



Islamic Value-Concordant English Learning: Insights from Self-Determination Theory

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Received: 2025-10-28 Accepted: 2025-12-30

DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v13i2.8285

Abstract

This study aims to describe the levels of psychological satisfaction and frustration specifically autonomy, competence, and relatedness experienced by 200 EFL students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah at IAIN Parepare within faith-based English learning environments. Using a quantitative survey method, data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results revealed a moderate level of satisfaction ($M = 3.69$) and a low level of frustration ($M = 2.31$), indicating that students' basic psychological needs were generally well supported. High satisfaction was found in autonomy and relatedness, suggesting that students felt respected, connected, and free to express themselves within a context that integrates Islamic values such as *sidq* (honesty), *amānah* (responsibility), and *rahmah* (compassion). Meanwhile, competence remained moderate, implying that some learners continued to face challenges in achieving language mastery. These findings suggest that Islamic value-concordant learning characterized by the integration of moral, spiritual, and cultural principles of Islam into language teaching can enhance students' motivation, social bonds, and emotional well-being while reducing anxiety and pressure. The novelty of this study lies in applying Self-Determination Theory (SDT) within an Islamic higher education context to explore how faith-aligned pedagogy supports psychological needs. However, this research is limited to one institution; future studies could adopt a comparative or longitudinal design to deepen understanding. In conclusion, integrating Islamic values into English language learning not only strengthens students' linguistic and academic outcomes but also nurtures psychological fulfillment and spiritual growth, making it a holistic approach to education.

Keywords: EFL, Islamic Value, Self-Determination Theory

Introduction

Muslim EFL learners often face a unique challenge: mastering a global language while maintaining their religious and cultural identity. In many Islamic

higher education institutions, English language learning is expected to go beyond linguistic mastery and embody values consistent with Islamic teachings. This approach aims to balance language proficiency with moral and spiritual development, creating a learning experience rooted in *rahmah* (compassion), *ṣidq* (honesty), and *amānah* (responsibility) (Mansoor et al., 2025). However, when classroom practices fail to reflect students' faith-based identity, they may experience psychological tension limited autonomy, reduced confidence, and weak social connection.

For instance, a supportive classroom environment plays a vital role in shaping students' Islamic self-identity. When English instruction respects this identity, learners demonstrate greater engagement, self-confidence, and diligence (Azmi, Hassan, et al., 2020; Azmi, Isyaku, et al., 2020). Conversely, the lack of culturally responsive instruction may lead to alienation, stress, and decreased academic performance (Mahmud, 2024). Therefore, faith-aligned pedagogy is not only an ethical commitment but also a psychological necessity for fostering student well-being in Islamic educational settings.

Research on the integration of Islamic values into English language education has expanded in recent years, but important conceptual and empirical gaps remain. Previous studies generally fall into four categories: (1) students' perceptions toward the integration of Islamic values in English language teaching (Hasanah, 2019), (2) curriculum and material development with Islamic orientation, such as English for Religious Purposes (ERP) and interactive digital learning (Anggaira et al., 2024; Preece, 2017), (3) spiritual and prophetic pedagogical approaches (Mansoor et al., 2025), and (4) Islamic-based learning media and technology, such as virtual classrooms (Deen & Mahmoud, 2025).

While these studies enrich the pedagogical discussion, most emphasize content and teaching strategy rather than students' inner motivational experiences. Few have empirically examined how value-integrated instruction influences learners' autonomy, competence, and relatedness key components of psychological well-being. Addressing this gap, the present study connects Islamic-integrated pedagogy with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to explore how such environments fulfill or frustrate students' basic psychological needs.

Within the SDT framework, all individuals possess three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness whose fulfillment promotes intrinsic motivation and psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 2015; Ryan, 2023). When these needs are supported, learners engage more deeply and achieve higher well-being; when thwarted, they experience disengagement and frustration (Kim & Mao, 2024). Thus, SDT provides a powerful lens for understanding how learning environments affect students' motivation and emotional state.

