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The ICARE Learning Model: Transforming Islamic Religious Education Learning Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The main background of this research is the low analytical ability of students (cognitive level C4) in Islamic Religious Education at Junior High School 1 Jati Agung. Lack of activity, low learning independence, and the prevalence of conventional learning methods with minimal innovation trigger this phenomenon. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the ICARE (Introduction, Connection, Application, Reflection, Extension) learning model as a transformative strategy in significantly improving student learning outcomes. This study uses a quantitative approach with a post-test-only control group design. The research sample was determined through a simple random sampling technique, which was divided into a control class (VII A) and an experimental class (VII B). Data was collected through a multiple-choice test instrument specifically designed to measure the analysis indicator (C4). Data analysis techniques include normality tests, homogeneity tests, and t-tests to verify differences in average learning outcomes between groups. The research findings indicate that the implementation of the ICARE model has a significant impact on the transformation of student learning outcomes. This result is proven through statistical tests with a significant value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$). ICARE syntax organizes real-life experiences with concept understanding, encouraging students to participate and think critically. This study offers Islamic Religious Education (PAI) educators' new ways to create a dynamic and immersive learning environment. ICARE has been successful in transitioning from passive to outcome-oriented learning and accelerated cognitive development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is defined as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and instructional process conducive to students' optimal self-realization (Ningsih, 2024). This process is expected to foster a balance between spiritual intelligence, self-control, personality, and practical skills relevant to the needs of society and the nation. Within this framework, learning outcomes serve as a fundamental indicator reflecting the effectiveness and quality of the learning process (Mejía-

Rodríguez & Kyriakides, 2022). Learning outcomes are defined as the level of mastery or achievement attained by students after interacting with a structured learning environment (Lavrijsen et al., 2022; Quadir et al., 2022). This achievement is multidimensional, comprehensively encompassing three main domains: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes), and psychomotor (skills). These three aspects are interconnected and continuous, with cognitive development often serving as the foundation for the formation of students' attitudes and technical skills (Abbasi et al., 2023).

Functionally, learning outcomes provide a quantitative and qualitative overview of students' progress during a specific learning period. Monitoring learning outcomes is important not only to find out how many students graduate but also to see how well they have learned the material. Furthermore, data generated from learning evaluations serves as a feedback mechanism for both teachers and students (Firestone & Donaldson, 2019; Zhang & Gao, 2022). For educators, learning outcomes serve as a basis for evaluation to assess whether implemented pedagogical strategies are relevant to established curriculum targets (Mendoza et al., 2022). For students, learning outcomes signify self-efficacy and can stimulate motivation to rectify deficiencies in their cognitive processes (Aldeeb et al., 2024).

The convergence of various complex variables influences a student's success in achieving optimal learning outcomes. Internal factors within students, such as critical thinking skills, dispositions toward subjects, and basic skills developed from an early age, play a vital role (Kartal et al., 2024). Furthermore, psychological factors such as intrinsic motivation, academic interest, and independent learning skills act as catalysts in accelerating the understanding of abstract concepts. Nonetheless, these internal factors necessitate the backing of a conducive external ecosystem, encompassing the teacher's role as a facilitator, parental guidance at home, and affirmative peer influence (Adisel et al., 2022).

To optimize this potential, learning design must be systematic and visionary. Learning should not be merely a routine activity but rather a planned, structured activity with measurable indicators of success. This is where teacher professionalism is key. Educators are required to possess strong pedagogical competencies, including the ability to map the needs of diverse learners and the flexibility to address instructional challenges that arise in the classroom (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Kim, 2019). Regular positive changes in how students feel and think are clear signs that this process is working. These changes are usually measured by test scores or other real assessments. The integration of innovative learning media and emotional support from the surrounding environment has also been shown to increase students' confidence to continue exploring (Hartono et al., 2025; Qiu, 2025).

Theoretically designed educational instruments may be ideal, but real-world experiences often reveal significant disparities. Initial research at Junior High School 1 Jati Agung, which included detailed observations, interviews with stakeholders, and reviews of documents related to seventh-grade students, uncovered several major issues in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. The fundamental problem that emerged

was the stagnation of student engagement. This obstacle is rooted in the dominance of one-way (teacher-centered) lecture methods that stifle critical thinking and dialogue. PAI learning, which should reflect life values, is instead trapped in a monotonous transfer of information. This situation directly impacts students' low ability to transform theoretical knowledge into real-life practice. Empirical evidence demonstrates a sharp gap in students' cognitive profiles: questionnaire results revealed that students performed very well on the comprehension indicator (C2) but achieved zero success on the analysis indicator (C4). This phenomenon suggests that students can only memorize information and cannot break down problems or think at the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) level.

