

# Toward Holistic Assessment in Adult Islamic Religious Education: Integrating Irfani Epistemology and Andragogy

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## ARTICLE INFO

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### Keywords:

Irfani epistemology;  
adult learning (andragogy);  
Islamic religious education  
(PAI);  
spiritual assessment

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### Article history:

Received 2025-11-17

Revised 2026-03-05

Accepted 2026-03-31

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## ABSTRACT

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Conventional evaluation in adult Islamic Religious Education (PAI) remains predominantly rooted in pedagogical paradigms that prioritize cognitive achievement, thereby overlooking the spiritual and existential development central to adult learning. This conceptual study employs systematic library research, drawing on scholarly sources indexed in Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ. Data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis to translate Irfani epistemological concepts into observable educational indicators. The study proposes a three-stage evaluation framework integrating spiritual-intuitive dimensions with andragogical principles: (1) *Tazkiyah*, assessing behavioral and affective alignment; (2) *Kashf*, evaluating reflective depth and existential awareness; and (3) *Ta'bir*, measuring value internalization through ethical decision-making narratives. The framework introduces non-grading instruments, including self-reflection journals and ethical dilemma portfolios, to shift assessment from rote learning toward indicators of spiritual maturity. This model offers a transformative approach to adult PAI evaluation by emphasizing personal growth, intrinsic motivation, and non-coercive learning environments over formal certification. It aligns assessment practices with the holistic nature of adult religiosity. However, as a conceptual framework, it lacks empirical validation. Future research should focus on instrument development, expert validation, and cross-cultural application to enhance its robustness and practical implementation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adult education extends beyond formal schooling, encompassing diverse non-formal self-development programs (Bayanuddin, 2023; M. A. Ibrahim, 2022). Unlike children, adult learners possess unique characteristics, experiences, and motivations that necessitate an andragogical approach rather than conventional pedagogy (Farabi's, 2018). Knowles (as cited in Zainuddin, 2016). warns that treating adults with traditional methods ignores their need for autonomy and reflection, effectively making them a "wasted species" in education. This maturity is not merely chronological but multidimensional, encompassing biological, legal, and notably, psychological and social readiness

Faisol (2011). Consequently, effective adult education must align with these developmental stages to avoid instructional failure.

Despite these andragogical requirements, a significant gap persists in the current evaluation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for adults. Existing assessment frameworks remain heavily skewed toward cognitive mastery and rote memorization, failing to account for the deeper spiritual and affective transformations that define adult religious maturity. There is a noticeable lack of reflective tools and standardized spiritual indicators, leaving the "inner growth" of the learner largely unmeasured. Furthermore, current PAI evaluations often overlook the autonomy of adult learners by employing rigid, top-down testing methods that do not resonate with their lived experiences or spiritual intuition.

Nevertheless, rational and empirical approaches to understanding adult learning are often insufficient to explain the spiritual dimension and inner consciousness of learners, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). In this regard, an epistemological approach is needed one that not only relies on empirical (*tajribi*) and rational (*burhani*) aspects but also incorporates intuitive and spiritual dimensions (*irfani*). The Irfani epistemology, as elaborated by al-Ghazali, Ibn 'Arabi, and Mulla Sadra, is grounded in the belief that true knowledge is not only acquired through reason and experience but also through purification of the heart, spiritual intuition, and divine illumination (al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*; Ibn 'Arabi, *Futuh al-Makkiyyah*; Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah*). Within this epistemology, learning is not merely an intellectual endeavor but also an existential process that involves self-transformation through inner awareness (Junaidi, 2014).

In the landscape of Islamic epistemology, there are fundamental differences between the Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani methods regarding the source and validity of knowledge. The Bayani method places sacred texts (*naṣṣ*) as the primary authority, where truth is obtained through linguistic analysis and authentic textual transmission. Meanwhile, the Burhani method relies on the power of reason and demonstrative logic (syllogism) to reach systematic and certain conclusions, often supported by the *Tajribi* (experimental) method to validate empirical phenomena. Differing from both, the Irfani method depends neither on textual mediation nor discursive reasoning, but rather on inner revelation (*kashf*) and direct experience (*ilm ḥudūrī*). In Irfani, knowledge is not merely understood conceptually but experienced existentially through the process of spiritual purification (*tazkiyah al-naḥs*), thereby creating a unity between the knowing subject and the object known.

The relevance of the Irfani method becomes crucial in the context of educational evaluation, particularly in adult Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as it reaches dimensions undetected by conventional assessments. While the Bayani and Burhani methods tend to evaluate only cognitive achievements such as textual mastery and logical reasoning the Irfani method offers an evaluation framework focused on inner transformation and spiritual maturity. This allows educators to measure profound affective indicators, such as the level of inner tranquility (*tuma'ninah*), patience (*sabr*), and contentment (*ridha*) of learners in internalizing religious values. Consequently, Irfani-based evaluation shifts the assessment paradigm from mere memory testing toward a process of self-reflection, enabling adult learners to authentically recognize the development of their spiritual quality.

