

Application of Project Based Learning Method in Improving Students' Learning Motivation in Islamic Religious Education Lessons

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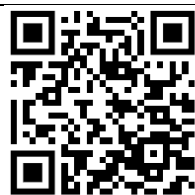
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ABSTRAK

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of Project Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 15 Kota Bima. The main focus of this study is to assess the extent to which the PjBL method can improve students' understanding of religious concepts, learning motivation, and critical and collaborative thinking skills. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data obtained were analyzed using a data reduction approach, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to obtain a comprehensive picture of the implementation of PjBL in PAI learning. The results of the study indicate that the PjBL method contributes positively to increasing student involvement in learning. Students become more active in exploring Islamic values and applying them in everyday life through designed projects. In addition, the use of PjBL has been proven to be able to increase student learning motivation by providing a more interactive and applicable learning experience. However, several challenges were identified in the implementation of this method, such as less than optimal time management, teacher readiness in designing appropriate projects, and uneven student involvement in group work.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals by providing knowledge and guidance to students, enabling them to understand and apply learning in everyday life. (Dhitasarifa et al., 2023). According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 1 Paragraph 11, education is defined as a process that allows students to develop their potential in various aspects, including spirituality, self-control, intelligence, and skills. The quality of education is reflected in the cognitive and behavioral development of students, who experience a transition from ignorance to knowledge. (Monika et al., 2023)

Islamic Religious Education plays a role as one of the pillars in forming individual and societal character based on Islamic values. (Selirowangi et al., 2024). In the contemporary era marked by the challenges of globalization, religious education not only functions as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a medium for instilling noble morals and spirituality. One of the methods commonly used in Islamic education is Islamic lectures (khutbah), which act as a direct communication medium in conveying moral messages, religious values, and spiritual motivation. (Amris & Desyandri, 2021).

Law No. 20 of 2003 Article 3 aims to increase national intelligence and shape the character of the Indonesian nation. Education does not only focus on intellectual development, but also emphasizes the instillation of noble values. (Yasin & Novaliyosi, 2023). Character education must be introduced from an early age to form a generation that upholds integrity. Given the increasing moral degradation among students, an innovative approach is needed to strengthen character education and overcome the moral crisis. (Fauzi et al., 2023). Character education includes the development of values, ethics, morality, and personality for all members of the

school community. This formation occurs through structured school activities and teacher role models in daily learning interactions. (Aziz & Nurachadijat, 2023).

The Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach offers various benefits in developing student competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. (Anggelia et al., 2022). Through PBL, students are actively involved in learning, seeking information, participating in discussions, and constructing their own understanding rather than simply memorizing material. (Ramadhan, 2021). This approach is in line with the objectives of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes competency development, character building, and life skills to prepare students to face future challenges. (Gulo, 2022).

The implementation of project-based learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) faces several challenges, such as teachers' difficulties in designing projects that are in line with the curriculum and time constraints. (Aditama et al., 2022). However, this approach encourages active participation of students in relevant projects, building critical thinking skills, creativity, and collaboration. (Wahyuningtyas & Kristin, 2021). Positive impacts include increased motivation, deeper understanding of the material, and better problem-solving skills. (Kurniawan et al., 2023). The challenges faced include the need for adequate resources and institutional support. This study aims to analyze these challenges and impacts and provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of PBL implementation in Islamic Religious Education learning. (Lestari & Ilhami, 2022).

Education in Indonesia has undergone significant transformations influenced by political, social, and economic factors. During the Dutch colonial period, formal education was only for the Dutch, while natives were considered second-class citizens. (Kaharu, 2021). The establishment of Taman Siswa by Ki Hajar Dewantara played an important role in fighting for education for the natives, so that it could be accessed by all groups. After independence, the national education system underwent various reforms to ensure equal access to education. (Salsabila & Hindun, 2024). The introduction of the nine-year compulsory education programme in 1975 and the post-1998 curriculum reforms reflect efforts to empower students. (Rodiyah, 2022). Despite challenges such as regional educational disparities and teacher quality, technological advances have supported distance learning, increasing learning opportunities. Character education and skills development remain a major focus. However, gaps in educational quality and resource constraints remain major challenges. (Murniarti, 2021).

In Bima City, access to primary and junior secondary education is generally adequate. However, rural areas still face limitations, as junior secondary schools are generally located in sub-district centers, while primary schools are scattered in remote areas. As a result, students from rural communities must travel long distances, often on foot, which causes fatigue and reduces learning efficiency. Government initiatives in the field of education focus on improving quality and equity of access, supported by adequate infrastructure, human resources, and technology integration. However, challenges such as gaps in access, teacher quality, and inadequate educational facilities still require continued attention.

