

ABRAHAM MASLOW'S HUMANISTIC THEORY IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the tendency of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning to remain cognitively oriented and teacher-centered, thereby not fully accommodating students' psychological and humanistic needs. In contrast, Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory emphasizes the fulfillment of hierarchical needs as a prerequisite for achieving self-actualization. Previous studies have generally examined humanistic theory conceptually or through literature reviews, while empirical studies analyzing the concrete implementation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in PAI learning at the secondary school level remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in PAI learning and its implications for the self-actualization of eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design. The research subjects consisted of PAI teachers and eleventh-grade students. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with data validity ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that Maslow's theory was implemented contextually through the fulfillment of physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization within the learning process. Teachers acted as facilitators by creating a safe, democratic, and respectful learning environment. The implementation of this approach contributed to increased intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, and the development of students' potential and self-actualization. These findings affirm that a humanistic approach is relevant in supporting participatory and meaningful PAI learning.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Education plays an important role in human life and in the development of a nation. Through education, individuals not only acquire knowledge but also develop attitudes, character, and life values. In the learning process, students do not learn independently; rather, it involves various components such as teachers, curriculum, media, learning strategies, and the school environment. All these elements are interconnected in achieving the planned educational goals. In Islamic teachings, seeking knowledge is an obligation for every human being. This is in line with Allah's word in Surah At-Talaq (65): 12, which explains that Allah created the heavens and the earth so that humans may recognize His power and the vastness of His knowledge. The verse encourages humans to continue learning and expanding their knowledge. Likewise, Surah At-Tin (95): 4 emphasizes that humans are created in the best form, meaning that every individual possesses potential that must be developed through appropriate education. Learning is essentially a process of behavioral change resulting from experience and interaction with the environment. The success of the learning process is determined not only by the material delivered but also by the teacher's role in professionally designing and implementing instruction. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirms that educators are responsible for planning and implementing learning, guiding, training, and evaluating students. Thus, teachers bear a significant responsibility in creating an effective and meaningful learning environment.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), learning objectives emphasize not only mastery of subject matter but also the formation of attitudes and the practice of Islamic teachings in daily life (Daradjat, 2014). Students are expected to understand, internalize, and practice Islamic values in order to develop into individuals who are faithful, pious, and of noble character. However, in practice, PAI learning in several schools still tends to focus on cognitive aspects and memorization. The learning process is often one-way and provides limited opportunities for students to express opinions, ask questions, or express themselves. This condition causes some students to learn merely to obtain grades rather than from personal awareness and intrinsic need. This situation indicates the need for a learning approach that better addresses students' needs and potentials. One relevant approach is the humanistic theory proposed by Abraham Maslow. This theory emphasizes that humans have basic needs that must be fulfilled in order to develop optimally, namely physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In the learning process, fulfilling these needs can enhance motivation, self-confidence, and student engagement. The humanistic approach views students as unique individuals with diverse potentials. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also facilitators who create a safe, comfortable, and respectful learning environment (Maslow, 2013). In such an atmosphere, students are expected to be more confident in expressing opinions, actively participate in learning, and develop their potential optimally.

Although Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory has been widely discussed in educational psychology and literature based studies, empirical research specifically examining the contextual implementation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in PAI learning within public secondary schools remains relatively limited. In fact, education particularly Islamic Religious Education serves as a strategic space for shaping students' socio religious character amid moral challenges and contemporary developments. Therefore, research is needed not only to examine the conceptual framework but also to analyze the actual implementation of humanistic theory in PAI learning and its impact on student development. Based on this background, the research questions of this study are: how is Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory implemented in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur and what are the implications of this implementation for students' self-actualization.

Based on preliminary observations at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur, PAI learning was previously teacher-centered and lacked active student involvement. The relationship between teachers and students was not fully established in a warm manner, resulting in a rigid classroom atmosphere. In response to this condition, the PAI teacher conducted an evaluation and began implementing a learning approach based on Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory over the past year. This study aims to describe the implementation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur.

