



Implementation of Group Discussion Method to Improve Students' Understanding of Islamic Education Learning at MTs Terpadu Darul Qudwah

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Abstract: This study aims to determine the improvement of students' understanding of the material of Commendable Morals through the application of the group discussion method at the Darul Qudwah Integrated MTs. This type of research is Class Action Research (PTK) which is carried out in two cycles, where each cycle consists of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The subjects of the study were 32 students in grade VIII of MTs Terpadu Darul Qudwah, consisting of 15 male students and 17 female students. Data collection techniques use observation, tests, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out with qualitative and quantitative descriptive approaches to see the improvement in learning outcomes and student activity during the learning process. The results of the study showed a significant increase in students' understanding of the material of Commendable Morals after the application of the group discussion method. In the pre-cycle, student learning completeness only reached 46.9%, increasing to 71.9% in cycle I, and reaching 90.6% in cycle II. In addition, students' activeness in the learning process has also increased, as seen from participation in discussions and the ability to express opinions more confidently. Thus, it can be concluded that the application of the group discussion method is effective in increasing students' understanding and participation in the material of Commendable Morals at the Darul Qudwah Integrated MTs.

Keywords: Group Discussion Method, Student Understanding, Commendable Morals.

Received January 19, 2025; **Accepted** February 21, 2025; **Published** April 30, 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a planned process to shape students into individuals who have faith, noble character, and knowledge. In the context of Islamic education, morals occupy a very important position because they are the core of a Muslim's success in living life. Moral education not only teaches normative concepts, but also emphasizes the internalization of moral values that can guide daily behavior. In junior high schools, especially tsanawiyah madrasas, commendable moral learning is expected to be able to shape the character of students to stay away from reprehensible morals and display behavior in accordance with religious guidance. However, the facts in the field show that students' understanding of commendable morals is still low. This can be seen from the attitude of some students who do not reflect good morals, such as low sense of responsibility, lack of honesty, and weak mutual respect among peers.

This condition shows that there is a gap between the ideal goal of moral education and the reality of learning in the classroom. Teachers often use lecture methods that tend to be monotonous so that students are passive and less actively involved in the learning process. According to Sanjaya (2016), learning that only focuses on verbally conveying information is not able to provide meaningful experiences to students. As a result, students only memorize the concept of commendable morals without understanding the meaning contained in it. This has an impact on low learning outcomes as well as weak internalization of moral values. Therefore, a more interactive and participatory learning strategy is needed so that students can understand and practice commendable moral material well.

One of the approaches that is considered relevant to improve student understanding is the group discussion method. Group discussions are learning activities that emphasize the active participation of students in exchanging opinions, solving problems, and drawing conclusions together. According to Arends (2012), group discussions can improve critical thinking skills, communication skills, and foster a sense of responsibility in working together. By discussing, students not only receive knowledge from the teacher, but also construct their own understanding through interaction with peers. This is in accordance with the theory of constructivism which emphasizes that knowledge is built through active learning experiences (Slavin, 2018).

The application of group discussions in commendable moral learning has its own advantages. Moral material is often abstract, such as honesty, patience, and humility. These abstract concepts can be better understood if students are given the opportunity to discuss concrete examples in everyday life. By discussing, students can share experiences, give arguments, and relate the concept of morality to the reality they are experiencing. According to Johnson and Johnson (2014), group discussions encourage students to learn cooperatively and increase mutual respect between individuals. This is important to form the character of students who are not only academically intelligent, but also noble in character.

Previous research has shown the effectiveness of the group discussion method in improving student learning outcomes. For example, research by Nurhayati (2019) found that the application of group discussions in PAI learning in junior high school was able to increase students' understanding of worship materials. Similar research by Hasanah (2020) also showed that group discussions increase students' activeness and motivation in moral subjects. These results are in line with the view of Uno (2019) who emphasized that participatory learning can strengthen student involvement, improve learning outcomes, and form better social skills.

