

Contents lists available at ojs.aeducia.org

Indonesian Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning

Volume 3, Issue 1 (2026), DOI: 10.64420/ijitl.v3i1

Journal homepage: https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/ijitl

IJITL

E-ISSN 3048-3816

P-ISSN 3062-9772

Research Article **Read Online:** https://doi.org/10.64420/ijitl.v3i1.381 **Open Access**

Improving Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education on the Topic of Asmaulhusna Using the Make a Match Method

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: January 25, 2026

Revised: February 24, 2026

Accepted: February 26, 2026

Published: March 30, 2026

KEYWORDS

Elementary School Students;
Learning Outcomes;
Islamic Religious Education;
Topic of Asmaulhusna;
Make a Match Method

ABSTRACT

Background: Islamic Religious Education in elementary school plays a vital role in instilling faith, moral values, and religious principles in students from an early age. However, in practice, Islamic Religious Education is often delivered through conventional lecture methods and textbooks, resulting in low student interest and limited understanding of the material, particularly Asmaulhusna. **Objective**: This study aimed to determine the improvement in students' Aqidah learning outcomes through the implementation of the Make a Match method at SDN 11 Bengkulu Selatan. **Method:** This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach conducted in three cycles during the first semester of the 2024–2025 academic year, specifically in September. The research subjects consisted of 20 fourth-grade students at SDN 11 Bengkulu Selatan. Data were collected through written tests to measure learning outcomes and classroom observations conducted by the teacher during the learning process. **Findings:** The results showed that implementing the Make a Match method significantly improved students' learning outcomes. The percentage of mastery learning increased from 55% in Cycle I to 75% in Cycle II and to 90% in Cycle III. These findings indicate that the Make a Match method is effective in helping students understand Aqidah material, particularly Asmaulhusna, in a more interactive and enjoyable way. Conclusion: The Make a Match method significantly enhances students' Aqidah learning outcomes and can serve as an effective alternative instructional strategy. **Contribution:** This study contributes by providing an innovative instructional model that teachers can use to enhance student engagement, motivation, and understanding of Islamic Religious Education in elementary school. It also offers a foundation for further research in similar religious education contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education in elementary school plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, faith (aqidah), and moral values from an early age. Learning in Islamic Religious Education does not merely focus on the delivery of information; it emphasises interactive and enjoyable learning experiences (Rahmania et al., 2023). The learning process should encourage students to think actively, engage in discussions, and practice religious values in their daily lives (Rasyidi, 2024). Teachers, as facilitators, need to adapt instructional methods to children's charac-

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How to Cite this Article:

Hafiza, R., Amaliyah, A., & Sukarno, S. (2026). Improving Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education on the Topic of Asmaulhusna Using the Make a Match Method. *Indonesian Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning, 3*(1), 43-51. https://doi.org/10.64420/ijitl.v3i1.481

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teristics, as they tend to learn more effectively through concrete activities and games (Fatimah et al., 2025). In addition, the use of varied media and teaching strategies can help students better understand abstract concepts, such as Asmaulhusna, in a more meaningful and effective way (Funna, 2025).

However, field observations indicate that Islamic Religious Education learning on the topic of Asmaulhusna in fourth grade at SDN 11 Bengkulu Selatan during the first semester of the 2024 academic year was still conducted conventionally. Lecture methods and textbooks were dominant, while active student interaction during the learning process was limited. As a result, students tended to be passive, easily bored, and demonstrated low understanding of the material. This situation reflects a gap between the ideal expectations of learning and the actual classroom conditions. Furthermore, the lack of instructional innovation undermines students' learning motivation, underscoring the need for teachers to implement more creative strategies to enhance both learning outcomes and student engagement.

Interactive and game-based learning methods have been shown to positively affect students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. According to Ramadhani (2024), the goal of Islamic Religious Education is to develop students' faith and understanding through knowledge, experience, and habituation so that they become individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character. Elementary school students more easily grasp abstract concepts when they are presented through real-life experiences, simulations, or educational games (Saba, 2024; Zahroh et al., 2025). With appropriate approaches, teachers can help students internalise religious values more effectively, ensuring that learning becomes not only a transfer of knowledge but also a character-building process (Judrah et al., 2024).

