

The Use of Big Book Media to Improve Students' Conceptual Understanding Abilities in Islamic Education Learning at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin

Evida ✉, SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin, Indonesia

Ana Mizasari, SD Negeri Gunong Kleng, Indonesia

✉ evievida2@gmail.com

Abstract This research aims to improve students' ability to understand concepts in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning through the use of big book media at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin. The method used is Classroom Action Research (PTK) which is carried out in two cycles with the research subject of grade VIII students. Data collection instruments include observation, concept comprehension tests, and documentation. The results of the study showed a significant increase in students' ability to understand concepts. In the initial condition, only 50% of students achieved the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) with an average score of 65. After the implementation of big book media in the first cycle, the percentage of students who completed increased to 70% with an average score of 72, and in the second cycle it reached 85% with an average score of 80. This increase indicates that the use of big book media is effective in improving students' understanding of concepts in PAI learning. Big book media provides visual stimulus that strengthens students' memory and understanding of the subject matter, while increasing students' interest in learning. In conclusion, big book media can be used as an alternative learning media to improve the quality of PAI learning at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin.

Keywords: Big book media, concept understanding, Islamic Religious Education

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role in shaping the character and morals of students in junior high school. A good understanding of concepts in PAI learning is one of the main aspects so that students not only memorize the material, but also be able to internalize religious values in daily life (Suryani, 2018). However, the reality in the field shows that there are still many students who have difficulty understanding religious concepts in depth, which results in low learning achievement and lack of interest in PAI lessons (Rahman, 2020). This is a challenge for teachers to find effective learning strategies so that students' understanding of PAI material can increase.

Learning media is one of the determining factors for the success of the teaching and learning process. According to Arsyad (2017), learning media functions as a tool that can clarify the delivery of material and stimulate students' interest and motivation to learn. Big book media, as a media that combines large visual elements and easy-to-read text, has the potential to increase students' understanding of concepts because it is able to attract attention and facilitate student interaction with the material in a more concrete way

(Nurhadi, 2019). The use of big book media in PAI learning is expected to overcome the problem of student boredom with the dominant lecture method and increase students' active involvement in the learning process.

Several previous studies have revealed that big book media is effective in increasing students' understanding of concepts and interest in learning. For example, research conducted by Pratiwi and Haryanto (2021) shows that the application of big book media in science learning can significantly improve the learning outcomes of grade VII students. In addition, a study by Wulandari and Kusuma (2022) confirms that the use of big book media is able to encourage students to be more active in asking questions and discussing in learning. However, the application of this media is still rarely found in PAI learning, especially in junior high schools which have their own challenges related to abstract concepts of religion.

The urgency of this research is very important considering the strategic role of religious education in shaping the nation's religious character and noble character (Mulyasa, 2017). In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic that has caused distance learning also requires teachers to be more creative in utilizing learning media that are interesting and easily accessible to students, so that big book media that can be presented in digital and print formats is a relevant choice (Kurniawan & Sari, 2021). The research gap found is the lack of studies that specifically examine the use of big book media to improve understanding of concepts in PAI learning, especially in SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin which has unique student characteristics and learning conditions.

The constructivist learning theory put forward by Piaget and Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of students' active involvement in building knowledge through social experiences and interactions (Santrock, 2018). Big book media can be a means that allows students to interact with the material visually and verbally, as well as support group discussion activities that enrich conceptual understanding. This is also in accordance with the principle of media-based learning which states that the proper use of media can significantly improve students' memory and understanding (Mayer, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to find out and describe the effectiveness of the use of big book media in improving students' ability to understand concepts in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin. Thus, it is hoped that this research can make a practical contribution for PAI teachers in choosing effective learning media and provide an empirical picture of improving student learning outcomes through big book media. Furthermore, this research also aims to add to the treasure of the study of innovative learning media in the field of religious education that still rarely receives attention. With a better understanding of concepts, students will be more motivated to actively ask, discuss, and reflect on the learning received (Ministry of National Education, 2013). Therefore, this research will be the basis for the development of more innovative and effective PAI learning models in the future.

METHODS

This research uses the Classroom Action Research (PTK) approach, which is a research model that is carried out systematically with the aim of improving and improving the learning process in the classroom through continuous action cycles (Arikunto, 2012). PTK was chosen because it allows researchers to directly implement big book media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning and evaluate and reflect on the results contextually. This research was conducted at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin, a junior high school that implements a curriculum based on religion and character excellence.

