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## THE ACADEMIC ROLE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS IN CORRECTING WORSHIP MISCONCEPTIONS AT SMP NEGERI 14 MERANGIN

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the academic role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in addressing students' misconceptions in worship at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation from teachers and students. Findings reveal students struggle with understanding obligatory (wajib) and recommended (sunnah) worship due to internal factors such as low understanding and interest, and external factors including teaching methods and limited instructional media. Teachers play a critical role in identifying misconceptions, providing re-explanations, applying varied teaching methods, guiding students, and evaluating learning. The study underscores the importance of systematic pedagogical strategies to improve students' religious understanding.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) constitutes a fundamental pillar within the Indonesian national education system. As mandated by national education objectives, IRE aims to develop learners who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character. In the context of formal schooling, IRE is not merely a complementary subject but a core component designed to shape students' spiritual awareness, ethical behavior, and moral responsibility.

Through systematic and structured learning processes, IRE seeks to cultivate students who not only understand Islamic teachings conceptually but are also able to internalize and practice those teachings in a consistent and meaningful manner in their daily lives. This requires learning activities that are carefully designed to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical religious conduct.

IRE encompasses several dimensions of Islamic knowledge, including *aqidah* (creed), *akhlak* (morality), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Qur'an-Hadith studies, and Islamic history. Among these, the study of worship (*'ibadah*) holds a central position because it directly governs students' religious practices. Accurate understanding of worship is essential; inaccuracies in comprehension may result in incorrect religious observance and affect students' long-term spiritual development.

Despite structured instructional efforts, misconceptions in religious understanding are still frequently encountered among students. A misconception refers to a misunderstanding or inaccurate interpretation of a concept that deviates from established scholarly explanations. In religious education, misconceptions may arise from limited prior knowledge, incorrect informal learning from peers or social media, lack of critical engagement during lessons, or insufficient clarity in instructional materials.

Misconceptions in worship are particularly concerning because worship constitutes a direct manifestation of one's obedience to Allah. Students may, for example, fail to differentiate between obligatory and recommended acts in prayer, misunderstand the conditions and pillars (*rukun*) of worship, or misinterpret the legal consequences of omitting certain practices. When left unaddressed, these misunderstandings can shape long-term religious habits that are inconsistent with correct Islamic teachings negatively affecting not only students' cognitive understanding but also their attitudes and behaviors in performing religious obligations.

Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin confirm this concern. Several students demonstrated difficulty in comprehending core worship concepts, showing confusion in distinguishing *wajib* from *sunnah* practices and uncertainty regarding the sequence and essential components of certain acts of worship. These findings suggest that students' conceptual understanding remains at a surface level,

underscoring the need for more effective instructional strategies and stronger academic guidance from teachers.

In this regard, IRE teachers bear significant academic responsibility. Their role extends beyond content delivery; they serve as educators, facilitators, mentors, and evaluators who guide students toward accurate religious understanding. Academically, teachers must design coherent lesson plans, utilize appropriate teaching methods, diagnose misunderstandings, and implement corrective interventions including interactive strategies, formative assessment, and contextual examples.

Moreover, the academic role of teachers involves continuous reflection and professional development. Subject-matter mastery and pedagogical competence are essential to ensure religious concepts are conveyed accurately. By integrating clear explanations, practical demonstrations, and reflective dialogue, teachers can help students reconstruct flawed understanding and replace it with interpretations grounded in authentic Islamic sources.

Based on these issues, the present study aims to analyze and describe the academic role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in overcoming students' misconceptions related to worship at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective pedagogical approaches in IRE and to strengthen the quality of religious understanding among students in formal educational settings.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of religious misconceptions experienced by students and the academic role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in addressing these misconceptions. This approach enables the researcher to obtain comprehensive, contextual data that reflect real conditions in the field. A descriptive design was selected because the study seeks to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of the research object without manipulating research variables.

The type of research used was field research, meaning that the study was conducted directly at the research site to obtain data that correspond to actual conditions. This research was carried out at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that religious misconceptions were still found among students at the school, particularly in the area of worship, making it necessary to investigate the role of IRE teachers in addressing this issue.

The subjects of this study were Islamic Religious Education teachers and students at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin. IRE teachers were selected as primary informants because

they play a direct role in the teaching and learning process and are responsible for delivering religious material. Students were also included because they directly experience the learning process and may encounter misconceptions in understanding worship material. By involving both teachers and students, the researcher obtained comprehensive data regarding religious misconceptions and teachers' efforts to overcome them.

Table 1. Research Participants

No.	Participant Category	Number	Role in Research
1	IRE Teacher	2	Primary informant teaching strategies and intervention methods
2	Students	15	Primary informant misconception identification and learning experience
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>	

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to directly examine the IRE learning process in the classroom, enabling the researcher to observe how teachers presented material, what teaching methods were used, and how students responded. Observation also aimed to identify the presence of religious misconceptions and how teachers addressed them in classroom activities.

Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth data regarding students' religious misconceptions and teachers' roles in addressing them. Interviews with teachers explored the strategies, methods, and efforts used to address students' misconceptions, while interviews with students aimed to understand their comprehension of worship material and the difficulties they experienced. The interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide to ensure alignment with the research objectives.

Documentation was used to complement the data obtained from observation and interviews. The documentation collected included lesson plans, teaching records, and other documents related to the IRE learning process, providing a more complete picture of instructional practices.

The data analysis technique followed the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying the raw data. Data display involved systematically presenting the data in narrative form to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the researcher's interpretation of the field data.

Prior to data collection, all participants were informed of the research objectives and their rights as research subjects. Participation was voluntary, and written or verbal consent was obtained from teachers and students (with parental consent for minors where required). To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized in data reporting. The researcher ensured that no participant was subjected to harm, coercion, or undue burden throughout the research process.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Forms of Religious Misconceptions in Worship

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin, it was found that some students still experience misconceptions in understanding the concept of worship, particularly those related to the classification and understanding of obligatory (*wajib*) and recommended (*sunnah*) acts of worship. These misconceptions were evident in some students' inability to correctly distinguish between obligatory and recommended worship, both in terms of definition and their position within Islamic teachings.

From classroom observations, it was found that when the teacher asked questions about examples of obligatory and recommended worship, several students provided inaccurate answers. Some students stated that all types of prayer have the same status without distinguishing between obligatory prayers (*shalat fardhu*) and recommended prayers (*shalat sunnah*). This indicates that students have not yet properly understood the basic concept of worship classification.

Interview results with students further showed that they experience confusion in understanding the overall concept of worship. Some students understand worship only as ritual activities without comprehending their meaning and legal position within Islamic teachings. This indicates the presence of conceptual misconceptions, namely errors in understanding the fundamental concept of worship itself.

The misconceptions experienced by students can be categorized into two types: (1) classificational misconceptions, which occur when students are unable to correctly classify types of worship according to their legal status; and (2) conceptual misconceptions, which occur when students do not fully and accurately understand the concept of worship as a whole. These findings indicate that religious misconceptions among students still occur and require special attention from IRE teachers.

### 2. Factors Causing Religious Misconceptions

Based on the research findings, the factors that cause religious misconceptions among students can be classified into two main categories: internal factors and external factors.

### **a. Internal Factors**

Internal factors originate from within the students themselves. One contributing factor is students' limited ability to comprehend abstract conceptual material. Based on interview results, several students admitted that they had not fully understood the material delivered by the teacher, owing to their limited capacity to process complex religious content.

In addition, students' low learning motivation contributes significantly to misconceptions. Based on observation results, some students were less active during the learning process; several appeared inattentive to the teacher's explanation and were not actively involved in classroom activities. This condition caused students to fail to understand the material optimally, which in turn led to persistent misconceptions. Research confirms that learning motivation plays an important role in determining students' level of understanding: students with high motivation tend to understand material more easily, while those with low motivation are more likely to experience comprehension difficulties (Uno, 2019).

### **b. External Factors**

External factors originate outside the students, particularly from teaching methods and the availability of instructional media. Based on observation results, the learning process was still dominated by the lecture method (*metode ceramah*). While the lecture method is effective for delivering information, its continuous use without variation may cause students to become passive and less able to understand material in depth (Sanjaya, 2020).

The limited use of instructional media also contributes to misconceptions. Instructional media play an important role in helping students understand learning materials, particularly abstract concepts. Without adequate teaching aids, students tend to have difficulty connecting theoretical explanations with practical application, making it harder to develop accurate conceptual understanding.

## **2. Academic Role of IRE Teachers in Addressing Misconceptions**

Based on the research findings, Islamic Religious Education teachers play a very important academic role in addressing religious misconceptions among students. This role encompasses five key aspects: identifying misconceptions, providing re-explanations, using varied teaching methods, offering guidance to students, and conducting learning evaluations.

### **a. Identifying Students' Misconceptions**

IRE teachers identify misconceptions by posing diagnostic questions and evaluating students' level of understanding during classroom interaction. Through this process, teachers determine students' comprehension levels and detect specific

misunderstandings. Identifying misconceptions is an essential first step, because teachers cannot effectively correct students' misunderstandings without first recognizing their nature and scope.

#### **b. Providing Re-Explanation to Students**

Teachers provide re-explanations of material that students have not yet understood. These re-explanations are delivered using simpler, more accessible language and are accompanied by examples relevant to students' daily lives. Such re-explanations help students correct their misunderstandings and gain a proper understanding of worship concepts.

#### **c. Using Varied Teaching Methods**

Teachers employ varied teaching methods to improve students' understanding. The use of diverse instructional approaches including discussion, demonstration, and collaborative learning activities helps students comprehend material more effectively than relying on a single method. Varied teaching methods also increase student engagement and active participation in the learning process.

