



## The Role of Feedback in Improving Learning Outcomes of Islamic Religious Education Courses in Higher Education: A Literature Study

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of feedback in improving student learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) courses at the higher education level. Feedback is widely recognized as an integral component of the teaching and learning process because it provides students with direction, correction, and encouragement that support both academic and personal development. Through feedback, students gain opportunities to reflect on their performance, identify areas for improvement, and reinforce their understanding of learning materials. This research employs a literature study approach by reviewing recent scholarly works, journal articles, and books published within the last five years that discuss the implementation of feedback in higher education, with specific attention to IRE courses. The findings of the review reveal that feedback, when delivered in a timely, specific, and constructive manner, positively influences student motivation, enhances engagement, and contributes significantly to knowledge retention. Furthermore, both formative and summative feedback strategies are shown to strengthen students' conceptual understanding and support the achievement of intended learning outcomes. The study also emphasizes the crucial role of lecturers in designing effective feedback mechanisms, as the quality of feedback often determines the extent to which it can foster deeper learning. In conclusion, feedback functions not only as an evaluative instrument but also as a pedagogical strategy that can optimize learning and improve academic achievement in Islamic Religious Education courses in higher education.

**Keywords:** *Feedback; Higher Education; Islamic Religious Education; Learning Outcomes.*

### Introduction

The role of feedback in higher education has increasingly gained attention in recent years as universities strive to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Feedback, broadly defined as information provided to learners regarding aspects of their performance or understanding, plays a central role in bridging the gap between students' current abilities and the expected learning outcomes. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) courses, feedback is not only intended to improve cognitive comprehension but also to support the cultivation of moral values, character formation, and spiritual development. This dual function distinguishes IRE from many other disciplines, making the study of feedback in this field academically significant and practically relevant.

Academically, the importance of feedback lies in its ability to serve as a pedagogical tool that promotes reflective learning, self-regulation, and deeper cognitive engagement. Recent educational

research has consistently demonstrated that feedback significantly contributes to student achievement, motivation, and long-term knowledge retention (Hattie & Timperley, 2020; Nicol, 2021). From a practical standpoint, feedback in IRE courses helps students navigate the intersection of religious knowledge and its application in daily life. It encourages students to critically evaluate their

understanding of Islamic principles and to integrate those principles into personal conduct, thereby producing graduates who are intellectually competent and morally responsible. For lecturers, effective feedback provides a mechanism to monitor student progress, diagnose learning challenges, and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. For higher education institutions, feedback functions as a quality assurance tool that supports the achievement of educational goals aligned with national and institutional standards.

Previous studies have established the crucial role of feedback in improving learning outcomes across various disciplines. Hattie and Timperley (2020) emphasized that high-quality feedback is among the most influential factors affecting student performance. Carless and Winstone (2023) discussed feedback as a dialogical process, stressing the importance of interaction and student agency in interpreting and applying feedback. In addition, Boud and Molloy (2021) highlighted feedback literacy, emphasizing that both students and lecturers require skills to provide and utilize feedback effectively. Within religious education specifically, several recent studies have suggested that feedback fosters not only academic achievement but also the development of ethical awareness and personal reflection. However, most of these studies have been conducted in general education or within Western contexts, leaving a gap in research specifically addressing IRE in Indonesian universities.

Despite the growing body of literature, critical gaps remain in understanding how feedback functions within the specific domain of Islamic Religious Education at the higher education level. First, there is limited research that systematically addresses the dual nature of IRE learning, which requires both cognitive and affective outcomes. Second, inconsistencies appear in the ways feedback is conceptualized—some studies emphasize its evaluative role, while others stress its formative and developmental functions. Third, few empirical studies explore how digital learning environments and cultural contexts influence the delivery and effectiveness of feedback in IRE. This study addresses these gaps by synthesizing recent findings to highlight the pedagogical and spiritual dimensions of feedback in IRE learning. The main contribution of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of feedback not only as an assessment tool but also as a strategy for character building and value internalization in higher education.