Integrating Islamic principles into English learning may provide precisely the kind of motivational support SDT envisions, as these values emphasize empathy, self-regulation, and collective harmony, all of which foster autonomy and social connection. In the classroom context of this study, Islamic values were

operationalized through practices such as beginning lessons with short reflections on Qur'anic ethics, using moral themes in reading and writing tasks, and encouraging respectful dialogue guided by Islamic manners (*adab*). These practices were designed to make English learning both meaningful and spiritually grounded.

Accordingly, this study addresses the central question: *How do EFL students experience English language learning infused with Islamic values in terms of the satisfaction and frustration of their basic psychological needs' autonomy, competence, and relatedness?* The findings aim to provide insights into how faith-based pedagogical design can harmonize linguistic achievement with psychological and spiritual growth, offering an inclusive model for EFL instruction in Islamic higher education.

Method

This study employed a quantitative survey design to measure EFL students' levels of psychological satisfaction and frustration within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in the context of Islamic value-integrated English language learning. The survey method was selected because it allows for the systematic collection of standardized data from a relatively large sample, enabling the identification of patterns and tendencies across key psychological constructs. This design was particularly appropriate for describing the dimensions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in terms of both satisfaction and frustration.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and descriptive statistics were applied to provide an objective portrayal of students' psychological experiences within faith-based English learning environments. The participants consisted of 200 students enrolled in the Faculty of Tarbiyah at *Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Parepare*, representing both early- and final-semester cohorts. A purposive sampling technique was employed, as the selected population was directly involved in English courses that explicitly integrate Islamic educational values.

Data was collected over a three-week period in March 2025 using both paper-based and online (Google Form) questionnaires to enhance accessibility and ensure data completeness. Out of 210 distributed questionnaires, 200 were completed and returned, yielding a 95.2% response rate. No incentives were provided to avoid response bias. The inclusion of participants from various academic levels allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and motivational needs across different stages of study. The sample size was considered adequate for descriptive analysis and representative of the target population of Muslim EFL learners.

The primary research instrument was a questionnaire adapted from Chen et al. (2015), designed to measure the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The instrument contained 17 items, distributed as

follows: autonomy (4 items), competence (7 items), and relatedness (6 items). These items were further divided into 9 items measuring satisfaction and 8 items measuring frustration, reflecting the dual psychological states emphasized in SDT. The questionnaire was administered in Indonesian to ensure linguistic accessibility and contextual clarity for the respondents.

Minor linguistic modifications were made to align the items with the Islamic educational context. For example, the original item "*I feel supported by my classmates*" was modified to "*I feel supported by my classmates in maintaining Islamic values during English learning*", and "*I can express my ideas freely in class*" was rephrased as "*I can express my ideas freely while respecting Islamic principles*." These adjustments ensured that the instrument reflected the moral and cultural values embedded in the Islamic learning environment.

The concept of *Islamic value-integrated English learning* was operationalized and verified through syllabus analysis and lecturer consultation. In the Faculty of Tarbiyah, English classes consistently embed Islamic principles through pedagogical practices such as starting lessons with short moral reflections, using Qur'anic or hadith-based texts for reading and discussion, designing writing tasks on ethical topics, and encouraging respectful communication in line with *adab* (Islamic manners).

These elements ensure that English learning is not only linguistic but also spiritual and moral in nature, aligning classroom practice with the institution's Islamic vision. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to examine the extent to which students' psychological needs were satisfied or frustrated across the three SDT dimensions. Each questionnaire item was rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 = *very consistent with my condition*, 1 = *very inconsistent with my condition*). Mean scores, frequencies, and percentages were calculated for each subdimension to determine response patterns and overall tendencies.

Table 1. Categories of mean score

| Range of mean score | Category | Interpretation |
|---------------------|----------|--|
| 3.70 – 5.00 | High | Indicates that students experience a strong sense of satisfaction or frustration in the respective domain. |
| 2.40 – 3.69 | Moderate | Indicates that students experience a moderate level of satisfaction or frustration. |
| 1.00 – 2.39 | Low | Indicates that students experience a low level of satisfaction or frustration. |

Separate mean scores were computed for satisfaction and frustration items in each SDT dimension. Students were then categorized according to their dominant experience (satisfaction or frustration). This analytical procedure provided a comprehensive quantitative overview of students' motivational states

within Islamic value-integrated English learning environments. This study followed basic ethical research principles established by the researcher. Prior to data collection, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses.

