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The Effectiveness of Group Discussion Methods in Efforts to Instill Tawhid Values in Early Childhood at RA Az-Zahra

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Abstract: Instilling the values of monotheism from an early age is an important aspect in the formation of children's character and morals. One method that can be used in the learning process is the group discussion method. This method provides an opportunity for children to actively participate, develop understanding, and strengthen the concept of monotheism through interaction with peers and educators. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the group discussion method in efforts to instill the values of monotheism in early childhood at RA Az-Zahra. The research approach used is qualitative with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects of the study were teachers and students at RA Az-Zahra. The results of the study showed that the group discussion method was effective in improving children's understanding of the concept of monotheism, such as knowing Allah as God Almighty, understanding His greatness through His creations, and instilling an attitude of gratitude and prayer. Group discussions allow children to express their thoughts, listen to the opinions of their friends, and gain a deeper understanding through concrete examples given by the teacher. In addition, this method also helps in building children's self-confidence and improving their communication skills. However, the effectiveness of this method is highly dependent on the active role of the teacher in guiding the discussion and creating a conducive and enjoyable learning environment for children. Thus, the group discussion method can be used as one of the effective learning strategies in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood. The implication of this study is the importance of improving teacher skills in managing group discussions and developing learning materials that are appropriate to the child's developmental stage. It is hoped that this method can continue to be applied and developed in Islamic religious learning at the early childhood education level.

Keywords: Group discussion method, monotheism values, early childhood.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is an important foundation in the formation of a person's character and personality. During this period, children experience rapid development in various aspects, including cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual. Therefore, the education provided must be able to instill fundamental values that will be the basis for their lives in the future. One of the values that is very important to instill from an early age is the value of monotheism, namely the belief in Allah as the only Almighty God.

The values of monotheism play a crucial role in shaping children's mindsets and attitudes towards life. By understanding the concept of monotheism from an early age, children will grow up with the awareness that everything comes from and depends on Allah. In addition, the values of monotheism also help shape children's character to have an honest, patient, and grateful attitude. In the context of Islamic education, instilling monotheism from an early age is not only the responsibility of parents, but also educational institutions, such as Raudhatul Athfal (RA) which functions as a formal education forum for early childhood. RA Az-Zahra as one of the early childhood education institutions has a great responsibility in shaping children's understanding and belief in the values of monotheism. To achieve these goals, effective learning methods are needed that are in accordance with the characteristics of child development. One method that can be used is the group discussion method, which allows children to learn actively through interaction with peers and educators.

The group discussion method is a learning strategy that emphasizes interaction and active involvement of students in the learning process. In this method, children are encouraged to ask questions, discuss, and express their understanding of a concept. The teacher acts as a facilitator who guides the discussion, provides provocative questions, and helps children understand the concepts discussed. The application of the group discussion method in learning the values of monotheism provides many benefits for children. One of them is increasing their understanding of the concept of the oneness of Allah. Through discussion, children can learn more enjoyably and understand the values of monotheism through various concrete examples that are relevant to their daily lives.

In addition, group discussions also help children develop social and communication skills. In discussions, children learn to listen to the opinions of their friends, express their own opinions, and appreciate differences. This is very important in building an attitude of mutual respect and cooperation in their social life. Despite having many benefits, the application of group discussion methods in learning the values of monotheism also faces various challenges. One of them is how to ensure that children remain focused in the discussion and understand the concepts being taught. Therefore, the role of teachers in managing discussions is very important so that the learning process remains effective and learning objectives can be achieved.

In addition, differences in the level of understanding of children in one group are also a challenge in themselves. Some children may grasp the concepts taught more quickly, while others need more guidance. Therefore, teachers must be able to adjust their approach to discussions so that all children benefit from the learning process. The group discussion method also requires a conducive learning environment so that children feel comfortable and free to express their opinions. A pleasant atmosphere will help children to be more confident in speaking and actively participating in discussions. Thus, teachers need to create a supportive classroom atmosphere, both in terms of facilities and pedagogical approaches.