However, research on the application of group discussions to commendable moral material is still relatively limited, especially in the tsanawiyah madrasah environment. Most of the previous research was conducted more on general subjects such as economics, biology, or language, while PAI subjects that emphasized moral and spiritual aspects have not been studied in depth. This shows that there is a research gap that needs to be bridged. Therefore, this research is important to test the effectiveness of the group discussion method in improving students' understanding of commendable morals at MTs Terpadu Darul Qudwah.

The urgency of this research is also related to the challenges of character education in the modern era. The development of technology and social media often affects adolescent behavior, including in terms of morals. Students tend to more easily imitate the negative behaviors they see in the surrounding environment rather than internalize the noble moral values taught in school. With the group discussion method, it is hoped that students will have space to reflect on their experiences, compare with the moral values taught, and take the right attitude. This is in line with the view of Lickona (2014) that character education requires an approach that encourages students to actively think, feel, and act according to moral values.

The main purpose of this study is to find out the extent to which the application of the group discussion method can improve the understanding of grade VIII students of MTs Terpadu Darul Qudwah towards commendable moral material. In particular, this study aims to measure the improvement of student learning outcomes in each learning cycle, identify changes in student activity in discussions, and assess the effectiveness of group discussions in fostering students' positive attitudes towards moral values. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of a more interactive and effective PAI learning strategy.

From the theoretical side, this study enriches the study of the effectiveness of the group discussion method in moral learning in madrasahs. The results of the research can be a reference for the development of a PAI learning model that emphasizes participatory, collaborative, and reflective aspects. From the practical side, this research can be a reference for teachers in designing more interesting learning, increasing student activity, and instilling commendable moral values more deeply. With the application of the group discussion method, it is hoped that the moral learning process will no longer only be cognitive, but also able to touch the affective and psychomotor realms of students. Thus, the background, urgency, theoretical studies, and research gaps that have been presented show the importance of carrying out this research. Through the application of group discussions, it is hoped that students can better understand the value of commendable morals, internalize them in daily life, and become individuals with character in accordance with the goals of Islamic education.

METHODS

This study uses the Classroom Action Research (PTK) approach, because the main focus of the research is to improve and improve the learning process of commendable morals in class VIII of Darul Qudwah Integrated MTs. PTK was chosen because it provides space for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices directly, design improvement actions, and evaluate their effectiveness on changes in student learning behavior. Arikunto, Suhardjono, and Supardi (2016) stated that PTK is a form of reflective research conducted by teachers in their own classrooms to improve the quality of learning in a sustainable manner.

This type of research is Classroom Action Research with a two-cycle design. Each cycle includes four main stages, namely planning, implementation of actions, observation, and reflection. This model refers to the spiral of action developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), in which each cycle forms an interconnected and continuous loop of improvement. Cycle I is used for the initial application of the group discussion method, while cycle II is a refinement stage based on the reflection of the results of cycle I.

This research was conducted at MTs Terpadu Darul Qudwah, a junior high school educational institution that integrates the national curriculum with Islamic content. The subjects of the study were 32 students in grade VIII, consisting of 15 male students and 17 female students. This class was chosen based on the teacher's initial findings that students' understanding of commendable moral material is still low, both in terms of mastery of the material and its application in daily life. The research location is in Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh Province, with learning facilities that support the implementation of the discussion model, such as flexible classrooms, audio-visual devices, and subject teacher support.

The stages in this study follow a systematic PTK procedure. At the planning stage, the researcher and the teacher prepare a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) that focuses on the application of the group discussion method. The learning material is about commendable morals which include honesty, patience, tawadhu, trust, and tolerance. The researcher also prepared instruments in the form of observation sheets, evaluation questions, and group discussion guides. The implementation of the action was carried out for two cycles, each consisting of two meetings. The teacher begins the learning by

conveying the objectives, then divides the students into small groups heterogeneously. Each group was given the task of discussing real cases related to commendable morality, then presenting the results of the discussion to the class. In this process, the teacher acts as a facilitator, providing guidance and motivation to encourage the participation of all group members.