The subjects of the study were 24 students in grade VIII. The selection of this class was based on the consideration that this class had difficulties in understanding the concept of PAI learning, especially material on faith and morals, as known from the results of the initial test and preliminary observation. The purposive selection of subjects is in

accordance with the PTK principle which focuses on improving learning in classrooms that require intervention (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

The research location is at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin which is located in City X, with school conditions that have provided learning support facilities such as air-conditioned classrooms, computer laboratories, and adequate internet networks. This condition supports the use of big book media in print and digital formats. The research was carried out for two cycles, each cycle consisted of two meetings with a duration of 45 minutes per meeting.

The research procedure begins with the identification of problems through initial observation and tests of students' concept understanding of PAI material. After that, action planning is carried out in the form of the preparation of a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) that combines sharing-based learning strategies and the use of big book media. The big book media used is a large storybook containing PAI material that is attractively designed with illustrated images that support the explanation of concepts and texts that are easy for students to read (Putra, 2019). This media is prepared in two forms, namely large print for classroom presentations and digital versions that can be accessed through electronic devices.

The implementation of actions is carried out according to the RPP that has been prepared. In the first meeting of cycle I, the teacher opens the learning with perception then shows the big book media in turn and invites students to discuss the content of the material. Each student is given the opportunity to read a specific section and express his or her opinion, so that there is an active interaction that leads to an understanding of the concept. In the second meeting, students carried out group activities by discussing questions related to the material and making a summary of the results of the discussion which was then presented in front of the class (Sanjaya, 2017).

The research instruments used consisted of several data collection tools, namely concept comprehension tests in the form of multiple choice and descriptions to measure student learning outcomes, observation sheets of student activity in learning, and field notes to record teacher activities and student responses during the learning process (Creswell, 2018). Tests are given at the beginning (pre-cycle), after cycle I, and after cycle II to see the development of students' abilities quantitatively. Observation sheets and field notes were used to obtain qualitative data on learning dynamics.

The data collection technique was carried out in a triangulation manner by combining test results, observations, and brief interviews with several selected students to explore their perceptions of the use of big book media in PAI learning (Moleong, 2018). The interviews were conducted informally and aimed to get a deeper picture of the motivations and obstacles experienced by students during learning.

Data analysis was carried out with qualitative and quantitative descriptive approaches. Quantitative data from test results were analyzed using simple statistics in the form of average calculations, percentage of learning completeness based on the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) set by the school, and comparison of scores between pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed with content analysis techniques to find patterns of student activity, teacher-student interaction, and changes in attitudes during the learning process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

After the first cycle is completed, reflection is carried out with teachers and students to evaluate the implementation of learning and identify shortcomings and things that need to be improved. This reflection became the basis for the planning of cycle II, where the big book media was improved in its visual appearance and the discussion method was developed by dividing into small groups so that student participation was more evenly distributed. Cycle II was carried out with a similar procedure, but with adjustments based on the results of reflection.

The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of data collection sources and techniques, as well as the participation of teachers as reflective partners in

analyzing learning outcomes. In addition, researchers try to maintain objectivity by recording and documenting the entire research process in detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With this method, it is hoped that research can produce valid and accountable findings. Thus, the classroom action research method used in this study allows for continuous changes and improvements in the PAI learning process through the use of big book media. Researchers can directly observe, analyze, and evaluate the impact of the application of these media on students' understanding of concepts and activeness in learning.

RESULTS

This research was carried out in two cycles with the aim of improving students' ability to understand concepts through the use of big book media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in grade VIII of SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin. At the beginning of the study, learning conditions showed low understanding of students' concepts and limited activeness in the teaching and learning process. Based on the results of the initial test, out of 24 students, only 11 students (45.83%) achieved the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) of 70, while 13 students (54.17%) obtained a score below KKM with an average grade of 63.4. This shows that most students have not understood the concept of faith and morals material in depth, so a more interesting and effective learning strategy is needed (Arikunto, 2012).

Observations on the initial condition also showed that only about 8 students (33.33%) actively participated in learning, such as asking questions, answering questions, and discussing. Students tend to be passive, only listening to the teacher's explanation without giving a response. This situation indicates a lack of interaction and involvement of students in the learning process, so that the classroom atmosphere is less lively and learning is less meaningful (Sanjaya, 2017).

In the first cycle, the action taken was the application of big book media as the main learning medium. The teacher opens the learning with an insight related to the material of faith, then shows a big book that contains stories and illustrations about relevant religious concepts. Students are invited to read together, observe pictures, and discuss in small groups about the content of the material. These discussions are facilitated by teachers with open-ended questions that stimulate students to think critically and express their opinions. At the end of the lesson, a concept comprehension test was given to measure the improvement in learning outcomes (Creswell, 2018).