RA Az-Zahra has implemented the group discussion method in learning the values of monotheism, but its effectiveness still needs to be analyzed further. Therefore, this study aims to explore the extent to which the group discussion method can help in instill the values of monotheism in early childhood at RA Az-Zahra. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to explore in depth how group discussions are implemented, how children respond to this method, and the factors that support and hinder its effectiveness. Data will be collected through observation, interviews with teachers and parents, and analysis of learning documentation.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the world of Islamic education, especially in the development of more effective learning methods in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood. In addition, this study is also expected to provide recommendations for teachers and administrators of RA Az-Zahra in improving the quality of Islamic religious learning in their institutions. With a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the group discussion method, it is hoped that other Islamic educational institutions can also adopt this method and develop it according to the needs and characteristics of their students. Thus, the instillation of monotheism values can be carried out more optimally, providing a greater impact on the spiritual development of children. Education of monotheism values in early childhood is not only about teaching theory, but also about how to internalize these values in everyday life. Therefore, the learning methods used must be able to touch the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of children in a balanced manner. This study is expected to be a reference for educators in finding the most effective strategy to instill monotheism values in early childhood. With the right approach, children will not only understand the concept of monotheism intellectually, but will also be able to practice it in their daily lives.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to explore the effectiveness of the group discussion method in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood at RA Az-Zahra. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth how the group discussion process takes place, how children interact in discussions, and how teachers manage learning so that the concept of monotheism can be conveyed properly. The descriptive method in this study aims to describe the phenomena that occur in the field systematically, factually, and accurately. With this method, the study can provide an overview of the application of group discussions in learning the values of monotheism and the factors that support or hinder the effectiveness of this method.

This study was conducted at RA Az-Zahra, an early childhood education institution that focuses on learning based on Islamic values. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that RA Az-Zahra has implemented the group discussion method in Islamic religious learning, especially in instilling the concept of monotheism in children.

The subjects of the study consisted of teachers, students, and parents of students involved in the learning process. Teachers were chosen as subjects because they are the parties responsible for designing and implementing learning methods. Students were chosen as the main subjects to see how they accept, understand, and internalize the concept of monotheism through group discussions. Parents were also involved to find out how learning at school impacts children's lives at home.

To obtain comprehensive data, this study used several data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted directly during teaching and learning activities at RA Az-Zahra. This observation aims to see how group discussions take place, how children participate in discussions, and how teachers guide the discussion. Participatory observation techniques are used so that researchers can understand the learning process in more depth without disrupting classroom activities. Interviews were conducted with teachers and parents of students to obtain their perspectives on the effectiveness of group discussion methods in instilling the values of monotheism. Interviews with teachers aimed to find out the strategies they use, the challenges they face, and the extent to which this method is effective in improving children's understanding of monotheism. Meanwhile, interviews with parents aimed to see whether there were changes in children's behavior and understanding of the values of monotheism at home after participating in learning at RA Az-Zahra.

Documentation is used to complement the data obtained from observations and interviews. Documentation includes learning notes, photos of activities, and teaching materials used in group discussions. This data will help in analyzing the extent to which the group discussion method contributes to children's understanding of monotheism. The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman, which consist of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by sorting and filtering data that is relevant to the focus of the research. Data that is not related or less significant will be eliminated so that the analysis becomes more focused and systematic. Data presentation is carried out in the form of narrative descriptions to describe the results of observations, interviews, and documentation in a structured manner. This presentation aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the group discussion method in learning the values of monotheism. Conclusions are drawn by looking at the patterns that appear in the data and connecting them to relevant theories. The conclusions obtained will be tested for validity through triangulation techniques, namely comparing data from various sources and methods to ensure their validity.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation, method triangulation, and time triangulation techniques. Source triangulation is done by comparing data obtained from various research subjects, namely teachers, students, and parents. In this way, the study can see the phenomenon from various perspectives.

Method triangulation is done by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. If the results of these various methods show similar patterns, then it can be concluded that the data has high validity. Time triangulation is done by conducting observations and interviews at different times to see the consistency of the data. Thus, the study can ensure that the results obtained are not merely a coincidence.

In conducting research, research ethics are upheld to protect the rights and privacy of research subjects. Each participant involved in the study is given informed consent or approval to participate. The identities of children and parents will be kept confidential in order to maintain their privacy. In addition, this study will not interfere with the learning process at RA Az-Zahra and will still respect the rules in force at the institution.

Every study has limitations, including this study. One limitation is that the research subjects are limited to one institution, so the results of this study cannot be generalized to all other RA or Islamic Kindergartens. In addition, because this study is qualitative, the results obtained are more exploratory than quantitative. Another limitation is the limited duration of the study, so that it cannot see the long-term impact of the group discussion method on children's understanding of monotheism. To overcome this limitation, further research can be conducted with a wider scope and a longer period. Nevertheless, this study still provides a significant contribution in understanding the effectiveness of the group discussion method in instilling the values of monotheism. It is hoped that the results of this study can be the basis for developing more effective learning strategies at RA Az-Zahra and other Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the group discussion method in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood at RA Az-Zahra. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, it was found that the group discussion method has been applied systematically in Islamic religious learning. Teachers use an interactive approach by asking reflective questions and encouraging children to share their understanding of the concept of monotheism. The results of observations show that children are more enthusiastic and active in learning using the group discussion method compared to the lecture method. They find it easier to understand the concept of monotheism when given the opportunity to discuss with peers, express opinions, and ask questions to the teacher. Thus, group discussions help children internalize the concept of monotheism more deeply compared to one-way learning methods.