Integrating the Irfani method into the context of Islamic Religious Education for adults is essential, as it bridges the rational and spiritual dimensions of education. Adults learning religion need not only conceptual knowledge but also guidance that enables them to experience the meaning and values of religion directly through spiritual experience. Accordingly, the evaluation of learning within this framework is not limited to cognitive achievements; it must also consider changes in attitude, inner tranquility, and spiritual awareness. Therefore, this study aims to explore the integration of the Irfani method into the evaluation of Islamic Religious Education for adults, examining how Irfani principles can enrich andragogical approaches and expand evaluation concepts that have traditionally been focused on rational-empirical aspects.

## 2. METHODS

This study is designed as a conceptual paper focusing on conceptual framework development for adult Islamic Religious Education (PAI) evaluation based on Irfani epistemology. The primary method employed is a systematic library research utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach. This procedure was selected to synthesize spiritual values from both classical and contemporary texts into modern andragogical instruments (Moleong, 2017; Risdiani, Syahidin, Hermawan, & Fakhruddin, 2025; Sugiyono, 2016). The data collection process was conducted through literature searches across reputable databases, including Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ, using strategic keywords such as "Irfani epistemology," "adult PAI evaluation," "andragogy," and "spiritual indicators." The author established strict inclusion criteria, focusing on literature discussing adult learning theory, in-depth explorations of Irfani epistemology, and journal articles identifying gaps in religious education evaluation. Conversely, works focusing on child pedagogy or articles without a strong theoretical basis were excluded.

Data analysis was performed using systematic content analysis techniques, where the Irfani spiritual stages (*maqamat*) and andragogical principles were established as the primary units of analysis. The coding process involved categorizing the literature into three key themes: the psychological characteristics of adult learners, spiritual indicators (such as *sabr*, *tawakkal*, and *1280ouns*), and the limitations of existing PAI evaluation instruments. These findings were then synthesized to construct a new evaluation model capable of bridging rational-empirical aspects with spiritual-intuitive dimensions. To maintain research credibility and quality, the author applied source triangulation (Raco, 2010).

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for Adult Learners

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa No.* (KBBI), education is defined as a process of transforming the attitudes and behaviors of an individual or a group in an effort to mature human beings through teaching and training activities (Redaksi, 2008). The term *adult* refers to a human being who is no longer a child or adolescent (Arif, 2012), meaning an individual who has passed the adolescent phase. According to Mustofa Kamil, the definition of adult education refers to the specific conditions of adult learners, viewed from physical (biological), psychological, and social dimensions. A person is considered biologically mature when they are capable of reproduction (Nurjan, 2016; Suralaga, 2021). Psychological adulthood means that an individual has developed responsibility for their life and the decisions they make. Meanwhile, sociological adulthood refers to the ability of an individual to perform social roles commonly expected in society. Thus, the term *adult* is based on the completeness of one's physical condition, age, and psychological maturity, alongside the capacity to perform duties aligned with one's social status (Sobur, 2016; Suralaga, 2021). From a psychological perspective, adulthood can be categorized into three stages: early adulthood (16–20 years), middle adulthood (20–40 years), and late adulthood (40–60 years) (Gunarsa, 2017).

In children's education, learning objectives are predetermined before instructional activities take place. In contrast, the objectives of adult education are flexible, meaning they may be jointly formulated by educators and learners according to the needs considered most important by the adult learning group (Muhammad, 2015; Riyanti & Rochmiyati, 2023). On this basis, Suprijanto explains that the goals of adult education are oriented toward learning outcomes that emphasize the enhancement of practical abilities and skills within the shortest time possible to meet their immediate life needs (Farabi, 2018). In general, adult education aims to equip adult learners with knowledge, experience, and skills that can improve their quality of life. Therefore, the core activities in adult learning are more closely aligned with the needs and goals that adult learners intend to achieve in the near term. Another important objective of adult education is to help adult learners understand and recognize the urgency of lifelong education (Daryanto, 2017). Adults are typically motivated to acquire knowledge or skills that are

necessary for enhancing their well-being. In addition, adult education also seeks to facilitate the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual maturation of adult learners.

Throughout the educational process, adults are trained and accustomed to developing frameworks of thinking, awareness, initiative, responsibility, social concern, and virtuous character as beings who possess faith in God. Through the knowledge, experience, and skills gained from education, adults are better prepared to engage in social transformation within their communities (Djamiluddin, 2019; Sunhaji, 2013). Andragogy is literally defined as the science and art of teaching adults. As individuals who are independent and capable of directing themselves, adult learners place self-directed learning at the core of the learning interaction. The emphasis in andragogy is not on the teacher delivering content, but on learners managing their own learning processes. For adults, learning is closely related to the capacity to direct oneself to ask questions and seek answers. Learning may thus be understood as a relatively lasting behavioral change toward improvement, resulting from experience and interaction with the environment involving cognitive processes (Farabi, 2018).

