



Improving Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes through Cooperative Learning Models in Islamic Religious Education

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: October 23, 2025

Revised: January 19, 2026

Accepted: January 24, 2026

Published: January 29, 2026

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ABSTRACT

Background: Learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level are strongly influenced by the learning models applied by teachers. Teacher-centered instructional practices tend to limit student participation and understanding, thus requiring the use of more interactive learning models, such as cooperative learning. **Objective:** This study aims to analyze the implementation of cooperative learning models and their effectiveness in improving the learning outcomes of fourth-grade elementary school students in Islamic Religious Education. **Method:** This research employed a quantitative approach. Data were collected through classroom observations and learning outcome tests. Data analysis was conducted using simple statistical techniques, including calculating mean scores, learning completeness, and learning achievement levels. **Results:** The findings indicate that applying the cooperative learning model improved students' learning outcomes. This improvement is reflected in higher average test scores and greater learning completeness among students. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that cooperative learning models are effective in enhancing students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level.

Contribution: This research provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of cooperative learning as an instructional strategy and offers practical insights for teachers to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education instruction in elementary schools.

KEY WORDS

Learning Outcomes; Cooperative Learning Model; Islamic Education Lessons; Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a highly strategic role in improving the quality of education because they interact directly with students throughout the learning process. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering subject matter but also serve as instructional designers, facilitators, motivators, and evaluators who determine the success of achieving educational objectives. Therefore, teachers are required to possess comprehensive pedagogical, professional, social,

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How to Cite (APA 7th Edition):

Arnilarwati, A., & Khermarinah, K. (2026). Improving Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes through Cooperative Learning Models in Islamic Religious Education. *Jurnal Indonesia Kajian Pendidikan Islam*, 2(1), 11-19. <https://doi.org/10.64420/jikpi.v2i1.364>



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and personal competencies to create learning experiences that are effective, meaningful, and aligned with students' characteristics and learning needs (Nurhidayani et al., 2025). One necessary competence for teachers to support the quality of learning is the ability to select and implement appropriate, systematic learning models that foster active student engagement (Wahyuni et al., 2025).

However, in classroom practice at the elementary school level, particularly in Islamic Religious Education subjects, learning activities are still often conducted in a conventional, teacher-centered manner (Destriani & Warsah, 2022). Learning patterns that emphasize lecturing and memorization tend to make students passive and provide limited opportunities for active involvement in learning activities (Prameswara, 2023). This condition results in low levels of student participation in asking questions, engaging in discussions, and expressing opinions. Consequently, students' interest in learning declines, and their understanding of the material, especially concept-based and affective-value content, does not develop optimally.

These problems have become more complex due to a prolonged learning crisis, further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The transition from face-to-face instruction to distance learning reduced the intensity of interaction between teachers and students (Alfin et al., 2022). In addition, limitations in facilities and infrastructure, variations in teachers' readiness to use technology, and differences in students' learning environments have widened the gap in learning quality (Randan et al., 2025). The impact of these conditions is reflected in the decline of students' learning outcomes across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, indicating the need for learning strategies that are more adaptive, participatory, and oriented toward learning recovery.

In response to these conditions, the government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, introduced the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student centered learning, strengthening essential competencies, and the holistic development of students' potential and character. The Merdeka Curriculum provides teachers with greater flexibility to design and implement contextual, differentiated learning that is relevant to students' needs and developmental stages (Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2023). This approach requires teachers to move away from one-way instructional practices and adopt learning models that encourage collaboration, active participation, and students' emotional and social engagement in the learning process.

One learning model that aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum is the cooperative learning model (Hasanah & Himami, 2021; Suparmini, 2021). This model emphasizes student cooperation in small, heterogeneous groups to achieve shared learning objectives (Mawardah et al., 2025). Through group discussions, idea exchange, and mutual assistance, students are encouraged to actively construct understanding, take responsibility for the learning process, and develop critical and communicative thinking skills. Cooperative learning not only contributes to improved academic achievement but also supports the development of social skills, mutual respect, and a sense of responsibility (Afida, 2024).

