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Efforts to Improve Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education through the Implementation of a Cooperative Learning Model

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Efforts to Improve Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education through the Implementation of a Cooperative Learning Model

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ABSTRACT

Background: Students' low learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education are often associated with limited variation in instructional models and the continued dominance of conventional, teacher-centred approaches. Such conditions tend to reduce student engagement, limit interaction, and hinder the development of critical understanding. **Objective:** This study aims to improve students' learning outcomes by implementing a cooperative learning model among fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 75 Palembang. **Method:** The research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted in three cycles, each consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through classroom observations and learning outcome tests, and analysis used a descriptive, quantitative approach to measure improvement across cycles. **Results:** The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' learning outcomes, demonstrated by the consistent increase in average scores and the percentage of mastery learning from the pre-cycle to cycle III. Student participation and engagement also showed noticeable enhancement during the learning process. **Conclusion:** The cooperative learning model is effective in improving both academic achievement and student activeness. **Originality/Value:** This study contributes novel empirical and practical evidence to the field of primary education and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) pedagogy by revealing the progressive enhancement of academic mastery alongside increased student participation through a cyclical action research process regarding cooperative learning model efficacy within the context of fourth-grade elementary school learners (SD Negeri 75 Palembang), an area that has received limited empirical attention amidst widespread conventional, teacher-centred practices. These findings enrich empirical evidence and serve as a strategic reference for implementing interactive, student-centred classroom strategies and designing pedagogical development programs for primary school religious education teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality education is characterised by achieving optimal learning outcomes and the holistic development of students' potential across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Ideally, the learning process is not limited to one-way content delivery but actively promotes student engagement, creativity, and direct participation in learning activities (Feriyanti et al., 2025). Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators, designing meaningful learning experiences through innovative strategies, methods, and instructional models tailored to students' characteristics (Damayanti, 2023). Effective learning is also reflected in dynamic teacher–student interactions, the use of relevant instructional media, and a conducive classroom environment (Putri et al., 2025). Therefore, the learning process is expected to create enjoyable experiences that significantly enhance students' learning outcomes.

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Modern learning emphasises a student-centred approach, where students act as active participants in constructing knowledge through learning experiences (Hermanto & Arifin, 2023). In this approach, students are no longer positioned as passive recipients of information but as individuals who actively build understanding through discussion, collaboration, and exploration (Fadillah, 2025). The cooperative learning model is one of the most relevant approaches to achieving these conditions, as it emphasises collaboration among students in small groups to achieve shared learning goals (Nafilata et al., 2025). In addition to improving understanding of content, this model contributes to the development of social skills such as communication, teamwork, and responsibility. Therefore, implementing cooperative learning is essential to creating interactive and meaningful learning experiences.

However, in practice, the learning process is still largely dominated by conventional, teacher-centred methods (Firmansyah & Jiwandono, 2022; Boiliu & Sinaga, 2021). Teachers often rely on lectures as the primary instructional strategy, resulting in limited student participation and engagement (Dulyapit & Lestari, 2024; Wulandari, 2022). This condition leads to low learning interest, minimal student involvement, and unsatisfactory learning outcomes. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, these challenges become more complex, as conceptual and value-based materials are often delivered in a theoretical manner without meaningful learning experiences. Consequently, students struggle to understand and internalise the material, and learning objectives are not fully met.

Theoretically, the cooperative learning model is grounded in constructivist theory, which emphasises that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and learning experiences (Salsabila & Gumiandari, 2024). In this model, students work collaboratively in groups to support one another in understanding the material, creating a more interactive learning process (Hasanah & Himami, 2021). Cooperative learning is also supported by social learning theory, which posits that interaction among individuals enhances understanding and learning skills (Sembiring, 2023). Furthermore, this model offers advantages in increasing learning motivation, strengthening conceptual understanding, and fostering positive social attitudes. Thus, theoretically, cooperative learning has strong potential to improve both the quality of instruction and students' learning outcomes.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that implementing cooperative learning significantly improves students' learning outcomes (Mimpin, 2022; Suardiana, 2021). Other studies have shown increases in average student scores, mastery learning percentages, and student participation following the application of cooperative learning methods (Suparsawan, 2021; Harefa et al., 2020). Additionally, research indicates that cooperative learning creates a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment, thereby enhancing students' motivation to learn (Oktaviana et al., 2025; Karlina et al., 2024). These findings suggest that cooperative learning impacts not only cognitive achievement but also students' affective and social development.