Based on a comprehensive review and analysis of Surah al-Baqarah (2): 189 and (2): 196, Ali 'Imran (3): 64, an-Nūr (24): 30–31, and al-Ahzab (33): 53, twenty-eight fundamental principles of adult education as derived from the Qur'anic perspective can be identified. These principles emphasize the centrality of *tawhid* as the foundation of learning, a problem-centered orientation, and a focus on real-life contexts. Adult learners are encouraged to select qualified experts as learning facilitators and to engage in reciprocal communication characterized by openness in expressing ideas and perspectives. The Qur'an also highlights the importance of actively exploring and deepening knowledge and experience, enhancing competencies to address personal shortcomings, and cultivating solidarity, social awareness, and environmental responsibility. Learning materials, therefore, should be problem-based and oriented toward problem-solving, while fostering attitudes of honesty, readiness to learn, and the ability to translate guidance into practical action.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic framework for adult education underscores the need to awaken spiritual consciousness, promote inner awareness in making decisions, and ensure that learning remains persuasive, non-coercive, and respectful of learners' dignity. Instruction is expected to address the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of learners simultaneously, while upholding mutual respect and tolerance for differing opinions. Learners are also guided to accept the possibility of their ideas being rejected, to develop the courage to take risks, and to learn from the negative realities of life. Additional principles include maintaining social virtue, nurturing *istikamah* in preserving personal integrity, and engaging emotional, spiritual, and intellectual intelligence. Finally, the Qur'an encourages the development of independence, individual awareness, respectfulness, and emotional self-control as integral components of adult learning (Farabi, 2018).

A careful examination of the 28 Qur'anic principles of adult education reveals their potential to address various discrepancies in the implementation of adult education currently found in many developing countries, including Indonesia. In practice, the implementation of adult education in Indonesia particularly within higher education institutions often contradicts the essential principles of true adult education. Higher education in Indonesia, often unintentionally, continues the culture and patterns of basic education, which are still rooted in pedagogical principles. As a result, the learning process tends to be unidirectional and does not actively involve students, even though learning for adults should emerge from lived experience rather than function merely as a complementary process.

These principles demonstrate clear distinctions between educational models for adults and for children. Adults differ significantly from children in terms of learning experiences, needs, barriers, self-concept, responsibilities, and social roles (Roqib, 2019; Sulaiman, 2017; Umar, 2018). Adults generally possess broader and richer learning experiences, whereas children have limited and minimal exposure to real-life situations. Adult learning experiences are usually practical and pragmatic, while children focus on forming foundational understandings, values, skills, and attitudes. In terms of the obstacles to behavioral change, adults encounter barriers related to social environments, work responsibilities, and

personal needs, whereas children face barriers associated with physical growth, socialization, and future roles they will assume.

For adult learners, learning needs are closely associated with future life conditions, while for children, learning is oriented toward developing learning patterns for the future (Aini, Sugiati, Dana, Wahyudi, & Ramadhani, 2020; Aziz, 2022). In practice, adults tend to 1282ounsel generalized and abstract thinking, whereas children depend more on concrete thinking. Adults are also capable of independently planning and organizing their own learning needs, while children lack such capacity, as their learning is typically determined by educational experts (Daryanto, 2017; Farabi, 2018). These contrasts between adults and children can be observed more clearly in the following table.

**Table 1.** Matrix of Differences Between Adults and Children (Farabi, 2018)

Adults	Children
1. Adults possess extensive practical and pragmatic experiences.	1. Children have limited pragmatic experiences.
2. Learning is centered on deepening and expanding prior experiences, including knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	2. Learning is centered on building the foundations of understanding, values, skills, and attitudes.
3. Barriers to behavioral change originate from factors related to their social environment, occupation, and personal needs for sustaining life.	3. Barriers to change arise from factors related to physical growth, socialization demands, preparation for social life, and future work.
4. Learning needs are connected to future life situations.	4. Learning needs are associated with the development of foundational understanding for the future.
5. Adults tend to employ generalized and abstract thinking.	5. Children tend to 1282ounsel concrete thinking.
6. Adults are able to articulate their learning needs, allowing them to negotiate with program planners in learning design.	6. Children are unable to articulate their learning needs, as these are generally determined by experts.
7. Adults have a well-established self-concept (organized and consistent), enabling participation and independence.	7. The self-concept is not yet fully organized, resulting in a sense of dependence.
8. Adults are assigned roles and responsibilities by society.	8. Children are not yet assigned responsibilities but are expected to develop accountability.