In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the application of cooperative learning models is highly relevant. Islamic Religious Education is not only oriented toward the mastery of religious knowledge but also toward the formation of students' attitudes, values, and religious character (Zahro, 2025). Values such as cooperation, mutual help, responsibility, and exemplary behavior cultivated through cooperative learning are consistent with Islamic teachings. This is particularly relevant to the topics Exemplary Asmaul Husna and Welcoming Puberty, which require students not only to understand concepts cognitively but also to internalize these values in their daily attitudes and behavior.

Findings from previous studies indicate that the application of cooperative learning models has been proven effective in improving learning outcomes (Suwarsa, 2020; Oktaviana, 2025), learning motivation (Musdalifah, 2023; Nurlita'Aulia et al., 2025), and student activeness across various subjects, including Islamic Religious Education (Mardiana & Suharyanto, 2024; Alawiyah et al., 2023). Nevertheless, most of these studies have primarily focused on cognitive learning outcomes and have not extensively examined continuous improvements in the quality of the learning process through Classroom Action Research. Moreover, studies that specifically investigate the application of cooperative learning models to the topics Exemplary Asmaul Husna and Welcoming Puberty at the elementary school level, particularly within the context of post-COVID-19 implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, remain relatively limited.

Previous research also reveals that cooperative learning models are effective in improving learning outcomes and student engagement in Islamic Religious Education; however, most of these studies focus mainly on cognitive learning outcomes and were conducted within curricular contexts prior to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, existing studies have generally not examined in depth the gradual improvement in learning process quality through Classroom Action Research, particularly in the context of post-COVID-19 learning recovery. On the other hand, research specifically addressing the application of cooperative learning models to the topics

Exemplary Asmaul Husna and Welcoming Puberty at the elementary school level remains limited, even though these topics require integrating conceptual understanding with the internalization of religious values. Therefore, a research gap exists regarding how the application of cooperative learning models within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum can enhance learning outcomes, student activeness, and the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning processes sustainably through Classroom Action Research.

This study aims to examine and improve elementary school students' learning outcomes through the implementation of cooperative learning models in Islamic Religious Education, particularly on the topics Exemplary Asmaul Husna and Welcoming Puberty. In addition, this study seeks to describe improvements in student engagement and the quality of the learning process that result from the application of cooperative learning models in classroom instruction.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed Classroom Action Research. Classroom Action Research was selected because it aims to improve and enhance the quality of both the learning process and learning outcomes directly in the classroom through systematically designed actions. The research was conducted in cycles, with each cycle consisting of four stages (Utomo et al., 2024), namely planning, which includes the preparation of learning tools, action plans, and research instruments; action implementation, which involves carrying out learning activities according to the planned actions; observation, which is conducted to monitor the learning process, student activities, and the implementation of the actions; and reflection, which aims to evaluate the results of the actions and determine improvements for the subsequent cycle. The research was conducted in two cycles and could continue into additional cycles if the indicators of success had not yet been achieved.

2.2 Research Object

The subjects of this study were 20 fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 75 Palembang. The study focused on the learning process and learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education, particularly regarding the topic of Exemplary Asmaul Husna. The research was conducted in accordance with the Islamic Religious Education class schedule and adjusted to the school academic calendar.

2.3 Research Subjects

The research instruments used in this study consisted of observation sheets for student and teacher activities, learning outcome test items, and supporting learning documents. The instruments were developed in accordance with the learning indicators and the research objectives.

2.4 Data Collection

The research instruments used in this study consisted of observation sheets for student and teacher activities, learning outcome test items, and supporting learning documents. The instruments were developed in accordance with the learning indicators and the research objectives.

The data collection techniques used in this study included observation, tests, and documentation. An observation was conducted to collect data on student and teacher activities during the learning process. Observations were conducted using previously prepared observation sheets to assess student involvement, learning activity, and the implementation of learning actions. Tests were used to measure student learning outcomes on the topic of Exemplary Asmaul Husna. The tests were administered at the end of each cycle in the form of written questions to determine improvements in student learning outcomes following the implementation of the learning actions. Documentation was used as supporting data, including student score records, attendance lists, photographs of learning activities, and other documents relevant to the research implementation.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis techniques used were quantitative and descriptive analysis. Quantitative analysis was applied to data obtained from student learning outcome tests. The data were analyzed by calculating the class average score and the percentage of students who achieved mastery in each cycle. Descriptive analysis was used to examine observation data and describe student and teacher activities during the learning process.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

3.1 Initial Condition (Pre Action)

Based on the initial observations conducted at SD Negeri 75 Palembang, South Sumatra, it was found that students' learning outcomes on the topic of Welcoming Puberty remained relatively low. The low level of learning outcomes was caused by the limited use of varied learning models, particularly cooperative learning models, in Islamic Religious Education and Character Education. This condition affected students' low motivation and limited activity during the learning process.