Despite these findings, a research gap remains that warrants further investigation, particularly regarding the implementation of cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. Most previous studies focus primarily on learning outcomes without deeply examining the implementation process and classroom dynamics. Moreover, studies employing Classroom Action Research with multiple cycles to observe sustained improvement in learning outcomes are still limited. Therefore, further research is needed not only to measure outcomes but also to analyse the learning process comprehensively.

Based on the above considerations, this study aims to improve students' learning outcomes by implementing a cooperative learning model in Islamic Religious Education for fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 75 Palembang. In addition, this study seeks to describe the implementation process and analyse improvements in students' learning outcomes across each cycle of action. The findings are expected to provide practical contributions for teachers in developing more effective and innovative instructional strategies, as well as serve as a reference for future education research, particularly in the application of cooperative learning models.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. This design was selected to improve the quality of the learning process through planned, direct, systematic actions implemented in the classroom. The study was conducted in three cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Each cycle was developed based on reflections from the previous cycle, allowing for continuous improvement in the learning process. The primary focus of the intervention in this study was implementing a cooperative learning model to improve students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education.

2.2 Research Subjects

The subjects of this study were 20 fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 75 Palembang. The participants were selected purposively, given that the class exhibited low learning outcomes and limited student participation in the learning process. The diversity of students' academic abilities was also taken into account, as it supports interaction and collaboration among students within cooperative learning groups. The object of this study was both the students' learning outcomes and the learning process that occurred during the implementation of the cooperative learning model.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using two main techniques: observation and testing. Observation was used to examine the activities of both students and the teacher during the learning process, including levels of participation, collaboration, and student engagement in group activities. Observations were conducted using structured observation sheets based on specific indicators. Meanwhile, tests were administered at the end of each cycle to measure students' learning outcomes. The tests were designed in accordance with the instructional materials to assess students' understanding after implementing the cooperative learning model. The use of these two techniques aimed to provide comprehensive data on both the learning process and its outcomes.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study employed descriptive quantitative techniques. Test data were analysed by calculating class-average scores and the percentage of students achieving mastery based on the minimum mastery criteria (KKM). Improvements in learning outcomes were examined by comparing results from the pre-cycle, Cycle I, Cycle II, and Cycle III. Meanwhile, observation data were analysed by calculating the percentage of achievement of student activity indicators during the learning process. The analysis results were then interpreted to determine the effectiveness of the cooperative learning model in improving students' learning outcomes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

This study was conducted in three cycles to improve students' learning outcomes through the implementation of a cooperative learning model in Islamic Religious Education for fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 75 Palembang. The findings indicate a consistent improvement in both students' learning outcomes and their level of participation across each cycle. The data were obtained through learning outcome tests and observations of student activities during the learning process.

Table 1. Improvement of Students' Learning Outcomes in Each Cycle

Stage	Average Score	Number of Students Achieving Mastery	Mastery Percentage (%)
Pre-cycle	62	8	40%
Cycle I	70	12	60%
Cycle II	78	16	80%
Cycle III	85	19	95%

The data in Table 1 show a gradual improvement in students' learning outcomes in each cycle. In the pre-cycle stage, the average score remained low and did not meet the minimum mastery criteria (KKM), with a mastery percentage of only 40%. After implementing the cooperative learning model in Cycle I, both the average score and the number of students achieving mastery increased. More significant improvements were observed in Cycle II and Cycle III, where the majority of students achieved mastery learning. These results indicate that the cooperative learning model is effective in improving students' learning outcomes.

