



Implementing Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities at Special School in West Sumatera

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Direct Instruction in IRE for students with intellectual disabilities at SLB YPAC West Sumatra. Using a descriptive qualitative field research design, data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with school principals, teachers, and students, and document analysis. The findings reveal that Direct Instruction, implemented in a structured, explicit, and gradual manner, is effective in improving students' understanding of basic religious concepts, practical worship skills (such as ablution and prayer), and religious attitudes, as well as enhancing active participation. The strategy also facilitates authentic, practice-based assessment aligned with students' learning characteristics. This study contributes to the development of IRE in special education by offering an adaptive and contextual instructional model that integrates Direct Instruction with Islamic educational values. The findings provide both theoretical insights and practical implications for teachers and institutions in designing more inclusive, effective, and meaningful learning for students with intellectual disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right of every individual without discrimination, as affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further reinforced by the global *Education for All* agenda promoted by UNESCO. Within the framework of inclusive education, students with intellectual disabilities represent a vulnerable group that frequently encounters significant barriers related to access, quality of educational services, and the availability of appropriate pedagogical approaches. Data reported by UNESCO indicate that children with disabilities are twice as likely to be excluded from education compared to their non-disabled peers, particularly in developing countries (UNESCO, 2020).

However, inclusive education extends beyond mere access to schooling; it also requires the provision of adaptive, meaningful, and learner-centered instructional processes that align with students' individual characteristics. Therefore, the provision of education for students with intellectual disabilities necessitates approaches that go beyond normative frameworks and are instead grounded in the actual needs of learners. Such an approach is essential to ensure that their right to education is fulfilled in a substantive rather than merely symbolic manner.

Students with intellectual disabilities are clinically defined as individuals who experience limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that emerge during the developmental period, directly affecting their capacity for learning, memory, language, and problem-solving (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). The World Health Organization estimates that the prevalence of intellectual disabilities ranges from 1% to 3% of the global population, with varying levels of severity that influence individuals' learning needs (WHO, 2019).

The pedagogical implications of this condition are substantial, as students with intellectual disabilities require instructional approaches that are concrete, structured, repetitive, and grounded in direct experience. Abstract learning strategies with limited interaction have been shown to be less effective for this group (Friend & Bursuck, 2021). Therefore, the urgency of inclusive education for students with intellectual disabilities lies not only in the dimension of social justice but also in the professional responsibility of educators to design instructional strategies capable of bridging students' cognitive limitations with the intended educational goals.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities, constitutes an integral component of fulfilling the right to inclusive education as discussed in the preceding section. While inclusive education emphasizes equitable access and adaptive pedagogical approaches, IRE provides a deeper value-based dimension, encompassing the development of faith (*aqidah*), the habituation of religious practices, and the internalization of moral virtues.

The primary objective of IRE extends beyond the mere acquisition of religious knowledge; it aims to guide students in recognizing God, performing basic religious practices, and demonstrating religious behavior in their daily lives (Muhaimin, 2017). For students with intellectual disabilities, these objectives are achieved through concrete, repetitive, and modeling-based instructional approaches, ensuring that Islamic values are not confined to the cognitive domain but are experienced as meaningful aspects of everyday life.

Accordingly, IRE functions as a medium for both spiritual reinforcement and character formation, aligning with the psychological and social needs of students with special needs within the broader framework of inclusive education.

The normative foundation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is deeply rooted in the Qur'an, one of which is articulated in Surah Al-'Alaq (Q.S. 96:1-5), which emphasizes the fundamental role of education as a transformative process from ignorance to knowledge. Allah SWT states:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ لَا يَعْلَمُ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Artinya: *Read in the name of your Lord who created, Created man from a clinging substance, Read, and your Lord is the most Generous, Who taught by the pen, Taught man that which he knew not.* (Q.S. Al-'Alaq [96]: 1-5).

This verse underscores that education in Islam is not merely the transmission of knowledge but also a process of intellectual and spiritual empowerment. It highlights the importance of literacy, learning, and continuous intellectual development as essential elements of human dignity and growth.

