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Effectiveness Of The Problem Based Learning Method In Learning Islamic Religious Education At SD IT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan

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ABSTRACT

A Gap between Conceptual Understanding and the Applied Competence of Islamic Values in Elementary School Islamic Religious Education Learning, which often remains dominated by lecture and memorization methods. This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method in enhancing the quality of the process and outcomes of Islamic Religious Education learning at SDIT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan, with a focus on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. The research method used is a qualitative case study, with data collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and staff, and document analysis, subsequently analyzed using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman. The discussion results indicate that PBL is effective in transforming Islamic Religious Education learning to be more contextual and student-centered. This effectiveness is evident in: (1) increased student engagement and critical thinking skills through the analysis of authentic problems; (2) strengthened conceptual understanding with practical application, where students are able to reference textual evidence (dalil) and social logic in their arguments; and (3) the direct development of social skills and moral values (akhlak) through collaborative dynamics within groups, making the learning process itself a practice of values..

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is no longer merely about transferring knowledge, but a process to equip students with critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills to solve real-life problems. This has become a necessity, especially in the context of globalization, which is full of dynamic shifts in values and identity. Phenomena such as digital addiction, rising cases of cyberbullying, and gadget dependency have implications for the

weakening of adolescents' psychological resilience. This situation indicates a trend in human behavior and life towards interconnectedness, both among individuals and nations, facilitated by increasingly sophisticated infrastructure (Danny Abrianto, 2023)

In the context of Islamic Religious Education these challenges become even more complex. Islamic Education Learning learning often faces the stigma of being a doctrinal, theoretical subject that lacks contextual relevance to students' social realities. Consequently, many students can memorize religious concepts well but struggle to translate these values into attitudes and behaviors in daily life. This reveals a gap between religious knowledge and religious practice that needs to be bridged through appropriate and effective learning methods (Muhaimin, 2015:78).

One approach considered potentially effective in addressing these challenges is the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a learning model that uses real-world problems as a context for students to learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as to acquire essential knowledge and concepts from the subject matter. According to Arends (2012:406), the core of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is presenting students with authentic and meaningful problem situations that serve as a foundation for investigation and inquiry.

Constructivist theory serves as a strong philosophical foundation for the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Constructivism posits that knowledge is actively constructed by students based on their experiences and interactions with the environment. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the process of constructing religious understanding becomes more meaningful when students are actively involved in examining, discussing, and seeking solutions to problems relevant to their lives, as opposed to merely receiving information passively from the teacher (Siregar, 2014:112). This aligns with the principle that the internalization of values requires a process of deep thinking and reflection.

The effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) across various disciplines has been widely researched. Strobel (2009:55) indicates that "PBL was more effective than traditional instruction in long-term retention, skill development and satisfaction of students and teachers, while traditional approaches were more effective for short-term retention as measured by standardized board exams." This suggests that the strength of PBL lies in its ability to build long-lasting understanding and develop skills, although for short-term retention (such as memorization-based exams), traditional methods might still be superior

In Indonesia, research on Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education is

also growing. Several studies show positive results. For instance, research at the secondary school level indicates that PBL can enhance students' critical thinking skills and cognitive learning outcomes in the subject of Aqidah Akhlak (Moral Theology) (Fathurrohman, 2016:95). Another study reveals that implementing PBL in Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) learning significantly increased student activity and participation (Nurhidin, 2019:67). These findings provide an initial picture of PBL's potential to renew the practice of Islamic Religious Education learning, which has long been dominated by lecture and memorization methods.

However, the application of PBL at the elementary school level, particularly in Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools, requires more specific and in-depth study. Elementary school students are at the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, where their learning process heavily depends on real objects and events. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values into every phase of PBL from problem identification, investigation, to solution presentation needs to be systematically planned to optimally achieve the learning objectives of Islamic Religious Education (Rusman, 2018:145).