Previous studies have revealed that the use of game-based methods in Islamic Religious Education improves students' ability to remember religious concepts (Septiani, 2025; Wahyuni, 2025; Lisa & Muthohar, 2024). Other research indicates that interactivity and group activities enhance student participation and understanding of learning materials (Siagian et al., 2025; Noviani & Muthi, 2025; Nofmiyati, 2023). However, there is still limited research specifically examining the implementation of the Make a Match method in Asmaulhusna at the elementary school level, particularly at SDN 11 Bengkulu Selatan. This indicates a need to empirically test the effectiveness of this method in a local context, providing teachers with more innovative and relevant instructional alternatives tailored to students' characteristics.

Based on the previous studies, a clear research gap exists, namely the lack of empirical studies investigating the application of the Make a Match method to improve Islamic Religious Education learning outcomes on the topic of Asmaulhusna at the elementary school level. This gap highlights the need for research focusing on the development of creative, interactive instructional strategies aligned with students' characteristics. By addressing this gap, it is expected that Islamic Religious Education learning can become more effective, enjoyable, and capable of optimally enhancing students' understanding and spiritual competencies.

This study aims to develop and implement the Make a Match method as a learning strategy in Islamic Religious Education to improve students' learning outcomes on the topic of Asmaulhusna in fourth grade at SDN 11 Bengkulu Selatan. The study is expected to provide practical contributions for teachers in implementing innovative instructional methods to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools. Additionally, it seeks to add empirical evidence on the effectiveness of game-based methods in religious education, particularly in teaching Asmaulhusna.

The urgency of this study lies in the pressing need to introduce innovative, evidence-based instructional strategies in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level, particularly in teaching Asmaulhusna, which requires not only conceptual understanding but also the internalisation of spiritual values. To date, empirical studies specifically examining the effectiveness of the Make a Match method in improving learning outcomes at the elementary level remain limited, resulting in a lack of a strong scientific foundation for its systematic implementation in classroom practice. This gap may perpetuate the use of conventional, less interactive approaches that are not fully aligned with the cognitive and social developmental characteristics of fourth-grade students. Therefore, this study is essential for generating empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Make a Match method as a creative, participatory, and engaging learning strategy, while also making practical contributions to improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education and strengthening students' cognitive and spiritual competencies.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach conducted in a natural setting, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena experienced by the research subjects. In other words, this research is a descriptive qualitative study in which data were obtained directly from their sources, and the researcher served as the primary data collection instrument. The rationale for selecting a qualitative method is as follows: first, the study seeks to present the essence of the relationship between the researcher and the respondents, enabling the researcher to be more sensitive to value patterns and field situations. Second, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, allowing comprehensive facts to be obtained and accurate conclusions to be drawn.

The type of research conducted was Classroom Action Research (CAR). A defining characteristic of Classroom Action Research is the implementation of specific actions intended to improve the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Classroom Action Research is an activity carried out by teachers, either independently or collaboratively, to enhance the quality of classroom instruction (Utomo et al., 2024).

2.2 Research Object

This study was conducted at SDN 11 Bengkulu Selatan. The research subjects were 20 fourth-grade students who participated in the Classroom Action Research. The subjects were selected because they were directly involved in the Islamic Religious Education learning process on Asmaulhusna, the focus of this study.