The results of cycle I showed a significant increase. Of the 24 students, 16 students (66.67%) managed to achieve a score of ≥ 70 , while 8 students (33.33%) have not completed. The average grade point increase to 71.2. Student activeness in learning also increased, with 15 students (62.5%) actively participating in discussions and questions and answers. The learning process feels more lively and students seem more enthusiastic about participating in learning using big book media (Gay et al., 2012).

Reflections at the end of cycle I reveal some important things. First, big book media has proven to be effective in attracting students' attention and facilitating the understanding of material through a combination of visuals and informative text. Second, even though the activity has increased, there are still some students who do not dare to speak in front of the class. Therefore, in cycle II, improvements were made by adding a variety of media in the form of digital animation and smaller discussion groups so that each student felt more comfortable participating (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

In cycle II, the implementation of learning is more focused on interaction between students through small group discussions and presentation of discussion results. Big book media is still used as the main source, but it is supplemented by short animated shows that strengthen students' visual understanding. Teachers play the role of facilitators who actively provide feedback and direct discussions so that they run according to learning objectives (Putra, 2019). The results of the cycle II test showed a better improvement. A total of 21 students (87.5%) managed to achieve a score of ≥ 70 , and only 3 students

(12.5%) have not completed it. The average grade point increase to 78.4. This increase shows that the use of big book media combined with group discussion strategies is effective in improving students' understanding of concepts in PAI materials (Moleong, 2018).

In addition, student activity has also increased significantly. Observation noted that as many as 20 students (83.33%) actively participated in learning with various activities such as asking questions, answering, and discussing. Students who were initially passive began to show courage and confidence to express their opinions, even students who were previously less active began to engage in group discussions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The students' response to the big book media was very positive. Based on the results of the interviews, students stated that the big book made it easier for them to understand the material because of the interesting visualizations and easy-to-understand text. They also find learning more fun and less boring. Some students mentioned that group discussions made them more confident and able to learn from their classmates (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the use of big book media in PAI learning can significantly improve students' ability to understand concepts. This medium not only serves as a visual aid, but also as an interactive medium that encourages active student engagement in learning. The increase in test scores and student activity is proof of the success of the actions implemented (Arikunto, 2012; Creswell, 2018).

These results are in line with the findings of previous research which shows that visual and interactive learning media can improve student motivation and learning outcomes (Sanjaya, 2017; Putra, 2019). In addition, the application of group discussions has been proven to increase students' courage in communicating and understanding concepts more deeply (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014). Thus, it can be concluded that big book media is effectively used to improve students' understanding of concepts in learning Islamic Religious Education at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin. The use of this media also helps to create a more interactive, fun, and meaningful learning atmosphere, thereby encouraging an improvement in the quality of student learning processes and outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of this research focuses on the effectiveness of the use of big book media in improving students' ability to understand concepts in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin. The results of the study show that the application of big book media significantly contributes to the improvement of students' understanding of concepts, which is in line with various theories and findings of previous research. Big book media as a visual and interactive learning medium provides a strong stimulus for students to capture information more thoroughly and deeply. This is in line with the opinion of Mayer (2009) who states that the use of visual media in learning can improve cognitive processes and information retention, so that students can more easily understand the concepts being taught.

In addition, this study shows that the use of big books is also able to accommodate various student learning styles, especially visual and kinesthetic learning styles, thereby increasing student motivation and involvement in the learning process. According to Fleming and Mills (1992), the success of learning depends heavily on the extent to which learning media and methods are in accordance with students' learning styles. With big book media, students can see big picture, clear text, and actively participate in group discussions that strengthen conceptual understanding collaboratively. This supports Piaget's (1972) theory of constructivism which emphasizes the importance of students' active involvement in building knowledge.

The findings of this study are also in line with the results of research by Wulandari and Supriyadi (2018) who found that the use of visual media such as big books significantly improves student learning outcomes compared to traditional lecture

methods. This success is also supported by the factor of ease of teachers in managing the classroom and explaining the material with interesting and interactive media. Teachers do not only play the role of delivering material, but also as facilitators who encourage students to think critically and discuss. In line with the opinion of Hattie (2009), the active involvement of students in learning is one of the main factors that affect the success of learning.

In addition, big book media has proven to be effective for Islamic Religious Education materials that require a deep understanding of concepts and a strong cultural context. As a medium that combines text and images, big books make it easier for students to understand stories and religious values in a complete and contextual way. This is important in religious learning, which not only requires memorization, but also understanding that can be applied in daily life (Nasution, 2016). Increasing understanding of this concept is expected to help students in applying religious values in real action.