This study offers novelty because it does not merely discuss Maslow's theory conceptually but also explores its practical application in real PAI classroom activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the development

of more humanistic PAI learning, enabling students not only to understand the subject matter but also to grow into confident, responsible individuals capable of actualizing their potential.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on real situations occurring in the field. The case study design was used to examine specifically the application of the theory within a particular context, namely PAI learning in Grade XI at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur. The research was conducted in a natural setting without manipulation of the learning process so that the data obtained reflected the actual conditions (Moleong, 2017). The study was carried out over a two-month period, from September to November 2025, covering the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis, and report writing. The research site was selected based on the consideration that the school had implemented a learning approach referring to Maslow's humanistic theory in the PAI learning process.

In this study, the researcher acted as the primary instrument (human instrument) who was directly involved in the processes of data collection and analysis. The researcher had no structural affiliation with the school under study and therefore assumed the role of a moderate participant observer. This position enabled the researcher to interact with informants without disrupting the learning process. To minimize subjectivity, continuous self-reflection (reflexivity) was conducted through field notes and academic discussions with supervisors to maintain objectivity and data credibility.

The data in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through observation and interviews using purposive sampling techniques, involving the Islamic Religious Education teacher and Grade XI-2 students who were directly engaged in the learning process. The primary data included information regarding learning strategies, teacher-student interactions, and forms of fulfilling students' needs based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from supporting documents such as PAI teaching modules, school profiles, photographs of learning activities, field notes, observation sheets, interview guidelines, and relevant literature related to humanistic theory and PAI learning. Data collection techniques included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Observation was conducted to directly examine classroom atmosphere, teacher-student interactions, and the implementation of the fulfillment of students' physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide while allowing informants the flexibility to share their experiences and perspectives openly. Documentation was used to complement and strengthen the data obtained from observation and interviews. Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously until data saturation was achieved, using the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis process also involved coding stages, namely open coding to identify and label raw data to generate initial categories, axial coding to connect these categories and identify relationships among concepts, and selective coding to integrate the main categories into a central theme concerning the implementation of Maslow's humanistic theory in PAI learning. Through these stages, the analysis was not merely descriptive but also generated systematic and in-depth thematic findings. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation by comparing data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation to ensure information consistency. The researcher also provided a detailed contextual description (thick description) to ensure that the findings could be comprehensively understood and scientifically justified. From an ethical perspective, this study obtained official permission from the school prior to conducting the research. Each informant was provided with an explanation of the research objectives and gave informed consent before participation. Informants' identities were kept confidential by using initials or specific codes, and the study adhered to research ethics principles, including respect for participants, data confidentiality, and ensuring that the research did not cause any harm to informants or the institution involved.