SDIT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan was chosen as the research locus due to its reputation as an Islamic elementary education institution committed to developing an integrative curriculum combining general and religious knowledge. The school has begun adopting various active learning approaches. Preliminary studies indicate that the Islamic Religious Education teachers at SDIT Assakinah Medan already have the desire to apply more varied methods. However, they still face challenges in designing PBL learning scenarios suitable for elementary students and comprehensively integrating them with Quranic values. This situation makes the school an appropriate context for exploring the effectiveness of PBL.

Based on the above explanation, this research is important to conduct in order to empirically investigate the extent to which the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method is effective in enhancing the quality of the process and outcomes of Islamic Religious Education learning at SDIT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan. The effectiveness in question is not only viewed from the improvement in cognitive learning outcomes but also from aspects of learning motivation, critical thinking skills, and students' ability to apply Islamic values in the context of solving everyday problems.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to investigate in-depth and holistically the effectiveness of implementing the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method in Islamic Religious Education learning at SDIT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan. The

qualitative approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring the understanding, experiences, and perceptions of various actors involved (teachers, students, and the principal)within the natural setting of the school, thereby enabling the production of rich and in-depth descriptions of the researched phenomenon (Moleong, 2019:6). The primary data sources in this research are primary data obtained directly from the field, comprising key informants (Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, and the principal), results from observations of the PBL learning process in the classroom, learning design documents, and student work products. Data collection techniques were carried out through passive participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The collected data were then analyzed interactively and continuously using the data analysis model by Miles (2014:31), which involves three interrelated streams of activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The research procedure begins with the preparation stage, followed by field data collection, data analysis, and concludes with the preparation of the research report while maintaining data validity through source and method triangulation techniques.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

1. Needs Analysis and Authentic Problem Design in Problem Based Learning

The implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level requires a deep understanding of students' psychological characteristics and cognitive development. Elementary school students, particularly in the middle and upper grades (grades IV-VI), are in the concrete operational stage according to Piaget's theory. In this stage, their logical thinking begins to develop but remains heavily bound to concrete objects and real experiences (Santrock, 2017:245). Therefore, the problems or driving questions raised in PBL must originate from their authentic life world, such as dynamics in school friendships, family conflicts, or observations of simple social phenomena in their immediate environment.

Designing authentic problems for Islamic Religious Education requires an integrative approach that blends Islamic values with students' contemporary contexts. For instance, instead of asking, "List the types of *riba* (usury)," a teacher might present a case study: "Arman's father borrowed money for medical treatment with a promise to repay a larger amount. What is your opinion based on Islamic teachings?" (Majid, 2018:112). Such a problem demands that students not only recall concepts but also apply them in an analysis

involving empathy, logic, and the search for a just solution. This aligns with the goal of Islamic Religious Education to foster both individual and social piety.

Conducting a contextual needs analysis at SDIT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan is a crucial step before designing Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Sugiyono (2019:87) emphasizes that development research must begin with a needs analysis to identify the gap between the real and ideal conditions. In this school, the ideal condition is Islamic Religious Education learning capable of developing spiritual and social competencies in balance. It is this gap that the appropriate PBL design aims to fill, starting by mapping actual themes relevant to the lives of SDIT Assakinah Medan students, such as honesty during exams, maintaining school environmental cleanliness, or respecting differing opinions.

The next stage involves transforming these actual themes into structured problem scenarios that meet the criteria of effective PBL. According to Arends (2012), a good problem in PBL should be ill-structured, not have a single definitive answer, be relevant to the curriculum, and be challenging to investigate. For the context of elementary school Islamic Religious Education, "ill-structured" must be understood within age-appropriate boundaries. For instance, the problem "How should we treat a friend of a different religion?" is ill-structured for elementary students because it requires consideration from various perspectives (*aqidah*, *ukhuwah*, tolerance) without a black-and-white answer (Mutho'in, 2020:76).

The development of teaching materials and supporting tools, such as Student Worksheets, is also an integral part of the design. Student Worksheets for PBL in Islamic Religious Education should not contain a series of closed-ended questions that only lead to one concept. Instead, the worksheet should function as an inquiry guide containing instructions for identifying the problem, a list of learning resources, space for brainstorming solutions, and a presentation rubric (Kurniasih, 2015:143).