In addition to the differences between adults and children in terms of developmental aspects (age), experience, and social factors, the learning patterns of adults (andragogy) and children (pedagogy) can also be distinguished. These differences are evident in learning style, objectives, prior experience, level of engagement, learning process, and communication. For a clearer comparison, the following table can be considered:

**Table 2.** Differences Between Andragogy and Pedagogy (Farabi, 2018)

Andragogy	Pedagogy
1. Learners are referred to as "participants" or "adult learners."	1. Learners are referred to as "students" or "children."
2. Learning style is independent.	2. Learning style is dependent.
3. Learning objectives are flexible.	3. Learning objectives are predetermined.
4. 1282ouns assumed that learners have prior experiences to contribute.	4. 1282 ouns assumed that learners are inexperienced and lack information.
5. Learners are expected to actively participate in the learning process.	5. Learners primarily receive knowledge from the teacher.
6. Learners influence the timing and pace of learning.	6. The teacher controls the timing and pace of learning.

7. Learner involvement or contribution is highly important.	7. Learners contribute minimal experience.
8. Learning is centered on real-life problems.	8. Learning is centered on content or theoretical knowledge.
9. Learners are considered the primary source of ideas and examples.	9. The teacher is the main source of ideas and examples.
10. A climate of equality between facilitator and learners is established.	10. The teacher appears authoritative and all-knowing, while learners are expected to accept information without question.
11. The target population is adults in the community.	11. The target population is children in schools.
12. Adults are viewed as "containers already filled" (with knowledge, experience, social status, etc.).	12. Children are considered "empty containers."
13. A process of mutual learning is created.	13. The learning process is primarily created by the teacher.
14. Learners possess autonomy in learning.	14. Learners remain 1283ounseling1283 teacher instructions and guidance.
15. Learners are involved in the planning, process, and evaluation of learning.	15. Learners are not involved in the planning, process, or evaluation of learning.
16. Communication in learning is multi-directional.	16. Communication in learning is predominantly one-way.

In addition to the differences in learning patterns between adults (andragogy) and children (pedagogy), there are also differences in the underlying assumptions that shape these distinctions. More specifically, Knowles elaborates on these differences, which can be observed in the following table:

**Table 3.** Assumptions of Andragogy and Pedagogy (Farabi, 2018)

No.	Aspects	Assumptions of Andragogy	Assumptions of Pedagogy
1.	Self-Concept	Development of self-direction or autonomy	Dependence
2.	Experience	Learners are rich resources for learning	Learners are of little value as resources
3.	Readiness	Developmental tasks are oriented toward social roles	Developmental tasks are oriented toward social pressure
4.	Learning Time Perspective	Speed of application	Application is delayed
5.	Orientation to Learning	Problem-centered approach	Subject-centered approach
6.	Learning Climate	Mutuality/helping, respect, collaboration, and informality	Subject-centered approach
7.	Learning Planning	Mutual self-diagnosis	Conducted by the teacher
8.	Formulation of Objectives	Mutual negotiation	Conducted by the teacher
9.	Learning Design	Sequenced according to readiness of learning units	Logic of the subject matter, content units
10.	Learning Activities	Experience-based techniques (inquiry)	Service-oriented techniques
11.	Learning Evaluation	Mutual needs assessment and program evaluation	Conducted by the teacher

In addition to the differences outlined above, it must be acknowledged that both andragogy and pedagogy are branches of educational science, aiming to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills for human well-being. Many models, methods, and instructional media can be applied in both

andragogical and pedagogical contexts. The characteristics of adult learning models are flexibility, openness, and participatory engagement. Flexibility refers to the ability to modify the model for various contexts, openness indicates receptivity to input for improvements and development (Rusman, 2019), and participatory engagement implies the involvement of learners in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities. The learning model most compatible with the characteristics of adult learning is the participatory learning model. In andragogy, participatory learning is an effort by educators to involve learners in the planning, implementation, and assessment processes. Participatory learning is based on the principles of (1) being learning-needs based, (2) goal- and objectives-oriented, (3) learner-centered, and (4) experiential (learning by experience) (Farabi, 2018).

Theoretical learning for adults should focus on real-life problems, motivating learners to actively engage in practice, share experiences, and foster collaboration between instructors and learners as well as among peers. The aim is to provide learning experiences rather than mere transfer or absorption of knowledge. In practical learning, adults are guided to increase productivity, improve work quality, develop new skills, use tools appropriately, and enhance competencies. Adult learning behaviors are highly varied and can be understood according to different types and levels of learning in a taxonomic framework, namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to learn (relearn or unlearn), learning to solve problems, learning to live together, and learning for personal development (Ibrahim, 2007). Learning activities for adults may include guidance, information delivery, and training. Educators are not the sole source of learning; adult learners can also learn from mass media, successful practitioners, and personal or others' experiences.