In the context of Islamic education for students with intellectual disabilities, this normative foundation reinforces the obligation to provide accessible and meaningful learning experiences that enable all learners, regardless of their cognitive limitations, to engage in the process of knowing and understanding. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education should be designed not only as a doctrinal obligation but also as an inclusive pedagogical practice that ensures every learner can participate in the transformative process of education as mandated in the Qur'anic worldview.

This verse indicates that education in Islam is inherently universal and inclusive, encompassing all human beings without exception. Contemporary interpretations emphasize that the command iqra' (read) is not restricted to a particular level of intellectual ability; rather, it accommodates the diverse capacities of individuals in learning and understanding (Quraish Shihab, 2019).

Therefore, the provision of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities represents a direct manifestation of the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy to all creation) within Islamic education. This perspective positions every individual as an active subject of learning, whose educational experiences should be aligned with their innate nature (fitrah) and individual capacities.

The teaching of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities presents both structural and cognitive challenges. These students typically experience limitations in intellectual functioning, short-term memory, and concentration, which directly affect their ability to receive and process religious information that is often symbolic and abstract in nature.

Research in the field of special education indicates that students with intellectual disabilities tend to have difficulty understanding concepts that are not supported by concrete experiences and require more intensive repetition compared to their typically developing peers (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; Friend & Bursuck, 2021).

Within the context of IRE, this condition poses a significant challenge, as religious content is frequently delivered through verbal instruction, memorization, and symbolic representation approaches that are difficult to comprehend without appropriate pedagogical adaptation. Therefore, teaching IRE to students with intellectual disabilities requires instructional strategies capable of bridging cognitive limitations with the goals of fostering faith, religious practice, and moral development, as discussed in the previous section.

In response to these challenges, instructional approaches that are concrete, structured, and repetitive become an unavoidable pedagogical necessity. Students with intellectual disabilities learn more effectively through direct experiences, tangible examples, and guided practice that is implemented gradually and consistently. Instructional strategies that are overly abstract, fast-paced, and minimally interactive have been shown to be less effective for this group (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2020).

Within this context, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) must be transformed from a mere transmission of knowledge into a process of guided engagement that emphasizes the practice of religious rituals, modeling, and habituation. The need for concrete and repetitive approaches aligns with the principles of inclusive education, as well as with Islamic values that emphasize facilitation (*taysir*), compassion, and attentiveness to learners' conditions.

Thus, the challenges of teaching IRE to students with intellectual disabilities should not be viewed as a justification for lowering educational standards, but rather as a foundation for developing more adaptive and humane instructional strategies.

One instructional strategy that is particularly relevant in addressing these pedagogical needs is Direct Instruction, which was systematically developed by George Arends as a structured, teacher-guided model of teaching. This approach emphasizes clearly defined learning objectives, explicit demonstration, guided practice, and continuous reinforcement and feedback (Arends, 2015).

Notably, the principles of Direct Instruction exhibit strong alignment with the educational practices of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, as reflected in the Qur'an, particularly in Surah Al-Baqarah (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 151), which states:

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ^ط

Artinya: "Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves who recites to you Our verses, purifies you, teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know" (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 151).

This verse highlights a pedagogical pattern that includes structured delivery (recitation), moral and spiritual development (purification), explicit teaching (instruction of the Book and wisdom), and guided learning. Such elements resonate closely with the core components of Direct Instruction, suggesting that structured and guided teaching approaches are not only pedagogically effective but also normatively grounded within the Islamic educational tradition.

A *tarbawi* (educational) interpretation of this verse emphasizes that Islamic education prioritizes the direct, gradual transmission of knowledge, accompanied by

modeling and moral development (Shihab, 2019). This perspective highlights that effective teaching in Islam involves not only the delivery of content but also structured guidance and character formation.

Therefore, the implementation of Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities is not only pedagogically relevant within contemporary educational frameworks but also possesses strong normative legitimacy within the Islamic educational tradition.

The central phenomenon underlying this study is the gap between the ideal objectives of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) which emphasize the development of faith, religious practice, and moral character and the realities of instructional practices for students with intellectual disabilities, who face limitations in cognitive functioning, memory, and concentration. On the one hand, students with intellectual disabilities have the same right to access meaningful religious education as part of inclusive education. On the other hand, the instructional approaches employed are often insufficiently adaptive to their specific learning characteristics.