This low level of interest and motivation is exacerbated by the limited use of interactive learning media, which in turn leads to low learning independence. Students tend to exhibit highly dependent behavior on teachers and peers. This inability to experiment with their understanding reflects a crisis of academic self-confidence. However, application and analytical skills are essential for enhancing the significance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and influencing student character development within society.

A new paradigm in learning models is needed to address this decline in learning quality and simultaneously accommodate students' literacy and cognitive needs (Wang et al., 2025). The ideal learning model should be able to stimulate collaboration among students and create a cooperative learning environment (Hasni et al., 2025; Le et al., 2018). In efforts to reconstruct these learning barriers, a planned and comprehensive approach is crucial for improving the quality of teaching and learning activities (Pal et al., 2022).

The ICARE (Introduction, Connection, Application, Reflection, Extension) learning model emerged as a comprehensive alternative solution. ICARE was designed to transform the classroom atmosphere to be more dynamic, participatory, and enjoyable (Latifah et al., 2022; Simamora et al., 2024; Suminar et al., 2021). Unlike conventional methods, ICARE provides autonomous space for students to learn both independently and collaboratively, eliminating passive subjects in learning. This model is widely recognized for its effectiveness in overcoming barriers to participation, strengthening conceptual understanding, and honing previously neglected critical thinking skills (Latifah et al., 2022; Siahaan et al., 2020).

Each stage of the ICARE syntax involves intense cognitive activity. The introduction stage serves to capture attention and map out objectives. Connection builds a bridge between new knowledge and students' prior experience schemas. The application provides a platform for students to practice concepts, which addresses the C4 requirement, a standard that emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills in educational settings. Reflection provides space for self-evaluation, and extension broadens students' horizons of understanding beyond the classroom. Through this cycle, students not only master the material cognitively but also hone social skills such as communication and cooperation (Munazad et al., 2023; Saputri et al., 2022).

The implementation of ICARE specifically improves students' reading literacy skills and depth of understanding (Efendi et al., 2023). The introduction stage presents the reading topic with a compelling narrative to pique students' curiosity. The connection stage encourages students to make associations between the text and their personal reality, facilitating the assimilation of information. During the application stage, students are tested on how well they can solve problems based on what they read. This process continues with reflection, where students reconstruct the reading content in their words, which is the highest indicator of comprehension. Finally, Extension offers enrichment via summarization activities or innovative presentations (Ranadhana, 2020).

The active engagement encouraged by ICARE ensures that each stage of learning has functional meaning (Latifah et al., 2022). We can minimize cognitive barriers by connecting new material to personal experiences. The ICARE process, which includes practice and self-assessment, has been shown to greatly improve learning results by covering all aspects of learning (Zeng et al., 2024). Various previous studies validate the effectiveness of the ICARE model, as a literature review reveals. This model has been shown to work better than traditional methods for improving understanding of concepts in chemistry and physics (Arlim & Fauzi, 2025; Latifah et al., 2022; Salirawati et al., 2021), and it also helps strengthen critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills in science and math. However, there is a significant research gap: to date, no study has comprehensively explored the effectiveness of ICARE in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), particularly in public junior high schools with diverse student characteristics.

Yet PAI is a pressing field that requires application and contextual teaching. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not simply the transfer of doctrine but rather the formation of behavior that requires a high level of analysis so that religious values can be implemented in modern social challenges (Nahuda, 2024). The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to integrate higher cognitive levels (C4) with the internalization of Islamic values through the ICARE approach, an area often overlooked in traditional lecture methods.

The urgency of this research is driven by the urgent need to address the low level of learning independence and instructional dependency at Junior High School 1 Jati Agung. Using the interactive, comprehensive, and organized ICARE approach, this research aims to offer new ideas for improving Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching methods and practical help for teachers to create a learning environment that meets the needs of Generation Z. Thus, the transformation of learning outcomes is no longer merely a numerical target but rather a concrete manifestation of in-depth and applicable understanding.