In organizing learning materials, adults should be involved in planning objectives and content, determining the sequence of learning activities by offering programs and activities, utilizing their practical experiences, and allowing for adjustments to learning materials as agreed upon with learners. Material selection should prioritize relevance, usefulness, learner capacity, connection to past experiences, practicality, and immediate applicability in adult learners' lives (Sulaiman, 2017). In communicating with adult learners, educators or facilitators should begin lessons in an engaging manner, understand and consider learners' conditions without monopolizing the discussion, provide feedback openly, honestly, and constructively to foster positive attitudes, enthusiastically exchange ideas, and use language that conveys equality with learners. Physically, educators or facilitators should avoid monotonous postures, maintain balanced eye contact, minimize tension-revealing gestures, display pleasant facial expressions, dress modestly without drawing unnecessary attention, and avoid gestures that reflect arrogance.

According to Sudjana, the steps for educators as facilitators in implementing adult learning models include: (a) establishing rapport between learners and educators; (b) identifying learning needs, resources, and potential obstacles; (c) formulating learning objectives; (d) designing learning programs; (e) implementing learning programs; and (f) evaluating the process, outcomes, and impacts of learning (Ibrahim, 2007). The steps of adult learning implementation can be described as follows:

1. Stage of Building Rapport, this stage aims to create conditions where learners get to know each other, fostering a friendly atmosphere between learners and educators. A trustful environment is crucial for developing democratic attitudes and behaviors, openness, mutual respect, and cooperation during learning activities. Techniques that can be used at this stage include paired cards, expressing expectations, team formation, or the broken square method.
2. Stage of Identifying Learning Needs, Resources, and Potential Barriers, this stage aims to motivate learners so that the learning process feels jointly owned. Needs identification is conducted by gathering information through statements from learners regarding the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values they wish to acquire. Learners also recognize and state resources in their environment that can serve as valuable sources of information for learning. Similarly, learners can identify potential barriers to learning, whether internal or external. Techniques used at this stage include opinion polling, group discussions, nominal group process, needs assessment forms, community learning resources cards (SKBM), interviews, and similar methods.

3. Stage of Formulating Learning Objectives, this stage aims to help learners draft and determine learning objectives. Objectives are formulated based on the diagnosis of learning needs, available resources, and potential barriers. Learning objectives can include general objectives and specific objectives, both serving as guides for learning activities and as benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of learning. Techniques used include group discussions, nominal group process, Delphi method, opinion polling, task analysis, or Q-Sort.
4. Stage of Developing the Learning Program, this stage aims to involve learners in expressing, selecting, structuring, and finalizing the learning program they will undertake. The program includes learning materials, methods, techniques, media, educators, facilities, learning time, and other supporting factors. Techniques used at this stage may include behavioral modeling, group discussion, task analysis, and simulations.
5. Stage of Implementing the Learning Program, this stage involves learners actively in the learning process according to the agreed-upon program. Learners engage in learning activities, while educators facilitate and guide them. Initially, educators play a more intensive role in guiding learners, which gradually decreases as learners become more active. Conversely, learners' participation intensity increases over time. Techniques that can be applied in this stage include itemized response, fishbowl discussions, group discussions, critical problem analysis, hypothetical situations, case studies, study visits, role-playing, and simulations.
6. Stage of Evaluating the Learning Program, this stage involves learners in evaluating the process, outcomes, and impacts of learning. Evaluation is the process of collecting, processing, analyzing, and presenting data or information to inform decisions regarding the learning program. Process evaluation assesses the interaction among components, procedures, and objectives of learning. Outcome evaluation measures changes in learners' behavior in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Impact evaluation examines the effects of learning on learners' well-being, on the learning of others, and on their participation in social activities or community development where the learners or adult education graduates reside (Farabi, 2018).

### 3.2 The Concept of the Irfani Method from a Scientific Perspective

Etymologically, the term *'irfān* originates from the root word *'arafa*, which means *al-'ilm* (knowledge). Within the context of Islamic epistemology, *'irfān* refers to the highest form of knowledge, obtained directly by the heart (*qalb*) through the processes of *kashf* (inner unveiling) or *ilhām* (divine inspiration). *'Irfān* represents an epistemic dimension also known as *'ilm ḥudūrī*, *isyraqī* (illuminationist), or intuitive knowledge, which is distinct from knowledge acquired through discursive rational processes. As part of the Islamic intellectual tradition, *'irfān* has long been recognized within Arab philosophical thought, especially among Sufi circles, the *bāṭiniyyah*, and Eastern philosophers (*mashriqiyyīn*), often referred to as *aṣḥāb al-ma'rifah* (seekers of inner knowledge). A defining characteristic of the *'irfānī* method is its ability to apprehend the object of knowledge directly, without relying on discursive or sensory intermediaries (Junaidi, 2014).

Firstly, this type of knowledge is obtained through direct experience, meaning one must personally experience the object of knowledge. For instance, one cannot fully comprehend the essence of love without having personally experienced it; without such experience, knowledge of love remains superficial and artificial rather than authentic. Secondly, *'irfānī* knowledge is presential, in the sense that the object of knowledge is immediately present in the inner consciousness of the individual. Consequently, this form of knowledge is referred to as *'ilm ḥudūrī* (knowledge through presence), characterized by a unity of the subject (the knower), the object (that which is known), and the act of knowing itself. Thirdly, in *'irfānī* epistemology, objects are not recognized through categorization or classification, but through a personal and existential approach, engaging each object individually according to its unique characteristics. Since this knowledge is not text-based as in the *bayānī* method but arises from the process of *kashf* (divine unveiling of reality by Allah SWT), its attainment is achieved not through analytical study of texts, but through spiritual exercises and the purification of the soul.