#### **d. Providing Guidance to Students**

Teachers provide individual or group guidance to students who experience difficulties in understanding the material. Through targeted guidance, teachers can help students achieve deeper comprehension and correct specific misunderstandings related to worship material.

#### **e. Conducting Learning Evaluation**

Teachers conduct learning evaluations to determine students' level of understanding of the material that has been taught. These evaluations help teachers identify whether students still experience misconceptions or have understood the material correctly. Learning evaluation is a critical component of the instructional process, as it enables teachers to assess the effectiveness of their teaching and plan appropriate follow-up interventions.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study align with previous research emphasizing that misconceptions in religious education require targeted pedagogical responses (Nisa, 2021; Nugraha, 2020). The classificational and conceptual misconceptions identified at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin reflect a broader challenge in IRE: students often approach worship as ritual routine rather than as a structured system of obligations with varying legal statuses. This surface-level understanding, if left unaddressed, may influence

students' long-term religious practices and shape habits inconsistent with authentic Islamic teachings.

Regarding internal factors, low learning motivation and limited comprehension ability are consistent with findings by Uno (2019), who emphasized that student engagement is directly tied to learning outcomes. Students who lack intrinsic motivation tend to engage passively, which prevents deep conceptual processing and increases the likelihood of persistent misconceptions. Students who are disengaged are also less likely to ask questions when they do not understand material, allowing misunderstandings to accumulate unchallenged within their cognitive structures.

On the external side, over-reliance on lecture-based instruction is a well-documented limitation. Sanjaya (2020) argues that varied teaching methods including problem-based learning, cooperative learning, and multimedia-supported instruction are more effective in promoting active comprehension. For instance, using visual aids such as flowcharts to illustrate the hierarchy of worship (*wajib, sunnah, mubah, makruh, haram*) can significantly reduce classificational misconceptions. Similarly, demonstration-based learning for practical worship activities enables students to connect abstract jurisprudential rules with observable practice, strengthening conceptual accuracy.

The five academic roles performed by IRE teachers in this study—identifying misconceptions, re-explaining material, applying varied methods, providing guidance, and conducting evaluation—reflect a comprehensive pedagogical framework consistent with Mulyasa's (2018) conception of professional teaching. These roles are not isolated actions but form a cyclical process: identification informs re-explanation, varied methods support deeper understanding, guidance addresses individual needs, and evaluation feeds back into the next cycle of identification. This cyclical model of instructional correction is an important contribution of the present study to the literature on IRE pedagogy.

Compared to studies in general education contexts, the unique challenge in IRE is that misconceptions carry not only cognitive but also normative consequences: incorrect worship understanding may lead to practices considered legally invalid (*tidak sah*) in Islamic jurisprudence. This elevates the professional and ethical stakes of the teacher's academic role and justifies a more systematic and reflective approach to misconception correction in Islamic schools. Teachers who continuously develop their pedagogical competence and integrate innovative learning strategies are better positioned to create meaningful religious learning experiences that strengthen both students' conceptual understanding and their religious attitudes and behavior.

## D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious misconceptions among students at SMP Negeri 14 Merangin persist, particularly in the area of worship. The identified misconceptions take two main forms: classificational misconceptions, where students fail to correctly distinguish between obligatory (*wajib*) and recommended (*sunnah*) worship; and conceptual misconceptions, where students understand worship only as ritual activity without grasping its spiritual meaning and legal standing in Islamic teachings.

These misconceptions are shaped by interacting internal and external factors. Internally, limited comprehension ability and low learning motivation reduce students' engagement and prevent deep understanding. Externally, the predominance of lecture-based teaching and insufficient instructional media limit opportunities for active, meaningful learning.

The academic role of IRE teachers is pivotal in addressing this challenge. Teachers contribute through five interconnected functions: diagnosing misconceptions through formative questioning and classroom observation; providing re-explanations using accessible and contextual language; applying varied and active teaching methods such as discussion, demonstration, and collaborative learning; offering targeted individual and group guidance; and conducting continuous evaluation to monitor conceptual development.

Based on these findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed. First, IRE teachers should integrate varied instructional strategies including visual media, role-play, and problem-based learning to reduce dependence on lecture-based methods. Second, schools should support teacher professional development through regular training focused on misconception diagnosis and evidence-based pedagogy. Third, school policy should provide teachers with adequate access to instructional media and resources to support more effective worship instruction. Fourth, formative assessment should be embedded as a routine component of IRE classes to enable early detection and correction of misconceptions before they become entrenched.

By strengthening the academic role of IRE teachers in these ways, schools can improve the accuracy, depth, and meaningfulness of students' religious understanding ultimately contributing to the formation of learners who practice Islamic teachings with knowledge, conviction, and consistency.

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