Observations were carried out directly by researchers and collaborators to record students' activeness, ability to express opinions, and interactions during discussions. Reflection is carried out after each cycle to evaluate the success and shortcomings of the implementation of the action, then it is used as the basis for planning the next cycle. In cycle II, improvements were made by simplifying discussion cases, strengthening time management, and giving symbolic rewards to active groups. This strategy aims to increase the involvement of students who are still passive in cycle I. The instruments used include student activity observation sheets, learning outcome tests, field notes, and documentation. The observation sheet is designed to assess aspects of student involvement in discussions, ability to work together, and courage to express opinions. The learning outcome test is used to measure the level of students' understanding of commendable moral material after the implementation of the action. Field records record specific events during the learning process that are not recorded in formal instruments. Documentation in the form of photos of activities, attendance lists, and student grades is used to reinforce the data obtained.

According to Sugiyono (2019), the use of various instruments is needed to obtain valid and reliable data in classroom action research. The combination of these instruments allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive picture of the learning process and outcomes. Data is collected through observation, testing, and documentation. Observation is used to observe the activities of students and teachers during the learning process. Tests are administered at the end of each cycle to assess students' improved understanding. Documentation is used to collect visual and administrative data that supports the validity of research results. Data triangulation is carried out by comparing observation results, test scores, and documentation to increase the validity of research findings.

According to Moleong (2017), triangulation is a data validity check technique that utilizes different sources, techniques, and times to ensure the credibility of data. In this study, triangulation techniques are an important step to avoid bias in the interpretation of results. The data was analyzed with quantitative and qualitative descriptive approaches. Quantitative analysis is used to calculate the improvement in student learning outcomes based on test scores in each cycle. The data was calculated on average, the percentage of learning completeness, and the increase between cycles. According to Sudjana (2011), learning completeness is said to be achieved if at least 85% of students obtain scores above KKM.

Qualitative analysis is used to process observational data, field notes, and documentation. Data were reduced, presented, and then inferred using an interactive analysis model from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) which included three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. This process is carried out continuously during and after the action takes place.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied technical triangulation and collaboration with subject teachers. Teachers not only play the role of implementers of actions, but also as reflective partners involved in planning and evaluation. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), the involvement of collaborators in PTK helps to improve the objectivity and quality of findings. Ethical aspects are also maintained during the research. The researcher asked for permission from the school and ensured that all learning activities did not interfere with the comfort of students. Students are given the understanding that their participation in research is part of a regular learning process aimed at improving the quality of their own learning.

RESULTS

This class action research is carried out in two cycles, each consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The subjects of the study were 32 students in grade VIII of MTs Terpadu Darul Qudwah, with details of 15 male students and 17 female students. The research focuses on improving students' understanding of commendable moral material through the application of the group discussion method. The results of this study are presented in quantitative and qualitative descriptive form which includes initial conditions, the results of cycle I, the results of cycle II, and comparative analysis between cycles.

Before the action is given, commendable moral learning is still dominated by the lecture method. Teachers tend to be the center of information, while students only listen and take notes. This condition makes students passive and less involved in learning. Early observations show that only a small percentage of students dare to ask questions or answer the teacher's questions. When the initial test was carried out, the average student score was still low, and only 15 out of 32 students achieved the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM), which was 70. The completion percentage is only 46.9%.

This initial condition illustrates the gap between learning objectives that emphasize the internalization of commendable moral values and the reality in the classroom. According to Sudjana (2011), learning that is only oriented to the delivery of material is not effective enough to foster students' understanding and positive attitudes. Therefore, there is a need for a more interactive learning strategy so that students not only understand the concept of morality cognitively, but also be able to reflect on it in daily life.

In the first cycle, teachers began to apply the group discussion method by dividing students into six groups heterogeneously. Each group was given a real case related to commendable morals, such as the importance of being honest in society or the benefits of being patient when facing problems. Students are asked to discuss the case, write down the results of the discussion, and present it in front of the class. Teachers act as facilitators who provide guidance if needed. The results of the observation show an increase in student activities. Some students began to dare to express their opinions, even though they were still dominated by certain students. The participation of group members is not evenly distributed, and there are still students who tend to be passive. However, the classroom atmosphere is more lively compared to the initial conditions.