The results of this research can make a significant contribution to designing more effective learning strategies to improve students' application skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. By identifying issues related to student engagement and dependency, the implications of this study are expected to encourage the use of more varied learning methods and the inclusion of more engaging technology or learning media. Furthermore, this study can assist teachers in designing lessons that focus more

on developing student independence. We expect the implementation of appropriate learning models to foster student activity and confidence in applying their acquired knowledge. Therefore, this research can have a positive impact on improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at Junior High School 1 Jati Agung.

2. METHOD

This study applies a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design of the posttest-only control group design type. In this design, learning outcomes are measured through a final evaluation after treatment is given to the experimental group, the results of which are then compared comparatively with the control group. The study was conducted at Junior High School 1 Jati Agung, South Lampung, with a population covering all seventh-grade students. The sampling technique was carried out through simple random sampling using a random drawing application to ensure objectivity and provide equal opportunities for each class. Based on the results of the drawing, two sample classes were selected: Class VII A as the experimental group implementing the ICARE learning model and Class VII B as the control group implementing conventional methods (lectures and questions and answers).

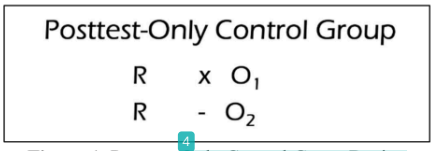

Figure 1. Posttest-Only Control Group Design

The implementation of the ICARE model in the experimental class was carried out systematically through five operational stages designed to stimulate students' analytical skills.

- Introduction: The educator conveys the instructional objectives, provides motivation, and outlines the material explicitly.
- Connection: Integrating new knowledge with students' prior knowledge or experience schemas.
- Application: A crucial stage where students are given contextual tasks to complete independently or collaboratively to test practical understanding.
- Reflection: Students self-evaluate their learning process through presentations, reflective discussions, or short quizzes to assess the effectiveness of their understanding.
- Extension: Enrichment activities in the form of independent assignments or further literature reviews are provided to deepen their mastery of the material outside the classroom.

The primary instrument used in this study was a multiple-choice objective test. The questions focused specifically on cognitive level indicators C4 (Analysis) according to the

revised Bloom's Taxonomy to measure students' ability to break down material into its components and understand the relationships between these structures. Before final data collection, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure the appropriateness and consistency of the measurement tool.

Data obtained through the post test was statistically processed using the following steps:

- Prerequisite Analysis Test: Consisting of a normality test (to determine data distribution) and a homogeneity test (to ensure equal variance between groups).
- Hypothesis Testing: Using parametric statistical analysis, namely the pooled variance t-test. This test aims to empirically prove whether there is a significant difference in learning outcomes between the group using the ICARE model and the conventional group at a significant level of 5% (alpha = 0.05).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research was conducted at Junior High School 1 Jati Agung using objective test-based data collection techniques. The research instrument used was a multiple-choice test specifically constructed based on student learning achievement indicators.

Validity And Reliability Tests

To ensure the quality and accuracy of the instrument, a series of empirical tests were conducted, including validity and reliability tests. This process aimed to ensure that the test items were able to measure the research variables accurately and consistently. The results of the data analysis obtained through the instrument reliability testing are presented in detail in Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Description of the Results of the Trial Class Validity Test

No Question	R table	R count	Information
1	0.349	0.417	Valid
2	0.349	0.526	Valid
3	0.349	0.511	Valid
4	0.349	0.478	Valid
5	0.349	0.480	Valid
6	0.349	0.435	Valid
7	0.349	0.417	Valid
8	0.349	0.373	Valid
9	0.349	0.241	Invalid
10	0.349	0.258	Invalid
11	0.349	0.258	Invalid
12	0.349	0.457	Valid
13	0.349	0.470	Valid
14	0.349	0.453	Valid
15	0.349	0.470	Valid
16	0.349	0.258	Invalid
17	0.349	0.423	Valid
18	0.349	0.423	Valid
19	0.349	0.302	Invalid
20	0.349	0.387	Valid

Table 2. Description of the Results of the Trial Class Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	**N of Items**
.703	20

The empirical analysis conducted on the pilot class determined that the research instrument met the academic eligibility criteria. The validity test revealed that 15 items had correlation coefficients greater than the critical r_table value (0.349), thus classifying all items as valid. Consistent with this finding, the reliability test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.703. Given that this value exceeds the reliability threshold (alpha > 0.60), this test instrument is considered reliable and has high consistency for use as a research measurement tool.