IRE is still frequently delivered through verbal and memorization-based methods that are abstract in nature, making it difficult for students with intellectual disabilities who require concrete, repetitive, and structured learning experiences to fully comprehend the material. This condition gives rise to several pedagogical challenges, including limited understanding of religious concepts, weak practical skills in performing religious rituals, and suboptimal internalization of moral values in students' daily lives.

Therefore, this phenomenon calls for an in-depth examination of how more appropriate instructional strategies particularly Direct Instruction can be effectively implemented to bridge the intellectual limitations of students with intellectual disabilities with the substantive goals of Islamic Religious Education, both from the perspective of contemporary pedagogy and the values embedded in Islamic educational tradition.

A growing body of previous studies indicates that research on Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with special needs remains largely dominated by normative and general descriptive approaches, primarily focusing on the importance of inclusive education and curriculum adaptation. However, relatively limited attention has been given to the in-depth examination of specific pedagogical strategies implemented in classroom settings.

Studies by Friend and Bursuck (2021) and Hallahan et al. (2020) highlight the importance of concrete and structured instructional approaches for students with intellectual disabilities. Nevertheless, these studies remain general in scope and do not specifically address the context of religious education. Similarly, research by George Arends (2015) and Barak Rosenshine (2012) demonstrates the effectiveness of Direct Instruction in improving academic outcomes for students with cognitive limitations; however, its application within IRE particularly for students with intellectual disabilities has not been a primary focus.

Meanwhile, studies by Muhaimin (2017) and Abdullah (2020) tend to emphasize the objectives and values of IRE in fostering faith and moral development, yet they provide limited discussion on how concrete instructional strategies are systematically implemented in special school contexts. In addition, *tarbawi* interpretations that link the educational methods of the Prophet Muhammad

with modern pedagogical practices remain largely conceptual and lack empirical support from field-based research (Shihab, 2019).

Therefore, a significant research gap exists in the form of empirical studies examining the implementation of Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education for students with intellectual disabilities. Such studies are needed to integrate perspectives from contemporary pedagogy with the values of Islamic education, particularly within the context of special education settings.

This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the implementation of Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities in special schools, with a particular focus on planning, implementation, evaluation, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the effectiveness of this instructional strategy. The objective of this study extends beyond merely describing classroom practices; it seeks to understand how Direct Instruction can bridge the cognitive, memory, and attentional limitations of students with intellectual disabilities with the substantive goals of IRE, namely the development of faith, the habituation of religious practices, and the internalization of moral values.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the enrichment of Islamic Religious Education literature within the context of special education, an area that remains relatively underexplored, particularly in terms of empirical investigations into concrete and structured pedagogical strategies. Furthermore, this study offers a conceptual contribution by integrating perspectives from contemporary pedagogy particularly Direct Instruction with the values of Islamic education grounded in the Qur'an and *tarbawi* interpretations. This integration is expected to produce an adaptive and applicable model of IRE that remains firmly rooted in Islamic values.

The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for teachers, schools, and policymakers in designing more inclusive, effective, and meaningful Islamic Religious Education for students with intellectual disabilities.

METHODS

This study was designed to obtain an in-depth and contextual understanding of the implementation of Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, a descriptive qualitative approach with a field study design was considered the most appropriate. A qualitative approach enables researchers to explore meanings, processes, and instructional dynamics as they naturally occur within the school setting, without manipulation of variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted at a special school (SLB YPAC) in West Sumatra, Indonesia, selected based on its specific characteristics as an institution serving students with intellectual disabilities and its implementation of IRE through direct instructional practices. The extended duration of the study allowed for in-depth and sustained data collection.

The research participants included the school principal, classroom/IRE teachers, and students with intellectual disabilities. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, which prioritizes individuals who have the most relevant knowledge and experience related to the phenomenon under investigation.

Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, allowing for data triangulation and enhancing the

comprehensiveness of the findings. Data analysis was conducted through an interactive and iterative process involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña (2014).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, validity was established through source and technique triangulation, strengthening the credibility and reliability of the data in line with the principles of qualitative research trustworthiness as articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The Special School of the *Yayasan Pembinaan Anak Cacat* (SLB YPAC) in West Sumatra is a specialized educational institution that plays a strategic role in providing education for students with special needs in Padang, Indonesia. Operating under the *Yayasan Pembinaan Anak Cacat* (YPAC), which has been established nationally since 1953, the school was founded in response to the need to provide equitable educational opportunities for children with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Geographically, the school is located in Alai Parak Kopi, North Padang District, with relatively accessible transportation for parents and guardians. It serves as a referral institution for students with special needs from various areas in Padang and its surrounding regions, due to its structured, inclusive, and individualized educational services. The school accommodates a wide range of disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, physical disabilities, visual impairments, and autism, with instructional approaches tailored to the characteristics and abilities of each student.

In terms of student and teacher characteristics, SLB YPAC West Sumatra has a diverse population of students with special needs, including 20 students with intellectual disabilities classified into mild and moderate categories. This condition necessitates adaptive, concrete, and repetitive instructional strategies. The school is supported by qualified teaching and administrative staff with backgrounds in special education, including the principal, vice principal, classroom teachers, and administrative personnel.

The available facilities are relatively adequate to support the learning needs of students with disabilities, including specialized classrooms, therapy rooms, vocational training spaces, and instructional aids. Instruction at the school is implemented based on the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which is contextually adapted to emphasize flexibility, personalized learning, and the development of students' character and spirituality. Within this framework, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is prioritized, with instructional approaches designed to be simple, concrete, and engaging, enabling students with intellectual disabilities to understand and practice Islamic values in accordance with their abilities.

1. Planning of Direct Instruction Strategy

The planning of Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities at SLB YPAC West Sumatra reflects a strong level of pedagogical awareness among teachers regarding the cognitive

characteristics of their students. Instruction is not conducted spontaneously; rather, it is preceded by the formulation of realistic, measurable learning objectives that are aligned with students' intellectual capacities. This practice is consistent with the principles of Direct Instruction, which emphasize clarity of objectives and a focus on specific learning outcomes as the foundation of effective teaching, particularly for students with cognitive limitations (Arends, 2015; Rosenshine, 2012).

By limiting instructional objectives to a single, simple competency in each session, teachers attempt to prevent cognitive overload—a common challenge among students with intellectual disabilities—thereby making the learning process more focused and meaningful. This finding supports existing literature suggesting that structured and segmented instruction enhances comprehension and retention among learners with intellectual disabilities.

The preparedness of instructional planning is further reflected in the simplification and contextualization of teaching materials. Teachers develop lesson plans or instructional modules by taking into account students' abilities, mental age, and learning styles. This is illustrated by a classroom teacher (Yulha, S. Pd), who stated:

“Before starting the lesson, I prepare concise learning materials that match the students’ level of ability. For example, when teaching daily prayers, I focus on only one short prayer per session so that it is easier for students to understand and remember.”

This practice demonstrates an adaptive pedagogical approach in which instructional content is carefully selected and structured to suit learners' needs. It also reflects a key characteristic of Direct Instruction—namely, the deliberate sequencing of content into manageable units to facilitate gradual learning.

From an analytical perspective, these findings indicate that effective planning in IRE for students with intellectual disabilities requires not only curriculum adaptation but also pedagogical intentionality in aligning learning objectives, materials, and student capacities. This aligns with broader principles of inclusive education, which emphasize the importance of responsive and learner-centered instructional design.



Figure 1 Interview with One of Yulha's Class Teachers, S. Pd

The planning of Direct Instruction strategies also includes the systematic design of instructional steps and evaluation procedures. Teachers structure the sequence of activities starting from explanation, followed by demonstration, guided practice, and concluding with practical evaluation. This pattern is consistent with the stages of explicit teaching recommended in special education

literature, where evaluation is not merely understood as a final assessment, but as an integral part of an ongoing learning process (Rosenshine, 2012; Miles et al., 2014).

By incorporating evaluation from the outset, teachers establish a clear framework for providing feedback and reinforcement that aligns with students' developmental progress, thereby ensuring that the learning process remains adaptive and responsive.

Interestingly, the planning of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SLB YPAC West Sumatera is not solely oriented toward technical aspects but also encompasses the spiritual and emotional readiness of teachers. Educators prepare themselves by engaging in prayer, cultivating sincere intentions, and fostering attitudes of patience and empathy prior to instruction.