2.3 Data Collection

Data in this study were collected using several techniques: 1) Observation, to monitor the teaching and learning process and student interactions during the implementation of the Make a Match method; 2) In-depth interviews, to obtain information regarding students' learning experiences and the teacher's perceptions of the implemented method; 3) Document analysis, to examine records, worksheets, and students' learning outcomes as supporting evidence in the study. By combining these techniques, the data obtained were expected to be comprehensive, valid, and capable of providing a complete picture of the effectiveness of the implemented instructional method.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive qualitative analysis, following the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, highlighting, and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. The data were presented in narrative form, supported by tables to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved concluding the obtained data to evaluate the effectiveness of the Make a Match method in improving students' learning outcomes in Asmaulhusna.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Based on the results of the data collection and analysis, the findings are described as follows:

3.1.1 Cycle I

Table 1. Percentage of Students' Learning Outcomes in Cycle I

No	Mastery Criteria	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Mastery	11	55%
2	Not Yet Mastered	9	45%
	Total	20	100%

Table 1 shows that in Cycle I, 11 students (55%) achieved learning mastery, while 9 students (45%) did not meet the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC). The class mean score was 64.5, with a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 80. These data indicate that during the initial implementation of the Make a Match method, students' learning outcomes were moderate and had not yet met the established standard for classical mastery. This condition can be understood as students were still in the adaptation phase to a new instructional method that required active participation and collaboration. Therefore, Cycle I demonstrates that the initial intervention was not yet optimal and required improvement in the subsequent cycle.

3.1.2 Cycle II

Table 2. Percentage of Students' Learning Outcomes in Cycle II

No	Mastery Criteria	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Mastery	15	75%
2	Not Yet Mastered	5	25%
	Total	20	100%

Table 2 shows an improvement in learning outcomes compared to the previous cycle. The number of students who achieved mastery increased to 15 students (75%), while those who had not yet achieved mastery decreased to 5 students (25%). The class mean score also increased to 69.00. Although the lowest and highest scores remained relatively similar to those in Cycle I, the distribution of mastery indicates significant improvement. This suggests that the refinement of instructional strategies in Cycle II began to produce a positive impact on students' understanding. The Make a Match method was better understood and implemented more effectively by students, resulting in increased engagement and improved learning outcomes.

3.1.3 Cycle III

Table 3. Percentage of Students' Learning Outcomes in Cycle III

No	Mastery Criteria	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Mastery	18	90%
2	Not Yet Mastered	2	10%
	Total	20	100%

Table 3 demonstrates a more significant improvement in Cycle III. The number of students achieving mastery increased to 18 students (90%), while only 2 students (10%) had not yet achieved mastery. The class mean score rose sharply to 85.00, with the lowest score rising to 60 and the highest to 90. These data indicate that the actions implemented in Cycle III were optimal and successfully achieved classical mastery. The increase in the mean score and the reduction in the number of students who had not yet achieved mastery show that the Make a Match method was effective in improving students' understanding of the Asmaulhusna material.

3.1.4 Improvement in Students' Learning Outcomes

Table 4. Recapitulation of the Improvement in Students' Learning Outcomes Across Research Cycles

No	Cycle	Number of Students	Mean Score	Mastery (T)	Not Yet Mastered (B)	Criteria
1	I	20	64.5	11	9	Not Yet Mastered
2	II	20	69.00	15	5	Not Yet Mastered
3	III	20	85.00	18	2	Mastered

Table 4 presents a recapitulation of the development of the class mean scores and student mastery in each cycle. A consistent upward trend can be observed from Cycle I through Cycle III. The class mean score increased progressively, as did the number of students achieving mastery. In the first two cycles, classical mastery had not yet been fully achieved; however, by Cycle III, the mastery criteria were successfully met. These findings indicate that implementing the Make a Match method, through a process of reflection and continuous improvement within the Classroom Action Research framework, systematically enhanced the quality of students' learning outcomes.

3.1.5 Improvement in Students' Learning Mastery

Table 5. Percentage of Improvement in Students' Learning Mastery in Each Research Cycle

No	Activity	Mastery (n)	Mastery (%)	Not Yet Mastered (n)	Not Yet Mastered (%)
1	Cycle I	11	55%	9	45%
2	Cycle II	15	75%	5	25%
3	Cycle III	18	90%	2	10%

Table 5 illustrates the increase in the percentage of student learning mastery across cycles. In Cycle I, mastery was at a moderate level, increased in Cycle II, and reached a high level in Cycle III. Conversely, the percentage of

students who had not yet achieved mastery decreased progressively. This pattern indicates that the impact of the Make a Match method became stronger as students grew more familiar with the instructional model. Thus, learning mastery improved progressively, demonstrating the effectiveness of the implemented intervention.