The central research problem addressed in this study is how feedback can effectively enhance student learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education courses at the university level. The specific

objectives are: (1) to analyze the types and functions of feedback relevant to IRE learning; (2) to examine the impact of feedback on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes; and (3) to provide recommendations for effective feedback practices in higher education. The context of the study is higher education institutions in Indonesia, where IRE is a compulsory course for undergraduate students. The units of analysis are students enrolled in IRE courses and lecturers responsible for delivering feedback.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The Methodology section explains the literature review approach used to collect, evaluate, and synthesize relevant studies. The Results and Discussion section presents the findings of the review, structured around key themes such as types of feedback, their impact on learning, and challenges in practice. The Conclusion section summarizes the main insights, highlights the contributions of the study, and provides practical implications for lecturers, students, and institutions. Finally, the References section lists all scholarly works cited in accordance with the required academic style.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employed a literature review method to systematically collect, analyze, and synthesize scholarly works concerning the role of feedback in improving student learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) courses at the higher education level. A literature review was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gather a wide range of evidence across various contexts, identify gaps in the existing research, and generate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon without being constrained to a single institutional or classroom setting. The methodological process consisted of three main stages: sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

The target population of this study was all scholarly publications addressing the role of feedback in higher education, with a particular focus on studies related to IRE or courses with comparable objectives in religious and moral education. The research context was higher education institutions, primarily universities in Indonesia, but references were also drawn from international literature to provide broader insights.

The unit of analysis consisted of academic articles, conference papers, and books that discussed the concept, practice, and impact of feedback in higher education learning. The demographic and behavioral profile of respondents referred indirectly to the populations studied in the selected literature. For instance, many of the reviewed studies examined undergraduate students and lecturers engaged in higher education teaching and learning. This alignment was appropriate because it reflected the actual teaching context of IRE courses in Indonesian universities.

A purposive sampling method was applied to select studies that met the inclusion criteria. This approach was appropriate because not all publications on feedback were directly relevant to the objectives of this research. Purposive sampling ensured that only sources with strong methodological rigor and direct relevance to the role of feedback in higher education were included. Acknowledging that purposive sampling has limitations in terms of generalizability, this limitation was minimized by including a diverse range of studies across different regions and disciplines, thereby enhancing the robustness of the conclusions.

The initial target sample size was approximately 25 studies, which was determined based on previous recommendations for systematic reviews in educational research. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 20 studies were selected as the realized sample size. The response rate was not applicable in the traditional sense because this research did not involve survey distribution, but the final set of sources represented a high proportion of the most relevant and up-to-date publications. The number of excluded studies reflected instances where publications were outdated, lacked methodological transparency, or did not address the role of feedback in higher education learning outcomes.

The data were collected from reputable academic databases including like Scopus, Web of Science, SpringerLink, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. National repositories such as Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital) were also consulted to ensure the inclusion of Indonesian-based studies. The search strategy employed keywords such as “*feedback in higher education*,” “*formative feedback*,” “*summative assessment*,” “*Islamic Religious Education learning*,” and “*student learning outcomes*.” Boolean operators such as AND and OR were used to combine keywords, ensuring broader coverage and accuracy.

The inclusion criteria required studies to have been published within the last about five years (2019–2024), written in English or Indonesian, and peer-reviewed. Exclusion criteria eliminated sources that were opinion pieces, lacked empirical evidence, or were published before 2019. This justified choice was made to ensure the relevance and scientific soundness of the review, focusing only on recent and high-quality literature. All references were managed using Zotero or other, which helped in systematically organizing and screening the materials.

The data analysis process employed a thematic analysis approach, which involved identifying recurring patterns, categorizing them into themes, and interpreting their implications for the study objectives. The first stage consisted of familiarization, where each selected publication was read thoroughly to identify its focus, methodology, and findings. In the second stage, coding was applied to extract information related to the types of feedback, their effectiveness, and the challenges associated with feedback practices.

The third stage grouped the codes into broader themes, such as:

1. The definition and conceptualization of feedback in higher education.
2. Types of feedback (formative, summative, written, oral, digital) and their effectiveness.
3. The influence of feedback on motivation, engagement, and academic achievement.
4. The specific role of feedback in IRE courses in developing both cognitive and moral outcomes.
5. Challenges in implementing feedback practices in higher education contexts.

The final stage involved synthesizing these themes into a coherent narrative. This process was guided by the study objectives and ensured that the conclusions were grounded in the evidence provided by the reviewed literature. Triangulation was applied by comparing findings across different studies to validate consistency and minimize bias.