In addition, interactions between children in group discussions also have a positive impact on the development of their social skills. Children learn to listen to their

friends' opinions, appreciate differences, and practice expressing their thoughts more confidently. Some children who were initially shy and less active in learning began to show improvements in participation after several discussion sessions took place. The results of interviews with teachers revealed that the group discussion method presented its own challenges in its implementation. One of the challenges faced is the difference in children's level of understanding. Some children grasp the concept of monotheism more quickly, while others require further guidance. Therefore, teachers must have the skills to manage discussions so that each child gets the same opportunity to learn and understand the material well.

In addition, interviews with parents showed that the group discussion method had a significant impact on the development of children's understanding of monotheism at home. Parents reported that their children began to show new habits, such as asking about Allah, showing gratitude through prayer, and connecting daily events with the greatness of Allah. This shows that learning at school has a lasting impact on the home environment. However, there are several obstacles found in implementing this method. One of the obstacles faced is the limited time in one learning session. Because children have a short attention span, discussions must be managed well to remain effective without making them lose focus. Teachers also need to create an interesting and fun discussion atmosphere so that children do not feel bored or fed up.

In addition, managing discussion groups is also an important factor in the success of this method. If the group is too large, some children tend to be passive and just listen without contributing to the discussion. Therefore, teachers at RA Az-Zahra divide children into small groups so that each child has the opportunity to speak and interact more optimally. Based on the documentation collected, it was found that the group discussion method also improves children's memory of the concept of monotheism. Children find it easier to remember and understand lessons when they are directly involved in the discussion. This can be seen from their ability to retell the material that has been discussed in the discussion in their own words.

Overall, this study shows that the group discussion method is an effective method in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood. Although there are some challenges in its implementation, the benefits obtained are much greater, especially in terms of increasing understanding, active participation, and social and spiritual development of children. From the results of this study, it can be concluded that the group discussion method can continue to be developed and improved so that it is more optimal in its application. It is hoped that other Islamic educational institutions can adopt this method with adjustments that are in accordance with the needs and characteristics of early childhood. In addition, training for teachers in managing discussions effectively is also an important aspect that needs to be considered so that learning the values of monotheism can run better.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the group discussion method has high effectiveness in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood. This finding is in line with research conducted by Suparno (2018) which states that discussion-based learning can improve children's understanding of religious concepts because it provides space for them to think critically and actively participate in the learning process. In the context of Islamic education, group discussions allow children to explore the concept of monotheism in more depth through interaction with peers and teacher guidance.

Another study by Hidayati & Kuswandi (2019) also showed that the discussion method in Islamic education helps children develop reflective and logical thinking skills. In their study, children who were active in group discussions tended to have a better understanding of abstract concepts in religion, including monotheism. This finding supports the results of research at RA Az-Zahra, where children showed an increase in understanding the concept of monotheism after participating in group discussion sessions. In addition, Hasanah (2020) in her research on Islamic religious learning strategies at Al-Firdaus Islamic Kindergarten found that the group discussion method can improve children's memory of the material taught. Children who are involved in discussions have a higher retention rate compared to those who only receive material through lecture methods. This is also seen in research at RA Az-Zahra, where children can retell the material that has been discussed in the discussion better.

In the context of developmental psychology, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is also relevant to the results of this study. Vygotsky explained that learning will be more effective if carried out in a social environment where children can learn through interaction with peers and guidance from more experienced people, such as teachers. Group discussions at RA Az-Zahra provide space for children to learn together, ask questions, and get explanations from teachers, thus helping them understand the concept of monotheism better.

A study by Rahman (2021) on Islamic religious learning in early childhood also supports this finding. In his research, he found that children who were involved in interactive learning tended to have stronger religious attitudes. Group discussions not only help in cognitive understanding, but also in the formation of children's religious attitudes and habits, such as reciting prayers consciously and recognizing the greatness of Allah in everyday life. However, the challenges in implementing the group discussion method have also been discussed in various previous studies. Nurhidayah (2017) highlighted that one of the obstacles in the group discussion method is the difference in children's level of understanding. Some children may grasp the material more quickly, while others need further guidance. This challenge was also found in research at RA Az-Zahra, where teachers had to pay more attention to children who had difficulty understanding the concept of monotheism so that they could continue to follow the learning process well.

In addition, research by Setiawan & Lestari (2018) shows that the effectiveness of the discussion method is highly dependent on the teacher's skills in managing the class. Teachers who are able to create a conducive and interesting atmosphere in discussions will be more successful in instilling religious concepts in children. This is in accordance with the findings at RA Az-Zahra, where the success of group discussions is highly dependent on the role of the teacher as a facilitator. According to Suryani (2020), group discussions can also help children develop social skills, such as cooperation, empathy, and respect for the opinions of others. In the context of monotheism learning, these social skills are very important because children are taught to understand divine values and apply them in their social lives.