Through this process, 1286 souls hoped that Allah SWT grants direct knowledge, which can subsequently be formulated conceptually and communicated to others in a rational and logical manner (Junaidi, 2014).

Accordingly, *'irfānī* knowledge is generally acquired through three main stages: (1) preparation, (2) reception, and (3) disclosure, either orally or in writing. The initial stage, preparation, involves a structured spiritual journey to receive *kashf* (divine unveiling). This stage comprises seven key steps: (1) *taubat*, awareness and repentance for one's sins; (2) *wara'*, abstaining from doubtful matters; (3) *zuhd*, detachment from worldly desires; (4) *faqr* emptiness from dependence except on Allah SWT; (5) *ṣabr*, steadfastness in facing trials with proper conduct and acceptance; (6) *tawakkal*, total reliance on divine will; and (7) *riḍā*, full inner acceptance, leaving only spiritual contentment and peace.

The second stage, reception, occurs when an individual who has attained a certain level of spiritual purity in the Sufi path receives direct enlightenment from Allah SWT. This process, known as *kasyf*, involves metaphysical awareness of the essence of the self (*musyāhadah*). In this state, the subject and object of knowledge merge into the same existential reality, so that awareness of knowledge itself becomes knowledge of consciousness. Mehdi Yazdi refers to this as *'ilm ḥuḍūrī* or presential knowledge, in which the knower and the known are no longer ontologically separate. The third stage, disclosure, involves articulating the mystical experience in oral or written form for communication to others. However, because *'irfānī* knowledge is not conceptual or representational but existentially unified with God's presence within the self and the self's presence in God, not all experiences can be fully or perfectly communicated (Junaidi, 2014).

In summary, *'irfānī* epistemology represents the highest form of knowledge in the Islamic tradition, acquired through direct experience and inner consciousness rather than through discursive or sensory processes. This presential knowledge unites the subject, object, and act of knowing within an existential awareness. The *'irfānī* method emphasizes three main stages: spiritual preparation through soul purification and inner exercises, reception of direct divine illumination through *kashf* or *musyāhadah*, and the disclosure of mystical experiences in oral or written form. This process generates intuitive, personal, and existential knowledge, enabling direct understanding of the essence of reality and spiritual values. *'Irfānī* knowledge underscores experiential learning, inner transformation, and the unity of the individual with God, distinguishing it from rational or textual knowledge, and highlights the importance of the spiritual journey as the foundation for attaining true knowledge.

### 3.3 Integration of the Irfani Method with Adult Islamic Education Assessment

Evaluation in adult Islamic education (PAI) cannot be separated from the distinctive characteristics of adult learning, which emphasize experience, self-reflection, and contextualized learning needs (experiential and self-directed learning) (Farabi, 2018). In this context, the Irfani method provides a spiritual and intuitive dimension that enriches the evaluation approach, as it focuses on the unveiling of inner consciousness, direct experience, and spiritual reflection as an integral part of the learning process (Junaidi, 2014). Philosophically, the Irfani method emphasizes that true knowledge is not only obtained through instruction or rational discussion but also through inner experiences deeply realized by the *qalb* (heart). This principle aligns with the characteristics of adult learning, which is meaning-centered, where learning outcomes are not merely cognitive mastery but self-transformation through experience and awareness (Daryanto, 2017; Muhammad, 2015). Therefore, integrating the Irfani method in adult PAI assessment encourages a shift from output-based assessment to process- and consciousness-based assessment.

In the context of andragogy, assessment is not merely a measure of the instructor's success but a reflective process that allows learners to identify changes in behavior, awareness, and spiritual values gained during learning (Farabi, 2018). The Irfani method supports this approach by emphasizing three main stages of knowledge: (1) preparation (*tazkiyah an-nafs*), (2) reception (*kashf and musyāhadah*), and (3) expression (*ta'bīr and tafsīr*) (Junaidi, 2014). In PAI assessment, these stages can be translated into indicators for evaluating learners' spiritual readiness, depth of religious experience, and reflective

ability to express Islamic values in real life. First, in the preparation stage, assessment focuses on learners' inner readiness to receive knowledge through the purification of intention, sincerity, and openness to divine guidance. This principle aligns with the "building familiarity" and "identifying learning needs" stages in the participatory adult learning model (Ibrahim, 2014). Here, PAI facilitators can use reflective and dialogical methods to assess how spiritually prepared learners are before beginning the learning process.