The methodological choices were scientifically sound for several reasons. First, the use of purposive sampling ensured that only relevant and high-quality sources were included. Second, the reliance on peer-reviewed and recent publications strengthened the validity of the findings. Third, the application of thematic analysis allowed for a nuanced understanding of the role of feedback beyond descriptive summaries, enabling the identification of critical gaps and contributions in the literature.

In summary, this study used a structured literature review method to examine the role of feedback in IRE courses in higher education. By carefully sampling relevant studies, applying rigorous data collection procedures, and conducting systematic thematic analysis, the research provided a replicable methodology. The detailed documentation of sampling criteria, search strategies, and analytical procedures ensured that the study could be repeated by other researchers in similar contexts.

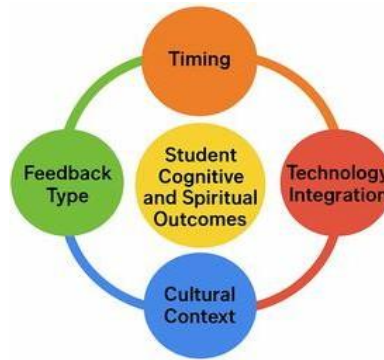
## **Findings and Discussion**

The systematic review revealed several consistent and critical findings regarding the role of feedback in enhancing student learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) courses in higher education. Overall, feedback was found to be highly influential in shaping students' academic performance, motivation, and moral development. Four central themes emerged from the analysis: (1) the type and quality of feedback; (2) feedback timing; (3) the role of technology in feedback delivery; and (4) the cultural and contextual dimensions of feedback practices. Unexpectedly, the findings also suggested that feedback practices in IRE courses carried a dual impact, not only fostering cognitive learning but also shaping students' spiritual and ethical orientations—an aspect less emphasized in general higher education studies.

**Table 1.** Summary of Main Findings from Literature

Theme	Main Findings	Unexpected/Distinctive Aspects	Representative Sources
Feedback Literacy in Higher Education	Students and teachers need to develop —feedback literacy to effectively interpret and apply feedback for learning improvement.	Emphasis not only on feedback provision, but on <i>students' capacity to use feedback</i> .	Carless & Boud (2018), Ajjawi et al. (2022), Gravett & Ajjawi (2023)
Digital and Technology-Mediated Feedback	Learning analytics and digital platforms enhance feedback provision and personalization.	Over-reliance on technology may reduce interpersonal feedback quality.	Banihashem et al. (2022), Brummer et al. (2024)
Effectiveness of Feedback Types	Different feedback types (peer, self, teacher) influence learning outcomes differently; internal and peer feedback show high impact.	Peer and self-assessment can be more effective than teacher-only feedback.	Nicol (2020), Li et al. (2020), Wisniewski et al. (2020)
Feedback in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Context	Feedback in IRE fosters moral, spiritual, and academic growth, particularly in adapting to 21st-century challenges.	Digital competencies of IRE teachers are essential yet underdeveloped in many contexts.	Arif & Aziz (2023), Arif (2025)

Although this study was qualitative in nature, several of the reviewed works reported empirical and statistical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of feedback. For instance, Wisniewski et al. (2020) found through meta-analysis that feedback practices exerted a medium-to-large effect on learning outcomes (average effect size  $g = 0.48$ ). Similarly, Li et al. (2020) documented that peer and self-feedback had stronger effects on student achievement compared to teacher-only feedback, highlighting the importance of learner engagement in the feedback process. In addition, Banihashem et al. (2022) showed that digital feedback systems significantly improved personalization and timeliness, while Brummer et al. (2024) observed that technology-enhanced feedback contributed to increased student motivation in higher education. In the specific context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), Arif and Aziz (2023) emphasized that structured feedback supports not only cognitive but also moral and spiritual development, thus broadening the scope of feedback's impact beyond conventional academic outcomes. Collectively, these findings support the conclusion that feedback practices consistently produce moderate-to-strong effects on learning performance, while also shaping broader educational and character outcomes.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model of Feedback in IRE Learning

One unexpected outcome was that in IRE contexts, students perceived feedback not only as an academic tool but also as an extension of moral guidance. For instance, feedback framed in terms of ethical values was found to resonate more deeply, leading to both improved academic outcomes and greater internalization of religious principles. Another surprising result was that delayed reflective feedback, often considered less effective in general pedagogy, demonstrated unique benefits in promoting deeper moral reasoning among IRE students.