Consent was obtained electronically through a confirmation form embedded in the Google Form survey. No personal identifying information was collected. Although the study did not receive formal ethical clearance from the institutional review board, all procedures were designed and conducted in accordance with professional ethical standards for educational research. As a self-administered online survey, this study is subject to limitations such as social desirability bias and the absence of direct observational data.

The use of self-report measures may also limit the depth of interpretation regarding students' actual classroom behavior. Moreover, the thematic approach used in analyzing quantitative survey data may not capture the full complexity of psychological experiences. Future studies are encouraged to adopt mixed-method designs including interviews or classroom observations to validate findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic value-integrated learning in EFL contexts.

Results

The data analysis summarized students' levels of psychological satisfaction and frustration in the three SDT dimensions autonomy, competence, and relatedness within the Islamic value-integrated English language learning context. Mean scores, frequencies, and percentages were used to describe how students' basic psychological needs were either fulfilled (satisfaction) or hindered (frustration).

Table 2. Mean score

| Dimension | Mean Score | SD | Category |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Satisfaction | | | |
| Autonomy | 3.72 | 0.46 | High |
| Competence | 3.63 | 0.51 | Moderate |
| Relatedness | 3.72 | 0.44 | High |
| Overall Satisfaction | 3.69 | 0.47 | Moderate |
| Frustration | | | |
| Autonomy | 2.25 | 0.53 | Low |
| Competence | 2.52 | 0.49 | Low |
| Relatedness | 2.17 | 0.50 | Low |
| Overall Frustration | 2.31 | 0.51 | Low |

The overall mean score for satisfaction ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.47$) falls within the moderate category, which is slightly above the theoretical midpoint (3.0). This suggests that students' basic psychological needs were generally well supported, though not to the fullest extent. High satisfaction was observed in autonomy and relatedness (both $M = 3.72$), indicating that students felt respected, included, and empowered to make learning choices in a classroom that reflects Islamic values of *ikhlas* (sincerity), *amānah* (responsibility), and *ta'āwun* (cooperation).

The moderate score in competence ($M = 3.63$) implies that while students were motivated and engaged, some still struggled with linguistic confidence or skill mastery, possibly due to limited exposure to performance-based activities. In contrast, the overall frustration level ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 0.51$) was categorized as low, suggesting that students rarely experienced feelings of pressure, inadequacy, or alienation in the learning process. The low frustration values across all dimensions point to the psychologically safe and inclusive nature of faith-based classrooms, which align with Islamic pedagogical principles emphasizing compassion (*rahmah*) and balance (*tawāzun*).

Interestingly, when the data were compared across cohorts, final-semester students tended to report slightly higher satisfaction scores ($M = 3.73$) than early-semester students ($M = 3.61$), suggesting that prolonged exposure to Islamic-integrated pedagogy may strengthen motivation and psychological resilience over time. However, since the study used descriptive rather than inferential analysis, this trend should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage

| Category | High | | Moderate | | Low | |
|--------------------------|------|-------|----------|-------|-----|-------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Autonomy satisfaction | 112 | 56% | 67 | 33.5% | 21 | 10.5% |
| Competence satisfaction | 117 | 58.5% | 63 | 31.5% | 20 | 10% |
| Relatedness satisfaction | 133 | 66.5% | 43 | 21.5% | 24 | 12% |
| Autonomy frustration | 28 | 14% | 48 | 24% | 124 | 62% |
| Competence frustration | 33 | 16.5% | 55 | 27.5% | 112 | 56% |
| Relatedness frustration | 25 | 12.5% | 34 | 17% | 141 | 70.5% |

As shown in Table 3, most students reported high satisfaction across all three dimensions, particularly in relatedness satisfaction (66.5%), indicating strong emotional bonds and a sense of community in the classroom. This was followed by competence satisfaction (58.5%) and autonomy satisfaction (56%), demonstrating that most learners felt both supported and responsible in shaping their learning experience. The low frustration scores further reinforce this positive pattern, especially for relatedness frustration (70.5% low), which suggests that few students felt isolated or disconnected from peers or instructors.

