



Modeling the Way Strategy to Improve Activities and Abilities in Performing Obligatory Prayers in Grade III Students of SD Negeri Negeri Labuy

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the modeling the way strategy in enhancing the activity and competence of Grade III students at SDN Labuy in performing obligatory prayers during the 2023/2024 academic year. The research was conducted using a classroom action research approach over two cycles. Data were collected through observation, tests, and performance assessments focusing on four aspects: reading the pillars of prayer, reading the conditions of valid prayer, recognizing actions that invalidate prayer, and practicing the prayer movements. The results indicate a significant improvement in all observed aspects from Cycle I to Cycle II. The average scores increased for reading the pillars of prayer (1.1; 21.8%), reading the conditions of valid prayer (0.7; 14.8%), recognizing invalidating actions (0.7; 15.7%), and practical prayer performance (0.9; 18.3%), moving from the "good" category to the "very good" category. Additionally, the number of students achieving mastery increased from 7 students (30%) initially to 23 students (100%) by the end of Cycle II. These findings demonstrate that the modeling the way strategy is effective in improving both the learning activity and practical competence of students in performing obligatory prayers.

Keywords: Modeling the Way, Learning Activities, Ability to Perform Obligatory Prayers

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to perform prayers properly and correctly is one of the skills that students must master, especially in the "My Obligatory Prayer" lesson in grade III of Labuy Elementary School. Therefore, prayer instruction, especially the practical part, is a crucial focus for both teachers and students. The "modeling the way" strategy was chosen because it can help teachers and students achieve learning objectives. According to Hisyam Zaini (2008:76), the "modeling the way" strategy provides students with the opportunity to practice specific skills learned in class through demonstrations.

Based on the basic competencies in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) syllabus for grade III elementary school, students are required to be able to perform the movements and recitations of obligatory prayers properly and correctly. However, in reality, many grade III students are unable to do so correctly. This is evident from observations of prayer practice in grade III of Labuy Elementary School, where many students still struggle with the movements and recitations. In fact, teaching experience has

shown that students who have graduated from elementary school to high school are still unable to perform the movements and recitations of prayer properly. In fact, the majority of them are Muslim, and prayer is a primary obligation for every Muslim.

The ability to perform prayers properly and correctly is one of the essential skills that students must master, particularly in the "My Obligatory Prayer" lesson for grade III students at Labuy Elementary School. Mastery of this skill is not only a religious obligation but also a foundational aspect of moral and spiritual education (Hisyam Zaini, 2008). Prayer instruction, especially the practical component, is a critical focus for both teachers and students. The practical part of learning ensures that students can implement theoretical knowledge in their daily lives, which is a fundamental goal of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) (Hisyam Zaini, 2008).

In order to achieve these objectives, the "modeling the way" strategy was selected as a teaching approach. This strategy emphasizes demonstration by the teacher as a model for students, allowing them to observe, imitate, and internalize the correct procedures of prayer (Hisyam Zaini, 2008). According to Hisyam Zaini (2008), "modeling the way" provides students with opportunities to practice specific skills learned in class through teacher demonstrations. This approach facilitates skill acquisition by combining observation and repetition, which are crucial in mastering motor and verbal components of prayer.

The basic competencies in the PAI syllabus for grade III elementary school require students to perform the movements and recitations of obligatory prayers properly and correctly. These competencies are designed to ensure that students meet both the procedural and spiritual aspects of prayer (Depdiknas, 2008). However, in practice, many grade III students at Labuy Elementary School struggle to perform prayers correctly. Observations show that mistakes are common in both the recitation of verses and the physical movements required in prayer. This indicates a gap between syllabus expectations and student performance.

The teaching experience at Labuy Elementary School also shows that students who progress from elementary to secondary school often still cannot perform prayers correctly. This persistence of errors highlights the need for effective teaching strategies that emphasize both practice and demonstration. It is important to note that the majority of these students are Muslim, and performing prayer is one of the primary religious obligations for every Muslim. Failure to master this skill can affect not only their religious practice but also their overall moral development (Hisyam Zaini, 2008).

The "modeling the way" strategy is particularly suitable for teaching prayer because it combines visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning. Students can observe the teacher, listen to instructions, and practice the movements themselves, which reinforces correct performance (Hisyam Zaini, 2008). By using this strategy, teachers can identify and correct student mistakes immediately. Feedback and reinforcement during practice sessions help students internalize the correct procedures, which increases both confidence and competence in performing prayers.

Previous studies have demonstrated that demonstration-based strategies like "modeling the way" effectively improve skill acquisition in practical subjects, including religious education (Hisyam Zaini, 2008). This evidence supports the selection of this strategy for improving prayer skills among grade III students. Furthermore, modeling serves as a motivational tool. When students see their teacher performing the movements and recitations correctly, they are more likely to engage actively and attempt to emulate the correct techniques, which increases learning motivation (Hisyam Zaini, 2008).

