

A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF THE BAHTSUL MASAIL METHOD, LEARNING MOTIVATION, AND STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAMIC LAW

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Abstract

This study addresses the limited empirical investigations into the correlation between traditional Islamic learning models and student academic outcomes in higher education, specifically within the context of Islamic legal education. The purpose of this research was to analyze the relationship between the Bahtsul Masail method, learning motivation, and students' understanding of Islamic law among fourth-semester students in the Ahwal al-Syakhsyah program at IAIH NW Lombok Timur. A quantitative correlational approach was employed, involving a purposive sample of 53 students. Data were collected utilizing validated questionnaires and comprehension tests on Islamic law, subsequently analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation. The findings indicated that the implementation of the Bahtsul Masail method ($M=78.5$), students' learning motivation ($M=81.2$), and their understanding of Islamic law ($M=76.4$) all fell within the "high" category. Notably, significant positive correlations were identified between: (1) the Bahtsul Masail method and understanding of Islamic law; (2) learning motivation and understanding of Islamic law; and (3) the Bahtsul Masail method and learning motivation. These results highlight the necessity of integrating traditional pedagogical methods with motivational strategies to enhance educational outcomes in Islamic law programs. The study contributes to constructivist learning theory and Nurhayati's motivational framework, illustrating how collaborative, context-rich learning experiences can promote deeper legal comprehension and academic motivation. The implications extend

to curriculum development, teacher training, and instructional design, balancing classical Islamic approaches with contemporary educational needs. Future research should investigate longitudinal impacts, utilize mixed methods, and encompass additional Islamic law faculties to further elucidate this pedagogical synergy.

Keywords: Bahtsul Masail, Learning Motivation, Islamic Law, Educational Outcomes, Constructivist Learning Theory

INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic legal studies in higher education has increasingly gained attention in recent years, particularly in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam, PTKI). Globally and nationally, the study of Islamic law is not only about preserving religious values but also about contextualizing Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) to respond to the modern socio-political environment (Hefni 2018; (Sutrisno 2020). In Indonesia, where the Muslim majority population adheres to diverse schools of Islamic thought, the relevance of integrating traditional methods with modern educational strategies has become more crucial than ever. The demand for legal scholars who understand both classical Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary challenges is increasing, particularly in programs such as *Abwal al-Syakhsyah*, which focus on personal law within the framework of Islamic teachings.

Islamic law is *ansich* (in essence), meaning that it encompasses all types of legal concepts, including private law (al-qanun al-khas) and public law (al-qanun al-‘am). Islamic private law covers commercial law (at-tijarah), procedural law (al-murafa‘at), and private international law (ad-daui al-khas). Meanwhile, public law includes criminal law (al-jina‘i), constitutional, administrative, and financial law (as-siyasah ash-shar‘iyyah ad-dusturiyyah, al-idariyyah, wal-maliyyah), as well as international law (al-fiqh ad-daui) (Muhyidin 2019)

The character of Islamic law itself is elastic, adaptable, and applicable, all of which ultimately lead to the realization of *maqasid al-shari‘ah*—the overarching objective of achieving public welfare (maslahah) (Islamiyati 2017). Islamic law is sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith, also referred to as the Sunnah. Anyone engaged in the field of Islamic law must adhere strictly to the texts of these two sources. If there are no explicit rulings

found directly within them, then one must still abide by the spirit of the Shari'ah and its general foundational principles (Muhyidin 2019)

In response to these issues, educators and scholars have emphasized the importance of active and contextual learning models that foster critical thinking and deepen students' understanding of Islamic law. One such model is the *Bahsul Masail* method, a traditional form of scholarly discussion and problem-solving originating from pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). This method is structurally similar to musyawarah (deliberation) and modern pedagogical approaches such as problem-based learning (Jumini, Insiyyah, and Khoiri 2020). Through collaborative discussions within *halaqah* groups, students are encouraged to critically analyze issues based on classical texts, promoting both independent learning and problem-solving skills. This method, therefore, provides a platform for integrating classical Islamic scholarship with student-centered learning.

Learning motivation is another essential aspect influencing students' academic success. Motivation is defined as an internal drive that stimulates an individual to act and persist in learning (Tohari, Mustaji, and Bachri 2019). Scholars have consistently highlighted that students with higher motivation demonstrate better concentration, persistence, and enthusiasm in learning processes (Rahmi 2020).

The ability to comprehend is one of the essential learning objectives that students must master, especially in the study of Islamic law (Rosita, Laelasari, and Noto 2014). Understanding Islamic legal principles requires not only familiarity with the Qur'an and Hadith as primary sources but also the intellectual capacity to interpret and apply them within various legal contexts, such as private, public, and international law. Therefore, mastering comprehension skills is fundamental for students to grasp the dynamic and comprehensive nature of Islamic jurisprudence. This is particularly important in fields like Islamic law, which require sustained engagement with complex legal and theological texts. Therefore, educational methods such as *Bahsul Masail* must not only stimulate cognitive understanding but also enhance intrinsic motivation to learn.