This research also revealed that the use of big book media can increase interaction and communication between students during the learning process. Group discussions conducted using big books make students more active in asking questions, expressing opinions, and correcting each other's understandings. This supports the theory of Vygotsky (1978) which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process as a means of cognitive development. These interactions provide a space for students to exchange ideas and build new understandings collaboratively. However, this study also found several obstacles in the implementation of the use of big books, such as the limited number of available media so that they must be used in turn, as well as the need for teachers to be more skilled in facilitating discussions and managing learning time. This is in accordance with the findings of Slameto (2010) who stated that the success of learning media is highly dependent on the ability of teachers to integrate these media into learning strategies effectively. Therefore, training and mentoring for teachers are very important so that the use of big books can be optimal.

The contribution of this research to educational practice is as empirical evidence that big book media not only improves understanding of concepts but also enriches students' learning experience with a more engaging and participatory approach. This is in line with the goals of 21st century education which emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, and collaboration (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The use of big book media can be a strategic alternative to overcome Islamic Religious Education learning which tends to be monotonous and lecture-based.

In general, this study strengthens the evidence that visual learning media, especially big books, are an effective tool in improving the quality of learning. This media not only facilitates the understanding of concepts but also encourages students to be active and emotionally and socially involved in learning. Therefore, schools and teachers are advised to integrate big book media in learning, especially for subjects that require an understanding of complex concepts such as Islamic Religious Education.

Further research can explore the use of big book media with digital technology to reach more interactive and flexible learning, considering the rapid development of technology today (Kozma, 2011). In addition, further research can also examine the long-term impact of the use of big books on students' attitudes and behaviors in applying religious values in daily life, so that the contribution of this media can be more comprehensive. Overall, the big book media has proven to be an effective learning innovation to improve students' ability to understand concepts in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin. This success is a combination of the advantages of engaging media, interactive learning strategies, and the role of teachers as active facilitators. The practical implications of these results are the need to provide adequate learning media and increase the capacity of teachers in managing media-based learning to achieve higher quality educational goals.

Further research can explore the integration of big book media with digital technology to create a more interactive and flexible learning experience. With the rapid

advancement of educational technology today, combining traditional big book formats with digital tools such as interactive tablets or augmented reality can greatly enhance student engagement and accessibility (Kozma, 2011). This approach would allow learners to interact with the content in dynamic ways, such as through animations, quizzes, and audio narrations, which can cater to diverse learning styles and increase motivation. Exploring this intersection between conventional media and digital innovation could open new pathways for effective religious education, especially for young students in increasingly tech-savvy environments. In addition to technological enhancements, future research should examine the long-term effects of big book media on students' attitudes and behaviors, particularly in applying Islamic values in daily life. While improved academic understanding is a critical outcome, the ultimate goal of religious education extends beyond cognitive gains to nurturing moral and spiritual development. Investigating how sustained exposure to such media influences students' character formation and ethical conduct could provide deeper insights into its holistic educational impact. Longitudinal studies tracking behavioral changes over time would help educators and policymakers better assess the comprehensive contributions of big book media in shaping students' lives.

The effectiveness of big book media in this study at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin can be attributed to several key factors. First, the media itself offers engaging, colorful, and narrative-driven content that captures students' attention and simplifies complex religious concepts. Second, the interactive learning strategies employed alongside the media, such as group discussions and role-plays, actively involve students in the learning process, promoting better comprehension and retention. Third, the role of teachers as active facilitators is crucial; their ability to guide, motivate, and adapt instruction ensures that the media is utilized to its fullest potential. This combination creates an optimal learning environment where students not only receive information but also internalize and apply it meaningfully. From a practical perspective, these findings underscore the importance of providing adequate learning media and investing in teacher training focused on media-based instruction. To achieve higher quality educational outcomes, schools must ensure that teachers are equipped with both the resources and skills necessary to manage interactive and innovative learning tools effectively. Professional development programs aimed at enhancing teachers' technological literacy and pedagogical techniques can empower them to design more engaging and effective learning experiences. Ultimately, this integrated approach supports the advancement of Islamic Religious Education and contributes to the overall goal of fostering knowledgeable, moral, and well-rounded students.

CONCLUSION

The use of big book media in learning Islamic Religious Education at SMPIT Darul Muta'allimin has proven to be effective in significantly improving students' concept comprehension skills, this is shown by increasing student active participation and increasing consistent learning outcomes throughout the learning process. Big book media not only facilitates the delivery of material visually and attractively, but also supports student involvement in group discussions thereby encouraging more interactive and constructive learning. This success shows that the integration of big book media can be an effective strategy in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning, as well as strengthening the understanding of concepts that are important in the development of religious character and values in students.

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