Using this validated instrument, data on student learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) were collected from class VII A (the experimental group) and class VII B (the control group). A comprehensive interpretation of the comparison of learning outcomes between the two groups is presented below:

Level of Difficulty of Questions

The difficulty level is a parameter used to measure the degree of difficulty of a test item. Statistically, this parameter is expressed using the difficulty index or symbol P (Proportion), which represents the proportion of students who answered the item correctly compared to the total number of test takers. The difficulty level classification in this study was determined based on the following criteria:

- Difficult Question: If the difficulty index value is in the range of $P \leq 0.30$.
- Medium Question: If the difficulty index value is in the range of $0.31 \leq P \leq 0.70$.
- Easy Question: If the difficulty index value is in the range of $P \geq 0.71$.

The use of this parameter aims to ensure a proportional distribution of test items, so that the instrument has good discriminating power and can accurately measure students' analytical skills (C4). The following presents the results of the distribution of questions based on the level of difficulty in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Questions Based on Level of Difficulty

No	Difficulty Level	Question Items	Total	Percentage
1	Very Difficult	-	-	-
2	Difficult	-	-	-
3	Currently	5,9,20	3	20%
4	Easy	2,3,4,6,8,10,11,12,13,14,15, 16,19	13	40,2%
5	Very easy	1,7,17,18	4	26,5%

Building upon the data presented in Table 3, the distribution of difficulty levels for the 20 test items exhibits varying characteristics but tends to cluster at a low difficulty level. The analysis reveals that 3 items (15%) fall into the moderate category, while

most of the instrument falls into the easy category (13 items (65%), and the very easy category (4 items (20%).

Empirically, these data indicate that the overall instrument construction is dominated by items with a low to moderate difficulty index. Conversely, no items fall into difficult or very difficult categories. This dominance of the easy category provides an initial indication of the test material's accessibility to respondents, although its implications for the instrument's discriminatory power in measuring higher-level analytical skills should be considered.

Distinguishing Power of Questions

Discriminating power is a parameter that measures a test item's capability to differentiate between students with high competence and those with low competence. The effectiveness of this discriminating power is expressed through the discrimination index, which statistically has a value range of 0.00 to 1.00. Index values closer to 1.00 represent a more precise ability of the test item to separate student ability levels.

In addition to discriminating power, instrument quality is also determined by the difficulty index, which describes the degree of complexity of a test item from the perspective of the probability of successful answers. The integration of the discrimination index and the difficulty index is crucial to ensure the instrument's content validity and reliability in accurately measuring research variables. The results of the item distribution analysis based on discriminating power are presented in detail in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Questions Based on Distinguishing Power

No	Distinctive Power	Question Items	Total	Percentage
1	Excellent	3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 17,18	7	33,3%
2	Good	1,2,6, 13,16,19	6	20,0%
3	Fair	12, 20	2	6,7%
4	Poor	4, 9, 11, 14, 15	5	40,0%

The data presented in Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the instrument's capability in differentiating competencies between students. The analysis shows that 7 items (33.3%) are categorized as very good, with a discrimination index ranging from 0.70 to 1.00. Furthermore, 6 items (20%) are categorized as good (range 0.40 to 0.69), and 2 items (6.7%) are categorized as fair (range 0.20 to 0.39).

However, the evaluation also identified 6 items (40%) as weak or unsatisfactory, with discrimination values below 0.20. Methodologically, these findings indicate that these items do not have optimal clarity in separating high- and low-ability students. Therefore, the classification of items in this category needs to be reviewed or revised to maintain the quality of the instrument in measuring research variables more competitively and accurately.

