

Enhancing Fiqh of Worship Learning through Simulation: A Systematic Literature Review

Nor Musfirah Mohamad^{1*}, Noorkartina Mohamad², Nur Fatin Nabila Shahrom³, Amirah Izzati Omar⁴

¹ Jabatan Syariah, Fakulti Pengajian Islam, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UniSIRAJ) Perlis, Malaysia

² Fakulti Muamalat, Pengurusan dan Teknologi, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UniSIRAJ), Perlis Malaysia

³ Akademik Pengajian Islam Kontemporari, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perlis Malaysia

⁴ Pusat Pengajian Asasi, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UniSIRAJ), Perlis Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review synthesises evidence on simulation-based teaching and learning in Fiqh of worship (Fiqh al-‘Ibādāt) education, with attention to its relevance for private higher education institutions. Simulation is increasingly promoted in Islamic education, but the relevant evidence is scattered across pedagogy, educational technology and Islamic studies, and it is unclear what is known about its effectiveness, its mechanisms and the conditions in which it works. The review followed the PRISMA 2020 guideline. Scopus and Mendeley were searched (181 records) and the records were screened against narrowed eligibility criteria that admitted only empirical studies in which simulation (role-play, socio-drama, practice simulation of worship, or virtual reality) was used to teach Fiqh, worship or closely related Islamic religious content. N studies met these criteria. Methodological quality was appraised with the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT 2018) by two independent reviewers, data were extracted with a standardised form, and findings were synthesised through thematic synthesis supported by narrative synthesis. Three themes were generated: (1) simulation improves conceptual understanding, procedural accuracy and pedagogical competence; (2) simulation supports the internalisation of religious values and social competencies such as patience, discipline, tolerance and cooperation; and (3) simulation raises engagement and enjoyment, whereas evidence on deeper affective and spiritual outcomes is thin. The evidence suggests that simulation works through guided, embodied rehearsal followed by feedback and reflection, and that its benefits depend on teacher readiness, shariah-accurate scenario design and adequate resources. However, the evidence base is small, concentrated in school-level settings, dominated by short-term and self-reported outcomes, and largely silent on IPTS contexts. Simulation is therefore a promising but under-evidenced approach, and a research agenda for rigorous, context-specific studies is proposed.

Keywords: simulation; fiqh of worship; learning and teaching, SLR

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of educational technology and student-centered pedagogy has pushed Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to rethink how fiqh of worship is taught, especially in institutions serving the digital-native generation. In private higher education, fiqh al-‘ibādāt and sunnah-based practices demand not only cognitive understanding but also procedural accuracy, spiritual internalization, and practical readiness. Simulation-based learning – ranging from simple role-play to advanced virtual reality (VR) – has emerged as a promising innovation to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and lived worship practice (Kharismatunisa, 2023; Nofianti, 2024; Sidik et al., 2023; Zamzami, 2025). This introduction and literature review situate simulation innovation within broader trends of experiential and technology-enhanced Islamic education, while highlighting

its specific relevance to sunnah-oriented fiqh of worship courses.

A key pedagogical shift in IRE is toward experiential learning and Student Centered Learning, which prioritize direct experience, reflection, and application over lecture-dominated transmission. Studies on fiqh and PAI learning show that problem-based projects, social experience tasks, and worship practices embedded in real-life contexts enhance critical thinking, engagement, and the integration of Islamic values with modern realities (Hidayah et al., 2024; Hosaini et al., 2024; Kistoro et al., 2023; Nisak, 2025). Experiential worship activities, simulations, and visits to places of worship significantly improve students' religious attitudes, motivation, and ability to apply teachings in daily life (Kistoro et al., 2023; Nisak, 2025). In this paradigm, fiqh of worship is not treated as abstract legalism, but as embodied practice cultivated through guided performance, reflection, and feedback in authentic or simulated settings (Hidayah et al., 2024; Nofianti, 2024; Zamzami, 2025). Such an approach aligns closely with sunnah-based pedagogy, where modeling, practice, and repetition play central roles in transmitting acts of worship.

Within this experiential turn, simulation methods have gained prominence as a structured way to approximate real worship situations in a safe and repeatable environment. Simulation in fiqh learning has been shown to increase students' understanding of ritual procedures, improve learning outcomes, and make classes more enjoyable and less monotonous (Amin & Novriyana, 2024; Nofianti, 2024; Sidik et al., 2023). In studies at the secondary level, simulation of fard prayer, prostration of sahw, zakat procedures, and Ramadan fasting practices strengthened conceptual grasp and helped students internalize values such as patience, self-control, discipline, and social cooperation. For pre-service Islamic education students, simulation significantly enhances creative thinking and basic teaching skills, indicating its dual role in deepening content mastery and developing pedagogical competence (Hamzah & Nur'aini, 2024). Role-playing and socio-drama variants of simulation further foster communication, soft skills, and social interaction – competencies that are important for future religious leaders and educators (Hamzah & Nur'aini, 2024; Toleransi et al., 2024). Collectively, this literature positions simulation as a powerful tool to transform fiqh from passive reception to active, performative learning.

