible that at that moment, achievements will emerge, which require recognition from those around them, both teachers and parents. From this, students can indirectly actualize themselves in social life (Solichin, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The application of constructivist and humanistic learning theories in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) offers a comprehensive and effective approach to developing students holistically. Constructivism provides an epistemological framework for how knowledge is constructed through active experience, while humanism ensures that the learning process respects and develops the full potential of human beings.

From a psychological perspective, the integration of the two theories shows a significant positive impact on:

1. Cognitive development: Improving conceptual understanding, critical thinking skills, and knowledge transfer abilities
2. Affective development: Fostering intrinsic motivation, internalization of Islamic values, and religious character development
3. Learning motivation: Fulfilling basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) that drive optimal learning motivation

The constructivist approach emphasizes that students construct their own knowledge through experience and social interaction, making learning more meaningful and contextual. Meanwhile, the humanistic approach emphasizes the importance of humanizing students by paying attention to their needs, feelings, and efforts to achieve self-actualization.

The integration of these two approaches in PAI learning encourages the creation of an interactive, reflective, and Islamic character development-oriented learning atmosphere. Teachers act as facilitators and motivators who guide students to think critically, creatively, and with noble character. Thus, humanistic and constructivist theories become an important foundation in realizing PAI learning that not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also builds affective and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner towards holistic and humanistic Islamic education.

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