The teacher's role in this design phase is that of a scenario designer and learning resource curator. The ability of the Islamic Religious Education teacher to reconstruct material from *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *aqidah* (theology), or *akhlak* (morality) into a problem narrative is crucial and highly tested. This underscores the importance of training and collaboration among teachers. Rusman (2018:178) notes that the success of PBL heavily depends on the teacher's readiness to design a learning environment conducive to inquiry.

2. Implementation and Dynamics of Problem Based Learning (PBL) Phases

The implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education classes at SDIT Assakinah Medan follows phases that have been modified to suit student characteristics. The first phase is orienting students to the problem. In this stage, the teacher does not directly deliver the material but presents a problem scenario, for example, through a short story, a brief video, or a role-play simulation about "finding a wallet in the school prayer room." According to Hosnan (2014:315), the success of the orientation phase is marked by the emergence of critical questions from students regarding what should be done, what the ruling (*hukum*) is, and what the consequences are. These questions will become their learning guide.

The second phase is organizing students for learning. Students are divided into small, heterogeneous groups, typically consisting of 4-5 members. This grouping is strategic to encourage collaboration and the exchange of perspectives. Each group then discusses and formulates the problem from the given scenario in their own words and identifies what they already know (prior knowledge) and what they need to learn more about (learning issues) regarding the topic (Trianto, 2014:92). For instance, for the lost wallet problem, the learning issues might be the definition of *amanah* (trust), textual evidence (*dalil naqli*) about *amanah*, and exemplary stories of the Prophet Muhammad regarding honesty.

Primary sources are, of course, the Qur'an and Hadith, but can also include books on morality (*akhlak*), children's articles, or interviews with teachers. It is in this phase that students' digital and spiritual literacy skills are honed. Samani (2016:156) emphasizes that in problem-based learning for character education, the process of searching for and internalizing values from authentic sources is more important than merely receiving a lecture from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator, circulating to provide scaffolding, ensuring the investigation stays on track, and assisting students experiencing difficulties.

After data and information are gathered, students enter the phase of developing and presenting solutions. Each group analyzes the information obtained, discusses various alternative solutions, and agrees upon the best solution they deem most aligned with Islamic values and contextual. This solution is then presented in a creative form, such as a short drama, campaign poster, simple multimedia presentation, or an open letter. This presentation is not merely about showing an answer but explaining their reasoning process: from problem identification, basis in textual evidence (*dalil*), to solution recommendations. This trains their communication and value-based argumentation skills

(Daryanto, 2017:204).

The phase of analyzing and evaluating the problem-solving process becomes a crucial moment of reflection in Islamic Religious Education. After all groups have presented their solutions, the teacher guides a class discussion to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each solution, test their consistency with religious principles, and reflect on the values that can be learned. Abdussamad (2021:89) states that reflection is the bridge between cognitive knowledge of values and attitude formation. Without deep reflection, learning would only remain at the cognitive level.

Overall, the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education creates a distinctly different classroom dynamic. The atmosphere, which may initially have been teacher-centered, transforms into a student-centered one, where the teacher spends more time listening, guiding, and providing feedback. Interactions among students become more intensive, not only discussing subject matter but also practicing attitudes of mutual respect for opinions, patience, and responsibility all of which are part of the noble character that Islamic Religious Education itself aims to achieve.

3. The Impact of Problem Based Learning (PBL) on Students' Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Learning Outcomes

The most measurable impact of implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is often seen in the improvement of students' cognitive learning outcomes. In the context of Islamic Religious Education at SDIT Assakinah Medan, cognitive learning outcomes encompass not only the ability to memorize textual evidence (*dalil*) or concepts but, more importantly, conceptual understanding and the ability to apply (*application*) knowledge in problem analysis. Assessments through essay tests or authentic assessments of solution projects indicate that students learning with PBL tend to have a more holistic understanding and are better able to explain the cause-effect relationships of a ruling (*hukum*) with stronger arguments. This aligns with the research by Susilowati (2020:102), which found that PBL significantly enhances students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in Islamic Religious Education, as students are trained to analyze, evaluate, and create solutions.