Table 2. Improvement of Student Learning Activities

Activity Aspect	Cycle I	Cycle II	Cycle III
Questioning activity	55%	70%	85%
Participation in discussion	60%	75%	90%
Group collaboration	65%	80%	92%
Attention to material	70%	82%	95%

Table 2 shows an improvement in student activity across all aspects of learning. In Cycle I, student participation remained moderate as students continued to adapt to the cooperative learning model. However, in Cycle II and Cycle III, there was a significant increase in all activity indicators, including participation in discussions and group collaboration. This improvement demonstrates that the cooperative learning model creates a more interactive learning environment and encourages active student engagement in the learning process.

Overall, this study's results indicate that implementing the cooperative learning model not only improves students' learning outcomes but also enhances their participation and engagement during the learning process. These improvements occurred progressively across each cycle, suggesting that continuous instructional refinement has a positive impact on learning quality. Therefore, the cooperative learning model has been proven effective in improving fourth-grade students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education at SD Negeri 75 Palembang.

3.2. Discussion

The findings indicate that implementing the cooperative learning model significantly improved students' learning outcomes across each cycle. This improvement is reflected in the steady increase in class average scores and the percentage of students achieving mastery, which consistently rose from the pre-cycle stage through Cycle III. These results suggest that shifting instructional strategies from conventional methods to a cooperative approach can create a more effective learning environment. Students were no longer passive recipients of information but became actively engaged in the learning process through group discussions, idea sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. This active involvement fostered a deeper understanding of the material, thereby improving learning outcomes.

Theoretically, these findings are consistent with constructivist theory, which emphasises that individuals construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and meaningful learning experiences (Zajda, 2021; Saleem et al., 2021). In the context of cooperative learning, social interaction among students becomes a primary means of knowledge construction (Zhang et al., 2027). Students exchange information, clarify understanding, and correct misconceptions through group discussions. This process not only enhances conceptual understanding but also strengthens memory retention, as students are actively involved in the learning process. Therefore, the improvement in learning outcomes observed in this study can be explained by more effective knowledge construction compared to conventional learning approaches.

In addition, increased student activity during the learning process emerged as a key factor influencing the success of the cooperative learning model. Observational data indicate that students' engagement in questioning, discussion, collaboration, and attention to the material improved across each cycle. From the perspective of social learning theory, interaction among individuals within a group enhances understanding through processes such as modelling, imitation, and collaboration (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018; Ahn et al., 2020). When students learn together, they gain knowledge not only from the teacher but also from their peers (Brown & Palincsar, 2018). This creates a more dynamic and participatory learning environment, which in turn increases students' motivation to engage in learning activities.

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous research demonstrating that cooperative learning is effective in improving both students' learning outcomes and their level of participation (Tadesse et al., 2024; Geletu, 2022; Agonafir, 2023). Other studies have reported significant improvements in average student scores and mastery learning percentages following the implementation of cooperative learning strategies (Salomone & Kling, 2017; Rahman, 2025). Furthermore, research has shown that cooperative learning can foster a more interactive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, thereby enhancing students' motivation to learn (Qureshi et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Thus, the results of this study not only reinforce existing findings but also provide additional empirical evidence within the context of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level.

From a causal perspective, the improvement in learning outcomes observed in this study can be explained by changes in classroom interaction patterns. During the pre-cycle stage, teacher-centred instruction led to limited student engagement and a superficial understanding of the material. After implementing the cooperative learning model, a significant transformation occurred in the learning process, with students becoming more active, participating in discussions, and supporting one another in understanding the content. This increase in interaction directly enhanced students' comprehension, as reflected in improved learning outcomes. Therefore, a clear causal relationship can be identified between the implementation of cooperative learning and improvements in students' learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the study's implementation across multiple cycles demonstrates that continuous instructional improvement is crucial for achieving optimal results. Each cycle provided the teacher with opportunities to reflect on identified weaknesses and make necessary adjustments in subsequent cycles. This reflective process enabled