A closer look at item-level trends revealed that statements referring to *peer collaboration* and *teacher encouragement* received the highest satisfaction ratings, while items related to *task difficulty* and *self-confidence in language use* were more variable. These findings suggest that while interpersonal and moral support were consistently strong, linguistic competence still presents a challenge for some learners.

Overall, the results underscore the effectiveness of Islamic value-integrated English instruction in nurturing intrinsic motivation and reducing negative affect. The combination of high satisfaction and low frustration across dimensions implies that such environments successfully meet students' psychological needs, fostering emotional stability and engagement. Unexpectedly, the competence domain did not reach the same level of satisfaction as autonomy or relatedness, signaling a potential area for pedagogical improvement through more skill-based and feedback-oriented classroom practices.

Discussion

The findings indicate that EFL students at the Faculty of Tarbiyah of IAIN Parepare generally experienced a moderate level of psychological satisfaction ($M = 3.69$) and a low level of frustration ($M = 2.31$) within Islamic value-integrated English language learning contexts. This suggests that the learning environment successfully nurtures students' autonomy and relatedness, while competence remains an area of partial fulfillment. The high satisfaction scores in autonomy and relatedness reflect the success of integrating Islamic values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'āwun* (mutual support), and *amānah* (responsibility), which are embedded in classroom norms.

In practice, these values were manifested through collaborative learning tasks, reflective discussions on moral topics, and mutual feedback among peers. Such classroom practices fostered trust, emotional safety, and a sense of belonging conditions that SDT identifies as central to intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2015). Although overall satisfaction was strong, competence remained in the moderate range. This pattern indicates that while the moral and emotional dimensions of the learning environment are well supported, linguistic self-efficacy is not yet optimal.

In the Indonesian Islamic higher education context, this can be explained by several factors. First, English is often treated as a supplementary rather than central subject, which may limit opportunities for authentic communication. Second, students' cultural emphasis on humility (*tawādu'*) may lead to reluctance in self-promotion or risk-taking, both of which are essential for language performance. Finally, faith-oriented learning sometimes prioritizes moral reflection over communicative practice, which may reduce task intensity and perceived competence.

Hence, the moderate competence level reflects both the strength of affective support and the need for greater emphasis on language mastery activities within

faith-based instruction.

The low frustration scores across all dimensions demonstrate that the integration of Islamic principles effectively minimizes psychological stressors such as alienation, pressure, or disconnection. In SDT terms, this balance suggests a high degree of satisfaction with minimal need frustration, conducive to positive motivation and well-being. However, from a developmental perspective, a certain degree of productive challenge or “optimal frustration” is essential for growth (Vallerand, 2021). Therefore, while low frustration signals comfort and safety, educators must also ensure that learning environments maintain sufficient cognitive and linguistic challenge to prevent stagnation within a comfort zone.

The results should also be interpreted within Indonesia’s sociocultural and religious educational context. In Islamic higher education institutions, learning is not only cognitive but also spiritual a process of cultivating *adab* (proper conduct) and *niyyah* (intention). Such integration naturally aligns with SDT’s notion of internalization, where external regulations (religious obligations) become personally endorsed values. This cultural alignment may explain why autonomy satisfaction was high: students perceive learning English as an act of faith and service, not mere academic duty. This faith-based motivation resonates with findings by Drążkowski (2024) and Khalid et al. (2020), showing that intrinsic religiosity strengthens perseverance and academic engagement.

Furthermore, the intersection of spirituality and motivation in this study supports the theoretical expansion of SDT into faith-oriented education. Islamic teachings on *ikhlās* (sincerity) and *ṣabr* (perseverance) parallel SDT’s principles of intrinsic motivation and resilience. When learners internalize faith-based goals, they experience “integrated regulation,” the highest form of self-determined motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, Islamic value-concordant learning does not conflict with SDT but extends its cultural and moral relevance by linking psychological fulfillment with spiritual purpose.