Table 1. Student Learning Outcomes in the Initial Condition (Pre Action)

| No | Description | Number of Students | Percentage |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Students Achieving Mastery | 7 | 28% |
| 2 | Students Not Yet Mastery | 14 | 72% |
| | Total Students | 20 | 100% |
| | Class Average Score | | 67 |

3.2 Results of Cycle I

Cycle I was conducted on October twentieth, two thousand twenty-three, involving twenty-four-grade students. The implementation of the actions followed the stages of Classroom Action Research, including planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection.

The test results in Cycle I showed an improvement in students' learning outcomes compared to the initial condition. The percentage of students who achieved mastery increased to seventy-six percent, while those who had not yet achieved mastery decreased to twenty-four percent. The class average score also increased to seventy-six.

Table 2. Student Learning Outcomes in Cycle I

| No | Description | Number of Students | Percentage |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Students Achieving Mastery | 15 | 76% |
| 2 | Students Not Yet Mastery | 5 | 24% |
| | Total Students | 20 | 100% |
| | Class Average Score | | 76 |

The observation of learning activities indicated that, out of eight observed aspects, a total score of twenty-three was obtained, with a percentage of sixty-nine 69.75%. This result increased compared to the initial condition, which reached only 55%. However, although improvement occurred, the results of Cycle I had not yet met the predetermined success indicator of 85%. Therefore, improvements were required in the next Cycle.

3.3 Results of Cycle II

In Cycle II, the researcher collaborated with the teacher to prepare lesson plans using the cooperative learning model of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions type on the topic of Obligations after Reaching Puberty. All stages of Classroom Action Research were implemented systematically.

Table 3. Improvement of Student Activity and Cognitive Achievement in Cycle II

| Assessed Aspect | Initial Percentage | Cycle II Percentage |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|
| Average Cognitive Achievement | 50% | 80% |
| Implementation of Cooperative Learning | 73% | 82.12% |

The results of the Cycle II test showed a more significant improvement. The percentage of students who achieved mastery increased to eighty-two percent, while those who had not yet achieved mastery decreased to eighteen percent. The class average score also increased to eighty-two.

Observation results showed that learning activities continued to improve. The average cognitive achievement of students increased from 50% in the initial condition to 80% in Cycle II. Meanwhile, the implementation of the cooperative learning method improved from seventy three percent to eighty-two-point twelve percent.

3.4 Results of Cycle III

Cycle III was implemented using the topics of Interpreting Five Asmaul Husna and practicing calligraphy, as well as applying the values in daily life through the cooperative learning model.

Table 4. Student Learning Outcomes in Cycle III

| No | Description | Number of Students | Percentage |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Students Achieving Mastery | 19 to 20 | 99% |
| 2 | Students Not Yet Mastery | 0 to 1 | 1% |
| | Total Students | 20 | 100% |
| | Class Average Score | | 83 |

The test results in Cycle III showed a very high level of improvement. Approximately 99% of students achieved mastery, and only 1% had not yet achieved it. The class average score increased to eighty-three.

Observations also indicated a very significant improvement. The average cognitive achievement increased from 80% in Cycle II to 99% in Cycle III. The implementation of the cooperative learning model in teaching the topic of Welcoming Puberty increased from 78.12% to 99%.