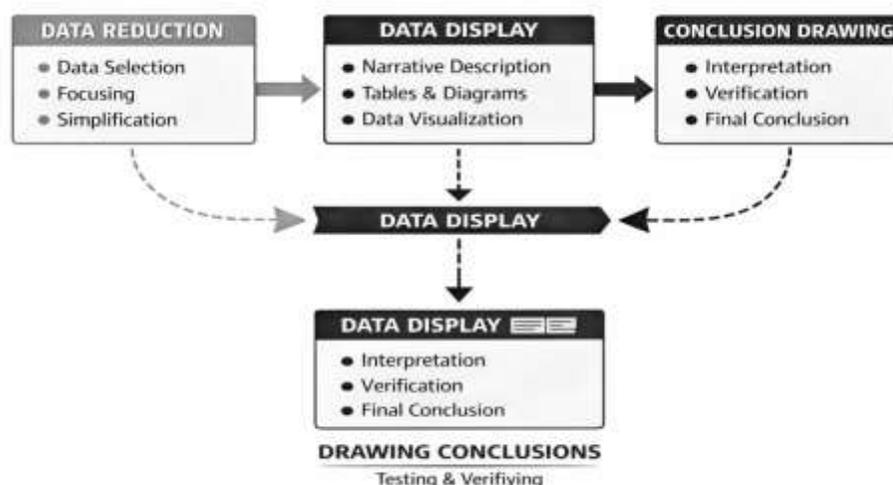


Figure 1. Miles & Huberman Data Analysis Technique Model

Source: Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

Based on the results of interviews with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher and ten Grade XI-2 students of SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur, as well as classroom observations conducted during the learning process, it was found that the implementation of the humanistic theory proposed by Abraham Maslow (1943) has been carried out gradually and contextually in PAI learning. Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs emphasizes the fulfillment of human needs ranging from physiological needs to self actualization. Although the teacher did not explicitly mention Maslow's theory during instruction, the principles underlying the fulfillment of students' needs were implicitly integrated into the learning activities. PAI learning referred to a teaching module designed in alignment with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly in the topic *The Beauty of a Meaningful Life (The Essence of Iman, Islam, Ihsan, and the Relationship Among Them)*. The module served as a guideline for the teacher in accommodating students' needs comprehensively, including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. The field findings regarding the implementation of Maslow's humanistic theory (1943) in PAI learning are summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1. Implementation of Abraham Maslow's Humanistic Theory in Grade XI 2 PAI Learning

No	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Field Findings	Forms of Implementation in Islamic Education (PAI) Learning	Implications for Students
1	Physiological Needs	Students are able to concentrate more easily when the classroom atmosphere is	The teacher manages the classroom to create a conducive environment, ensures orderly learning, and provides flexibility when students appear tired or unfocused during the learning process	Learning concentration increases, students are more prepared to receive the material, and they are less easily bored



		comfortable and not tense		
2	Safety Needs	Students are not afraid to answer or ask questions even when their answers are not entirely correct	The teacher demonstrates a friendly attitude, does not scold or embarrass students, and provides calming responses when mistakes occur	Students develop self-confidence and the courage to express their opinions
3	Love and Belongingness Needs	A close relationship is established between the teacher and students	The teacher involves students in group discussions, encourages cooperation among peers, and creates warm and respectful learning interactions	A harmonious and collaborative classroom atmosphere is formed
4	Esteem Needs	Students feel happy when their efforts are appreciated	The teacher gives praise, expresses gratitude, and provides verbal reinforcement for students' activeness and participation in learning	Intrinsic motivation increases and students are encouraged to be more active
5	Self-Actualization Need	Students are able to express their opinions and relate the material to daily life	The teacher provides opportunities for presentations, reflection, and assignments that encourage students to express their understanding of the values of faith (iman), Islam, and ihsan based on their experiences	Students demonstrate deeper understanding, critical thinking skills, and spiritual as well as emotional development

Source: Adapted from Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (Maslow, 1943) and empirical findings from field research conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur (2025).

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, the implementation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in Grade XI 2 at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur was carried out contextually and gradually. The teacher did not explicitly mention Maslow's theory in classroom practice; however, the principles of fulfilling students' needs were visibly integrated into the teaching and learning process. Learning was not solely oriented toward cognitive aspects, but also paid attention to students' physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self actualization.

At the stage of physiological needs, the teacher paid attention to students' physical readiness before beginning the lesson. Observations showed that the teacher allowed students time to calm themselves, permitted short breaks when they appeared tired, and adjusted the pace of material delivery according to the classroom condition. One of the teacher's statements was, "When the students look tired, especially during afternoon classes, I give them about 10 minutes to rest so they can focus again." This was reinforced by a student who said, "When we're tired, we're usually told to take a short break so we can focus again." These findings indicate that fulfilling basic needs serves as a foundation for optimal learning. Regarding safety needs, the teacher created a classroom atmosphere free from pressure. The teacher avoided harsh reprimands and prioritized a dialogical approach. Students felt unafraid to ask or answer questions even if their responses were not entirely correct. One student stated, "We're not afraid of being wrong because the teacher doesn't immediately scold us." The teacher also emphasized that mistakes are part of the learning process. This condition encouraged students to participate more confidently.

The fulfillment of love and belonging needs was reflected in the warm interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the students. The teacher greeted the students, asked about their well-being, and opened space for communication when students had problems. One student stated, "If we have problems, we can talk to the PAI teacher." This close interaction created an inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere. Regarding esteem needs,

the teacher appreciated every effort made by students, not only the final results. Forms of appreciation included verbal praise, motivation, and occasionally simple rewards. A student expressed, “Even if the answer isn’t completely correct, it is still appreciated.” This practice had a positive impact on increasing students’ self-confidence and learning motivation. At the stage of self-actualization, the teacher implemented discussion-based and group work learning in the topic The Beauty of a Meaningful Life (The Essence of Iman, Islam, and Ihsan and Their Interrelationship). Students were given the freedom to express their opinions and relate the material to their daily lives.

