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Active Learning Small Group Discussion Method to Improve the Quality of Islamic Education Learning

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Article Information	Abstract
Received: 20 May 2024	<i>This study aims to analyze the process of improving the quality of learning in the scope of Islamic religious education. This study uses a qualitative approach, field studies. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The collected data were checked with source triangulation and technique triangulation then analyzed with the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the small group discussion method encourages collaboration, because students are divided into several groups, thus encouraging collaborative learning. This approach encourages active involvement and empowers students, which leads to improving the quality of Islamic religious education learning. Active learning methods improve the quality of learning through increasing participation and learning motivation, increasing conceptual understanding, the role of teachers as facilitators and developing social skills and critical thinking. The implementation of the sgdm method needs to be applied more widely, both in Islamic religious education subjects and other subjects, to continue to encourage more effective and meaningful learning for students.</i>
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<p>Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses peningkatan mutu pembelajaran lingkup PAI. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, studi lapangan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data yang terkumpul dilakukan pengecekan dengan triangulasi sumber dan triangulasi teknik kemudian dianalisis dengan tahapan kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metode diskusi kelompok kecil mendorong kolaborasi, karena siswa dibagi menjadi beberapa kelompok, sehingga mendorong pembelajaran bersama. Pendekatan ini mendorong keterlibatan aktif dan memberdayakan siswa, yang mengarah pada peningkatan</p>	

mutu pembelajaran PAI. Metode pembelajaran aktif meningkatkan kualitas pembelajran melalui peningkatan partisipasi dan motivasi belajar, peningkatan pemahaman konseptual, peran guru sebagai fasilitator serta pengembangan keterampilan sosial dan berpikir kritis. Implementasi metode sgd perlu diterapkan secara lebih luas, baik dalam mata pelajaran PAI maupun mata pelajaran lainnya, untuk terus mendorong pembelajaran yang lebih efektif dan bermakna bagi siswa.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the learning process, there will be a reciprocal activity between the teacher and students to achieve better goals. The implementation of Islamic religious education in educational institutions held in schools has a very important position in guiding students' religious knowledge (Huda et al., 2020; Taubah, 2019).

However, when a teacher's learning is required to be regular, directed, systematic, and planned, a learning method is needed. An effective and efficient way to achieve learning goals is to interest someone, which can also be used as a teaching approach. A teacher and students must participate in the learning process. Because one of the keys to realizing change is the teacher (Somantri et al., 2024).

A good education will produce high quality generations in this country. The government must pay special attention to all aspects of education to improve education (Sola, 2019). This includes students, teachers, objectives, materials, methods, facilities and infrastructure, evaluation, and environment. The learning component involves teachers and students as active participants (Wibowo, 2016). Therefore, educators must be able to supervise many learning components. In line with these factors, professional teachers are needed in learning (Harjanto et al., 2017; Jordan et al., 2021). Teachers who are able to manage learning with appropriate methods, make it easy for students to learn lesson material, resulting in better outcomes. The use of learning methods must be varied so that students do not feel bored. Teachers do not only rely on one method, namely the lecture method, in learning activities (Ikhwan, 2019).

As is already known, looking at the Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir Middle School perspective on Islamic Religious Education learning, it was found that learning activities are still dominant by providing assignment methods to students, teachers still dominate learning activities, and students are given less opportunity to express ideas and construct their own answers to practice questions. given by the teacher (Fauzi & Inayati, 2023). Based on the results of initial observations and initial interviews with one of the PAI subject teachers, this is because the learning method is less active in improving the quality of PAI learning (Thahir et al., 2023). Some of the teacher's efforts so far in providing material have been less than interesting (Silberman et al., 2015).

By using methods to create interactive learning strategies and techniques, teachers can innovate learning in the learning method process (Jannah, 2019). The small group discussion approach is an active learning strategy that can help students gain the freedom to express opinions (Wellyanti & Narwen, 2018). Class participants are divided into small groups for the purpose of small group discussion, an active learning technique (Putriawati, 2019; Ridwan & Al-Baekani, 2019). The program's ease of use makes it suitable for a variety of settings. Additionally, it fosters collaborative thinking among students and helps them refine their ideas as a group (Syafyahya & Yades, 2018). Listening well, teamwork and the ability to accept criticism in order to appreciate differences of opinion are some of the soft skills produced (Anwar, 2023).

II. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, namely scientific research that describes phenomena that occur realistically, actually, and contemporary, because this study includes making descriptions, images, or paintings systematically, factually, and precisely regarding the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the phenomena studied (Ikhwan, 2021; Setyosari, 2016). The type of field research was chosen to identify and explain the phenomena that occur in the field. This research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir. The reason for choosing the location was the discovery of an increase in the

quality of PAI learning using the Active Learning method of the Small Group Discussion type. The subjects in this study were 2 fiqh subject teachers and 2 students.

Data collection was carried out directly in the field using data collection techniques with observation, interviews, and documentation (Hardani et al., 2020). An interview is a process of communication or interaction to collect information through questions and answers between researchers and research subjects. In essence, an interview is an activity to obtain detailed information about the questions and problems raised in the survey. Observation is a data collection technique using the senses of sight, hearing, smell, and five senses to obtain the information needed to answer research problems. This observation has special characteristics when compared to other techniques, namely interviews and questionnaires. The type of observation that will be used is focused observation, where this observation has a reference to the formulation of the problem or theme. Documentation is the last research method used. Documentation is information that can be obtained through facts stored in the form of letters, notes, archives, photos, or other things. In addition, documentation is a data collection method that produces important notes related to the problems being studied, so that complete, correct data can be obtained and not just based on ideas (Sukmadinata, 2016).

Data collected before analysis was checked using source triangulation and technical triangulation. This qualitative data analysis technique is carried out in several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. Data reduction: the process of sorting data to focus on important aspects related to active learning small group discussion method. Data presentation: the reduced data is then presented in the form of a narrative, matrix, or diagram to facilitate understanding of the patterns that emerge. Drawing conclusions: after the data is analyzed, conclusions are drawn to determine how the active learning system is applied to improve the quality of learning (Miles et al., 2014).

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Active Learning with Small Group Discussion

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir has implemented a small group discussion method as part of an active learning approach. This method aims to improve the quality of learning in a more participatory way, where students do not only passively listen, but are also actively involved in the learning process (Butolo et al., 2023). Small group discussion-based learning is considered effective in creating a pleasant learning atmosphere and making students more comfortable with the material presented. In this case, teachers play an important role in planning, organizing, and facilitating conducive learning activities (Susanto, 2020).

Based on the results of an interview with Khusni (2024), he emphasized that a varied approach to teaching is very necessary to improve the quality of learning. According to him, varied learning methods allow students to feel more comfortable and not bored. In the context of small group discussions, he emphasized the importance of creating a conducive atmosphere so that students are more active in participating in learning activities. This is done through a group sorting process so that each group has the right dynamics and each student can contribute according to their abilities.

The first step in implementing this small group discussion method begins with careful planning by the Khusni (2024) begins the lesson with greetings, prayers, and reading of tadarus by students. Then, he introduces the main material, namely "Qurban," by giving a brief introduction followed by student responses. Furthermore, the material is explained further using a PowerPoint presentation containing information about sacrifice in everyday life. This is an important stage in the active learning model, where students are given an initial overview before they have a more in-depth discussion in small groups (Madjdi & Rokhayani, 2021).

In the second stage, Khusni (2024) divides students into five discussion groups based on their attendance order. Each group is given a specific topic related to the big theme, namely Qurban. For example, the first group is asked to

explain the meaning of sacrifice, the second group discusses the requirements for slaughtering sacrificial animals, and so on. This group division aims to ensure that each student gets clear responsibilities and is able to explore one aspect of the topic more specifically. The teacher also provides relevant learning resources such as worksheets and textbooks, and gives 10 minutes for internal discussion within the group.

After the discussion time is over, each group presents the results of their discussion. During the presentation, other groups are given the opportunity to ask questions and provide responses. This interaction between groups is designed so that students not only listen and speak, but also exchange ideas and enrich their understanding through dialogue. This stage also helps students hone their critical thinking skills and improve their understanding of the material more comprehensively.

After all groups have completed their presentations, Khusni (2024) summarizes the results of the discussion and emphasizes the important points that emerged during the question and answer session. This conclusion is drawn from the conversation that occurred during the discussion, so that students can understand the essence of the material discussed. In addition, the teacher's conclusion helps to reinforce the information that has been presented previously and ensures that all students have the same understanding of the topic.

At the end of the session, Khusni (2024) gives homework as a follow-up to the learning in class. This assignment aims to reinforce the material that has been learned and provide an opportunity for students to reflect on what they have learned. Motivation is also given to students so that they continue to be enthusiastic in learning and prepare themselves for the next learning. Learning ends with prayer and greetings.