Second, the reception stage (*kashf*) can be integrated into process evaluation, where assessment focuses on learners' religious experiences, such as changes in attitude, moral sensitivity, and transcendental awareness of Islamic values. This evaluation is not based on tests or exams but through observation, reflective interviews, and spiritual self-assessment (Farabi, 2018; Sunhaji, 2013). In practice, Irfani-based assessment recognizes that religious experience is personal and cannot always be quantified but must be observed through value expression, behavior, and learners' narrative experiences. Third, the expression stage (*ta'bīr*) relates to learners' ability to articulate the spiritual and moral understanding gained during learning into tangible actions, whether orally, in writing, or socially. Assessment at this stage can be conducted through project-based methods, learning journals, or case studies demonstrating the application of PAI values in daily life (Roqib, 2019; Sulaiman, 2017). This process aligns with andragogical principles, where assessment should be collaborative and participatory, involving learners in evaluating their own learning outcomes (Farabi, 2018).

Integrating the Irfani method also broadens the assessment dimension from cognitive aspects alone to affective and spiritual dimensions (*ta'dīb*). Evaluation assesses not only "what is known" (learning how to know) but also "how knowledge transforms self-awareness" (learning how to be) and "how values are applied in social relationships" (learning how to live together) (Ibrahim, 2014). Thus, Irfani-based evaluation is holistic, involving intellect, heart, and action as a unified process in achieving Islamic educational goals. Furthermore, the Irfani approach encourages PAI evaluators to prioritize honesty, introspection, and empathy. Assessment is not intended to judge but to guide learners in discovering self-awareness through reflection (*muhāsabah*). This is consistent with adult learning principles, which are persuasive, open, and appreciative of individual experience (Asrul, Saragih, & Mukhtar, 2022; Farabi, 2018; Febriana, 2019). Therefore, Irfani-based assessment instruments should be flexible, adaptive, and oriented toward spiritual consciousness changes, not merely mastery of content.

In conclusion, integrating the Irfani method into adult PAI assessment unifies spiritual, reflective, and transformative values in the evaluation process. Assessment evaluates not only intellectual ability but also the depth of heart, sincerity of intention, and spiritual maturity in internalizing Islamic teachings (Djamaluddin, 2019; Junaidi, 2014). This integration also underscores that Islamic education assessment should aim at achieving *ma'rifatullah*, the awareness of Allah's presence in every learning and life process.

### 3.4 Spiritual-Andragogical Evaluation (ESA)

The integration of the irfani method into the evaluation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for adults can be understood as an effort to balance the empirical, rational, and spiritual dimensions in assessing learning outcomes. While andragogy emphasizes experience and self-reflection, irfani extends this to the level of inner consciousness and a transcendental relationship with God. Thus, irfani serves as a complement to evaluation models that have traditionally been instrumental in nature.

#### 1. Spiritual Readiness Evaluation (Takhalli and Tazkiyah)

The initial stage in the *irfani* method is *takhalli*, which refers to the purification of the self from negative traits such as arrogance, ignorance, and attachment to worldly desires (Junaidi, 2014). In the context of adult learning, this stage corresponds to the "self-orientation" and "learning motivation" phases in andragogical theory (Farabi, 2018). Evaluation at this stage focuses on the spiritual readiness of learners, specifically the extent to which they possess sincere intentions (*1287ounse*), openness to guidance, and willingness to improve themselves. Evaluation instruments may include personal reflection (spiritual self-assessment), intention journals, or guided

discussions with the PAI facilitator. According to Sulaiman (2017), personal dialogue between the facilitator and adult learners has a high transformative power as it facilitates self-introspection. Takhalli-based evaluation is not intended for quantitative measurement but aims to help participants recognize their spiritual condition before, during, and after the learning process.

## 2. Evaluation of Consciousness and Experience (Tahalli and Kasyf)

The second stage is *tahalli*, or the filling of the self with positive values such as honesty, patience, compassion, and humility. In the evaluation framework, this stage reflects the internalization of Islamic values (PAI). Evaluation is conducted to assess the extent to which learners demonstrate changes in attitude, behavior, and awareness in applying Islamic teachings in daily life. Farabi (2018) emphasizes that adult learners learn most effectively through experiential learning. Therefore, the *kasyf* method in irfani, which involves inner revelation through spiritual experience, can be applied in the form of learning reflection. Learners are encouraged to write or narrate their religious experiences during learning, which are then reflected upon together with the facilitator. This type of evaluation serves as a bridge between conceptual knowledge and spiritual awareness (Muhammad, 2015).

In PAI practice, tahalli process evaluation can employ methods such as learning journals, peer dialogues, and reflective observation of daily behavioral changes. This aligns with Ibrahim's (2014) view that adult learning evaluation should encompass social and emotional dimensions, not merely academic outcomes.