The learning outcome test at the end of cycle I showed an improvement. A total of 23 students managed to achieve KKM, with a completion percentage of 71.9%. The grade point average increased significantly compared to the initial condition. Although it has not met the classical completeness target of 85%, this improvement shows that the group discussion method has a positive influence on student comprehension. Reflection on the first cycle identified several obstacles, including the lack of courage for some students to speak, limited time in discussions, and the need for more intensive guidance from teachers. Therefore, in cycle II, improvements were made, such as giving a special role to each group member, using simple visual media to clarify the material, and giving symbolic awards to active groups.

Cycle II is carried out by paying attention to the results of reflection in cycle I. Teachers continue to implement group discussions, but with strengthening strategies. Each group was given a more specific topic, for example about the importance of tawadhu in social relationships or the dangers of arrogance. Students are given the opportunity to prepare an argument before the discussion begins. The teacher also emphasized the role of each group member so that all students were actively involved. The results of the observations showed a significant improvement. Almost all students participated in the discussion, either by expressing their opinions or giving feedback. The classroom atmosphere becomes more conducive, interactive, and fun. Students look enthusiastic about participating in learning and are more confident when presenting the results of the discussion.

The learning outcome test at the end of cycle II showed a significant increase in completeness. A total of 29 out of 32 students managed to achieve KKM, with a completion percentage of 90.6%. The average grade of the class increased higher than cycle I. These results show that the indicator of research success has been achieved, namely at least 85% of students achieve grades above the KKM. In addition to quantitative improvement, the qualitative aspect also shows positive developments. Students are more active, work well together in groups, and are able to relate moral material with daily experiences. According to Hamalik (2019), learning that actively involves students will be more meaningful because students can build their own knowledge.

The results showed a significant increase from the initial condition to cycle II. In the initial condition, learning completeness was only 46.9%. After the implementation of the group discussion in the first cycle, the completeness increased to 71.9%. In cycle II, completeness reached 90.6%. This improvement illustrates the effectiveness of the group discussion method in increasing students' understanding of commendable moral material. From the qualitative side, student participation has also experienced positive changes. If in the initial condition most students were passive, then in cycle II almost all students actively participated. Students are more courageous to express their opinions, respect each other's opinions, and be able to draw conclusions together. This is in accordance with the view of Johnson and Johnson (2014) that group discussions are able to improve social skills, cooperation, and responsibility. Overall, the results of this study show that the group discussion method is effective in increasing students' understanding of commendable moral material. The improvement was seen both in terms of learning outcomes and student activities during learning. Thus, this method can be used as an alternative PAI learning strategy that is more interactive, participatory, and meaningful.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the application of the group discussion method is effective in improving students' understanding of commendable moral material. The improvement is seen both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, student learning completeness increased from 46.9% in the initial condition, to 71.9% in cycle I, and reached 90.6% in cycle II. Qualitatively, students become more active, dare to express opinions, are able to cooperate, and show mutual respect during the discussion process. These findings are in line with various theories and previous research that affirm the effectiveness of group discussions in learning oriented towards concept understanding and character formation.

Group discussions are one of the cooperative learning methods that encourage students to actively learn through the exchange of opinions and experiences. According to Arends (2012), learning that places students as active subjects will increase the sense of ownership of the knowledge obtained. In this study, students are directly involved to discuss real cases related to commendable morals, so that learning is not only theoretical, but also applicative.

The results of observations show that in the first cycle, student participation began to increase, although there were still some passive students. In cycle II, student participation was more evenly distributed, and almost all students actively contributed to the discussion. This change proves that group discussion learning can overcome the problem of activeness that often arises in the lecture method. This is in line with the opinion of Slavin (2018) that cooperative learning provides opportunities for all students to be involved, thereby fostering a sense of shared responsibility for group learning outcomes.