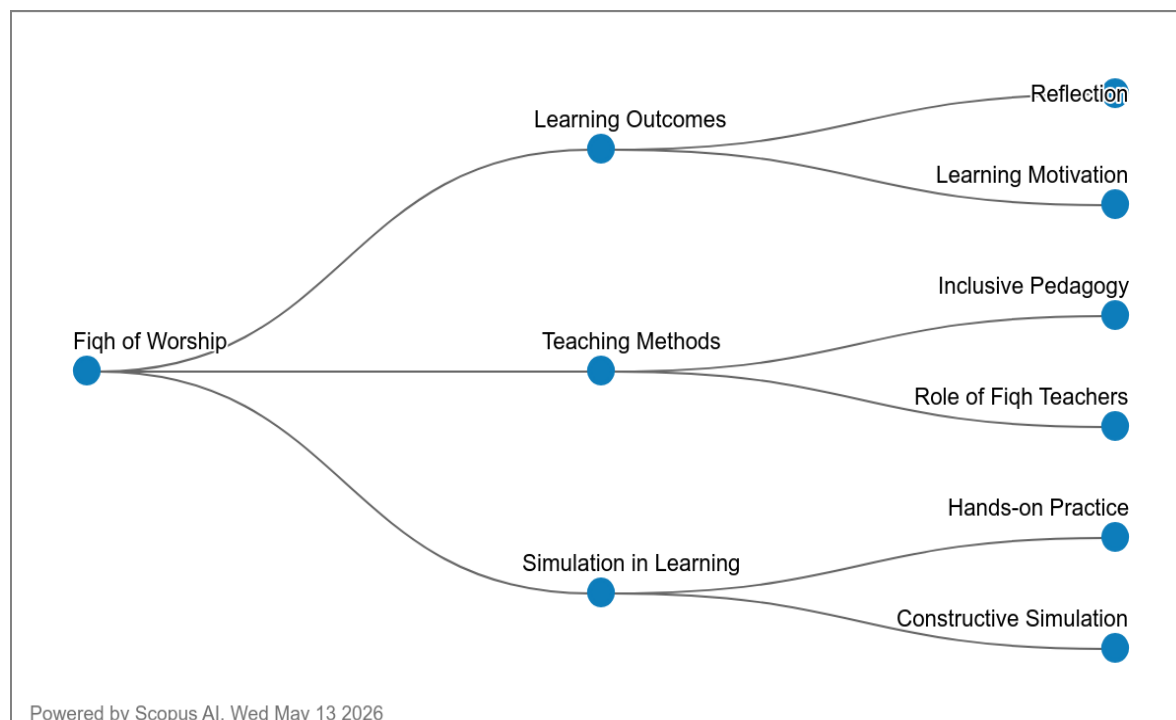
Parallel to pedagogical innovation, there is growing interest in digital and VR-based simulations for fiqh of worship. VR modules for Hajj and 'Umrah, designed through systematic research and development processes, have been validated as suitable and engaging learning media, offering concrete, authentic, and enjoyable experiences that traditional methods struggle to match (Asril et al., 2023; Slamet et al., 2025). Students report high levels of clarity, realism, and desire to reuse VR media, suggesting strong potential for sustained engagement (Asril et al., 2023). Systematic reviews of VR in fiqh al-'ibādāt highlight its relevance for visualizing complex ritual sequences, enabling personalized pacing, and providing safe rehearsal spaces for high-stakes acts of worship. However, they also stress the necessity of close collaboration between technologists and Islamic scholars to ensure shariah-accurate content and avoid ritual misconceptions (Slamet et al., 2025). More broadly, digital learning innovations in IRE – including e-learning platforms, animated videos, and blended learning – have been found to enhance motivation, accessibility, interactivity, and assessment effectiveness, reinforcing the case for integrating technology into fiqh teaching at higher education levels (Nur'Aini & Nurlatifah, 2025; Hoerudin et al., 2023). In private institutions, which often have greater autonomy and flexibility, such tools can underpin distinctive, sunnah-focused curricula that respond to students' digital habits.