This small group discussion method has proven effective in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir. The teacher acts as a facilitator who not only provides material, but also helps students in the learning process through effective discussion management and interaction (Minsih & Galih, 2018). This small group discussion-based learning also

provides space for students to be more active in learning, which is one of the main characteristics of active learning. Students are not only passive listeners, but are also directly involved in the learning process through discussions, presentations, and questions and answers.

From the results of class observations, it can be seen that this method has succeeded in making students participate more actively in learning activities. The teacher has succeeded in conditioning the class well, so that the learning atmosphere remains controlled and effective. However, there are several challenges that need to be overcome, such as ensuring that each student contributes to the group and maximizing discussion time to be more efficient. Teachers need to continue to monitor and provide guidance during discussions to ensure that learning runs smoothly and students remain focused on the topic being discussed.

Overall, the application of the small group discussion method in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir has a positive impact on improving the quality of learning. With this learning strategy, students become more active and involved in the learning process, while the teacher acts as a facilitator who helps direct the discussion. This changes the teaching paradigm from a traditional teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered approach. Thus, it is hoped that the quality of learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir will continue to improve along with the use of active learning methods such as this small group discussion.

Active Learning to Improve Learning Quality

The findings show that the use of SGD successfully created an active and interactive learning atmosphere in the classroom (Aini, 2022). This is in line with the Active Learning theory proposed by Bonwell & Eison (1991), where learning becomes more meaningful when students are directly involved in learning activities that require them to think critically and discuss. In the observed class, students were more involved in learning activities through group discussions, where they exchanged opinions and answered questions from classmates, which of course enriched their understanding of the material. By acting as a facilitator,

the teacher was able to create a more open atmosphere, so that students felt comfortable and actively participated (Patau, 2024).

In addition, the implementation of small group discussions reflects the concept of Collaborative Learning proposed by Johnson & Johnson (1986). They emphasized that cooperation between students in a group not only improves social skills but also helps them achieve learning goals together (Suh, 2011). This was evident in observations at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir, where groups of students worked together to understand the material, such as the laws and procedures for slaughtering sacrificial animals. Students who have a better understanding of the material help their group members who still don't understand it, so that each group member gets an equal opportunity to learn and develop (Astuti, 2021).

The theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) proposed by Vygotsky (1978) also seems relevant in this context. The teacher divides students into groups based on their abilities, ensuring that the groups contain students with different levels of understanding. This allows more advanced students to help students who need more guidance, so that they can deepen their understanding of the material through social interaction. In this way, these small discussion groups develop a cooperative learning process, supported by a supportive social environment (Fajar, 2021).

Previous research by Susanto (2020) showed that SGD can significantly increase student participation. This is in line with the findings at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir, where students were actively involved in the discussion process and were able to contribute to each topic discussed (Nahak & Benu, 2021). The change in the role of the teacher from teacher to facilitator in SGD also seems successful in creating a more participatory learning environment. In this discussion, students not only listen to the teacher's lecture, but are also invited to think and interact directly through questions and group discussions (Darmiyanti & Taufik, 2021).

Fajar (2021) research which found that SGD is effective in improving students' understanding of abstract concepts in religious learning is also relevant

to findings in the field. For example, material on "sacrifice" involving theological concepts and religious law can be better explained through small group discussions (Nisa et al., 2021). When students are given the opportunity to discuss the requirements for slaughtering sacrificial animals, they can develop a better understanding, because the material is discussed in an applicable and collaborative manner (Ghozali et al., 2022).

This finding also supports research conducted by Putriawati (2019), which shows that small group discussion-based learning can improve students' critical thinking skills. This is evident in the PAI class observed, where students not only passively study the material, but also analyze and provide critical responses to the material presented by the teacher and their group mates (Mutahidah & Muhamadiyah, 2021). The question and answer activity after the presentation also encourages students to develop critical thinking skills by questioning information and providing constructive opinions.

Overall, the small group discussion method in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir has proven effective in improving the quality of learning. This method not only improves students' understanding of the material, but also develops their social and intellectual skills, making learning more meaningful and sustainable (Hudriyah et al., 2021).

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the application of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Minggir significantly improves the quality of learning by encouraging more active student involvement, deeper understanding, and the development of critical thinking and collaboration skills. Teachers act as facilitators, creating an interactive learning atmosphere and supporting student independence in learning. Practical implications of the application of this method include increasing student motivation, optimizing the role of teachers, and developing social and academic skills through structured discussions. To strengthen these results, suggestions put forward include improving teacher training in implementing active learning methods, using a variety of learning

resources, and collaborating with parents and the community to support the sustainability of learning outside the classroom. This SGD method can be adopted more widely in various subjects to create more effective and meaningful learning.

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