gradual improvements in instructional quality, including teaching strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Thus, the success of the learning process was influenced not only by the instructional model used but also by the consistency with which systematic evaluation and refinement were conducted.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating the cooperative learning model with a cyclical Classroom Action Research approach in the context of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. This study does not focus solely on outcomes, such as improved test scores, but also examines the learning process and the dynamics of changes in student behaviour across each cycle. Additionally, it provides practical insights into implementing cooperative learning that can be directly applied by teachers in classroom settings. Therefore, this study not only reinforces existing theoretical frameworks but also adds empirical and practical value to the development of more effective, contextually relevant instructional strategies.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study offer important implications for instructional practices at the elementary school level, particularly in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education. The implementation of the cooperative learning model has been proven to enhance both student engagement and learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to integrate this model into their instructional practices consistently. In addition, teachers need to design learning activities that promote interaction, collaboration, and active student participation in order to create more meaningful learning experiences. Schools also play a crucial role by supporting the implementation of innovative teaching approaches through adequate facilities and professional development programs that enhance teachers' pedagogical competencies. Thus, the appropriate selection and consistent application of instructional models can serve as an effective solution to address low student learning outcomes.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of education, particularly regarding the implementation of cooperative learning models in elementary schools. Theoretically, the findings reinforce the relevance of constructivist theory and social learning theory in explaining improvements in learning outcomes through student interaction and collaboration. In practice, this study provides empirical evidence that implementing a cooperative learning model through a Classroom Action Research approach can gradually and sustainably improve learning outcomes. Furthermore, this study offers a practical and context-specific description of implementation practices, making it a useful reference for teachers and future researchers seeking to develop more effective and innovative instructional strategies.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.2 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was conducted in only one class, namely fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 75 Palembang, making the results context-specific and not fully generalizable to broader populations with different characteristics. Second, the Classroom Action Research design focuses on improving instructional practices within a specific classroom context and is not intended to test causal relationships in a broader sense, as in experimental research. Third, implementing only three cycles may not fully capture the long-term sustainability of the cooperative learning model's impact. Additionally, data collection based on observation and tests may be influenced by the researcher's subjectivity and situational conditions during the learning process.

5.1 Recommendation for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations, future research is recommended to expand the scope by involving a larger number of classes or schools to enhance the generalizability of results. Further studies may also employ experimental or mixed-methods approaches to obtain more comprehensive insights into both the learning process and outcomes. Moreover, it is important to examine the long-term effects of cooperative learning on students' academic achievement and character development. Future research could also explore different variations of cooperative learning models or integrate them with digital learning technologies to enhance instructional effectiveness in contemporary educational settings.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that implementing a cooperative learning model significantly improves fourth-grade students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education at SD Negeri 75 Palembang. The improvement is evident in the increase in average class scores and the percentage of students achieving mastery, which consistently rose from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle III. These findings indicate that an appropriate instructional model can have a substantial impact on learning quality. Through group collaboration and active interaction, students are better able to understand the material, as they are directly involved in the learning process. Therefore, cooperative learning effectively transforms the learning process from passive to active and meaningful engagement.

In addition to improving learning outcomes, this study also shows that students' learning activities developed positively and progressively. Students became more active in asking questions, participating in discussions, expressing their ideas, and collaborating within groups. The interactions fostered through cooperative learning not only enhanced students' understanding of the material but also developed essential social skills such as communication, responsibility, and teamwork. These findings indicate that the cooperative learning model contributes not only to cognitive development but also to students' affective and social growth. By creating an interactive and participatory learning environment, students become more motivated to engage optimally in the learning process.

Overall, this study confirms that the cooperative learning model is an effective strategy for improving instructional quality at the elementary school level. The success of its implementation is closely linked to the continuous improvement process carried out in each cycle, which allows identified weaknesses to be addressed promptly. This demonstrates that a combination of appropriate instructional strategies and ongoing reflection is key to achieving optimal learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to consistently implement cooperative learning models and adapt them to students' characteristics and classroom conditions to ensure that learning remains effective, innovative, and sustainable.

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CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

The author declares that the entire research and writing process for this article was conducted independently. The author assumes full responsibility for all data associated with this research. No other individual contributed as a co-author or made any significant contribution to the content of this work.

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