Taken together, the literature indicates that simulation – both low-tech (role-play, classroom worship simulations) and high-tech (VR, interactive media) – effectively supports cognitive, affective, and psychomotor outcomes in Islamic religious education and fiqh of worship (Hamzah, H., & Nur'aini, N. (2024) Nofianti, L. (2024). It promotes deeper understanding of ritual structures, strengthens religious attitudes, develops professional skills, and makes learning more meaningful and memorable (Zamzami, 2025; Nisak, 2025). At the same time, several challenges are noted: teacher readiness and skill in designing experiential and simulation-based activities; resource and time limitations; resistance to pedagogical change; and the need to carefully align simulations with authentic Islamic teachings and contemporary student realities. (Kistoro et al., 2023; Hidayah et al., 2024; Hosaini et al., 2024; Firma et al., 2025). These issues are particularly salient for private higher education institutions, which must balance innovation, institutional capacity, and their mission to produce graduates grounded in the sunnah. Against this backdrop, a focused study on simulation innovation in sunnah-based fiqh of worship courses at private higher institutions is timely and significant.

In conclusion, existing research provides a strong conceptual and empirical foundation for investigating

simulation innovation in teaching and learning sunnah-based fiqh of worship. Experiential learning frameworks, proven benefits of simulation in fiqh and PAI classes, and the expanding use of digital and VR media collectively suggest that simulation can respond to the unique demands of contemporary Muslim students while honoring classical aims of worship education. Yet, there remains a distinct gap concerning how private higher education institutions systematically design, implement, and evaluate such simulations within courses that explicitly foreground the sunnah in worship practice. Exploring this gap can clarify best practices, identify institutional and pedagogical constraints, and offer models for integrating simulation that are pedagogically effective, technologically appropriate, and normatively faithful to Islamic law. This study therefore seeks to contribute both theoretically and practically to the ongoing renewal of Islamic higher education by detailing how simulation-based innovation can enrich fiqh of worship learning and shape graduates who not only know, but can correctly and meaningfully perform, the sunnah of ‘ibādāt in their daily lives.

Against this background, the present review synthesises empirical studies in which simulation is used as an instructional method for Fiqh of worship and closely related Islamic religious content. Evidence from unrelated disciplines, such as health, cultural heritage or general higher education, is deliberately not used to support conclusions about Fiqh of worship. The review asks three questions (Section 2.7) about learning outcomes, values and social competencies, engagement and affective experience, and the mechanisms, conditions and challenges of implementation, and it discusses what the resulting evidence means for private higher education institutions.



MATERIAL AND METHODS

Identification

The review followed the PRISMA 2020 guideline (Page et al., 2021). Search terms were developed from dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopaedias and prior studies, and search strings were built for Scopus and Mendeley (Table 1). Both sources were last searched in May 2026. The search retrieved 181 records (Scopus, n = 172; Mendeley, n = 9). Because the strings combined broad terms such as “simulation”, “modeling”, “worship” and “rituals”, they also returned records from unrelated disciplines. Relevance was therefore secured at the screening and eligibility stages by applying the criteria in Table 2, and not by the search strings alone.

TABLE 1 The search string

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("simulation" OR "modeling" OR "simul*") AND ("fiqh" OR "Islamic jurisprudence" OR "worship" OR "rituals") AND ("teaching" OR "education" OR "instruction"
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	OR "pedagogy") AND ("learning" OR "education" OR "knowledge acquisition" OR "cognitive development")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cp")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , "2022") OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , "2023") OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , "2024") OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , "2025") OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , "2026")))
	Date of Access: Mei 2026
Mendeley	(implement* OR approach) AND "simulation* worship*" AND education AND technology pubyearmin:2022 pubyearmax:2026
	Date of Access: Mei 2026

Screening

Screening was carried out on titles and abstracts (Figure 2). Two authors screened all 181 records independently against the criteria in Table 2 and recorded a decision (include, exclude or uncertain) and a reason for each record. Disagreements were resolved by discussion and, when necessary, by a third author. Agreement between the two screeners was calculated with Cohen's kappa and interpreted following Landis and Koch (1977). The criteria were narrowed so that every included study directly addresses simulation-based learning in Islamic education, Fiqh or worship instruction, or closely related content. Records were excluded when simulation was not used as an instructional method for religious learning (for example computational modelling, clinical or vocational simulation, cultural-heritage digitisation, or psychological and public-health studies) or when the setting was not Islamic education, even if the record contained the words "simulation", "ritual" or "worship".

Screening excluded $n = 114$ records and left $n = 67$ for full-text assessment. No duplicates were found between the two sources. The reason for each exclusion was recorded.

