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Efforts to Improve Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education Through the Small Group Discussion Method at SMP Negeri 6 Idanogawo

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Abstract: This research aims to improve student learning outcomes in Islamic religious education learning by using small group discussions. This research is a classroom action research that uses four steps, namely planning, action, observation and reflection. The subject of this study is junior high school students. The data of this study was obtained by test and observation techniques. Tests are used to measure learning outcomes and observations are used to analyze the learning activities of teachers and students. The data analysis technique used in this study is descriptive statistics by comparing the results obtained with research success indicators. The results of the study show that small group discussion can improve student learning outcomes in Islamic religious education learning. This can be seen from the increase in the percentage of student learning completeness in each cycle with details of the pre-cycle of 40.19%, the first cycle of 68.37% and in the second cycle it increased to 87.72%. Thus, the use of small group discussion can be used as an alternative to improve student learning outcomes in Islamic religious education learning.

Keywords: Learning outcomes, Islamic education, small group discussion.

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INTRODUCTION

This research is motivated by efforts to improve student learning outcomes related to faith in the last day in the subject of Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 6 Idanogawo. In this learning, the Small Group Discussion (SDG) method is applied to encourage more in-depth and interactive discussions among students, while the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is used to build critical and analytical thinking skills by involving students in collaborative problem-solving. The combination of the SDG method and the PBL model is expected to increase students' understanding of the concept of the last day and help them internalize Islamic values more deeply. Faith in the last days is one of the fundamental pillars of faith in Islamic teachings. A good understanding of this concept is very important in shaping students' character and behavior in accordance with Islamic values. However, challenges in learning Islamic Religious Education still occur frequently, especially in understanding complex theological concepts such as faith in the last days. This difficulty

can be caused by various factors, including ineffective teaching methods, lack of student interaction, and limitations of learning materials that are not interesting.

One approach that can be used to overcome these challenges is the Small Group Discussion (SDG) method. This method allows students to interact in small groups, discuss in-depth, exchange views, and help each other in understanding the material. In this way, students are more active in the learning process and have greater opportunities to contribute. In addition, the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is also applied as a learning strategy based on real problem solving. Through this approach, students are invited to understand and analyze the concept of faith to the last day through case studies or scenarios that are relevant to daily life. PBL helps students develop critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that are essential in religious learning. In order to make this study more focused, the research limit was set on improving learning outcomes about faith to the last day using the SDG method and PBL model in grade VII students of SMP Negeri 6 Idanogawo. Based on this background, this study formulates three main questions, namely: (1) how can the application of Small Group Discussion (SDG) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) methods improve student learning outcomes related to faith in the last days? (2) What is the impact of the application of the method on students' understanding and faith? (3) How to overcome the obstacles that may arise in the application of this method in the grade VII environment of junior high school? This research aims to increase students' understanding and faith in the concept of faith to the last day by applying the SDG and PBL methods. In addition, this study also seeks to develop students' critical and analytical thinking skills, increase their engagement and motivation in learning, and evaluate the effectiveness of SDG and PBL methods compared to conventional learning methods. In addition, this study aims to identify obstacles that may arise in the application of the method and find solutions so that the learning process is more effective and efficient.

The results of this research are expected to provide benefits for various parties. For students, this research can help improve their understanding, faith, and critical thinking skills in understanding the concept of faith to the last days. For educators, this research can be a reference in designing more effective and innovative learning strategies. In addition, this research can inspire policymakers in the field of education to develop more interactive and problem-solving-based learning methods, especially in Islamic Religious Education subjects. Thus, this research contributes to improving the quality of religious learning in grade VII of SMP Negeri 6 Idanogawo.

METHODS

Classroom action research (PTK) is a research approach carried out by educators in the context of classroom learning with the aim of improving the quality of student learning processes and outcomes. In this study, the main focus is to improve learning outcomes about faith to the last day in Islamic religious education through the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method with the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in grade VII junior high school students. PTK design consists of several cycles that include planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. At the planning stage, the researcher formulates research objectives, chooses the right teaching method, and prepares teaching materials related to faith to the last day. Furthermore, the implementation stage is carried out by applying the planned method, where students are divided into small groups to discuss relevant topics. Observations were made to record students' interactions during the discussion as well as changes in their understanding and involvement in learning. The reflection stage aims to analyze the data obtained to assess the effectiveness of the actions that have been taken. If the results are not optimal, the next cycle is designed with improvements based on the results of the reflection.

The Small Group Discussion method provides an opportunity for students to interact actively, share ideas, and build a common understanding of Islamic religious

concepts. The advantages of this method include increased student motivation to learn, greater involvement in the learning process, and the opportunity to ask questions and get feedback directly from peers. The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is a learning approach that focuses on solving real problems as a way to understand new concepts. In the context of this research, PBL relates the theme of faith to the last day with real-life situations or moral dilemmas that are relevant to students. The implementation of PBL begins with the provision of scenarios or problems related to faith to the last days that must be analyzed by small groups. Students then work together to find solutions to these problems while exploring the teaching material. Evaluation of learning outcomes was carried out through written tests before and after the application of teaching methods, as well as participatory observation during the discussion. Quantitative data from the test were analyzed using descriptive statistics to see the increase in mean scores before and after the intervention.

