Application of the Project Based Learning Model in Improving Student Discipline in PAI Subjects at Insan Kamil An-Nahdliyah Islamic Junior High School

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and its contribution to the formation of student discipline. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study was conducted at Insan Kamil An-Nahdliyah Islamic Junior High School, a pesantren-based school in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Data collection techniques included participatory observation in the classroom, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, students, and the school principal, as well as analysis of learning documents such as lesson plans and student project results. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of student engagement, changes in discipline behavior, and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of the PjBL model. The results showed that PjBL not only increased cognitive engagement, but also supported the development of affective and psychomotor aspects simultaneously. The model encourages collaboration, reflection, time management and learning independence - important indicators of disciplined and organized learning. Furthermore, PjBL provides a pedagogical space for the internalization of Islamic values in a contextualized manner, especially when projects are designed in line with Islamic moral and social principles. The teacher's role as a facilitator and the integration of character values in the project activities proved crucial in shaping a disciplined and responsible learning environment. This study confirms the importance of integration between innovative learning models and value-based education in improving the quality of PAI learning. The findings open up opportunities for further exploration in different educational contexts, including quantitative studies related to the character impact of the project-based approach.
Keywords: Project-Based Learning; Student Discipline; Islamic Religious Education

Introduction

Education has a central role in educating the nation's life and shaping the character of future generations. In this context, learning is not just a process of delivering material, but a dynamic interaction space between teachers and students to develop cognitive, affective, and psychomotor potential holistically (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2020) The quality of this interaction is largely determined by the teacher's ability to manage the learning process effectively, especially in value-based subjects such as Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

PAI learning in many schools is still dominated by the verbalistic lecture method. Although the lecture method has its place in information transfer, this approach tends to be passive and less effective in fostering student engagement and discipline (Hidayat, 2022) . Observations at Insan Kamil An-Nahdliyah Islamic Junior High School showed a low level of student discipline during PAI learning. This is reflected in the students' lack of attention when the teacher conveys the material, tardiness in collecting assignments, and low interest in actively participating in learning.

Discipline is a fundamental element in character education and has a strong correlation with students' academic success and personal development (oecd, 2019) . Discipline education not only creates order, but also instills the values of responsibility, self-control, and critical thinking (Tamim & Grant, 2013) . Previous research confirms that innovative and contextualized learning is able to improve student discipline (Ahmad & Nurjannah, 2016) , but not many studies have specifically explored this in the context of PAI learning in pesantren-based institutions.

In the global literature, *Project-Based Learning* (PJBL) has been recognized as a learning approach that is able to increase student engagement, creativity, and positive attitudes including discipline (Thomas, 2000 ; Bell, 2010 ; Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016) . PPA provides space for students to collaborate, explore and produce real products in the learning process, which indirectly shapes responsibility and perseverance. Although the effectiveness of PPA has been widely studied in exact subjects or in public schools (Agung, Suardana, & Rapi, 2022) , research on the application of PPA in PAI subjects at the junior high school level, especially in the pesantren environment, is still very limited. This marks a significant *research gap* that is important to fill.

This study was conducted to fill the gap, with the aim of evaluating the extent to which the PJBL model can improve students' disciplinary attitudes in PAI learning at Insan Kamil

An-Nahdliyah Islamic Junior High School. The pesantren context was chosen because it has a strong religious tradition, but still faces challenges in applying learning methods that are relevant to the dynamics of today's generation. By synergizing religious values and modern pedagogical approaches, it is hoped that this research can contribute to more effective and contextualized learning practices at the national and global levels.

Research Methodology

This research is a field study with a descriptive qualitative approach (Sugiyono, 2019) , which aims to understand how the *Project-Based Learning* (PJBL) model is applied in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as well as how this model contributes to the formation of student discipline. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore reality directly in the field, emphasizing in-depth understanding of the processes, meanings, and experiences experienced by students and teachers.

The research was conducted at Insan Kamil An-Nahdliyah Islamic Junior High School, a pesantren-based school located in Sidoarjo, East Java. This school was chosen because it integrates Islamic values in its learning practices, and is the location for the implementation of PJBL in PAI subjects.

The researcher was directly involved in observing the learning process in class VIII, especially when the PAI teacher implemented PJBL for several meetings. Through this observation, the researcher noted various dynamics that emerged: from the way the teacher guided the project, to the students' response and involvement in activities that demanded cooperation, responsibility, and time management as important elements in discipline formation. In addition to observation, the researcher also conducted open interviews with PAI teachers, some students who were actively involved in the project, as well as the school principal. This interview was intended to get a direct view of the benefits and challenges of using PJBL, especially in the context of character education.

Researchers also collected supporting documents such as lesson plans, project modules used, and student work. All the data were then analyzed thematically to find patterns that showed the relationship between the implementation of PJBL and changes in students' disciplinary behavior.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis technique by grouping the data into main themes such as: (1) the form of implementation of PPA, (2) students' response to PPA, (3) changes in students' disciplinary behavior during the learning process, and (4) supporting

and inhibiting factors in the school environment. The steps of analysis followed the model (Miles & Huberman, 1994) , which includes: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Each data obtained was studied in depth to find a meaningful relationship pattern between the PPA approach and the formation of student discipline. To maintain data validity, researchers used triangulation, which compares data from observations, interviews, and documentation. In this way, researchers can ensure that the conclusions drawn truly reflect the conditions in the field, not just assumptions.