Prior studies have examined the role of innovative learning models in Islamic education. For example, Ririn (2019) found that *Bahsul Masail* significantly contributed to improving the critical thinking skills of santri in pesantren settings. Similarly, Syafair (2023) demonstrated that interactive learning models such as the "Snowball Throwing" method effectively increased student engagement and understanding of Islamic legal content in primary schools. However, there is still limited empirical research exploring the

interrelation between the *Bahtsul Masail* method, students' motivation, and their understanding of Islamic law at the tertiary level, particularly within the *Ahwal al-Syakhsiyah* program.

This gap signifies the novelty of the present study, which seeks to explore the correlation among these three variables using a quantitative approach. While previous studies focused on either the method or motivation independently, few have integrated these elements to understand their combined influence on learning outcomes in Islamic legal education. Theoretically, this study is underpinned by constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through experience and interaction (Meta Ruswana and Nailah Zamnah 2018), and by Nurhayati's motivation-to-learn framework, which connects motivational states to behavioral outcomes in learning (Nurhayati, et al, (2020).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the correlation between the *Bahtsul Masail* method, learning motivation, and students' understanding of Islamic law among fourth-semester students in the *Ahwal al-Syakhsiyah* program at IAIH NW Lombok Timur. By identifying the strength and nature of these correlations, the study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of how traditional Islamic teaching methods can be optimized to support modern educational goals and produce graduates who are both knowledgeable and motivated.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative research approach with a correlational method. Quantitative research is a method used to acquire knowledge through numerical data as a tool for analyzing information related to the topic of interest (Azizah, Subando, and Nurhidayati 2022). Statistical analysis is then used to transform the collected data or information into numerical form (Subando, 2021). Specifically, this research sought to investigate the correlation between the Bahtsul Masail method, students' learning motivation, and their understanding of Islamic law. This approach is appropriate because it supports hypothesis testing and enables generalization of the results to similar populations.

The design employed in this study is correlational research, which focuses on identifying and measuring the strength of relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them. This design is suitable for answering the main research

question: whether there is a significant correlation between the Bahtsul Masail method, learning motivation, and students' understanding of Islamic law. Compared to experimental or case study designs, this method is more appropriate for educational settings where variables cannot be controlled or manipulated directly. The use of correlational design in this context reflects the actual teaching-learning situation in Islamic higher education institutions.

The research was conducted from March 5 to April 15, 2025. The population of the study consisted of 170 students enrolled in the Faculty of Sharia at IAIH NW Lombok Timur during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The sample was drawn specifically from the Ahwal Al-Syakhsyah program, focusing on fourth-semester students in Class A (27 students) and Class B (26 students), making a total of 53 respondents.

The sampling technique used in this research was purposive sampling, which is appropriate when selecting specific groups with particular characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019). The fourth-semester students were chosen because they had already been exposed to the Bahtsul Masail method and relevant Islamic law subjects, making them ideal for assessing the relationships under investigation.

Data were collected using three main instruments: A questionnaire to measure the implementation of the Bahtsul Masail method, A learning motivation scale adapted from existing educational psychology models, and A test of Islamic law understanding, developed based on the fourth-semester curriculum. All instruments underwent content validation by three experts in Islamic education and methodology to ensure the appropriateness of items and content alignment with the research objectives. A pilot test was also conducted, and the reliability of the instruments was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, where values above 0.70 were considered acceptable for each variable. The data collection process was conducted in person during regular class hours, ensuring a natural and comfortable environment for the students. The researcher distributed the instruments and explained the purpose of the study while ensuring ethical procedures such as informed consent and confidentiality.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution) were used to summarize the respondents' responses. To test the relationships among the variables (Bahtsul Masail method, learning motivation, and understanding of Islamic law), Pearson

Product-Moment Correlation analysis was applied using SPSS version 25. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$, and interpretation of the correlation coefficient followed the guidelines of Sugiyono (2019), where: 0.00–0.199 = very weak, 0.20–0.399 = weak, 0.40–0.599 = moderate, 0.60–0.799 = strong, and 0.80–1.00 = very strong.

RESULTS

1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was conducted to summarize the students' responses on each research variable. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Bahtsul Masail Method	53	78.5	6.73	High
Learning Motivation	53	81.2	7.14	High
Understanding of Islamic Law	53	76.4	6.32	High

Data show that all three variables are in the **"high" category** based on predetermined criteria. This indicates that students perceived the Bahtsul Masail method positively, reported high learning motivation, and demonstrated a strong understanding of Islamic law.

2. Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationships between the variables, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was performed using SPSS 25. The results are presented below:

Table 2. Correlation Between Variables

Variables	r-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Bahtsul Masail Method ↔ Learning Motivation	0.612	0.000	Strong, Significant
Bahtsul Masail Method ↔ Understanding of Law	0.558	0.000	Moderate, Significant
Learning Motivation ↔ Understanding of Law	0.645	0.000	Strong, Significant

The data show that:

- There is a strong and significant correlation between the Bahtsul Masail method and learning motivation ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$).
- There is a moderate and significant correlation between the Bahtsul Masail method and students' understanding of Islamic law ($r = 0.558$, $p < 0.05$).
- There is a strong and significant correlation between learning motivation and students' understanding of Islamic law ($r = 0.645$, $p < 0.05$).

3. Negative and Anomalous Data

Although the general pattern showed strong and moderate positive correlations, a small subset of students expressed differing experiences. For instance: 1) "I feel that Bahtsul Masail is useful, but sometimes it feels more like a debate than actual learning. It makes me less motivated on certain days." (P12, Female, 23 years); 2) "My motivation is strong because I want to become a judge, not necessarily because of the teaching method." (P27, Male, 22 years)

These perspectives, although in the minority (6 out of 53), suggest that individual differences in motivation sources and learning preferences exist, which is important to acknowledge.

4. Summary of Findings

Most students experienced high levels of motivation and understanding in relation to their participation in Bahtsul Masail.

- All tested relationships between the three variables were statistically significant.
- Some participants offered nuanced perspectives, emphasizing personal goals over teaching methods, reflecting the complexity of motivational factors.

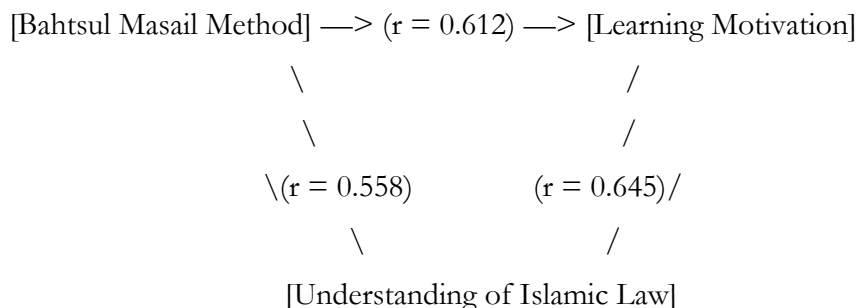


Figure 1. Conceptual Relationship Among Variables

This diagram illustrates the interconnection between the variables and emphasizes how both the method and motivation influence students' understanding.

DISCUSSION

This section presents an analytical interpretation of the findings, elaborating on their significance in relation to the study's objectives and prior literature. The results demonstrate a significant positive correlation among the Bahtsul Masail method, learning motivation, and students' understanding of Islamic law, highlighting the interconnected roles of pedagogy and motivation in Islamic legal education.

1. Analysis of Findings

a. The Role of the Bahtsul Masail Method

The strong correlation between the Bahtsul Masail method and students' learning motivation ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$) reinforces the value of this traditional pedagogical approach in contemporary higher education settings. As a form of collective inquiry rooted in pesantren tradition, Bahtsul Masail encourages students to engage deeply with legal texts through collaborative reasoning, which aligns with constructivist learning principles (Meta Ruswana and Nailah Zamnah 2018)

Bahtsul Masail is a teaching method that employs a discussion-based model, similar to the problem-based learning approach. In this method, students (santri) are required to examine and reflect on a problem, then analyze it as a means to find solutions. Therefore, students are not passive recipients of knowledge merely accepting what their teacher delivers; instead, they become active subjects who learn from each other. In this context, a productive dialectic of thought takes place, which fosters the development of critical and analytical thinking (Ato'ilah, Nasih, and Rodafi 2022)

This finding affirms prior research by Ririn (2019), who found that Bahtsul Masail enhanced critical thinking and participation among santri. Similarly, Jumini, Insiyyah, and Khoiri (2020) argued that Bahtsul Masail fosters student-centered learning by promoting deliberation and debate on real-life legal problems. In this study, students who perceived the method as intellectually stimulating also demonstrated higher levels of motivation and engagement.