Learning centered on authentic problems and managed within small groups creates situations where values such as cooperation (*ta'awun*), responsibility, honesty in expressing opinions, and empathy are naturally honed. For example, in solving a problem about "helping a less fortunate friend," students not only learn cognitively about the concepts of *zakat* and *infaq* but also directly experience the process of sharing roles and

demonstrating care within their group. According to Lickona (2013:78) in the context of character education, learning that involves real-life experiences (experiential learning) is more effective for value internalization. PBL provides that experience within an academic framework.

The aspect of motivation and student engagement also shows positive change. Engaging and relevant problems or scenarios are able to increase students' initial interest in Islamic Religious Education material, which is sometimes perceived as "heavy". Students become more active in asking questions, arguing, and enthusiastically seeking information because they feel they have a clear purpose: to solve the problem. This reduces the impression that Islamic Religious Education is merely a subject of memorization. Sanjaya (2015:187) states that the intrinsic motivation stemming from curiosity and the challenge inherent in PBL is more meaningful and sustainable than extrinsic motivation such as grades or praise.

The impact on the psychomotor domain or skills is also significant, although it often receives less attention in Islamic Religious Education evaluation. PBL trains various crucial 21st-century skills, including: (1) Critical thinking skills in analyzing problems and evaluating solutions; (2) Communication skills when expressing opinions in discussions and presenting solutions; (3) Collaboration skills in teamwork; and (4) Creativity skills in designing the form of the solution presentation. These skills are manifestations of intelligence that are also highly valued in Islam, as reflected in various Quranic verses that encourage humans to think and create (Jalaluddin, 2017:134).

Authentic assessment becomes the appropriate tool to measure this multi-dimensional impact. Assessment no longer relies solely on written tests but encompasses observation of activities and attitudes during the discussion process (affective), evaluation of the solution product produced (cognitive and psychomotor), as well as self-assessment and peer-assessment for the collaboration aspect. A portfolio assessment model can be used to document student development from the beginning to the end of a PBL cycle. This provides a more comprehensive picture of learning effectiveness (Kunandar, 2014:278).

The effectiveness of PBL in Islamic Religious Education learning at SDIT Assakinah Medan must be viewed holistically, beyond mere cognitive scores. This effectiveness is reflected in the shift from learning oriented towards memorizing content to learning focused on developing competence and character. PBL has the potential to bridge the gap between religious knowledge and actual practice by making the learning process itself a

medium for practicing the application of Islamic values in solving simple social problems.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) at SDIT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan reveals a paradigm shift in Islamic Religious Education instruction. Field findings indicate that the effectiveness of PBL is not linear or instant but rather a dynamic process highly dependent on the quality of problem design and the teacher's facilitation skills. They transition from passive listeners to active participants, asking spontaneous questions like, "What is the ruling (*hukum*) on this, Ustadz?" or "If we do this, is it considered good?" These spontaneous questions serve as initial indicators that PBL successfully activates critical reasoning and connects religious values to their real-world context an objective often difficult to achieve through conventional methods (Siregar, 2014:112).

However, the dynamics during the independent and collaborative investigation phase reveal both challenges and opportunities. It was found that although student enthusiasm was high, their ability to filter information from various sources (Qur'an translations, Prophet storybooks, children's religious videos) still required close guidance. The teacher does not merely assess the final answer's correctness but, more importantly, guides the thinking process to remain within the framework of a simplified methodology for deriving Islamic rulings. For example, when discussing honesty, the teacher directs students not only to search for textual evidence (*dalil*) about honesty but also to consider the social consequences of lying, thereby fostering a holistic and applicable understanding (Majid, 2018:112).