## 3. Spiritual Transformation Evaluation (Tajalli and Ma'rifah)

The third stage in irfani is *tajalli*, which represents the manifestation of divine light in the self after purification and the internalization of spiritual values. At this stage, the learner experiences inner transformation leading to divine awareness (*ma'rifatullah*). In PAI evaluation, this stage becomes the highest indicator of learners' spiritual achievement. Tajalli-based evaluation cannot be measured through quantitative instruments but rather through longitudinal observation of spiritual qualities, such as inner peace, consistency in worship, social honesty, and maturity in facing life's challenges (Roqib, 2019). Sunhaji (2013) emphasizes that true Islamic education outcomes are reflected not in exam scores but in noble character and spiritual awareness manifested in social behavior.

Therefore, PAI facilitators or evaluators must possess high spiritual competence and empathy to assess participants' inner transformation wisely. Tajalli-based evaluation is descriptive-reflective, inviting learners to write or narrate their spiritual experiences without fear of judgment. In this way, the evaluation process becomes a tool for *muhasabah* (collective introspection) between the teacher and learners.

From the analysis above, it can be synthesized that the integration of andragogical theory and the irfani method produces a new reflective-spiritual evaluation model. This model encompasses three main dimensions:

**Table 4.** Dimensions of the reflective-spiritual evaluation model

Dimensions	Description	Example of Instruments
Cognitive-Reflective	Assessing learners' understanding of Islamic teachings in a rational and contextual manner.	Formative tests based on case studies, reflective discussions, and in-depth interviews
Affective-Experiential	Assessing emotional engagement and spiritual experiences during the learning process.	Learning journals, observation of social values, and narratives of religious experiences
Spiritual-Transcendental	Assessing changes in self-awareness and closeness to Allah SWT as the ultimate outcome of learning.	Spiritual reflections, religious counselling, and muhasabah-based evaluations

These three dimensions form an evaluative cycle aligned with the *takhalli-tahalli-tajalli* process in Irfani epistemology. The facilitator acts not as a judgmental assessor, but as a spiritual guide (*murabbi*)

who assists learners in achieving inner transformation through the learning process (Junaidi, 2014). This integrative model emphasizes that the ultimate goal of PAI learning evaluation is not scores or certificates, but the formation of *insan kamil*, a human being who is knowledgeable, virtuous, and spiritually aware (Djamaluddin, 2019).

The integration of andragogical theory and the Irfani method in evaluating Islamic Religious Education for adults gives rise to a reflective-spiritual evaluation model that is holistic in nature. This model seeks to combine rational aspects, emotional experiences, and spiritual consciousness into a unified and comprehensive learning process. In this context, andragogical theory, which emphasizes independence, experience, and the relevance of learning for adults, is enriched by the Irfani approach, which emphasizes heart purification, spiritual intuition, and inner enlightenment. The synergy between these approaches results in an evaluation model that not only assesses cognitive knowledge but also measures changes in attitudes and spiritual awareness of learners in understanding and practicing Islamic values.

This reflective-spiritual model comprises three main dimensions: cognitive-reflective, affective-experiential, and spiritual-transcendental. The cognitive-reflective dimension focuses on assessing learners' rational understanding of Islamic teachings and their ability to contextualize religious values in real life. The affective-experiential dimension evaluates emotional engagement and spiritual experiences during the learning process, while the spiritual-transcendental dimension assesses changes in self-awareness and closeness to Allah SWT through reflection and *muhasabah*. These three dimensions form a cohesive evaluative cycle that aligns with the *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli* stages in Irfani epistemology, where learning is understood as a process of soul purification, cultivation of noble values, and the manifestation of divine light within the learner.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study contributes a conceptual framework for adult PAI evaluation by integrating Irfani epistemology with andragogical principles. The proposed model shifts evaluation focus from purely cognitive mastery to internal transformations, such as reflective depth and value internalization. Practically, facilitators can adopt this by utilizing non-grading reflective journals and ethical narratives. However, as a conceptual paper, this study is limited by the lack of empirical validation. Future research should prioritize instrument development and field trials to test the framework's reliability and effectiveness in diverse educational settings. Adult education has distinct characteristics compared to the education of children, in terms of experience, learning needs, motivation, and social responsibilities. Therefore, adult learning should prioritize the principles of andragogy, namely participatory learning that is learner-centered, flexible, and contextualized according to the life needs of the learners. In addition, the *Irfani* method, which emphasizes knowledge acquisition through inner experience, intuition, and spiritual transformation, can enrich the practice of andragogy in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The integration of the *Irfani* method in evaluating PAI for adults expands the scope of assessment from merely cognitive to a holistic approach encompassing affective, spiritual, and practical dimensions. Evaluation in this model is conducted through reflection, self-assessment, behavioral observation, as well as the expression of understanding through verbal, written, and social actions. *Irfani*-based evaluation emphasizes spiritual readiness, the capacity to internalize and comprehend religious experiences, and the ability to manifest this understanding in concrete actions. Consequently, evaluation does not merely measure what learners know but also how their learning experiences transform their thinking, attitudes, and religious behavior in a sustainable manner.

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