One student stated, “Group discussions make us brave enough to express our opinions.” This activity shows that students not only understand concepts theoretically, but are also able to reflect them in their daily behavior. Overall, the implementation of a humanistic approach in PAI learning demonstrates that the gradual fulfillment of students’ needs contributes to the creation of meaningful and student-centered learning. The application of Maslow’s humanistic theory in PAI learning has positive implications for the development of students’ self-actualization. First, there is an increase in students’ self-confidence. Students appear more courageous in asking questions, answering, and delivering presentations. One student stated, “Now I am braver to ask questions because the teacher never scolds us.”

Second, there is increased active participation in learning. Observations show that students are actively involved in discussions and group work. The teacher stated, “Those who used to be quiet are now starting to actively ask questions and participate in discussions.”

Third, the development of critical and reflective thinking skills. Students not only memorize the material, but are also able to relate the concepts of iman, Islam, and ihsan to real-life situations. One student stated, “PAI lessons are no longer just about memorization, but we are encouraged to think.”

Fourth, the growth of self-awareness and religious attitudes. Students begin to reflect on their behavior and strive to improve their worship practices and daily conduct. The teacher emphasized that the goal of learning is to cultivate internal awareness, not merely to pursue grades. These findings indicate that fulfilling basic needs up to the level of self-actualization has a tangible impact on the development of students’ personality and religious attitudes.

Table 2. Interview Results and Field Findings on the Implementation of Abraham Maslow’s Humanistic Theory in Grade XI 2 PAI Learning

No	Sub-Theme	Informant	Verbatim Quote
1	Physiological Needs	PAI Teacher	“When the students look tired, I give them about 10 minutes to rest so they can focus again.”
2	Physiological Needs	Student	“When we’re tired, we’re usually told to take a short break so we can focus again.”
3	Safety Needs	Student	“We’re not afraid of being wrong because the teacher doesn’t immediately scold us.”
4	Love & Belonging	Student	“If we have problems, we can talk to the PAI teacher.”
5	Esteem Needs	Student	“Even if the answer isn’t completely correct, it is still appreciated.”
6	Self Actualization	Student	“Group discussions make us brave enough to express our opinions.”
7	Self Confidence	Student	“Now I am braver to ask questions because the teacher never scolds us.”
8	Active Participation	PAI Teacher	“Those who used to be quiet are now starting to actively ask questions and participate in discussions.”
9	Critical & Reflective Thinking	Student	“PAI lessons are no longer just about memorization, but we are encouraged to think.”
10	Self Awareness & Religious Attitude	Student	“After learning about iman and ihsan, I became more aware of improving my worship.”

B. Discussion

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and data analysis, the implementation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in PAI learning in Grade XI-2 at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur indicates that the fulfillment of students' basic needs contributes to increased engagement, self-confidence, and reflective abilities. However, the findings of this study do not merely confirm Maslow's theory; they also demonstrate that the success of humanistic learning largely depends on the consistency of the teacher's pedagogical practices and the dynamics of classroom interaction.

Regarding physiological and safety needs, the teacher demonstrated flexibility in managing the pace of instruction and creating a psychologically non-threatening classroom atmosphere. While this condition aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), a critical analysis suggests that such practices also intersect with constructivist pedagogical approaches. From a constructivist perspective, a safe and supportive learning environment is a prerequisite for students to actively construct knowledge through social interaction and reflective experience. Thus, the findings indicate that the implementation of humanism in the classroom does not operate exclusively within Maslow's theoretical framework but intersects with constructivist principles that emphasize learning as an active and social process.