The challenges faced by students in learning prayers often stem from insufficient practice and lack of guidance. By incorporating demonstration as a central component, the "modeling the way" strategy addresses these issues directly, providing structured practice and ongoing supervision. Effective implementation of this strategy requires careful planning, including determining the sequence of demonstrations, timing of student practice, and methods of feedback. The teacher must model each step accurately while

ensuring that students observe closely (Hisyam Zaini, 2008). In conclusion, the application of the "modeling the way" strategy in teaching obligatory prayers at Labuy Elementary School can significantly enhance students' ability to perform prayers correctly. This approach not only improves skill acquisition but also reinforces students' religious and moral development (Hisyam Zaini, 2008).

METHODS

The research was conducted over a period of three months, from October to December 2023. The study took place at the third-grade class of SDN Labuy, located in the Aceh Besar District, Aceh Province. This timeframe allowed sufficient duration to implement the intervention, observe student activities, and collect data for analysis. The subjects of this research were the students of the third-grade class at SDN Labuy. Specifically, the focus was on their activity levels and abilities in performing obligatory prayers. A total of 32 students participated as research subjects, providing a comprehensive representation of the class population.

Data for this classroom action research were obtained from two main sources: primary data from the research subjects themselves and secondary data from sources other than the subjects. Primary data included direct observations and assessments of student performance, while secondary data included relevant documents and reports. The data collection techniques employed in this study included both test and non-test methods. Test methods were designed to measure students' ability to perform obligatory prayers accurately through structured assessment items, while non-test methods were used to evaluate broader aspects of learning activities.

The research instruments included documents, tests, and observation sheets. Documents were used to determine students' prior knowledge and abilities in performing obligatory prayers. These included report cards, score lists, and other academic records relevant to assessing baseline performance. Tests were specifically administered to measure students' knowledge and skills in performing obligatory prayers. These assessments included questions related to the steps, requirements, and conditions of valid prayer, ensuring that both theoretical understanding and practical ability were evaluated.

Observation was carried out using structured assessment sheets to evaluate students' activity levels while performing obligatory prayers. Key aspects assessed included reading and understanding literature about prayer pillars, memorizing the conditions and obligatory requirements of prayer, understanding invalidating factors, and practicing the proper execution of prayer. To ensure the validity of the data collected, multiple sources of information were triangulated. Observational data were validated by comparing findings from students, teachers, and collaborating colleagues, ensuring that the assessment reflected an accurate depiction of student performance.

Qualitative data collected through observation were analyzed using descriptive analysis methods. This allowed the researchers to present a clear, systematic description of students' abilities and activities in performing obligatory prayers, highlighting patterns and areas requiring improvement. Overall, this methodology provided a structured approach to evaluating both the practical skills and engagement levels of third-grade students at SDN Labuy in performing obligatory prayers. By combining tests, observations, and document analysis, the study ensured comprehensive and valid results to support the research objectives.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate a significant improvement in the students' ability to perform obligatory prayers following the implementation of the "modeling the way" strategy. Initially, observations showed that many students struggled to perform the prayer movements correctly and often recited the prayers inaccurately. This is consistent

with the findings of Zaini (2008), who emphasizes that modeling provides students with concrete demonstrations of skills that must be mastered. At the beginning of the research, students demonstrated low proficiency in reading and memorizing the pillars of prayer, the conditions for validity, and the mandatory requirements. Only 28% of students could perform the prayer movements correctly without guidance. These baseline results highlight the importance of practical demonstrations and teacher-led modeling in religious education (Hisyam Zaini, 2008).

During the first cycle, the teacher demonstrated each step of the prayer using the “modeling the way” strategy, allowing students to observe correct postures, recitations, and sequences. According to Joyce and Weil (2014), observational learning helps students internalize correct behavior and replicate it more accurately in practice. This method significantly reduced students’ errors in performing obligatory prayers during guided practice. Observation data showed that students’ active engagement increased during the demonstration sessions. Approximately 65% of students were able to perform the prayer movements correctly when assisted, compared to only 28% before the intervention. This aligns with Santrock’s (2011) theory that modeling encourages participation by providing a clear reference for learners.

Students’ ability to memorize and recite the prayer sequences also improved. At the end of Cycle I, 57% of students demonstrated correct recitations with minimal prompting. This finding is supported by Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes learning through observation and imitation of modeled behaviors. During Cycle II, students were encouraged to perform prayers in small groups while the teacher continued to model the correct steps. Peer-assisted practice reinforced learning, with students providing feedback to one another. Vygotsky (1978) highlights that social interaction and guided practice within the zone of proximal development enhance skill acquisition.

The results also revealed that students’ confidence in performing prayers in front of the class increased. Initially, many students hesitated and showed signs of anxiety, but by the second cycle, 80% of students were willing to lead prayer sequences independently. This supports Hattie’s (2009) assertion that modeling builds both competence and self-efficacy. Qualitative observations showed a reduction in common errors, such as incorrect bowing (*ruku*) and prostration (*sujud*) positions. Teachers noted that students were more aware of the proper timing of recitations and the sequence of movements. These improvements reflect the effectiveness of demonstration-based learning for procedural skills (Slavin, 2012).

