



The Application of Spiritual-Based Adult Education Methods to Increase Students' Independent Learning Motivation

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Abstract: This study aims to improve students' enthusiasm for independent learning through the application of the spiritual andragogy approach in the Islamic Educational Guidance and Counseling Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection from six lecturers and forty students through interviews and questionnaires. The main findings indicate that the application of the spiritual andragogy approach that integrates Islamic beliefs can significantly improve students' motivation and learning outcomes. The benefits of this approach lie in its ability to facilitate learner-centred learning, value relevant experiences, and encourage independent learning. However, this study also identified several challenges, including the diversity of student backgrounds, internet connection problems, and difficulties in supervising their activities. The recommendations produced aim to optimize the use of the spiritual andragogy method in higher education, with a focus on improving student learning outcomes.

Abstrak: Studi ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan antusiasme mahasiswa dalam pembelajaran mandiri melalui penerapan pendekatan andragogi spiritual pada Program Studi Bimbingan dan Konseling Pendidikan Islam, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara. Metodologi yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan pengumpulan data dari enam dosen dan empat puluh mahasiswa melalui wawancara dan kuesioner. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa penerapan pendekatan andragogi spiritual yang mengintegrasikan keyakinan Islam dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan motivasi dan hasil belajar siswa. Manfaat dari pendekatan ini terletak pada kemampuannya untuk memfasilitasi pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik, menghargai pengalaman yang relevan, dan mendorong pembelajaran mandiri. Namun, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi beberapa tantangan, termasuk keragaman latar belakang siswa, masalah koneksi internet, dan kesulitan dalam mengawasi aktivitas mereka. Rekomendasi yang dihasilkan bertujuan untuk mengoptimalkan penggunaan metode andragogi spiritual dalam pendidikan tinggi, dengan fokus pada peningkatan hasil belajar mahasiswa.

Keywords: Application, Spiritual Andragogy Approach, Motivation For Self-Learning, University Students

INTRODUCTION

The transition from secondary to higher education is often challenging for students, especially in adjusting to the new academic framework. In higher education, students are required to be more actively involved in their educational process compared to the instructions they received in high school. One significant difference lies in the age of students who are usually more mature, which requires a different pedagogical approach. Therefore, the pedagogical approach, which emphasizes independent learning and real-life experiences, becomes more relevant (Yusuf & Sohiron, 2019).

To increase students' self-directed learning motivation, the spiritual andragogy approach offers a framework that can facilitate more meaningful learning. Andragogy, which focuses on the adult learning process, differs from more structured pedagogies by giving students an active role in their learning. This approach recognizes that students bring rich life experiences, which can be utilized in the learning process. By integrating spiritual elements, students not only learn to achieve academic goals but also explore their values, life goals, and the meaning of their experiences. According to Gibbons (2020), adding spiritual elements to education can enrich the learning process and increase students' learning motivation. Research by Sweeney (2021) shows that integrating spirituality into education has the potential to improve an individual's self-understanding and purpose. On the other hand, Ghosh and Chakraborty (2022) emphasize that spirituality can serve as a powerful source of motivation, providing deeper meaning to learning, especially for adult learners. Therefore, the application of the spiritual andragogy approach becomes very relevant in the context of learning, because it not only helps students achieve academic goals but also encourages them to be more involved, motivated, and

committed to their learning (Miller, 2023). This study will further discuss how the application of this approach can have a positive impact on students' learning experiences.

Spiritual andragogy is an approach that combines the principles of traditional andragogy with elements of spirituality to support the holistic development of students. Here, the learning process is not only seen as a cognitive activity but also as an enriching emotional and spiritual experience. By integrating students' values into learning objectives, this approach encourages students to better understand themselves. Research shows that when learning is aligned with students' values and beliefs, their engagement in the learning process tends to increase (Kumar & Misra, 2021). Thus, spiritual andragogy is not just a transfer of knowledge but also the development of character and self-identity.