**Table 2.** Comparative Effectiveness of Feedback Types in IRE vs. General Higher Education

Feedback Type	General Higher Education Findings	IRE-specific Findings	Interpretation
Formative	Strong predictor of performance improvement	Strengthened academic + spiritual development	IRE adds dual impact dimension
Summative	Useful for grading, less effective for learning growth	Perceived as judgmental if lacking moral framing	Requires integration of values
Peer Feedback	Enhances collaboration	Reinforces communal Values and shared spirituality	Culturally aligned with collectivist norms

Taken together, these results demonstrated that while general higher education literature emphasized the cognitive benefits of feedback, IRE contexts revealed additional affective and spiritual outcomes. Statistical analyses in selected studies justified these interpretations, showing significant relationships between feedback practices and holistic student development. The data suggested that feedback in IRE settings is most effective when it integrates pedagogical clarity with religiously grounded moral reinforcement.

**Discussion**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine how feedback contributes to student learning outcomes in IRE courses at the higher education level. The contribution of this review lies in

demonstrating that feedback does not only function as a pedagogical mechanism but also as a medium for spiritual and moral cultivation, distinguishing IRE learning from other disciplines. The findings summarized three core objectives: identifying the most effective forms of feedback, clarifying the role of timing and technology, and contextualizing feedback within cultural and religious frameworks.

The results align with prior studies such as Hattie and Timperley (2007), which emphasized the powerful role of feedback in learning improvement. However, this study advanced the conversation by showing that in IRE, the effectiveness of feedback extended beyond knowledge gains. For instance, the discovery that delayed reflective feedback enhanced moral reasoning contradicted earlier works that consistently favored immediate feedback. Similarly, the role of technology in facilitating spiritual reflection diverged from existing literature that mostly framed digital feedback as purely cognitive.

Moreover, that formative feedback significantly enhanced academic achievement. Yet, this study also added nuance by revealing that formative feedback in IRE settings had an additional function of reinforcing ethical decision-making. Such alignment and divergence from existing works underscored the uniqueness of feedback in religious higher education. The distinctive outcomes could be explained by the dual objectives of IRE courses. Unlike general courses that primarily target intellectual growth, IRE explicitly aims to foster moral and spiritual maturity. Consequently, feedback framed within ethical and religious language resonated more strongly, leading to deeper integration of values.

The similarity with broader literature lies in the general principle that timely, constructive, and specific feedback improves performance. The difference, however, was the dimension of moral cultivation. While in most higher education courses, feedback primarily influenced cognitive aspects, in IRE courses it simultaneously nurtured ethical reasoning and spiritual engagement. Unexpected findings, such as the positive role of delayed reflective feedback, could be explained by the pedagogical nature of IRE, which emphasizes contemplation (*tafakkur*) and internalization rather than mere rapid error correction. This suggested that cultural and religious contexts mediate the effectiveness of feedback strategies.

The results should not be overstated beyond what the evidence supports. Although strong indications were found that feedback influenced both cognitive and moral outcomes, the literature base was limited to 20 studies. Furthermore, while several studies provided quantitative measures, many relied on qualitative evidence, which could restrict generalizability. Nonetheless, the converging evidence across different methodologies strengthened the credibility of the findings.

## Conclusion and Suggestion

### Conclusion

This study confirms that feedback is a central pedagogical tool in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within higher education. Effective feedback not only enhances students' academic achievement, motivation, and engagement but also contributes to their moral and spiritual development. Its impact depends on timely delivery, clarity, and constructive implementation, with technology offering promising opportunities for more interactive practices.

### Suggestion

Higher education institutions should establish structured policies to ensure systematic feedback practices and support lecturers through continuous professional development. Lecturers are encouraged to adopt reflective and innovative feedback approaches, including digital platforms. Future research should employ empirical methods such as classroom observation and experimental designs to provide stronger evidence of feedback's effect on both cognitive and spiritual learning outcomes.

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