To enhance students' enthusiasm and active participation in Islamic Religious Education, effective learning solutions must be developed. Teachers, as facilitators, must create interesting and responsible learning experiences. Given the complexity of Islamic Religious Education materials, educators should apply various methods that are tailored to learning objectives. Considering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives, Project-Based Learning is an appropriate model for developing students' problem-solving skills through authentic real-world challenges. (Rineksiane, 2022) A conducive, open, and democratic learning environment is essential to optimize student thinking. PBL provides an opportunity for teachers to manage classroom learning through project-based activities.

Project-based learning enhances students' creativity and motivation. This model is considered an open, contextual, and activity-based learning approach that emphasizes problem solving through collaborative efforts over a period of time. (Nikmah et al., 2023).

Initial observations showed that students at SMPN 15 Kota Bima had low motivation in participating in Islamic Religious Education. They tended to be passive, reluctant to ask questions, and less enthusiastic in completing assignments. One of the contributing factors was the teaching method which was still dominated by lectures and memorization, which was less interesting for students. Therefore, this study aims to explore effective solutions to improve students' learning motivation through the implementation of Project-Based Learning. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of innovative teaching strategies for Islamic Religious Education teachers. In addition, schools can adopt this method as a more effective learning approach, as well as being a reference for other institutions that want to improve students' learning motivation through PBL.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the learning system at SDN 15 Kota Bima. Case studies allow researchers to understand phenomena in depth in a real context (Roosinda et al., 2021). This study is descriptive in nature with the aim of exploring information related to teaching practices, student experiences, and interactions in the school environment.

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The participant criteria included teachers who teach at SDN 15 Kota Bima, students from various grade levels, principals, and parents who play an active role in their children's education. The selected participants were considered to have insight and experience relevant to the research objectives. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of saturation sampling, where data collection is stopped when no new information emerges. Data were collected through three main techniques, namely:

Participatory Observation, researchers conduct direct observations in the classroom to record the teaching methods used by the teacher, student involvement in learning, and the dynamics of interaction between teachers and students. Observations are conducted non-participatively by recording in field notes (Sari et al., 2022).

Semi-Structured Interviews, interviews were conducted with teachers, students, school principals and parents to obtain an in-depth perspective on the learning system. Interviews were recorded (with participant permission) and transcribed for further analysis (Safarudin et al., 2023).

Document Analysis, related documents, such as school curriculum, academic reports, and educational policies applicable at SDN 15 Kota Bima, were studied as data triangulation materials.

Data analysis, data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis process includes data transcription, initial coding to identify patterns, grouping codes into main themes, and reviewing themes to ensure they are appropriate to the data (Safarudin et al., 2023). The results of this analysis will be presented in narrative form to describe the dynamics of learning comprehensively. Validity and Reliability, data validity is strengthened through method triangulation by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis. In addition, member checking is carried out by reconfirming the interview results with participants to ensure the accuracy of the information (Hasan et al., 2025).

Research Ethics

This study followed ethical research standards by obtaining official permission from the school and participants before data collection. The identities of the participants were kept confidential, and informed consent was used to ensure their agreement in the recorded interview process. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of learning methods and interactions in the school environment at SDN 15 Kota Bima.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The implementation of the Project Based Learning (PJBL) method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 15 Kota Bima showed significant results in improving students' understanding of the teaching materials as well as critical and collaborative thinking skills. Based on the results of descriptive qualitative research conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, it was found that the PJBL method provides a deeper and more meaningful learning experience for students.

Project-based learning allows students to experience a deeper and more meaningful learning process in understanding Islamic values. Unlike the lecture method which is more one-way, this approach encourages students to be actively involved in exploring and applying Islamic concepts in real life. Students' activeness in class discussions increases, as seen from the many questions and opinions they raise. They are more motivated to explore the meaning of Islamic teachings in the social context they face, both in the school environment and in everyday life. Teachers also observe changes in students' mindsets, where they do not only receive material passively, but also try to connect it to actual events. In addition, this method strengthens students' critical and reflective thinking skills. They not only understand Islamic teachings as a theory, but also find ways to apply them in various situations.

Students' learning motivation also increased significantly. Many students stated that the PJBL method was more interesting because they could be directly involved in the learning process through projects that were relevant to their lives. Active involvement in project-based tasks provides a more interactive learning experience, so that students feel more motivated and enthusiastic in participating in PAI learning. (Hanun et al., 2023).

In addition, this study found that PJBL contributes to the development of critical thinking and collaboration skills. Through projects worked on in groups, students are trained to analyze problems, find solutions based on Islamic values, and compile and present their work. This process helps students develop better analytical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.

Although the results of this study show many benefits from the implementation of PJBL, there are still some challenges that need to be overcome. One of the main obstacles is less than optimal time management, especially for students who are not yet accustomed to project-based learning methods. In addition, the level of student involvement in group work still varies, with some students tending to be passive in contributing to the projects being worked on. Teacher readiness in implementing PJBL is also a factor that needs to be considered, because the success of this method is highly dependent on careful planning and effective guidance from educators.