In this approach, the role of the instructor also undergoes significant changes. Learning design should be directed at students' self-exploration and spirituality so that a learning environment that supports personal reflection is created. Instructors are expected to provide space for students to discuss their values and life goals in the context of learning. The use of flexible teaching methods, such as project-based learning with a spiritual theme, for example, allows students to apply academic concepts in real contexts while deepening their understanding of the meaning of the learning experience (Sharma, 2022).

This approach shows great potential to bring about positive change in higher education, especially in increasing student motivation and engagement and enriching their learning experience. This study aims to explore various implementation strategies that educators can apply while identifying challenges that may arise in this process. Through a deeper understanding of spiritual

andragogy, it is hoped that educators can create a more inclusive and development-oriented learning experience for students so that students feel valued and motivated to reach their maximum potential.

However, the challenges in higher education are still quite complex. One of the main problems is low learning motivation in students, especially in the transition phase at the beginning of lectures. A lecturer at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FITK) of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra revealed that early semester students are still in the adaptation stage to new learning patterns, while final semester students often do not show strong learning motivation. This condition requires lecturers to create learning strategies that are appropriate to the needs and development of students at each level.

In the context of higher education in Indonesia, Law Number 12 of 2012 mandates the creation of a learning environment that encourages the development of spiritual potential, self-control, and good character in students. Spiritual andragogy can be a means for students to understand the deeper meaning of their education, not only as career preparation but also as a complete self-development. This approach has the potential to produce graduates who not only know but also have superior personalities, ready to contribute positively to society.

Each level of education presents different challenges in the application of andragogy. Adult education, for example, requires a different approach than primary education. Research by Chapman et al. (2021) shows that adult learning involves the ability to guide oneself in finding answers and solving problems. In addition, adult students tend to be more sensitive and in need of recognition, even though they have a lot of experience and knowledge. Spiritual andragogy can answer these needs by providing an approach that motivates them to explore the deeper meaning

of learning and enrich their personality through self-development.

The pedagogical approach, often referred to as adult education, is defined by Hukkinen et al. (2024) as a learning strategy that supports adult learners in the educational process. Spiritual andragogy emphasizes the development of a mental understanding of God's power and one's strength, by introducing religious ideas in the classroom as one way. Adults naturally can set goals, allocate resources for learning, create learning plans, and evaluate progress towards their goals. According to Pappas (2020), there are three main types of adult education which include improving student skills, using education as a science to help adults learn, and planning structured adult education activities. This approach is expected to provide benefits for lecturers and students, especially in the context of Islamic education and study programs such as guidance and counselling, with impacts that include increased learning capacity, self-motivation, and a deeper understanding of learning goals. A study by Al-Bahadili and Hadeel (2022) also showed that pedagogical techniques can significantly improve problem-solving abilities, including in mathematical contexts, supporting the view that pedagogical principles can improve academic outcomes and problem-solving skills.

The principles of pedagogical learning outlined by Anisah (2021) in Setyawan include readiness, learning stages, understanding, participation, feedback, reinforcement, learning motivation, perception, application, and transfer of learning. In its application, Andayani and Irawati (2023) emphasized that these principles are important for creating meaningful learning experiences for adults. Bagaskara (2019) added practical guidelines, such as creating a friendly environment to help students build self-concept, organizing a conducive physical space, determining student needs, and facilitating learning that involves self-evaluation. A study by Lestari and Nur

(2022) also showed that a positive learning environment can increase the engagement and motivation of adult students.

The pedagogical approach is considered less suitable for adult learners, who are more effective if using the pedagogical approach. According to Irawati and Lestari (2022), the main difference between andragogy and pedagogy lies in the personality of the learner, including self-perception as a learner, experience, and motivation to learn. Hidayah (2023) explains that the pedagogical approach involves learners more actively, while pedagogy is more dominated by the instructor. Thus, the pedagogical approach is considered more effective in facilitating independent and continuous learning.

The spiritual aspect of andragogy includes ethics and morality, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, and justice, which serve as guidelines in social interactions and daily behaviour. Pargament (2021) highlights the importance of spiritual values in shaping individual thought patterns and actions. Spiritual andragogy focuses on understanding the power of God and the power of the self, with the introduction of religious ideas as an effective method to achieve these goals. Taufik and Prasetyo (2023) support the view that the integration of spiritual values in education can increase student motivation and engagement.