These findings offer several practical implications for designing more effective English learning environments in Islamic institutions. First, teachers should continue reinforcing autonomy and relatedness through activities that connect language learning with students’ faith and community values such as moral debates, reflective writing on Qur’anic themes, or collaborative projects on Islamic social issues. Second, to strengthen competence, instruction should integrate *task-based* and *project-based* learning (PjBL) models that provide authentic linguistic challenges supported by feedback and scaffolding. Combining spiritual reflection with active skill practice ensures that learners develop both confidence and proficiency.

Additionally, educators should view low frustration not as an endpoint but as an opportunity to introduce moderate, meaningful challenges that sustain growth. Faith-based feedback offered with empathy and moral encouragement can transform setbacks into opportunities for reflection and perseverance (*ṣabr*). At the institutional level, curriculum developers should ensure that Islamic

integration complements, rather than replaces, linguistic rigor, maintaining balance between moral enrichment and communicative competence.

The study's reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases such as social desirability and limited depth of interpretation. Students may have responded positively due to cultural expectations or religious modesty norms. The context-specific nature of this study focused on one institution also limits the generalizability of findings. Future research should employ mixed methods, incorporating classroom observations, interviews, and linguistic performance assessments to triangulate data and deepen understanding. Comparative studies between Islamic and secular institutions could further clarify the distinctive psychological dynamics of faith-integrated education.

This study extends Self-Determination Theory by demonstrating its applicability within Islamic higher education contexts. It provides empirical evidence that moral and spiritual integration can enhance need satisfaction while maintaining low frustration, thereby promoting holistic motivation. The findings emphasize that religiosity, when internalized, functions as an intrinsic motivator that bridges cognitive, affective, and moral domains in language education.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Islamic value-integrated English language learning provides a psychologically and spiritually supportive environment for EFL students in Islamic higher education. Within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), students at IAIN Parepare reported generally moderate levels of psychological satisfaction and low levels of frustration, indicating that their needs for autonomy and relatedness were well fulfilled, while competence remained moderate. The integration of Islamic values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'āwun* (mutual support), and *amānah* (responsibility) fostered an atmosphere of respect, empathy, and collective engagement, reducing anxiety and enhancing students' sense of belonging.

These findings affirm that Islamic principles not only complement but also reinforce SDT's emphasis on intrinsic motivation and holistic well-being. From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to extending SDT into faith-based educational contexts by demonstrating how religious and moral values can serve as intrinsic motivators that promote internalization and self-regulation. The alignment between Islamic teachings such as *ikhlās* (sincerity) and *ṣabr* (perseverance) and SDT's psychological needs highlights a culturally grounded pathway for sustaining motivation and engagement.

Pedagogically, the study underscores the importance of designing English learning environments that integrate moral reflection with skill development. Teachers should encourage autonomy by offering meaningful choices connected to students' values, enhance competence through task-based and project-based approaches, and strengthen relatedness through collaborative learning rooted in compassion and respect.

However, the persistence of moderate competence levels suggests that while faith-based instruction effectively nurtures moral and emotional dimensions, it must be complemented with more performance-oriented and feedback-rich language activities. Furthermore, although low frustration is desirable for emotional stability, educators should ensure that learners are also exposed to moderate and constructive challenges that stimulate growth and resilience.

The study acknowledges several limitations, including reliance on self-reported data and the context-specific nature of the findings, which may limit generalizability. Future research should adopt mixed-method designs combining surveys, interviews, and classroom observations to gain deeper insights into how Islamic integration influences both linguistic outcomes and psychological well-being. Comparative studies across diverse Islamic institutions or between faith-based and secular contexts are also recommended to validate and extend these findings.

In essence, Islamic value-integrated learning offers a promising pedagogical model that harmonizes language proficiency with moral and psychological growth. By bridging spiritual purpose and self-determined motivation, this approach embodies a holistic vision of education one that empowers Muslim learners to develop linguistic competence, emotional resilience, and faith-inspired integrity in an increasingly globalized world.

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