TABLE 2 The inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population and setting	Learners or teachers in Islamic education (school, madrasah, pesantren, IPTS or university), including pre-service teachers	Non-educational populations; non-Islamic religious education; clinical, vocational or general education settings
Intervention	Simulation used as a teaching or learning method: role-play, socio-drama, practice simulation of worship, virtual or augmented reality, or other digital simulation	Simulation used as a computational or statistical modelling technique or as a research tool rather than as pedagogy
Content focus	Fiqh, especially 'ibādāt (for example prayer, ablution, fasting, zakat, Hajj and 'Umrah), worship instruction, or closely related Islamic religious content	Content unrelated to Islamic religious learning (for example cultural heritage, health, engineering, language learning)
Outcomes	At least one learning-related outcome: knowledge, procedural or psychomotor skill, attitudes or values, engagement or motivation, or socio-emotional outcome	No learner or instructional outcome reported
Study design	Empirical studies: experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, qualitative, mixed-methods, classroom action research, or design-and-development with learner evaluation	Conceptual or opinion papers and editorials; reviews (read only to cross-check interpretation)
Language	English and Malay	Other languages
Timeline	2022 – 2026	Before 2022
Literature type	Peer-reviewed journal article	Conference paper, book chapter, review
Publication stage	Final	In press

Eligibility

In the eligibility stage, the same two authors assessed the full texts of the $n = 67$ remaining records against all criteria in Table 2. A study was included only if it (a) reported empirical data, (b) used simulation as a teaching or learning method, and (c) addressed Fiqh, worship instruction or closely related Islamic religious learning.

Full-text exclusions were classified by reason (not simulation-based; not Islamic education or Fiqh; no empirical data; full text unavailable) and are shown in Figure 2. Review and conceptual papers were not part of the synthesis but were read to cross-check the interpretation of findings, for example the systematic review of virtual reality in Fiqh 'Ibādāt by Slamet et al. (2025).

Quality Appraisal

The methodological quality of every included study was appraised before synthesis. Because the included designs were expected to be heterogeneous (experimental and quasi-experimental studies, surveys, qualitative case studies, mixed-methods studies and classroom action research), the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018 (Hong et al., 2018) was used as the primary instrument. After two screening questions, MMAT applies five design-specific criteria to each of five study categories: qualitative, randomised controlled, non-randomised, quantitative descriptive and mixed methods. Where a study evaluated an instructional intervention with a comparison group, the Joanna Briggs Institute checklist for quasi-experimental studies (Tufanaru et al., 2020) was applied as well. Risk of bias was judged within the appraisal against the domains of selection and allocation, comparability of groups, performance and detection (including whether outcome measures were validated or self-reported), attrition, and selective reporting.

Two authors appraised each study independently and rated every criterion as “yes”, “no” or “can’t tell”. Disagreements were resolved by consensus, and inter-rater agreement was $\kappa = 5$. Because the MMAT developers discourage a single overall score, the pattern of criteria met is reported for each study (Table 3). An overall confidence rating was assigned only to structure the synthesis: high (4–5 of 5 criteria met), moderate (3 of 5) or low (0–2 of 5). No study was excluded on quality alone. Instead, findings supported only by low-confidence studies were reported as tentative, and the influence of study quality on each theme was examined by comparing the themes with and without the low-confidence studies (Section 3.2).

Data Extraction

Data were extracted with a standardized form that was piloted on three studies and refined before use. One author extracted the data and a second author checked them against the source; disagreements were resolved by discussion. The form recorded: bibliographic details; country and educational level (school, pre-service teacher education or IPTS); course or worship topic (for example prayer, ablution, zakat, fasting, Hajj and 'Umrah); type and duration of the simulation (role-play, socio-drama, practice simulation, virtual or augmented reality); the theoretical or pedagogical framework, if stated; the facilitator's role and any feedback or debriefing; sample and design; outcome measures and instruments; main findings; and reported limitations, barriers and enabling conditions. Items that were not reported were recorded as “not reported”.

Coding and Synthesis

The studies differed in design, measures and outcomes, so effect sizes could not be pooled and no meta-analysis was attempted. Findings were synthesized through thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008), supported by narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006), in four steps. First, the results and discussion sections of each included study were read repeatedly and the findings relevant to the review questions were coded line by line, using inductive codes (for example “embodied rehearsal” or “teacher readiness”) and deductive codes taken from the review questions. Second, codes were grouped into descriptive categories (for example procedural accuracy, conceptual understanding, patience and self-control, enjoyment, resource constraints). Third, categories were compared across studies to generate analytical themes that answer the review questions, and the direction and consistency of findings were tabulated by simulation type (low-technology or high-technology) and by outcome domain. Fourth, patterns, contradictions, gaps and possible explanatory factors (setting, learner level, simulation type, facilitation and study quality) were examined across the themes.

Two authors coded a subset of studies independently, after which the coding frame was refined and applied to all studies. A coding log recorded decisions and emerging interpretations, and disagreements about themes were resolved by discussion. Confidence in each theme was judged from the number, quality and consistency of the studies supporting it.