In terms of love and belongingness needs, the warm interpersonal relationship between teacher and students was shown to enhance participation and learning comfort. Research by Allen et al. (2018) demonstrates that a sense of belonging is positively associated with student motivation and engagement. The findings of this study support those results but further reveal that a sense of belonging is not formed solely through emotional closeness; it is also cultivated through recognition of students' voices in classroom discussions. This reflects a more dialogical approach, approaching the paradigm of critical pedagogy, in which students are positioned as learning partners rather than merely recipients of normative values. Regarding esteem needs, the provision of positive reinforcement contributed to increased self confidence and intrinsic motivation among students. Previous studies (Yuhe & Bhaumik, 2025; Fadilah et al., 2025) have emphasized the importance of reinforcement in enhancing classroom participation. However, the results of this study indicate that effective appreciation extends beyond verbal praise; it requires the teacher's consistent recognition of the learning process rather than solely the outcomes. This expands previous findings by highlighting the importance of process-oriented learning in PAI, which aligns with constructivist approaches and value based reflective learning.

At the level of self actualization, students were observed to connect the concepts of iman, Islam, and ihsan with their lived experiences. Theoretically, this condition represents the peak of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Nevertheless, when compared with constructivist approaches, this process of actualization can also be understood as the result of experiential learning and reflective dialogue. Studies by Pauzi & Jasiah (2023) and Nesor & Sari (2022) indicate that group discussions and contextual reflection in PAI enhance critical thinking skills and value internalization. The findings of this study reinforce those results while adding that self-actualization occurs only when students' basic needs are fulfilled sequentially. In other words, the humanistic approach provides the psychological foundation, while constructivism offers the pedagogical mechanism that enables actualization to occur.

The implications of implementing this humanistic approach are reflected in increased self-confidence, active participation, critical thinking skills, and religious awareness among students. Critically, however, it can be concluded that these outcomes were not achieved merely because Maslow's theory was applied, but because the teacher integrated humanistic principles with active, dialogical, and reflective learning strategies. Therefore, this study demonstrates that effective PAI learning is not solely oriented toward fulfilling students' psychological needs, but also toward providing space for independent construction of meaning. Overall, compared with previous studies that tend to emphasize the effectiveness of humanistic approaches in improving motivation and engagement, this research offers an additional contribution by demonstrating that the integration of humanism and constructivism is more relevant in the context of PAI learning. The humanistic approach provides emotional and psychological foundations, while

constructivism facilitates value internalization and the development of critical thinking. Therefore, PAI learning oriented toward students' self-actualization requires synergy between these two approaches to ensure holistic and sustainable cognitive, affective, and spiritual development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the implementation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in Grade XI at SMA Negeri 1 Madang Suku II OKU Timur has been carried out gradually and contextually in accordance with students' needs. Although it was not explicitly presented in theoretical terms during classroom instruction, humanistic principles were clearly integrated into the learning practices. The teacher paid attention to students' physical and psychological readiness, created a safe and dialogical classroom atmosphere, built warm interpersonal relationships, and provided appreciation for students' participation and efforts. At a higher stage, students were given opportunities to develop their potential through discussions, group work, presentations, and reflective learning activities, particularly in the topic The Beauty of a Meaningful Life (The Essence of Iman, Islam, Ihsan, and the Relationship Among Them).

The implications of this humanistic approach are reflected in the increased self-confidence and active participation of students in the learning process. Students were not merely passive recipients of material but demonstrated the ability to think critically, reflect on values, and relate Islamic teachings to their daily lives. Moreover, PAI learning that is oriented toward the comprehensive fulfillment of students' needs encouraged the development of self-awareness and more authentic religious attitudes in everyday behavior. Thus, the implementation of Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in PAI learning is considered relevant and effective in supporting the achievement of the objectives of Islamic Religious Education, namely to develop students who are faithful, morally upright, and capable of optimally developing and actualizing their potential in both personal and social life.

However, this study has limitations as it employed a single case study design conducted in only one class at one school. Therefore, the findings cannot be broadly generalized to other schools with different characteristics. In addition, this study focused primarily on classroom practices and did not extensively examine school policies or systemic support that may influence the success of the humanistic approach. Based on these limitations, this study recommends the development of a school based humanistic PAI learning model that is designed more systematically at the institutional level. Such a model may include the integration of students' needs fulfillment principles into curriculum planning, teacher professional development, the creation of a supportive school climate, and evaluation systems that value holistic student growth and learning processes. Future research is also recommended to involve multiple schools using comparative or mixed-method designs to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the humanistic approach across diverse educational contexts. With a structured model and strong institutional support, humanistic-based PAI learning has the potential to become a strategic approach in shaping a religious, reflective, and socially empowered generation.

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