This dimension reflects an integration between pedagogical professionalism and the values of Islamic education, in which teachers function not only as instructors but also as spiritual mentors. Such an approach is consistent with Muhaimin's (2017) view that the planning of IRE should holistically integrate cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that the planning of Direct Instruction strategies for students with intellectual disabilities constitutes a holistic process that combines teachers' academic, psychological, and spiritual preparedness.

2. Implementation and Evaluation of Instruction

The implementation of Direct Instruction strategies in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities at SLB YPAC West Sumatera reflects a structured, explicit, and repetitive instructional model. Teachers begin the lesson with an introductory phase consisting of orientation, apperception, and motivation to focus students' attention. This is followed by core instructional activities that emphasize direct demonstration and guided practice, and concluded with repetition of the material and simple assessment.

This pattern is consistent with the principles of Direct Instruction, which emphasize clarity of presentation, the use of concrete examples, and gradual practice to ensure student understanding, particularly for learners with cognitive limitations (Arends, 2015; Rosenshine, 2012). The step-by-step approach is highly relevant, as students with intellectual disabilities require consistent and predictable instructional structures to support effective learning processes.

From an analytical perspective, the structured sequencing of instructional activities facilitates cognitive engagement by reducing ambiguity and enhancing comprehension. It also reflects the application of explicit teaching principles, where each stage of instruction is intentionally designed to scaffold learning and reinforce understanding. This indicates that effective implementation of Direct Instruction in IRE is not merely procedural, but involves deliberate pedagogical structuring aligned with students' learning needs.

Field findings indicate that teachers consciously adjust their language, instructional pace, and learning media to align with students' abilities. This is affirmed by a classroom teacher (Yulha, S. Pd), who stated:

"The implementation of Direct Instruction is carried out gradually, starting from introductory, core, and closing activities, all of which are designed according to the abilities and conditions of

students with intellectual disabilities. I deliver the material using simple and easily understandable language, and I use visual or audio aids.”

This practice is consistent with the work of Hallahan, Kauffman, and Pullen (2020), who emphasize that instruction for students with intellectual disabilities should be concrete, multisensory, and repetitive to enhance retention and comprehension. Thus, instructional implementation in this context does not merely focus on the content, but also on adaptive modes of delivery that respond to students’ specific learning needs.

Evaluation in this context is not positioned merely as a tool for measuring cognitive outcomes, but rather as an integral part of the learning process. Teachers conduct evaluation through direct observation, simple questioning, and practical activities such as ablution (*wudhu*) and prayer (*salat*). This approach to authentic assessment is reflected in the teacher’s statement:

“Evaluation cannot be conducted all at once, but must be gradual and repeated. We emphasize the learning process rather than just the final outcome, because each student has different abilities.”

This strategy aligns with the perspective of Friend and Bursuck (2021), who argue that assessment for students with special needs should be flexible, continuous, and contextual in order to accurately reflect students’ holistic learning development.

Furthermore, students’ positive responses to the Direct Instruction strategy reinforce the effectiveness of its implementation. Students’ active involvement in imitating and directly practicing the taught material indicates that learning occurs in a participatory and meaningful manner. This is illustrated by a student with intellectual disabilities (Najwa), who stated: *“The teacher often gives examples. She shows the movements of wudhu and prayer, then I follow, and if I forget, the teacher helps me.”*



Figure 2 Interview with Najwa, a Student with Mental Retardation

These findings support Albert Bandura’s social learning theory, which posits that learning through observation and imitation of significant models, such as teachers, is highly effective in shaping new behaviors and skills (Bandura, 1986).

Therefore, the implementation and evaluation of Direct Instruction strategies not only enhance students' cognitive understanding but also strengthen their practical skills in performing religious practices, as well as their self-confidence in practicing the teachings of Islam.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The supporting factors for the implementation of Direct Instruction strategies in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SLB YPAC West Sumatra indicate the presence of relatively strong structural and pedagogical support. From an institutional perspective, the availability of facilities and infrastructure that accommodate the needs of students with intellectual disabilities constitutes a critical foundation for effective instruction.