Nonetheless, qualitative feedback from a minority of participants indicates the potential for the method to become counterproductive when not well-facilitated. For instance, one student noted that “it sometimes feels more like a debate than actual learning,” which could demotivate learners if the discussion lacks structure and academic direction. This underlines the need for lecturer mediation and instructional clarity to ensure that the method remains focused and inclusive.

b. Learning Motivation as a Key Predictor of Understanding

Learning motivation was found to have the strongest correlation with students’ understanding of Islamic law ($r = 0.645$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting its central role in influencing academic performance. This aligns with Nurhayati's, et al (2020) framework on motivation-to-learn.

Participants with high intrinsic motivation—such as those aspiring to become judges or religious scholars—showed better comprehension of legal content. As one student expressed, “My motivation is strong because I want to become a judge, not necessarily because of the teaching method.” This suggests that while Bahtsul Masail facilitates engagement, students’ internal goals also play a vital role in shaping their learning outcomes.

As emphasized by Raschintasofi et al. (2022), university students are expected to possess broad insights in addressing problems or events. Understanding is the ability to connect or associate various pieces of information that are already stored in our brain’s database. A high level of understanding stimulates a student’s enthusiasm and eagerness to seek as much knowledge as possible and to have an unquenchable thirst for learning.

Furthermore, the moderate but significant correlation between the Bahtsul Masail method and understanding of Islamic law ($r = 0.558$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that the method contributes meaningfully to conceptual understanding, but its impact is mediated by motivational and contextual factors such as prior knowledge, personal goals, and classroom climate.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies and Theoretical Perspectives

The present findings resonate with prior literature emphasizing the synergy between learning methods and student motivation. Syafair (2023) demonstrated that active learning strategies increased both participation and retention of legal knowledge. Similarly, Rahmi

(2020) concluded that students' learning motivation strongly influenced their ability to comprehend complex material.

The Bahtsul Masail method, while traditional in form, embodies principles of problem-based and experiential learning. It encourages students to not only access knowledge but also to construct meaning through textual analysis, group deliberation, and real-world application. This hybrid model of pedagogy affirms the relevance of integrating heritage-based education with contemporary learning theories (Sutrisno 2020)

Substantively, this is also in line with the understanding that Islamic law is a law designed to meet both physical and spiritual needs, in this world and the hereafter. Its implementation depends on faith and morality, as well as on power and authority. On the other hand, Islamic law offers rewards in both worldly and spiritual dimensions (Sadat 2018). Therefore, understanding Islamic law through the Bahtsul Masail approach is not only a matter of legal logic but also involves the spiritual values embedded within.

3. Practical and Theoretical Implications

The implications of this study are twofold. Practically, it suggests that Islamic Higher Education Institutions should retain and enhance traditional learning models like Bahtsul Masail, but with careful attention to instructional design and learner diversity. Facilitators must be trained to guide discussions, manage dynamics, and provide formative feedback to ensure students remain engaged and motivated.

Theoretically, the findings contribute to the literature on Islamic pedagogy by demonstrating how motivation functions as a mediating variable between teaching methods and learning outcomes. The study also validates the application of constructivist and motivational frameworks in Islamic legal education, offering a foundation for future research that integrates qualitative inquiry into student experiences.

4. Limitations of the Study

Despite the significant correlations identified, this study acknowledges several limitations. The sample size was relatively small ($N = 53$) and restricted to a single institution, which may limit generalizability. Additionally, self-reported measures are subject to response bias, and the cross-sectional design cannot establish causality. Future research should consider longitudinal approaches and mixed-method designs to explore how motivation and pedagogical methods evolve over time.

In summary, the Bahtsul Masail method is both relevant and effective in fostering motivation and understanding in Islamic legal education. However, its success depends on thoughtful implementation and alignment with students' learning goals. By combining traditional Islamic scholarly practices with motivational strategies and modern pedagogy, educators can create more dynamic and effective learning environments in Islamic law programs.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the correlation between the Bahtsul Masail method, learning motivation, and students' understanding of Islamic law in the fourth semester of the Ahwal al-Syakhsyah program at IAIH NW Lombok Timur. The findings indicated that all three variables scored within the high category, and significant positive correlations existed between each pair of variables. Specifically, the Bahtsul Masail method was positively correlated with both learning motivation and understanding of Islamic law, while learning motivation also exhibited a strong correlation with legal comprehension. These results affirm the effectiveness of the Bahtsul Masail method in promoting both cognitive and affective aspects of student learning in Islamic legal education. They highlight the potential of combining traditional learning approaches with motivational reinforcement to enhance students' academic performance and engagement. The study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the constructivist and motivational learning paradigms within the context of Islamic higher education.

However, this research is limited by its cross-sectional design and restricted sample size from a single institution, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs and include broader populations across different regions and Islamic education institutions. Further studies are also recommended to explore the mediating role of learning motivation in the relationship between teaching methods and learning outcomes, as well as to develop models for training educators in effectively implementing traditional Islamic pedagogies in modern classrooms.

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