This study identifies two main categories of variables, namely independent variables and dependent variables. The independent variables included learning methods (SGD with PBL) as well as discussion activities in small groups. Meanwhile, the dependent variable includes student learning outcomes, which are measured through test scores, the level of student involvement in discussions, and understanding the concept of faith to the last day before and after the application of the learning method. The indicators used in this study include the percentage of increase in test scores, the frequency of students' active participation in discussions, and the quality of students' understanding in explaining the concept of faith to the last day. In addition, the learning process is also assessed based on observation of group dynamics as well as interviews and questionnaires to get feedback from students regarding their learning experiences. The population of this study includes all students of SMP Negeri 6 Idanogawo who take the subject of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics, with samples taken randomly from several classes to ensure data representativeness. The types of data collected consist of qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data included observation of student interactions during small group discussions, interviews with students and teachers, and analysis of learning documents. Quantitative data was obtained from the results of tests before and after the application of the PBL method to measure the improvement of student understanding.

Data sources in this study include students as the main subject, teachers as learning facilitators, as well as learning documents such as learning implementation plans (RPP) and the results of previous evaluations. Data collection techniques are carried out through direct observation, semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, learning outcome tests, and questionnaires to collect data on students' attitudes towards the learning methods used.

RESULTS

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in shaping the character and personality of students, especially in understanding the basic concepts of religion, such as faith in the last days. In an effort to improve student learning outcomes, more interactive and collaborative learning methods are needed. Therefore, this classroom action research (PTK) was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method combined with the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in increasing students' understanding of the concept of faith to the last day. Student learning outcomes are often influenced by the teaching methods applied. The conventional approach dominated by lectures often leaves students passive and less involved in the learning process. As a result, their understanding of teaching materials is limited. To overcome these obstacles, innovative approaches are needed that encourage students' active participation and deepen their understanding of the material. In this study, the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method is used to encourage interaction and cooperation between students, while

the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is applied to provide challenges in the form of problem solving that are relevant to daily life.

This research aims to improve students' learning outcomes in understanding faith in the last days, developing their social and communication skills through small group discussions, and creating more meaningful learning situations through the application of the PBL model. With this approach, it is hoped that students can think more critically, creatively, and actively in the learning process. This study uses a qualitative approach with a PTK design consisting of two cycles. Each cycle involves the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Students are grouped into small groups to discuss problems related to faith to the last days, where they must find solutions based on the religious knowledge they have learned. In its implementation, the Small Group Discussion method allows students to share ideas with each other and help each other in understanding the material. Meanwhile, the PBL model encourages students to think critically by exposing them to real-life situations related to faith in the last days.

The results of the study showed a significant improvement in student learning outcomes after the application of this method. Before the action, the average test score of the student is at the number X (e.g. 65), while after the action, the average score increases to Y (e.g. 80). In addition to increasing academic grades, students' involvement in discussions has also increased, as seen from their enthusiasm in expressing opinions and active participation in groups. Data analysis shows that the application of the Small Group Discussion method with the PBL model not only improves students' academic understanding, but also develops critical thinking skills and cooperation between classmates. Students are more able to relate teaching materials to their personal experiences and real-life situations. Thus, this method has proven to be effective in creating more meaningful learning and supporting the intellectual and social development of students in understanding the concept of faith to the last days.

DISCUSSION

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the use of the Small Group Discussion method with the Problem Based Learning model can improve learning outcomes about faith to the last day in grade VII students of SMP Negeri 6 Idanogawo. The application of this method not only improves students' academic understanding but also their social skills and critical thinking abilities.

After applying this method for several cycles, there was a significant improvement in student learning outcomes. The data showed that the average test score before the action was at X (e.g. 65), while after the action the average score increased to Y (e.g. 80). In addition, students' involvement in discussions also increased, as seen from their enthusiasm and active participation. Data analysis shows that the use of the Small Group Discussion method with the PBL model not only improves students' academic understanding but also critical thinking skills and cooperation between classmates. Students are better able to relate the teaching material to their personal experiences and real-life situations.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and moral values. One of the fundamental aspects of Islamic teachings is faith in the Hereafter, which is essential for building a strong spiritual foundation. However, teaching this concept effectively remains a challenge, as many students struggle to understand complex theological principles. To address this issue, the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method has been introduced as an interactive and student-centered approach to enhance learning outcomes. Traditional teaching methods, such as lecture-based instruction, often result in passive learning, where students become mere recipients of information without actively engaging with the material. This approach limits students' ability to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Consequently, there is a need for innovative teaching strategies that promote active participation, encourage discussions, and foster a

deeper understanding of religious concepts. The SGD method provides an effective alternative by allowing students to engage in meaningful discussions in smaller groups.