Dedicated and conducive classroom environments, along with the availability of visual and audio media and tools for practicing religious activities, enable teachers to implement concrete and meaningful learning experiences. This is affirmed by the school principal (Desniar, S. Pd), who stated:

“The facilities and infrastructure in our school are quite adequate. We provide special classrooms for students with intellectual disabilities, equipped with visual aids, instructional media such as audio and images, as well as tools for practicing religious activities.”

From an analytical perspective, these findings highlight that institutional readiness plays a significant role in facilitating the successful implementation of Direct Instruction. Adequate resources not only support teachers in delivering structured and multisensory instruction but also contribute to creating a learning environment that is responsive to students' cognitive and developmental needs.



Figure 3 Interview with Desniar, S. Pd (Principal)

These findings are consistent with the literature in special education, which emphasizes that structured learning environments enriched with instructional media significantly influence the effectiveness of learning for students with intellectual disabilities (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2020; Friend & Bursuck, 2021).

In addition to institutional support, key enabling factors also emerge from classroom dynamics, particularly students' willingness to learn and teachers' creativity. Several students with intellectual disabilities demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm when instruction is presented in engaging formats, such as images,

videos, and Islamic songs. Teachers' creativity in simplifying instructional content and presenting it in a contextualized manner becomes a critical factor in the success of Direct Instruction strategies. This is reinforced by a classroom teacher (Yulha, S. Pd), who stated:

"The use of media such as images, videos, teaching aids, and Islamic songs is an important factor in facilitating students' understanding."

From a pedagogical perspective, this condition aligns with the principles of Direct Instruction, which require teachers to take an active role in guiding learning while adapting instructional strategies to students' characteristics in order to sustain attention and engagement (Arends, 2015; Rosenshine, 2012).

However, the implementation of Direct Instruction strategies also encounters several internal and external challenges. The primary constraints stem from the cognitive limitations of students with intellectual disabilities, particularly in terms of comprehension, memory, and concentration. As a result, they require more frequent repetition and extended learning time. This condition was highlighted by the same teacher, who noted:

"Students with intellectual disabilities have limited comprehension and memory, so they need more time to understand and memorize Islamic learning materials."

In addition, the limited availability of specialized Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers with specific expertise in teaching students with intellectual disabilities constitutes a structural challenge. These findings reinforce the view that the effectiveness of Direct Instruction is highly dependent on teachers' capacity to manage students' cognitive limitations, as well as on systemic support that ensures the availability of qualified educators (UNESCO, 2020; Hallahan et al., 2020).

Thus, the supporting and inhibiting factors identified in this study are closely interconnected and require adaptive pedagogical management to ensure the optimal implementation of Direct Instruction strategies.

4. Impact of Direct Instruction Strategy

The primary impact of implementing Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities at SLB YPAC West Sumatra is evident in improvements in the cognitive domain, particularly in understanding basic and practical religious content. Students demonstrate enhanced abilities in recognizing daily prayers, the pillars of faith (*rukun iman*), the pillars of Islam (*rukun Islam*), and in understanding the sequence and meaning of religious practices. These improvements occur because Direct Instruction presents material in a concrete, sequential, and repetitive manner, thereby facilitating the internalization of religious concepts.

This finding is consistent with the theory of Direct Instruction, which emphasizes that explicit teaching involving demonstration and guided practice is highly effective for learners with intellectual limitations (Arends, 2015; Rosenshine, 2012). This is further supported by a classroom teacher (Yulha, S. Pd), who stated:

"Direct Instruction has a significant impact on improving students' understanding, worship skills, and religious attitudes."

Beyond the cognitive domain, significant impacts are also observed in students' affective and psychomotor domains. The implementation of Direct Instruction promotes active student participation, fosters discipline and habitual religious practices, and cultivates moral values such as respect for parents and teachers. Through direct involvement in practicing religious activities, students not only learn conceptually but also experience continuous habituation.

This finding aligns with Albert Bandura's (1986) perspective that learning through observation and imitation of significant models effectively shapes behavior and attitudes. Students' responses further reinforce this finding, as reflected in the statement of a student with intellectual disabilities (R):

"I enjoy learning daily prayers, the pillars of Islam, the pillars of faith, wudhu, and prayer, as well as learning to be kind and respectful to my parents."