Review Questions

The review questions were formulated with the PICO framework: Population (learners and teachers in Islamic education, including pre-service teachers and students in private higher education institutions), phenomenon of Interest (simulation-based teaching and learning) and Context (Fiqh of worship and closely related Islamic religious content). Four review questions guided the review:

RQ1: How does simulation-based learning innovation influence students' understanding and practical application in Sunnah-based Fiqh of worship courses within Islamic educational settings?

RQ2: How does simulation-based learning influence students' religious values, attitudes and social competencies within Sunnah-based Fiqh of worship courses?

RQ3: How does simulation-based learning influence students' engagement, motivation and affective experience of worship learning?

RQ4: Through what mechanisms, under what conditions and with what challenges does simulation support Fiqh of worship learning in Islamic educational settings?

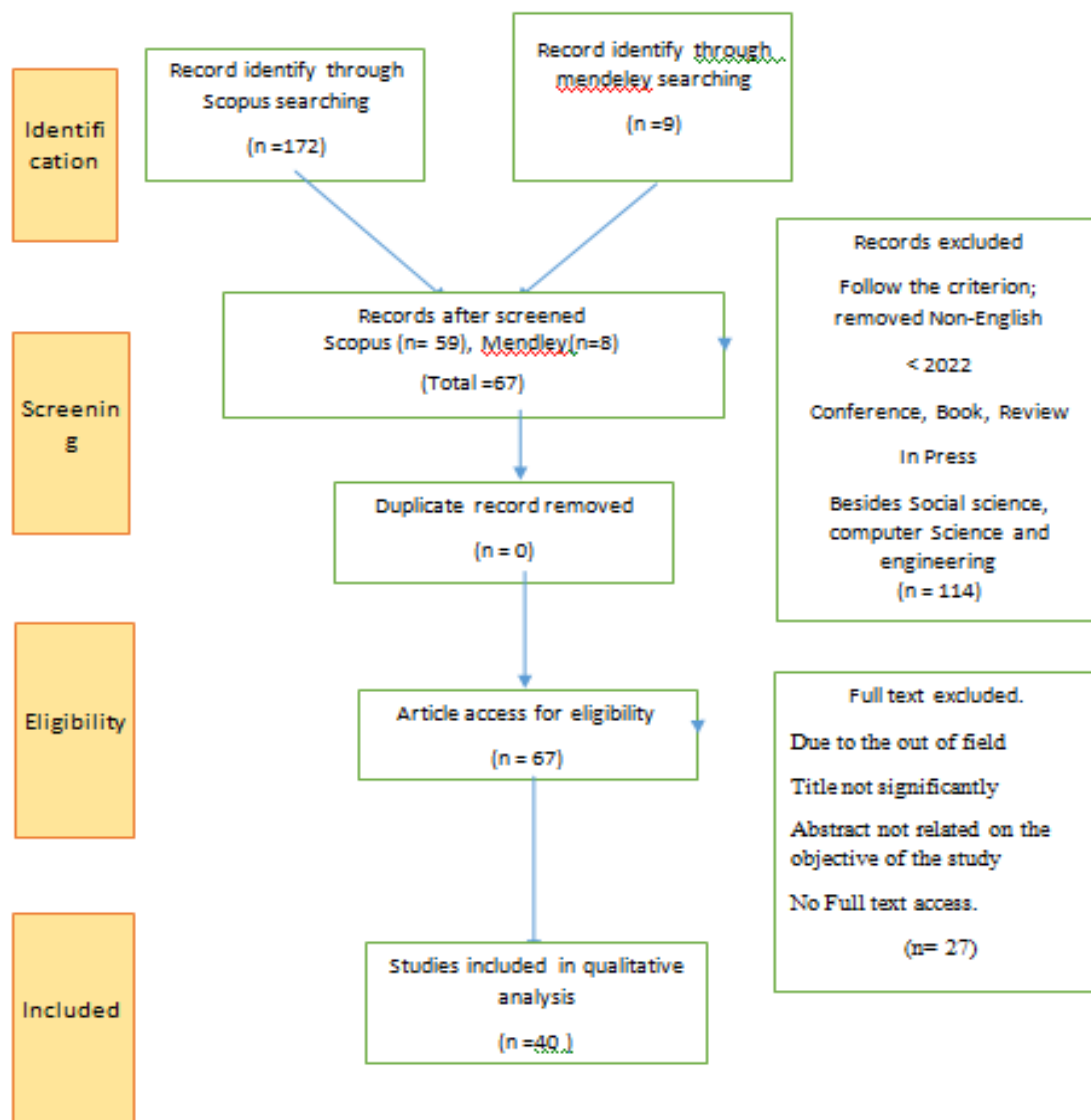


FIGURE 2. Flow diagram of the proposed searching study

RESULTS

This section reports the study selection, the methodological quality of the included studies and the three themes generated by the synthesis. Because the eligibility criteria were narrowed to studies that use simulation to teach

Fiqh, worship or closely related Islamic religious content, the synthesis draws only on that evidence. Findings from other fields, such as health, cultural heritage, language learning or general higher education, are not used to support conclusions about Fiqh of worship.