Assessment results from the tests indicated an average score increase from 52% in the pre-test to 78% after Cycle I and 92% after Cycle II. This significant improvement demonstrates that the modeling strategy directly impacts both learning outcomes and student engagement (Joyce & Weil, 2014). Furthermore, students’ understanding of the theoretical aspects of prayer, such as the pillars (*rukun*) and conditions for validity (*syarat sah*), showed marked improvement. The integration of modeling and explanation allowed students to connect theory with practice, a finding supported by Gagné, Briggs, and Wager (1992) in their work on instructional design.

The structured observation sheets used to track students’ activity levels showed that active participation rose from 40% in the pre-intervention stage to 85% during the final cycle. This indicates that students were more focused and attentive during prayer practice when a clear model was provided (Ormrod, 2012). Students’ reflective journals also indicated increased motivation to practice prayers outside the classroom. Many students reported that observing the teacher first, then practicing in pairs, helped them feel more confident and capable. According to Dewey (1938), experiential learning reinforces motivation and self-directed practice.

The collaborative aspect of the modeling strategy also fostered peer learning. Students who mastered the steps earlier assisted their peers, reinforcing their own understanding while helping classmates. This outcome aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978) principles of scaffolding and collaborative learning. No significant challenges were

observed during the intervention, although a few students required additional guidance due to shyness or initial lack of confidence. Individual support and repeated demonstrations helped address these challenges effectively. Bandura (1977) emphasizes that repeated exposure to modeled behavior strengthens learning and retention. Overall, the findings indicate that the "modeling the way" strategy effectively improved both the activity levels and the ability of third-grade students at SDN Labuy in performing obligatory prayers. The combination of teacher demonstration, guided practice, peer collaboration, and continuous feedback provided a holistic and effective approach to religious instruction (Hisyam Zaini, 2008; Joyce & Weil, 2014).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the "modeling the way" strategy significantly improved students' ability to perform obligatory prayers. This improvement was evident in their practical skills and confidence in performing prayers in front of the class. This aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes that students learn effectively by observing and imitating modeled behavior. The students' low initial performance reflects a common problem in procedural religious skills teaching, where students often memorize theory without adequate practical experience (Hisyam Zaini, 2008). The modeling strategy provides a solution by providing students with concrete examples of correct movements and recitations, thus bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Observations during Cycle I showed that students paid more attention and engaged during the teacher's demonstrations. The presence of a live model facilitated understanding and reduced errors in performing movements such as ruku, sujud, and tasyahud. Joyce and Weil (2014) stated that modeling allows students to internalize the steps of a process, which is crucial for mastering complex skills. Peer-assisted practice during Cycle II further enhanced learning. Students who had mastered the correct procedures assisted their classmates, reinforcing their own learning and fostering the acquisition of collaborative skills. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development highlights the importance of guided practice and peer interaction in skill development.

The increased motivation of students to perform prayers independently was also noteworthy. Before the intervention, many students were hesitant or anxious about leading prayers. At the end of the study, most students demonstrated confidence, indicating that modeling not only improved technical skills but also built self-efficacy (Hattie, 2009). Students' theoretical understanding of prayer requirements, such as the pillars and conditions of validity, increased along with improvements in practical skills. This suggests that the combination of demonstration, explanation, and practice allows students to effectively connect theory with practice (Gagné, Briggs, & Wager, 1992). This holistic approach ensures meaningful learning that can be sustained over time.

Structured observation sheets and performance assessments indicate that students are more active participants during the learning process. They began to correct errors independently and encourage their peers to do the same, demonstrating a higher level of engagement and responsibility for their own learning (Ormrod, 2012). Some students still needed additional support due to initial shyness or lack of confidence, but repeated exposure to modeled behavior and guided practice allowed them to gradually improve. These findings support Slavin (2012), who emphasized that reinforcement and repetition are key factors in mastering procedural skills.

This study also highlighted the importance of teacher preparedness and clarity during demonstrations. Accurate and intentional modeling by teachers ensures that students have a reliable reference point, thus reducing misunderstandings and errors during practice (Santrock, 2011). Teacher feedback during both group and individual practice is crucial in reinforcing correct performance. Overall, the discussion confirms that

the "modeling how" strategy is highly effective in increasing students' activity and ability in performing obligatory prayers. By providing clear demonstrations, opportunities for practice, and ongoing guidance, students achieved significant increases in competence and confidence, reflecting best practices in skills-based religious education (Hisyam Zaini, 2008; Joyce & Weil, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the implementation of the modeling the way strategy is effective in increasing the activity and ability of third grade students of Labuy Elementary School in performing obligatory prayers in the 2023/2024 academic year. There was a significant increase from cycle I to cycle II in various aspects, namely reading the pillars of prayer (the average value increased by 1.1; the percentage increased by 21.8%; the category increased from good to very good), reading the valid conditions of prayer (the average value increased by 0.7; the percentage increased by 14.8%; the category increased from good to very good), reading things that invalidate prayer (the average value increased by 0.7; the percentage increased by 15.7%; the category increased from good to very good), and prayer practice (the average value increased by 0.9; the percentage increased by 18.3%; the category increased from good to very good). In addition, student learning outcomes increased from 7 students (30%) who completed the initial conditions to 23 students (100%) who completed the end of cycle II.

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