Normality Test

The normality test is a crucial step in statistical prerequisite analysis, which aims to verify whether the collected data is normally distributed. This assurance of normality

serves as the basis for determining the type of statistics to be used in the hypothesis testing phase, namely, whether to use parametric or non-parametric statistics. The results of the normality test for data distribution in this study are presented in detail in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Description of Normality Test Results

	Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Learning outcomes	Experimental Class Post-Test	.133	29	.200*	.954	29	.226
	Control Class Post-Test	.153	28	.093	.949	28	.189

The results of the normality test presented in Table 5 obtained statistical parameters that indicate the characteristics of the distribution of the research data. In the experimental group, the significance value (p-value) generated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was 0.226, while in the control group, the Shapiro-Wilk test produced a significance value of 0.189. Considering that both significance values are greater than the alpha threshold of 0.05, it can be concluded that the learning outcome data in both sample groups are normally distributed. Fulfillment of this normality assumption provides a strong methodological foundation for continuing data analysis using parametric statistics.

Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test is applied to verify whether the variance of several research populations is uniform (homogeneous) or heterogeneous. This test is a crucial prerequisite to ensure that the differences that emerge in the hypothesis test truly represent differences between groups and are not caused by unequal internal variation in the data. The decision-making criteria in this test are based on the significance value (p-value); if the significance obtained is greater than 0.05 (Sig. > 0.05), then the data is declared to have homogeneous variance. The summary of the results of the homogeneity test in this study is presented in detail in Table 6.

Table 6. Description of Homogeneity Test Results

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Learning outcomes	Based on Mean	.788	1	55	.378
	Based on Median	.849	1	55	.361
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.849	1	54.982	.361
	Based on trimmed mean	.833	1	55	.365

The results of the data analysis presented in Table 6 obtained a significance value (Sig.) of 0.378. Considering that the significance coefficient is greater than the alpha threshold = 0.05 (0.378 > 0.05), it can be concluded that the research data group has a uniform or homogeneous variance. The fulfillment of this homogeneity assumption

indicates that the data distribution from both sample groups has equivalent variance characteristics, thus fulfilling the formal requirements for hypothesis testing using parametric statistics in the form of a t-test.

Hypothesis Testing

This test aims to provide a scientific basis for decision-making, namely by reviewing whether the null hypothesis (H_0) stating that there is no effect of the treatment will be rejected or accepted. By using the t-test (independent sample t-test) at a significance level of alpha = 0.05, this analysis is the main determinant in proving the effectiveness of the ICARE learning model on the transformation of student learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education subjects. The following is presented the results of the T-Test in Table 7.

Table 7. T-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Learning outcomes	Equal variances assumed	.788	.378	4.499	55	.000	2.372	.527	1.315	3.428
	Equal variances not assumed			4.508	54.679	.000	2.372	.526	1.317	3.426

The results of the Independent Samples T-Test analysis, presented in Table 7, obtained an F-value for Levene's Test for Equality of Variances of 0.788, with a significance coefficient of 0.378. Given that this significance value is greater than alpha = 0.05, the assumption of equal variances is met, indicating that the data variance between the experimental and control groups is homogeneous. Therefore, the interpretation of the hypothesis test refers to the first row of statistical parameters.

The test results showed a t-value of 4.499 with 55 degrees of freedom (df). The two-tailed significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was recorded at 0.000, significantly lower than the threshold of 0.05. This finding demonstrates a statistically significant difference in average learning outcomes between students in experimental and control groups. Empirically, the mean difference between the two groups reached 2.372 with standard errors of 0.527 and 0.526, respectively.

The validity of this difference is strengthened by the estimated 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference, where the range of the difference is in the interval of 1.315 to 3.428. Because the confidence interval does not cross zero, the significance of the

average difference between the two groups is further verified. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that there is a significant effect of the ICARE learning model on Islamic Religious Education learning outcomes can be accepted. These results confirm that the implementation of this innovative learning model provides far more optimal results compared to the use of conventional learning methods.

Discussion

The research showed that using the ICARE learning model greatly improved students' Islamic Religious Education (PAI) results, especially in their analytical skills (C4). This success did not occur by chance but rather through systematic instructional design across its syntax. The analysis of real data showed that using the ICARE learning model greatly helped students learn better, especially in advanced thinking skills like analysis (C4). The importance of this was confirmed by an independent samples t-test, which found a t-value of 4.499 and a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0$. This finding was supported by a mean difference of 2.372 and a 95% Confidence Interval (1.315 to 3.428) that was above zero, confirming that the difference in achievement between the experimental and control classes was due to the treatment, not by chance.