Discussion

Research on the application of the Project Based Learning (PJBL) method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 15 Kota Bima shows that this approach has a significant positive impact. Students not only experience increased understanding of the material, but also show higher learning motivation and more developed critical and collaborative thinking skills. Compared to the lecture method that has been more dominantly used, PJBL provides space for students to be more active in exploring Islamic concepts contextually. They are involved in discussions, teamwork, and projects that connect Islamic teachings with social phenomena around them. This not only makes learning more meaningful, but also encourages students to apply religious values in everyday life. This finding strengthens the idea that the PJBL method can be a more effective alternative in Islamic Religious Education learning. By providing learning experiences which is more interactive and problem-solving based, this approach has the potential to improve the quality of religious education in schools and shape the character of students to be more reflective, critical, and collaborative in understanding Islamic teachings.

The application of the PJBL method allows students to not only understand religious concepts theoretically, but also apply them in everyday life through project-based activities. (Khalisah et al., 2024) This is in line with the principle of constructivism, which emphasizes that students learn better when they actively construct understanding through real experiences. Project-based learning provides opportunities for students to explore Islamic values in various aspects of life, such as through social activities, creative da'wah media development, and community-based projects that are relevant to their environment. (Al Firda & Pamungkas, 2022) PJBL in PAI not only functions as a method of transferring knowledge, but also as a tool to instill a deeper and more applicable understanding of Islamic religious teachings.

In terms of learning motivation, this study shows that students are more enthusiastic in participating in learning when they are involved in projects that allow for independent exploration and group work. According to the theory of intrinsic motivation, active involvement in the learning process can increase a sense of ownership of the material being studied, so that students are more motivated to understand and develop the concepts being taught. Student involvement in collaboration-based projects also contributes to the improvement of social skills, which in the long run will be useful in their lives outside the school environment. (Undari, 2023) With this approach, Islamic Religious Education learning is no longer considered a subject that is only oriented towards memorization, but becomes a more contextual and meaningful learning experience for students.

However, this study also found challenges in implementing PJBL, especially related to time management and uneven student involvement in group work. Some students still showed difficulty in adjusting to a more independent learning method, especially those who were accustomed to a more passive lecture method. In addition, some groups experienced difficulties in dividing tasks fairly, resulting in inequality in the contributions of group members. This finding is in line with several previous studies stating that the success of PJBL is highly dependent on careful planning from the teacher and consistent guidance in the learning process. A more structured strategy is needed in project planning, role division, and a more transparent evaluation system, so that all students can participate optimally and gain maximum benefits from this method.

When compared to previous studies, these findings show consistency with the results of studies that have been conducted in the field of science and technology education, where PJBL has been shown to improve students' conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills. However, what distinguishes this study is the application of PJBL in Islamic Religious Education subjects, which traditionally use more lecture-based and memorization approaches. This finding opens up new opportunities for the development of innovative learning methods in the field of religious education, which has often been considered more difficult to integrate with a project-based approach. The success of implementing PJBL in Islamic Religious Education learning confirms that this approach is not only effective in improving conceptual understanding, but also in building character, moral values, and students' social skills.

The results of this study are in line with previous studies showing that PJBL can improve students' understanding and engagement in learning. However, this study also highlights that the effectiveness of PJBL in time management is still a challenge that needs further attention. (Lutfi & Zainuddin, 2024). The implementation of the PJBL method in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMPN 15 Kota Bima has been proven to be able to improve the quality of learning, both in terms of understanding the material, learning motivation, and students' critical and collaborative thinking skills. With more structured planning and optimal mentoring, the PJBL method can be an effective learning alternative in improving students' competence in Islamic Religious Education subjects.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is that the inquiry learning model significantly enhances students' understanding of Islamic values, as it encourages critical thinking and deep reflection

on how these values can be applied in daily life. The model fosters not only cognitive understanding but also the affective development of students, particularly in terms of character building and internalizing Islamic principles such as honesty, loyalty, and compassion. This aligns with the research objective of exploring how inquiry-based learning can improve students' comprehension of Islamic teachings. However, the research also identifies several challenges, including differences in students' critical thinking abilities, which can hinder the learning process for some students. Additionally, the limited availability of resources and facilities poses obstacles to effective implementation. To address these challenges, collaborative efforts between schools, teachers, students, and parents are crucial in creating a supportive learning environment. Furthermore, enhancing teachers' skills and ensuring sufficient learning resources are provided will help maximize the effectiveness of the inquiry model. Ultimately, these findings highlight the importance of adopting a more inclusive and adaptive approach to teaching Islamic values, ensuring that all students can actively engage with and internalize the material.

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