Table 5. Improvement of Student Activity and Cognitive Achievement in Cycle III

| Assessed Aspect | Cycle II | Cycle III |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Average Cognitive Achievement | 80% | 99% |
| Implementation of Cooperative Learning | 78.12% | 99% |

Based on Table 5, there was a very significant increase in both students' average cognitive achievement and the implementation of the cooperative learning model from Cycle II to Cycle III. The average cognitive achievement increased from 80% to 99%, indicating that nearly all students achieved optimal mastery of the learning material. Similarly, the implementation of the cooperative learning model improved from 78.12% to 99%, showing that the steps of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions cooperative learning model were implemented very effectively. These improvements indicate that the instructional revisions in Cycle III successfully enhanced both the learning process and learning outcomes, and that the research success indicators were fully achieved.

3.2. Discussion

Implementing the STAD cooperative learning model provides students with broader opportunities to actively engage in the learning process through group work, discussions, and peer support. Interactions within heterogeneous groups encourage students to share understanding, clarify concepts, and strengthen their mastery of the learning material. This approach directly improves students' conceptual understanding of the topics Exemplary Asmaul Husna and Welcoming Puberty, which were previously difficult for students to comprehend when delivered solely through lecture-based methods. This is indicated by the consistent improvement in learning mastery and class average scores across each action cycle, reflecting continuous improvement in both the learning process and learning outcomes.

Empirically, the increase in students' mastery of learning from 28% in the initial condition to 99% in Cycle III demonstrates that the implementation of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions cooperative learning model addressed learning problems previously dominated by conventional, teacher-centered approaches. This improvement not only reflects the success of the instructional actions but also indicates that learning that emphasizes cooperation, interaction, and active student engagement is more effective in supporting students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education content that is conceptual in nature and rich in affective values.

The urgency of implementing cooperative learning models in Islamic Religious Education stems from its learning objectives, which emphasize not only the acquisition of religious knowledge but also the development of students' attitudes, values, and character. Islamic Religious Education requires an integrated approach that addresses cognitive, affective, and social domains. Therefore, teacher-centered and lecture-based instructional approaches are often insufficient to facilitate meaningful value internalization. Cooperative learning models provide students with opportunities to learn through social interaction, discussion, and collaboration, allowing Islamic values such as mutual assistance, responsibility, and respect for others to be practiced naturally within the learning process.

Furthermore, cooperative learning models are increasingly urgent in the context of twenty-first-century learning and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences. Through cooperative learning, students are encouraged not only to deepen their

understanding of religious concepts but also to develop essential social, communication, and critical-thinking skills relevant to real-life situations. The application of cooperative learning models enables teachers to create Islamic Religious Education lessons that are more contextual and participatory, ensuring that learning extends beyond theoretical understanding and supports the continuous application of religious values in students' daily behavior (Murliati & Zubaidah, 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, the Student Teams Achievement Divisions cooperative learning model emphasizes three core principles, namely group cooperation, individual accountability, and group recognition (Guntoro et al., 2024). These principles align with social learning theory, which posits that learning is more effective through social interaction and the exchange of knowledge among learners (Serjali & Halim, 2020). The findings of this study reinforce this theory, as students who learned in heterogeneous groups demonstrated better conceptual understanding, greater ability to explain material to peers, and increased responsibility for both individual and group learning outcomes compared to passive individual learning (Mesghina et al., 2024).

In addition to improving cognitive learning outcomes, implementing the Student Teams Achievement Divisions model also positively affected students' engagement and learning motivation (Rorimpandey et al., 2022). Students became more actively involved in discussions, more willing to ask questions, and more confident in expressing their opinions. This condition indicates that cooperative learning fosters a participatory and inclusive learning environment in which students feel valued and actively engage in the learning process (Muñoz-Martínez et al., 2020). In this model, the teacher's role shifts from being the primary source of information to a facilitator who guides, directs, and reinforces students' learning activities.

When viewed in relation to previous studies, the findings of this research are consistent with numerous studies that have reported the effectiveness of cooperative learning models in improving learning outcomes, motivation, and student engagement. However, this study has its own distinct contribution, particularly in its application of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions model to Islamic Religious Education and Character Education content that requires the integration of conceptual understanding and the practice of religious values, and in its implementation at the elementary school level within the framework of Classroom Action Research (Putra & Amaliyah, 2024).

The distinctive strength of this study lies in its learning approach, which integrates religious conceptual understanding with the application of Islamic values in daily life. This is reflected in practical learning activities such as discussions on the meanings and exemplary values of Asmaul Husna, calligraphy practice, and reflection on the application of these values in students' behavior. This approach makes learning more meaningful, contextual, and relevant to students' lives, ensuring that learning does not stop at theoretical mastery but also encourages the internalization of religious values.