Study Selection and Characteristics

Of the 181 records identified, $n = 40$ met all eligibility criteria and were included (Figure 2). Table 3 summarizes their characteristics. The included studies examined simulation in the teaching of ritual procedures such as the obligatory prayer, prostration of forgetfulness (sujūd al-sahw), zakat and Ramadan fasting, and simulation of Hajj and ‘Umrah through virtual reality. Low-technology simulation (role-play, socio-drama and classroom enactment of worship procedures) was more common than high-technology simulation (virtual reality). Learners were mainly school pupils, with one study of pre-service Islamic education students (Hamzah & Nur’aini, 2024). No included study was conducted in a private higher education institution and focused on Fiqh of worship.

TABLE 3. Characteristics and methodological appraisal of the included studies

Study	Focus and setting	Simulation type	MMAT criteria met	Confidence
Amin & Novriyana (2024)	Fiqh subjects	Simulation-based learning	5/5	5
Nofianti (2024)	Fiqh learning	Simulation method	5-May	5
Sidik et al. (2023)	Fiqh materials	Simulation method	4/5	5
Zamzami (2025)	Ramadan fasting; Grade III pupils	Worship simulation	5-Apr	4
Hamzah & Nur’aini (2024)	Pre-service Islamic education students; creative thinking and basic teaching ability	Simulation method (role-play)	5-May	5
Toleransi et al. (2024)	Islamic religious education; tolerance and social care	Simulation as a learning strategy	4/5	5
Asril et al. (2023)	Islamic religious education; VR learning media	Virtual reality	5/5	4
Kistoro et al. (2023)	Islamic religious education; religious attitudes	Experiential learning with simulation activities	5/5	5
Nisak (2025)	Islamic religious education (MTs); religious attitudes	Experiential learning with simulation activities	4/5	5

Note. MMAT criteria met are reported out of five. Confidence: high (4–5), moderate (3), low (0–2).

Methodological Quality

Table 3 shows the MMAT results. n studies were rated high, n moderate and n low in confidence. The most frequent limitations were for example small non-random samples, no comparison group, outcome measures that were not validated, and reliance on self-reported outcomes. Themes supported only by low-confidence studies are flagged as tentative below, and the sensitivity comparison described in Section 2.4 did not change the direction of any theme.

Theme 1: Conceptual Understanding, Procedural Accuracy and Pedagogical Competence (RQ1)

Studies consistently reported that simulation improved students’ understanding of worship procedures and their learning outcomes in Fiqh (Amin & Novriyana, 2024; Nofianti, 2024; Sidik et al., 2023). In school settings,

simulation of the obligatory prayer, prostration of forgetfulness, zakat procedures and Ramadan fasting strengthened learners' grasp of the rulings and their sequence (Zamzami, 2025). Simulation put learners in the position of performing an act of worship rather than only hearing about it, which allowed procedural errors to surface and be corrected in a safe and repeatable setting. Among pre-service Islamic education students, simulation also improved creative thinking and basic teaching skills, which indicates that it develops pedagogical competence as well as content mastery (Hamzah & Nur'aini, 2024). Virtual reality modules for Hajj and 'Umrah were validated as suitable learning media, and students rated them as clear, realistic and worth using again (Asril et al., 2023). Effects were reported mainly as post-test or pre-post gains within a single course, and no included study reported a delayed post-test, so retention of ritual knowledge and skill is unknown.

Theme 2: Religious Values, Attitudes and Social Competencies (RQ2)

Simulation was also linked to the internalisation of values that are embedded in worship. Simulated Ramadan fasting activities were associated with greater patience, self-control and discipline among pupils (Zamzami, 2025), and experiential worship activities, including simulations and visits to places of worship, were associated with better religious attitudes and a stronger motivation to apply teachings in daily life (Kistoro et al., 2023; Nisak, 2025). Role-play and socio-drama variants fostered communication, cooperation and social interaction (Hamzah & Nur'aini, 2024), and simulation was used to build tolerance and social care in Islamic education classes (Toleransi et al., 2024). These outcomes were mostly measured by teacher observation, questionnaires or reflections shortly after the intervention. The evidence therefore shows that values can plausibly be cultivated through simulation, but it does not yet show that they persist or transfer to everyday worship.