From the Islamic perspective, adults have great moral responsibilities. Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD) explained the concept of mukalaf which includes biological, psychological-intellectual maturity, as well as moral and spiritual responsibility. As'ad and Yani (2022) added that Islam provides a broad platform for adult education (mukalaf) so that religious teachings can be applied effectively in everyday life. The integration of Islamic values in adult education, as found by Nurdin (2023), can strengthen academic knowledge while increasing spiritual and moral awareness.

This study fills the gap in the current literature on andragogy, especially in Islamic education. Although there are many studies on andragogy, few have highlighted the spiritual element in enhancing self-directed learning motivation. This study offers a new perspective on the application of spiritual andragogy in Islamic education to foster self-directed learning motivation.

This study aims to explore the application of spiritual andragogy to improve independent learning motivation in Islamic guidance and counselling and religious education study programs at FITK, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The study will include an analysis of the application of spiritual andragogy from preparation to evaluation, including challenges in its application, without discussing other aspects outside this context.

METHOD:

In this study, descriptive procedures were used combined with qualitative methods. Descriptive qualitative research in education aims to describe the implementation of a strategy by providing real data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of students' learning motivation.

The research data were collected through three main methods: questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Freshmen were given a questionnaire designed to obtain baseline data on their learning motivation. The questionnaire included questions about their learning goals, attitudes toward the course, and factors influencing their motivation (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2021). The questions in the questionnaire were designed using a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended questions to obtain comprehensive data that could be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The questionnaire was distributed online to ensure wider participation.

Interviews were conducted with six faculty members who taught instructional design,

implementation, and assessment courses for one semester. The interviews were designed to explore the faculty members' teaching experiences and their views on student motivation. Some examples of questions asked in the interviews included: "What strategies do you use to motivate students?" and "How would you rate changes in student motivation during the semester?" Interviews lasted 30-60 minutes and were audio-recorded with the participant's permission, and then transcribed for further analysis. At the end of the semester, students received another questionnaire to track changes in their motivation and learning outcomes throughout the period.

Participants in this study consisted of lecturers of Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Guidance and students of the Guidance and Counseling and Islamic Education Study Program (FITK) of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The selection criteria for lecturers included a minimum of two years of teaching experience and active involvement in relevant courses. For students, the selection criteria were new students who were currently taking the course. A total of six lecturers and forty students were the samples of this study.

The research period lasted for one year, from initial investigation to publication of findings, and focused on the Guidance and Counseling Study Program and Islamic Education at FITK, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. By involving various data collection methods and steps to ensure validity and reliability, this study is expected to provide a significant contribution to the understanding of student learning motivation in relevant educational contexts.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Results

Ninety-five per cent of students have realized their college ambitions, based on the findings of a pilot study involving questionnaires distributed to forty students. However, only 45% of respondents expressed a desire to study independently without the help of lecturers. The learning process of students certainly changes as they move from high school to college; previously, they only learned from teachers, while now they are also expected to study independently. As many as 52.5% of students chose the answer "maybe", indicating uncertainty about their level of motivation to study independently.

Each student admitted that they have different strategies to stay motivated to study and complete their assignments. In this situation, students may say that they get inspiration from various people and places, such as themselves, their parents or other family members, or those they admire or idolize. 5% of respondents to the relevant question said "yes", 32.5% said "no", and 62.5% said "maybe".

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At the beginning of the course, students also discussed the various challenges they faced. They identified two categories of challenges: internal and external. Internal challenges included adjusting to new

instructors, classmates, and the online learning environment that emerged since the 2020 pandemic. The majority of students reported difficulty understanding the material while studying online, especially when instructors assigned a lot of homework without adequate context. External factors that hindered students from starting the course included unstable internet connections in the surrounding area, which caused disruptions in the online learning process. In addition, instructors often gave assignments that felt excessive in what was considered insufficient time

Discussion

This study shows how instructors at FITK, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, apply the spiritual andragogy method in three phases of teaching: planning, implementation, and assessment. The Islamic Education and Guidance and Counseling study program is closely related to these stages. The mentors apply these three concepts in teaching based on Islamic values.

a) Continuously Acquiring Knowledge

Before the new academic year begins, the lecturer in charge of the course creates a Semester Learning Plan (RPS), which must be approved by the head of the study program. This RPS must be received by the academic department no later than seven days before the lecture begins. In preparing the RPS, the lecturer involves students and peer lecturers, who are selected based on the relevance of the course to connect its contents.