This statement indicates that Direct Instruction creates engaging and meaningful learning experiences for students.

In addition, the positive impact of Direct Instruction is evident in the strengthening of pedagogical relationships between teachers and students, as well as in facilitating the evaluation process. Continuous and intensive interaction during instruction enhances emotional closeness, enabling teachers to more effectively monitor individual student progress. This is highlighted by the school principal (Desniar, S. Pd), who noted:

"Students with intellectual disabilities learn more easily when explanations and examples are directly demonstrated by the teacher."

This finding is consistent with the work of Friend and Bursuck (2021), which emphasizes that Direct Instruction combined with authentic assessment enables teachers to comprehensively identify students' learning progress.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that Direct Instruction not only improves the academic quality of Islamic Religious Education but also plays a significant role in fostering students' religious attitudes, social skills, and positive educational relationships.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that Direct Instruction holds strong pedagogical relevance in the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for students with intellectual disabilities, particularly due to its structured, explicit, and progressively reinforced characteristics. At the planning stage, teachers at SLB YPAC West Sumatra demonstrated practices aligned with Direct Instruction theory as proposed by Arends and Rosenshine, including the formulation of clear objectives, simplification of instructional materials, selection of concrete media, and the design of adaptive evaluation strategies.

Such careful planning serves as a critical foundation, considering that students with intellectual disabilities experience limitations in intellectual functioning, memory, and abstract thinking. These findings are consistent with the special education literature, which emphasizes that instruction for students with intellectual disabilities requires clarity of instruction, visual-verbal reinforcement, and consistent sequencing to prevent cognitive confusion (Hallahan et al., 2020; Friend & Bursuck, 2021). Therefore, the planning of Direct Instruction strategies is not merely technical

in nature but represents a form of pedagogical adaptation that is responsive to the learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities within the context of Islamic education.

At the implementation and evaluation stages, Direct Instruction proves effective in bridging the normative goals of IRE with the actual capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. Instructional practices involving demonstration, guided practice, repetition, and performance-based evaluation reflect the application of modeling and guided learning processes consistent with the social learning theory of Albert Bandura (1986), in which observation and imitation of significant figures (teachers) serve as primary mechanisms for the development of knowledge and behavior.

The resulting impact extends beyond cognitive improvement to include affective and psychomotor domains, such as the habituation of religious practices, reinforcement of religious attitudes, and the development of social skills and self-confidence. However, the discussion also reveals that the effectiveness of Direct Instruction is significantly influenced by contextual factors, including teacher competence, availability of instructional media, school environmental support, parental involvement, and structural limitations such as limited instructional time and the absence of specialized IRE teachers.

Therefore, these findings reinforce the view that Direct Instruction is an effective and contextually appropriate approach for Islamic Religious Education for students with intellectual disabilities. Nevertheless, its successful implementation requires sustained institutional support and continuous professional development for teachers to ensure that its impact is both sustainable and widely applicable.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Direct Instruction is an effective, contextual, and relevant approach for teaching Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to students with intellectual disabilities at SLB YPAC West Sumatra. It successfully bridges students' cognitive limitations with the normative goals of IRE, including the development of faith, the habituation of religious practices, and the internalization of moral values.

The main findings indicate that the effectiveness of this strategy is determined by well-structured instructional planning—characterized by realistic objectives, simplified materials, concrete media, and adaptive evaluation—along with implementation that is gradual, explicit, and repetitive, and supported by authentic, practice-based assessment emphasizing students' developmental processes.

This strategy has a positive impact across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, as evidenced by improvements in students' understanding of basic religious concepts, active participation, habituation of worship practices, development of religious attitudes, and stronger pedagogical relationships between teachers and students.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the advancement of Islamic Religious Education within the context of special education by integrating Direct Instruction with Islamic educational values as an adaptive pedagogical approach. Practically, the findings suggest the need for teachers and schools to strengthen specialized pedagogical competencies, provide multisensory instructional media, and encourage greater parental involvement.

However, this study is limited by its focus on a single research site and a relatively small number of participants. Therefore, future research is recommended

to include more diverse educational settings, employ mixed-method approaches, and explore alternative instructional models that may complement Direct Instruction in Islamic Religious Education for students with intellectual disabilities.

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