Theme 3: Engagement, Motivation and Affective Experience (RQ3)

The most consistent finding across low- and high-technology studies was higher engagement. Students found simulation-based Fiqh lessons more enjoyable and less monotonous than lecture-based lessons (Amin & Novriyana, 2024; Nofianti, 2024; Sidik et al., 2023), and users of virtual reality expressed a wish to use the medium again (Asril et al., 2023). Beyond engagement, no included study measured emotional regulation, psychological well-being or spiritual states such as *khushū'*. Affective evidence is therefore limited to enjoyment, motivation and attitudes. This matters because worship education aims not only at correct performance but also at sincerity and presence of heart in worship.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This review examined what is known about simulation-based learning in Fiqh of worship after restricting the evidence to studies that directly address simulation in Islamic education, Fiqh or worship instruction. The resulting evidence base is small (N studies) but coherent. It suggests that simulation improves conceptual and procedural learning, supports the internalisation of values and social competencies, and raises engagement. It offers little evidence on long-term retention, on spiritual and psychological outcomes, or on effectiveness in private higher education.

Patterns and Contradictions

Three patterns emerge. First, the direction of effects is positive: all included studies reported benefits and none reported harm. This consistency should be read cautiously, given the small number of studies, the predominance of short interventions and the likelihood that studies with null findings are less often published. Second, low-technology simulation (role-play, enactment and socio-drama) dominates and appears to suit foundational, procedural content, whereas virtual reality has been developed mainly for complex, spatially distributed rituals such as Hajj and 'Umrah, where classroom rehearsal is impractical. The two forms have not been compared directly, so claims that high-technology simulation is superior are unsupported. Third, outcomes cluster in the cognitive and procedural domains, while affective and spiritual outcomes are measured thinly and mostly through self-report.

Several tensions also run through the evidence. The first is between engagement and depth: studies report that simulation makes lessons enjoyable, but enjoyment is not the same as better worship, and it is not known whether higher engagement leads to more accurate or more sincere practice. The second is between ritual as performance and ritual as devotion. Simulated worship rehearses the form of an act, whereas worship also depends on intention (niyyah) and presence of heart, so repeated staged performance could, in principle, encourage mimicry; the empirical studies rarely address this concern. The third is between innovation and normative fidelity. Studies of role-play and virtual reality call for close collaboration between technologists and Islamic scholars to secure shariah-accurate content and avoid ritual misconceptions (Slamet et al., 2025), yet few describe how content was validated. The fourth is between broad claims and narrow evidence: general reviews of innovation in Islamic religious education credit simulation with improving cognitive, affective and psychomotor outcomes together, whereas the primary studies located here mostly measure only one or two of these domains.

Why Simulation Works

The findings can be explained by several complementary mechanisms, although the included studies rarely test them. First, simulation operationalises experiential learning: it provides concrete experience, reflection and application in a cycle (Kolb, 1984), which suits acts of worship that are learned by doing and is consistent with the sunnah-based pedagogy of modelling, practice and repetition. Second, it supports situated and embodied learning. Enacting a ritual in its authentic sequence ties abstract rulings to bodily action and context (Lave & Wenger, 1991), so learners remember what to do and in what order and can see where their performance departs from the ruling. Third, it offers safe and repeatable rehearsal. Errors can be made and corrected without the consequences or self-consciousness of real worship, and difficult steps can be repeated; this is especially valuable for rarely practised acts such as Hajj, prostration of forgetfulness or funeral rites. Fourth, feedback and debriefing matter. In the wider simulation literature the learning value of a simulation depends heavily on structured reflection afterwards (Rudolph et al., 2006), which suggests that debriefing is likely to matter in Fiqh classes as well, although little explicit description of debriefing was found in the included studies. Fifth, novelty, participation and social interaction raise motivation, which may increase time on task and persistence.

Conditions for Effective Simulation and Implementation Challenges

Drawing on the reported enablers and barriers and on the wider simulation literature, simulation appears most likely to be effective when (a) the target content is procedural, sequential or hard to observe directly, as in prayer, ablution and Hajj rites; (b) scenarios are aligned with the intended learning outcomes and validated by qualified Islamic scholars; (c) teachers are trained to design, facilitate and debrief simulations and not only to demonstrate them; (d) simulation is preceded by conceptual instruction and followed by reflection and assessment, so that practice stays connected to rulings and evidence; (e) the level of technology matches available resources, with low-technology simulation preferred where infrastructure is limited; and (f) learners can repeat the simulation and receive individual feedback. These conditions are hypotheses to be tested, not findings established by comparative studies.