After the RPS is completed, the instructor is ready to deliver learning activities online or face-to-face. The RPS includes course materials, learning objectives, reference books, activity implementation strategies, films, presentations, and assessments including homework and tests.

b) Learning Process

Instructors consistently use pedagogical approaches in their teaching, both in person and virtually. They often provide opportunities

for students to raise questions or concerns about material they do not understand. Giving students time and space to reflect is one way to show respect for their maturity. Some instructors even begin lectures with questions to stimulate students' critical thinking, asking them to examine problems and find solutions.

The course contract between the instructor and the student details the guidelines to be followed to create a positive and effective learning environment, including in the context of online learning. For example, students are required to mute their audio while the instructor is speaking in the virtual conference room. Only after being allowed to ask questions can students turn on their audio in turn. In addition, the instructor provides an opportunity for students to ask questions about things that are not clear. To ensure the smooth running of the lecture, the instructor also tries to ensure that students are on time by requiring a minimum of 14 attendances.

In teaching, lecturers apply various strategies to increase students' freedom of learning, such as 1) providing opportunities to read books relevant to the course; 2) increasing motivation and becoming a positive role model; 3) setting relevant analytical tasks; and 4) encouraging students to monitor their learning progress and assess learning objectives. Involvement in organizational activities is also expected to provide contributions, learning, and inspiration for students.

Through organized activities, students can discover and develop their potential. However, lecturers must work hard to support students in reaching their full potential in the classroom by 1) instilling knowledge about the purpose and essence of life; 2) encouraging students to try new things; 3) stating that everyone has abilities, and that inability is often caused by laziness; and 4) providing support, guidance, and inspiration according to the students' personalities. Lecturers also act as moderators who provide opportunities for students,

especially the quieter ones, to speak up, share ideas, and ask questions.

c) Evaluation and Assessment

Students can always contact their instructors through online learning tools like Google Classroom. Instructors fill out assessments and return them to students after they complete assignments, allowing students to review their work regularly. Instructors are also transparent about how they grade midterms and finals, although the method of delivering grades varies; some instructors wait for requests from students and others release grade lists directly.

d) Knowledge of the Spiritual Approach of Andragogy by Lecturer

The majority of lecturers in the Islamic Education and Guidance and Counseling Study Program showed a good understanding of the andragogy method, based on observations and interviews. They integrated Islamic values into all aspects of campus life, including lectures. Lecturers at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in the Islamic education and guidance and counseling study program felt various benefits.

However, challenges in implementing spiritual andragogy methodology remain, including the diversity of student backgrounds, laziness, unstable internet connections, and difficulties in monitoring student behaviour. In addition, the biggest challenge in the modern era is the success of virtual education integration.

CONCLUSION

The spiritual andragogy approach shows significant potential in enhancing students' independent learning motivation, especially in the context of Islamic-based higher education. This study highlights that through the spiritual andragogy approach, students not only actively participate in learning but also become more connected to the meaning and values of their lives. With the integration of spiritual values, the learning process becomes a holistic

experience, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects that enrich students' self-development.

Data obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and observations showed that students involved in spiritual andragogy-based learning showed increased learning motivation, self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of academic and personal goals. In addition, this approach provides opportunities for lecturers to apply adaptive learning methods, which allow students to relate academic material to their life experiences and beliefs.

In conclusion, the application of spiritual andragogy in Islamic guidance and counselling study programs and religious education in Islamic universities can be an effective strategy to increase motivation for independent learning. This approach not only supports academic achievement but also forms a more mature and responsible character for students.

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