3.2. Discussion

This study aimed to improve students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education on the topic of Asmaulhusna by implementing the Make a Match method. Based on the gradual, step-by-step process of actions, the method demonstrated a positive impact on instruction quality. Changes were observed not only in students' academic achievement but also in classroom dynamics, participation, and students' learning attitudes toward Islamic Religious Education.

During the initial implementation stage, students were still adjusting to a learning model that differed from their prior experience. Instruction had previously been dominated by lecture-based methods, which tended to make students passive and dependent on teacher direction. When the Make a Match method was introduced, students were required to move actively, interact with peers, search for matching cards, and engage in discussion. This shift initially created hesitation and a lack of confidence among some students. However, through reflection and strategic improvements in each cycle, student engagement increased significantly. Students began to demonstrate enthusiasm, greater confidence in asking questions, and improved collaboration skills.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings indicate that active learning strongly influences understanding of abstract concepts (Hartikainen et al., 2019). The topic of Asmaulhusna, which requires comprehension of meaning and internalisation of values, became easier to understand when presented through concrete activities (Zamzam et al., 2023). The Make a Match method enabled students not only to memorise the names of Asmaulhusna but also to understand their meanings through matching activities and discussion (Susanty, 2024). Learning outcomes are optimised when students are actively involved in the instructional process. The physical activities and social interactions embedded in this method strengthen students' cognitive engagement (Zha et al., 2025).

Moreover, process-oriented learning emphasises that learning experiences play a crucial role in developing meaningful understanding (Chen & Zheng, 2025). In this study, students experienced collaborative and healthy competitive learning situations. Providing recognition to pairs who successfully matched the cards correctly also increased students' intrinsic motivation. This motivation encouraged students to take the material more seriously so they could participate optimally in classroom activities.

From a developmental psychology perspective, elementary school students tend to learn more effectively through concrete activities, games, and social interaction (Trajkovik et al., 2018). Therefore, the Make a Match method aligns well with their developmental characteristics (Putri et al., 2025). Learning is no longer merely a process of receiving information but becomes a learning experience that simultaneously engages cognitive, affective, and social dimensions (Schneider et al., 2022). This makes the internalisation of Asmaulhusna values more meaning-ful compared to one-way instructional approaches.

Compared with previous studies, this research's findings reinforce the evidence that game-based and cooperative learning strategies can enhance students' motivation and understanding of religious content (Sitanggang, 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2023; Papakostas, 2024). However, this study is distinctive in its specific focus on Asmaulhusna at the elementary school level and in its use of a Classroom Action Research approach, which enables continuous reflection and improvement. This approach provides a clear illustration of how instructional innovation can be implemented systematically to achieve optimal outcomes.

The primary strength of this study lies in its demonstration of a transformation in the learning process. The Make a Match method not only improved learning outcomes but also created a more dynamic, communicative, and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Students became more confident, demonstrated stronger collaboration skills, and showed greater motivation to understand the material in Islamic Religious Education. Additionally, this method is relatively simple to implement and does not require complex technological infrastructure, making it a practical alternative for teachers seeking to improve instructional quality.

This discussion confirms that implementing the Make a Match method effectively improves both lear-ning outcomes and the quality of the instructional process in Islamic Religious Education on the topic of Asmaul-husna. These findings underscore the importance of employing active and cooperative learning strategies in reli-gious education at the elementary school level. Consequently, this study offers both theoretical contributions by enriching the literature on active learning in Islamic Religious Education and practical contributions in the form of an instructional model that can be replicated and further developed in broader contexts.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Reseach Implication

The findings of this study indicate that the Make a Match method can serve as a strategic alternative in teaching Islamic Religious Education, particularly for conceptual and abstract topics such as Asmaulhusna. The results suggest that activity-oriented, collaborative, and experiential learning approaches can enhance student engagement and foster a more meaningful understanding. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers at the elementary level should integrate cooperative and game-based learning approaches into their lesson planning to shift instruction from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. More broadly, these findings reinforce the importance of implementing active learning principles, as emphasized by Wina Sanjaya, who argues that the quality of the instructional process strongly determines the quality of learning outcomes.