The implementation of the ICARE model successfully shifted the paradigm of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning from mere textual memorization to critical thinking. This aligns with the finding that students in the experimental class performed better in answering analytical questions than the control class, which used conventional methods (Fitrah et al., 2025). The dominance of one-way lecture methods and the lack of interactive media in control classes have been shown to hinder active student engagement and independence (Mutia et al., 2025; Zahrah et al., 2025). In contrast, ICARE presents an innovative solution that integrates active learning, conceptual understanding, and higher-order thinking skills (Barus et al., 2024; Riani et al., 2026).

The success of the ICARE model in optimizing learning outcomes lies in the strength of its comprehensive syntactic structure (Efendi et al., 2023; Zeng et al., 2024). Introduction and Connection: Successfully establish a clear learning orientation and link the material to students' personal realities, making learning more relevant and meaningful. Application: This stage is a key determinant of success, where students are challenged to solve contextual problems independently. This process effectively builds self-confidence and reduces reliance on teacher instruction. Reflection and Extension: Provides space for students to metacognitively evaluate their understanding and deepen their mastery of the material through exploratory follow-up assignments.

The ICARE model gives students complete experience by letting them talk about, present, and solve problems (Utami, 2022). This active engagement fuels students' motivation to understand Islamic Religious Education values not only as theoretical material but also as practical guidance in everyday life (Manopo & Gugule, 2022).

Adequate validity and discriminatory power data support these quantitative achievements in terms of instrument quality. Although the distribution of difficulty levels was dominated by easy and very easy categories, the ability of students in the experimental class to complete the analysis indicators still demonstrated sharper

thinking skills. Overall, these findings reinforce that the ICARE model is a strategic instrument for simultaneously improving students' cognitive quality and independent character (Adi & Habsari, 2020; Asmara et al., 2025).

The successful implementation of the ICARE model in this study provides significant theoretical and practical contributions for teachers, students, and future researchers. For educators, this model offers concrete instructional guidelines for transforming the learning environment into a more active and meaningful one. Through this approach, the teacher's role undergoes a paradigm shift, from being a sole source of information (teacher-centered) to being an adaptive learning facilitator. For students, the ICARE syntax has proven effective in fostering cognitive independence, collaborative skills, and a sense of responsibility for the learning process. At the same time, this study gives future researchers a solid basis to create similar models in different settings and fields, especially to combine spiritual values with practical scientific methods.

Comprehensively, this study confirms that the ICARE learning model is an effective instrument for optimizing Islamic Religious Education learning outcomes at the junior high school level. The gradual, scaffolding-based, participatory approach in ICARE meets the needs of today's learners, who want learning that is interactive and relevant to their lives. The ICARE model is not only a remedy for inadequate cognitive performance but also functions as a transformative approach in cultivating learners with critical, active, and autonomous thinking abilities. These findings provide important implications for educational policymakers in formulating learning strategies and curriculum development based on the real needs of educational institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the ICARE (Introduction, Connection, Application, Reflection, Extension) learning model has a significant influence on improving student learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), especially in the high-level cognitive domain, namely analytical skills (C4). The significance of this finding was validated through hypothesis testing using the Independent Samples T-Test, which produced a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate a substantial difference in average learning outcomes between the experimental group using the ICARE model and the control group. The validity of this finding is supported by the fulfillment of all analysis prerequisite tests, including normally distributed data distribution and homogeneous variance. Thus, the ICARE model has been empirically proven as an effective and statistically accountable instructional strategy in transforming students' cognitive competencies to be more analytical and applicable.

As a recommendation, teachers are expected to consistently adopt the ICARE model, especially for materials that are highly complex and require in-depth analytical skills (C4). Educators should increase creativity in managing the Connection and Application stages. This is critical for maintaining the connection between theoretical material and students' social realities so that motivation to explore religious values independently can grow optimally. It is recommended that teachers integrate interactive learning media

relevant to the ICARE syntax to minimize the dominance of one-way lecture methods. Future researchers are expected to expand the scope of the study by testing the effectiveness of the ICARE model on other dependent variables, such as intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, or digital religious literacy. Similar research is needed at different educational levels (elementary/high school) or in more diverse school characteristics to generalize the effectiveness of this model. Furthermore, it is advisable to conduct research over an extended duration to evaluate the sustained effects of the ICARE model on students' memory retention and behavioral modifications (affective dimensions) in the long term.

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