A significant improvement in student learning outcomes shows that group discussions not only increase engagement, but also strengthen understanding of concepts. Students are able to explain the meaning of commendable morals such as honesty, patience, and tawadhu, as well as provide examples of their application in daily life.

According to Sudjana (2011), effective learning is learning that not only adds knowledge, but also forms skills and attitudes. Group discussions provide space for students to reflect on moral values, so that their understanding is deeper.

This result is consistent with the research of Hasanah (2020) which found that the application of group discussions in moral learning in junior high school increases students' understanding of moral values while fostering a positive attitude. In other words, group discussions are not only a learning strategy, but also a means of internalizing Islamic values in students.

This research also reinforces the theory of constructivism which states that knowledge is built through experience and social interaction. Slavin (2018) explained that in constructivist learning, students not only receive information from the teacher, but also build knowledge through the process of questioning, discussing, and concluding. The application of group discussions in this study proves that students understand the material more easily when they are actively involved in the learning process.

In addition, Vygotsky in social-constructivist theory emphasized the importance of social interaction in building understanding. By discussing, students help each other in understanding difficult concepts, resulting in a proximal developmental zone where students who are better able to help their friends who understand less (Vygotsky, 1978). This is also seen in this study, where students share experiences and complement each other's understanding in group discussions.

The application of group discussions in moral learning is commendable not only to improve the cognitive realm, but also to shape the character of students. During discussions, students learn to be honest, respect the opinions of others, cooperative, and responsible. This is in accordance with the view of Lickona (2014) that character education must integrate aspects of knowledge, attitudes, and moral actions. With the group discussion method, students not only understand the concept of morality, but also practice it in real interactions.

Another contribution of this study is the increase in students' confidence in public speaking. At first, many students were reluctant to speak, but in cycle II they dared to convey the results of the group discussion. This change is in line with research by Nurhayati (2019) who shows that group discussions are able to improve students' communication skills while fostering confidence. When compared to previous research, the results of this study are consistent with the findings that group discussions can improve learning outcomes and social skills. Research by Sari and Lestari (2019) shows that group discussions are effective in improving students' critical thinking skills on social subjects. Similarly, Nugroho (2020) emphasized that the discussion method increases students' social interaction and strengthens solidarity between group members.

However, this research has a peculiarity because it is focused on commendable moral material in the tsanawiyah madrasah. Thus, this research makes a new contribution to the literature, especially about the application of the discussion method to PAI learning that emphasizes the moral and spiritual dimensions. The practical implication of this study is the need for PAI teachers to use the group discussion method more often in moral learning. Teachers not only play the role of delivering material, but also facilitators who guide the course of discussions. Sanjaya (2016) emphasized that teachers must be able to create a conducive learning environment and encourage students to be actively involved. Thus, group discussions can be one of the effective strategies to achieve the goals of moral learning in schools.

For schools, the results of this research are the basis for providing support for the implementation of participatory learning strategies. The provision of classroom facilities that support discussions and teacher training on active learning methods is needed so that learning effectiveness is more optimal. Although this research has succeeded in improving students' understanding, there are some limitations. First, the research was only conducted in one class with a limited number of students, so the results could not be generalized widely. Second, the research time that lasted only two cycles was not enough

to see the long-term impact of the application of the group discussion method. Third, student involvement in discussions still needs to be increased with more varied strategies so that all students are optimally involved. These limitations open up opportunities for advanced research that can involve more subjects, use mixed methods with technological media, or broaden the focus on aspects of social and emotional skills that develop through group discussions.

CONCLUSION

This class action research proves that the application of the group discussion method is effective in increasing students' understanding of commendable moral material in grade VIII of the Darul Qudwah Integrated MTs. The results showed a significant improvement from the initial condition, with learning completeness only 46.9%, increasing to 71.9% in cycle I, and reaching 90.6% in cycle II. This improvement shows that group discussions are able to encourage active student involvement, strengthen understanding of concepts, and help students relate moral values to daily life. In addition, students become more courageous in their opinions, more confident, and more able to work together in groups. Thus, group discussions not only enhance the cognitive aspect, but also the affective and social aspects that are important for character formation.

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