The challenges that limit implementation in Islamic educational settings are summarised in Table 4. Teacher readiness, time and resource limits, resistance to pedagogical change and the need to align simulations with authentic Islamic teaching are the barriers most often reported (Kistoro et al., 2023; Hidayah et al., 2024; Hosaini et al., 2024; Firma et al., 2025). These barriers are likely to be significant in private higher education institutions, which must balance innovation, institutional capacity and a mission to produce graduates grounded in the sunnah.

TABLE 4. Implementation challenges and their implications

Challenge	Basis in the evidence	Implication for practice
Teacher readiness and skills	Skill in designing experiential and simulation-based activities is a recurring barrier (Kistoro et al., 2023; Hidayah et al., 2024; Hosaini et al., 2024)	Professional development in simulation design, facilitation and debriefing for lecturers

Time and resource limits	Simulation takes more preparation and class time, and virtual reality needs equipment (Firma et al., 2025; Asril et al., 2023)	Start with low-cost role-play and practice simulation; share validated scenarios across institutions
Resistance to pedagogical change	Reported alongside teacher readiness and workload (Hosaini et al., 2024; Firma et al., 2025)	Institutional support, small pilots with evaluation, and sharing of local evidence
Shariah accuracy of simulated content	Close collaboration between technologists and Islamic scholars is needed to avoid ritual misconceptions (Slamet et al., 2025)	Scholar review and a validation checklist for every scenario and VR module
Sensitivities of enacting worship	Not examined in the included studies; raised here as a practical consideration (for example modesty, gender-appropriate grouping and the sanctity of ritual)	Guidance on what may be enacted and how, and use of avatars or VR where live enactment is inappropriate
Assessment of non-cognitive outcomes	Attitudes and spiritual engagement are measured thinly and mostly by self-report	Develop and validate instruments for values, engagement and khushū‘; add observation and delayed follow-up

Research Gaps

Six gaps stand out. (1) Setting: almost no evidence comes from private higher education institutions or from Malaysian IPTS, although these motivated the review. (2) Design: experimental and quasi-experimental studies with comparison groups, adequate samples and delayed post-tests are scarce, so causal claims and retention effects are unsupported. (3) Outcomes: spiritual engagement, sincerity, transfer to real worship and behaviour outside the classroom are rarely measured. (4) Comparison: low-technology and high-technology simulation, and simulation and conventional demonstration, have not been compared directly. (5) Theory: few studies state an explicit pedagogical or theoretical framework, so mechanisms remain untested. (6) Reporting: descriptions of the intervention (scenario, duration, facilitator training, debriefing) are often too brief to replicate, and the process used to validate shariah accuracy is rarely reported.

Implications for Theory and Practice

For theory, the findings support treating Fiqh of worship as a form of situated, embodied and experiential learning, and they point to a distinction that current simulation theory does not make: procedural fidelity (performing an act correctly) is not the same as devotional depth (performing it with intention and presence of heart). Future models of simulation in religious education should therefore state explicitly how a simulation is expected to connect rehearsal with real worship, for example through a sequence of briefing, simulation, debriefing and real practice, and should specify which outcomes belong to which stage.

For practice, lecturers and curriculum developers in IPTS can use role-play and practice simulation for core ‘ibādāt content, and virtual reality for complex rites such as Hajj and ‘Umrah where resources allow. Scenarios should be validated by scholars, simulations should be embedded between instruction and reflection, and debriefing should be planned as part of the lesson. Institutions should invest in lecturer training and shared resources and should evaluate pilots with designs that can show whether learning is retained. Policymakers overseeing religious curricula can use the conditions and challenges above to decide where to allocate resources for technology-enhanced instruction.

LIMITATIONS

This review has limitations. Only two sources were searched, and Mendeley is a reference-management platform whose catalogue is not curated in the way that Scopus is, so relevant studies indexed in ERIC, Web of Science, Google Scholar or regional databases may have been missed. Restricting the search to 2022–2026 and to English and Malay/Indonesian may have excluded earlier work and Arabic-language scholarship. The narrowed criteria improve relevance but reduce the number of studies, which limits how far the themes can be generalised. Screening and appraisal were carried out by two authors, but they relied on information as reported in the studies. The small number of studies and their heterogeneity precluded meta-analysis and a formal assessment of

publication bias. The findings should be read as a map of the current evidence and not as proof of effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Simulation is a promising approach to teaching Fiqh of worship. The best available evidence indicates gains in understanding, procedural accuracy, values and engagement, and it points to plausible mechanisms: experiential and embodied rehearsal, safe repetition and guided reflection. However, the evidence base is small, mostly short-term and school-based, and largely silent on private higher education, on spiritual outcomes and on the conditions that make simulation work. Future research should use stronger designs, validated measures and explicit frameworks in IPTS settings, and should report simulations in enough detail to be replicated and validated by Islamic scholars.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study

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