From the perspective of cognitive learning outcomes, the data shows significant improvement in conceptual understanding and analytical skills. When evaluated through tests requiring the application of concepts to new cases, students who participated in PBL demonstrated more structured argumentation skills by referencing textual evidence (*dalil*) and social logic. This confirms the findings of Strobel (2009:55) that the strength of PBL lies in long-term retention and skill development. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, memorization of the definition of *amanah* (trustworthiness) might be similar between the PBL and conventional groups, but the ability to respond to complex situations requiring *amanah* proved superior in the PBL group.

Students learned to listen to their peers' opinions (the concept of *husnudzon* - positive assumption), present arguments courteously (the concept of *qaulan karima* - kind speech), and be responsible for assigned tasks within the group (the concept of *amanah* - trustworthiness). In other words, the learning process itself becomes a medium for the direct practice of the moral

values being studied. This is an important achievement because moral education (*akhlak*) in Islamic Religious Education often seems abstract. However, through the social simulation within PBL, these values become concrete and observable (Nurhidin, 2019:67).

The school culture, which already prioritizes integrative character education, allows PBL to be embraced not as a foreign method but as an enhancement of existing good practices. Support from school leadership in providing time and resources for teacher training acted as a catalytic factor. Islamic Religious Education teachers, who initially felt awkward about leaving the "comfort zone" of the lecture method, gradually developed new teaching confidence as facilitators. They learned that losing complete control over the classroom narrative was not a failure but rather an indicator that students were constructing their own understanding (Rusman, 2018:178). However, this research also identifies several critical points requiring attention:

1. Increased Teacher Workload: The time and energy burden on teachers in designing and assessing the PBL process is significantly greater. Without adequate systemic compensation and support, there is a risk of burnout, which could undermine the sustainability of this innovation.
2. Effectiveness and Student Readiness: The effectiveness of PBL appears less optimal for students with low foundational literacy skills (reading and comprehension). This indicates that PBL is not a one-size-fits-all method; more intensive differentiation and scaffolding are required to ensure no student is left behind.

Overall, this discussion concludes that the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method in Islamic Religious Education at SDIT Assakinah Medan is multidimensional and contextual. PBL has proven effective in increasing student engagement, deepening conceptual and contextual understanding, and developing the social and spiritual skills that are central to moral education (*akhlak*). However, this level of effectiveness is significantly moderated by factors such as teacher readiness, the quality of instructional design, and systemic school support. Therefore, PBL is not merely a teaching technique but a systemic approach that requires the commitment of all stakeholders to create a more meaningful, relevant, and transformative Islamic Religious Education learning environment for students' lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the entire sequence of analysis, from the introduction, theoretical development, to the in-depth discussion, this research concludes that the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method offers an effective and transformative paradigm and practice for enhancing the quality

of Islamic Religious Education learning at SDIT Al-Qur'an Assakinah Medan. This effectiveness is not confined to cognitive achievement alone but extends to the affective and psychomotor domains, which are, in fact, the heart of religious education. PBL successfully transforms the atmosphere of Islamic Religious Education learning from one that tends to be monologic and textual to one that is dialogic and contextual. In this new paradigm, students are no longer passive objects receiving doctrine but become active subjects constructing their religious understanding through inquiry into real-life problems. More specifically, the conclusions of this research can be summarized in the following points:

1. Aspect of Instructional Design: The success of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is highly dependent on the quality of designing authentic, ill-structured problems that are relevant to the life world of elementary students and integrated with the values of Islamic Religious Education.
2. Aspect of the Learning Process: The implementation of PBL creates classroom dynamics that foster the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), collaboration, communication, and creativity.
3. Aspect of Learning Outcomes: PBL is effective in building deep and applicable conceptual understanding, increasing intrinsic learning motivation, and developing students' social-spiritual attitudes and skills.
4. Aspect of Success Factors: The optimal effectiveness of PBL is significantly moderated by factors such as teacher readiness and competence as facilitators, the availability of time and learning resources, and systemic support from the school's culture and policies.
5. Theoretical and Practical Implications: This research reinforces constructivist and contextual learning theories within the domain of Islamic Religious Education, while also providing a practical model in the form of a PBL-Islamic Religious Education design prototype for the elementary level, which can be adopted and adapted by similar schools.

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