Furthermore, research by Fauziah & Ramadhani (2022) revealed that discussionbased learning methods can increase children's curiosity about religious concepts. Children who are active in discussions tend to ask more questions and try to find out more about their religious teachings. This result was also seen in research at RA Az-Zahra, where parents reported that their children began to ask about Allah and showed an increase in their religious behavior at home. Finally, a study by Azizah (2023) emphasized that the success of the discussion method in Islamic religious learning depends not only on the method itself, but also on environmental support, both at school and at home. Research at RA Az-Zahra showed that parental involvement in supporting children's learning at home plays an important role in strengthening the values of monotheism taught in schools.

Based on this discussion, it can be concluded that the group discussion method is an effective strategy in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood. The results of this study are consistent with various previous studies showing that group discussions can improve children's understanding, social skills, and religious attitudes. However, the effectiveness of this method is highly dependent on teacher skills, classroom management, and the support of a conducive learning environment. Therefore, training for teachers and active involvement of parents are needed to optimize the learning of tauhid values for early childhood.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the effectiveness of the group discussion method in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood at RA Az-Zahra, it can be concluded that this method has a significant impact on the understanding and application of monotheism values in children's daily lives. Discussion-based learning allows children to interact actively, explore their own understanding, and learn from the experiences and opinions of their friends. The results of the study showed that children found it easier to understand the concept of monotheism when given the opportunity to discuss and convey their thoughts directly. They not only memorized the concepts of monotheism theoretically, but were also able to relate them to personal experiences and phenomena around them. This proves that the group discussion method is more effective than the one-way lecture method.

In addition to improving cognitive understanding, this method also has a positive impact on the development of children's social skills. Children learn to listen to the opinions of others, appreciate differences, and work together in groups. They are also more confident in expressing ideas and are more courageous in asking questions if there is something they do not understand. Thus, the group discussion method not only contributes to religious learning, but also forms good social character. From the teacher's perspective, the group discussion method helps them identify the extent to which children understand the values of monotheism. Teachers can see differences in children's levels of understanding and pay more attention to those who have difficulty understanding Islamic concepts. However, challenges in implementing this method were also found, such as limited time management and differences in children's ability to absorb the material. Therefore, teachers must have the right strategy in guiding discussions so that all children get maximum benefits.

The results of interviews with parents showed that discussion-based learning has a sustainable impact at home. Children who are involved in group discussions at school show changes in their religious behavior, such as asking more questions about Allah, understanding the concept of His oneness, and being more aware of carrying out daily worship. This shows that the group discussion method can help build a deeper and more sustainable understanding of religion. This study also found that environmental support, both at school and at home, plays an important role in the success of the group discussion method. Teachers play a role as facilitators who guide the discussion, while parents play a role in reinforcing the values that have been learned at school. Synergy between schools and families is a key factor in the success of instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood.

In addition to its benefits, there are several challenges that need to be considered in implementing this method. One of the main challenges is how to manage discussion groups so that they remain conducive and interesting for children. If the group is too large, some children tend to be passive and less likely to participate in the discussion. Therefore, dividing into small groups is one solution to ensure that each child gets an equal opportunity to speak and learn. Another challenge is the limited learning duration. Early childhood has a short attention span, so discussions must be managed effectively to keep them interesting and not boring. Teachers must have the skills to deliver material in an interactive and fun way, for example by using pictures, stories, or educational games that are relevant to the concept of monotheism.

In addition, the effectiveness of the group discussion method also depends heavily on the teacher's skills in guiding the discussion. Teachers must be able to encourage active

participation from children, ask thought-provoking questions, and provide easy-tounderstand explanations according to their level of cognitive development. Therefore, training for teachers in implementing group discussion methods is an important aspect that needs to be considered to improve the quality of learning.

Although there are several obstacles, the benefits of group discussion methods in instilling the values of monotheism are much greater. This method not only helps children understand the concept of the oneness of Allah more deeply, but also forms critical thinking patterns, social skills, and stronger spiritual awareness. Therefore, this method can be used as one of the main approaches in learning Islam for early childhood. Overall, this study confirms that the group discussion method is an effective learning strategy in instilling the values of monotheism in early childhood. Its success is highly dependent on the role of the teacher as a facilitator, good classroom management, and support from the family environment. With proper implementation, this method can be an optimal means of forming a generation of children who have a solid understanding of monotheism from an early age. As a recommendation, further research can be conducted with a wider scope and a longer period of time to see the long-term impact of the group discussion method on children's religious development. In addition, the development of a more interactive discussion model that is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood also needs to be carried out so that this method can continue to develop and provide greater benefits in the world of Islamic education.

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