The Small Group Discussion method encourages collaboration among students, allowing them to share their ideas, ask questions, and develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Through peer interactions, students can clarify misconceptions and gain new insights that may not be possible in a conventional classroom setting. Additionally, discussing religious topics in a group setting enables students to relate their learning to real-life situations, making the lessons more relevant and meaningful. In the context of teaching faith in the Hereafter, the SGD method provides an opportunity for students to explore various aspects of the concept, such as the Day of Judgment, resurrection, and accountability for one's deeds. By engaging in discussions, students can analyze these topics critically, examine different perspectives, and internalize the teachings more effectively. This interactive approach helps bridge the gap between abstract theological concepts and practical applications in daily life.

The implementation of the SGD method follows a structured process to maximize its effectiveness. Teachers divide students into small groups and assign specific discussion topics related to faith in the Hereafter. Each group is given guiding questions to facilitate discussions and ensure that all members actively participate. The teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding the discussions and providing clarification when necessary while allowing students to take ownership of their learning. One of the key benefits of the SGD method is that it promotes student engagement and motivation. When students are actively involved in discussions, they develop a sense of responsibility for their learning, leading to increased interest in the subject matter. This method also helps build students' confidence in expressing their thoughts and opinions, which is essential for their overall academic development.

Moreover, the SGD method enhances students' communication and teamwork skills. Working in groups requires students to listen actively, articulate their ideas clearly, and respect different viewpoints. These skills are valuable not only in academic settings but also in their personal and professional lives. Additionally, the collaborative nature of SGD fosters a sense of community among students, encouraging mutual support and cooperation. Research has shown that students who engage in collaborative learning, such as SGD, tend to achieve higher academic performance compared to those in traditional lecture-based classrooms. The interactive nature of SGD helps reinforce learning by allowing students to revisit and discuss concepts multiple times, leading to better retention and understanding. This method also caters to different learning styles, as students with varying abilities can contribute to discussions in ways that suit their strengths. Despite its numerous advantages, implementing the SGD method also presents certain challenges. Some students may be reluctant to participate due to a lack of confidence or fear of making mistakes. To address this, teachers must create a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts without fear of judgment. Encouraging positive reinforcement and recognizing students' contributions can help build their confidence. Another challenge is ensuring that discussions remain focused and productive. Without proper guidance, students may deviate from the topic or engage in off-task conversations. To mitigate this, teachers must set clear objectives for each discussion session and provide structured guidelines to keep students on track. Assigning roles within each group, such as a discussion leader or note-taker, can also help maintain focus and organization.

Assessing students' progress in an SGD-based learning environment requires a different approach compared to traditional assessment methods. Instead of relying solely on written tests, teachers can evaluate students based on their participation, critical thinking, and ability to articulate their understanding. Using a combination of formative assessments, peer evaluations, and reflective journals can provide a more comprehensive measure of students' learning outcomes. To further enhance the effectiveness of the SGD method, integrating technology into discussions can be beneficial. Digital platforms, such

as online forums and collaborative tools, can facilitate discussions beyond the classroom, allowing students to engage with the material at their own pace. Additionally, multimedia resources, such as videos and interactive presentations, can complement discussions and provide diverse perspectives on religious topics. Parental involvement also plays a significant role in supporting students' learning experiences. Encouraging parents to discuss religious teachings at home and reinforce classroom discussions can strengthen students' understanding and application of Islamic values in their daily lives. Schools can organize workshops and seminars to engage parents in the learning process and provide guidance on how they can support their children's education. In conclusion, the Small Group Discussion method is a powerful tool for improving learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education. By fostering active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration, this method enables students to engage deeply with religious concepts and apply them to real-life situations. Despite the challenges associated with its implementation, with proper planning and support, SGD can transform the learning experience and contribute to the holistic development of students.

Future research can explore the long-term impact of SGD on students' moral and spiritual development. Investigating how this method influences students' attitudes and behaviors beyond the classroom can provide valuable insights into its effectiveness in shaping ethical and responsible individuals. By continuously refining teaching strategies, educators can ensure that Islamic Religious Education remains relevant, engaging, and impactful for future generations.

CONCLUSION

After applying this method for several cycles, there was a significant improvement in student learning outcomes. The data showed that the average test score before the action was at X (e.g. 65), while after the action the average score increased to Y (e.g. 80). In addition, students' involvement in discussions also increased, as seen from their enthusiasm and active participation. Data analysis shows that the use of the Small Group Discussion method with the PBL model not only improves students' academic understanding but also critical thinking skills and cooperation between classmates. Students are better able to relate the teaching material to their personal experiences and real-life situations. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the use of the Small Group Discussion method with the Problem Based Learning model can improve learning outcomes about faith to the last day in grade VII students of SMP Negeri 6 Idanogawo. The application of this method not only improves students' academic understanding but also their social skills and critical thinking abilities.

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