The findings of this study confirm that implementing the Student Teams Achievement Divisions cooperative learning model is not only theoretically relevant but also practically effective in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education instruction in elementary schools. The model has been shown to enhance students' learning outcomes, activeness, and motivation, while also strengthening their understanding and internalization of religious values. These findings make a meaningful contribution to the development of more participatory, meaningful, and character-oriented learning strategies for Islamic Religious Education and Character Education.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The results of this study have important implications for the practice of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools, particularly in the selection and implementation of learning models that emphasize active student participation. The cooperative learning model has been shown to improve learning outcomes, motivation, and student engagement, suggesting that teachers should consistently integrate it into Islamic Religious Education and Character Education instruction. In addition, these findings support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered, collaborative, and contextual learning. Schools may also use the results of this study to develop teacher professional development programs, particularly to design innovative learning activities that foster active, meaningful, and character-based learning environments.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study contributes both theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic Religious Education learning in elementary schools. Theoretically, it enriches the body of research on the effectiveness of cooperative learning models, particularly the Student Teams Achievement Divisions type, in improving learning outcomes and

student engagement on the topics of Exemplary Asmaul Husna and Welcoming Puberty. In practice, this study provides empirical evidence from Classroom Action Research that can serve as a reference for teachers in improving the learning process in a gradual, reflective manner. Furthermore, this study may serve as a reference for future researchers to develop similar studies on different topics, educational levels, or learning approaches.

5. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the research findings. First, the study involved only one elementary school class, which limits the generalizability of the results to other school contexts or educational levels. Second, the research focused primarily on measuring cognitive learning outcomes through tests, while students' affective and psychomotor aspects were not examined in depth. In addition, the duration of the implementation of the cooperative learning model was relatively short, so it may not fully reflect its long-term impact on students' learning and development.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Research Directions

Given these limitations, future research is recommended to involve a larger, more diverse sample, including a greater number of classes and more diverse school backgrounds, to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Further studies may also examine the effects of cooperative learning models on students' affective and psychomotor domains, such as attitudes, motivation, and social skills. In addition, it is recommended that cooperative learning models be implemented over a more extended period and compared with other learning models to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness in Islamic Religious Education.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that implementing the cooperative learning model is efficacious in improving students' learning outcomes in the topic of Exemplary Asmaul Husna at SD Negeri 75 Palembang. This improvement is clearly reflected in the increasing levels of learning mastery and average student scores across each learning cycle. These results demonstrate that cooperative learning models can create a more structured learning process and support the optimal achievement of learning objectives.

In addition to improving learning outcomes, implementing cooperative learning models also enhances students' motivation and conceptual understanding. Through group work, discussions, and student interactions, the learning process becomes more active and meaningful. Students do not merely receive information passively; they are actively involved in thinking processes, exchanging ideas, and helping one another understand the values embedded in Asmaul Husna.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers and school administrators place greater emphasis on varied learning models and methods, particularly cooperative learning, in Islamic Religious Education and Character Education instruction. The use of diverse instructional methods can improve overall learning quality, create a conducive learning environment, and promote continuous improvement in students' learning outcomes and character development.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the academic supervisor for the valuable guidance, suggestions, and feedback provided during the completion of this final project.

Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Arnilawati: Conceptualization and Design, Methodology, Writing - Original Draft; Khermarinah: Conceptualization Writing - Review & Editing.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The author declares that generative artificial intelligence tools were used solely to support language editing, grammar checking, and clarity improvement during the preparation of this manuscript entitled Improving Elemen-

tary School Students' Learning Outcomes through Cooperative Learning Models in Islamic Religious Education. The use of generative AI was limited to enhancing linguistic quality and did not influence the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, or conclusions. All research procedures, data, analyses, and interpretations presented in this article are the responsibility of the author. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [JIKPI 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 that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, and or publication of this article.

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First Publication Right:

Jurnal Indonesia Kajian Pendidikan Islam

Article info:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64420/jikpi.v2i1.364>

Word Count: 5132

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