4.2 Reseach Contribution

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. Theoretically, the findings support the perspective of Dimyati and Mudjiono that active student involvement is a key factor in improving learning outcomes.

In practice, this research offers a simple, applicable, and contextually relevant instructional model that teachers can replicate to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education without requiring complex resources. In addition, this study contributes empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Make a Match method in teaching Asmaulhusna at the elementary level, thereby serving as a reference for future research and the development of more interactive and meaningful innovations in religious education.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Reseach Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research was conducted in a single class within one school; therefore, the generalizability of the findings is limited to similar subjects and contexts. Second, the Classroom Action Research design focused on improving instructional practice in a specific classroom and did not include a control group to assess the method's effectiveness experimentally. Third, the study primarily emphasised improvements in cognitive learning outcomes, while the impact on affective aspects and the internalisation of Asmaulhusna values was not analysed in depth. Additionally, the relatively short study duration does not allow for conclusions about the method's long-term sustainability.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Given these limitations, future research is recommended to involve a larger, more diverse sample to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Experimental or quasi-experimental designs may be employed to more comprehensively compare the Make a Match method with other instructional strategies. Furthermore, future studies should examine in greater depth the impact of this method on affective dimensions, learning motivation, and the internalization of religious values. The development of the Make a Match method integrated with digital media or technology-based approaches may also serve as an innovative alternative to further enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that implementing the Make a Match method in teaching Islamic Religious Education on the topic of Asmaulhusna gradually and consistently improved students' learning outcomes. Through Classroom Action Research conducted across multiple cycles, improvements in the instructional process were observed, resulting in greater student understanding of the material. The research objective of enhancing learning outcomes through a more active and interactive instructional method was achieved, as evidenced by increased classical mastery and improved quality of student participation in the classroom.

The application of the Make a Match method affected not only cognitive outcomes but also enhanced students' motivation, confidence, and collaboration skills. Instruction that had previously been teacher-centred shifted toward a more participatory and collaborative approach. These findings reinforce the perspective of Dimyati and Mudjiono that active student involvement in the learning process significantly improves learning outcomes. Moreover, the

results align with Wina Sanjaya's process-oriented learning concept, which emphasizes that meaningful learning experiences are central to instructional success.

The Make a Match method has proven to be an effective, innovative instructional strategy for improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools. The method aligns with the developmental characteristics of elementary students, who tend to prefer activities, games, and social interaction. Therefore, implementing active and cooperative learning strategies, such as Make a Match, can serve as a strategic alternative for teachers to create learning experiences that are more engaging, meaningful, and focused on improving student achievement.

Acknowledgments

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the teachers and students of SDN 11 Bengkulu Selatan for their participation, support, and cooperation throughout the research process. Without their active involvement and contribution, this study would not have been successfully conducted. Appreciation is also extended for their openness, enthusiasm, and commitment to supporting the implementation of the instructional method examined in this research.

Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Rikasti Hafiza: and Design, Methodology, Writing - Original Draf, Performed data collection and Analysis, Interpretation of the results. Aam Amaliyah: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing. Sukarno: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The author declares that the generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tool (Google Gemini) was used in a limited capacity during the preparation of this manuscript to assist with language editing, sentence refinement, grammar correction, and structural improvement to ensure clear, systematic, and academic writing. The use of Google Gemini did not replace the author's role in research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or formulation of conclusions. All substantive content, scientific arguments, data accuracy, research decisions, and ethical responsibility for this manuscript remain entirely with the author. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the IJITL GenAI Tool Usage Policy, with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding Statement

The authors declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Article Information

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First Publication Right:
Indonesian Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning

Article info:
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64420/ijitl.v3i1.481

Word Count: 4905

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