Learning Model

The learning model is a strategic framework that guides educators in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities systematically. This model includes the preparation of teaching materials, the selection of pedagogical strategies, and the use of appropriate evaluation tools with the aim of achieving predetermined learning outcomes (Mirdad, 2020). In the evolving 21st century education paradigm, learning models are expected to not only facilitate the delivery of material, but also encourage the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication in learners (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) .

One model that is very suitable for these competencies is Project-Based Learning (PjBL). PjBL emphasizes contextual learning through students' active involvement in complex projects that represent the real world, thus generating a deeper understanding. This model connects academic material with students' daily experiences, and covers various fields of science such as science, technology, social, and politics (Wijayanto, Supriadi, & Nuraini, 2020 ; Thomas, 2000) . Various studies have shown that PjBL can improve students' metacognitive skills, encourage self-regulation in learning, and strengthen memory of material (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006) .

The role of the teacher in PjBL transforms from a conveyor of knowledge to a facilitator and mentor, who guides students in an inquiry-based exploration process and encourages them to ask questions, evaluate sources, and build meaningful solutions (Anggraini & Wulandari, 2021) . This role is in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which states that learning is a socially mediated process, and *scaffolding* from teachers and peers is essential in developing students' abilities (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018) .

Furthermore, PjBL requires students' involvement for a long time, allowing them to understand concepts more deeply through an iterative process of investigation, synthesis,

and presentation (Nurfitriyanti, 2016) . According to Kristanti & Subiki (2017), this model empowers students to design and implement projects independently, thus fostering a sense of responsibility and time management skills. Nurmawati, Kadarwati, Purnomo, & Setiawan, (2022) also found that PjBL can improve creativity, critical thinking, and public speaking skills - skills that are very important in today's era.

In terms of evaluation, PjBL requires authentic and comprehensive assessment that not only measures aspects of knowledge, but also attitudes and skills that develop during the learning process. Nurmawati et al., (2022) emphasized that well-designed project assessments can improve students' ability to integrate information and communicate their understanding. Meanwhile, Nurdin, Pangastuti, Puji, Surya, & Adni, (2021) showed that students developed strong project management skills, signaling a shift from passive to active learning. These findings reinforce the value of PjBL in encouraging learning autonomy, an important goal in constructivist pedagogy (Hmelo-Silver, 2004)

Student Discipline

Student discipline is a core element in character education and is the basis for creating a conducive learning environment. Discipline is not only related to the application of rules, but also reflects the internalization of values by students to act consistently and voluntarily (Elfira, Violita, & Santosa, 2022) . From a developmental perspective, discipline shapes self-regulation skills and social-emotional competencies that are essential for lifelong learning (Putra, Rahim, Jasman, & Abadi, 2025)

According to Rifai, Uswatun, & Nurasiah, (2019) , student discipline is a series of actions carried out in an orderly and regular manner based on compliance and awareness, without coercion. However, the formation of discipline requires a gradual and continuous process, which requires synergy from teachers, parents, and the surrounding community environment (Hapsari, 2019) . This view is in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development, which emphasizes the importance of micro and meso system interactions (school, family, community) to individual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) .

Simanullang & Hasibuan, (2024) emphasized that discipline helps shape students' resilience and emotional control abilities, allowing them to make constructive decisions. Aula & Rizki, (2022) added that parental involvement in instilling the value of discipline that has been instilled by schools contributes greatly to creating consistency in student behavior at home and at school.

Furthermore, discipline instilled in a positive way can encourage moral awareness and self-reflection, which helps students recognize and correct deviant behavior Agisyaputri, Nadhirah, & Saripah, (2023) . Ihsan & Nugroho, (2020) state that discipline that comes from self-awareness will be more durable, because it is based on values that are believed, not merely because of fear of sanctions.

This idea is reinforced by Rais, (2023) , which states that discipline is an important foundation in personal growth and social harmonization. Therefore, the formation of discipline is not only as compliance with rules, but also as an expression of ethical personality and social responsibility, which is the main goal of character education today (Adha, Putri, & Mentari, 2023) .

Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an integral part of Indonesia's national education system, which not only functions as a means of transferring Islamic knowledge, but also as a medium for forming moral and spiritual values. Firmansyah, (2019) explains that PAI aims to form individuals who have faith, piety, and noble character. Ahyat, (2017) added that PAI must be implemented consciously and planned in order to be able to foster faith and obedience to Allah SWT in a sustainable manner.

The role of PAI is reinforced by Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System which states that national education must be based on religious values and national culture as well as responsive to the times. This emphasizes that PAI is not only a religious subject, but also a means of forming contextual moral and spiritual awareness (Ministry of National Education, 2003).

The pedagogical objectives of Islamic Education include character development (akhlaq), intellect (*aql*), and social responsibility (amanah) in the context of individual and collective life (Saputra et al., 2022) . Islamic education also emphasizes the importance of integration between science (knowledge) and charity (action), as emphasized in the Qur'an.

According to Djollong & Akbar, (2019) , the scope of PAI is very broad, covering aspects of theology, ethics, worship, social responsibility, and harmony with the environment. This is in line with the view of Al Rasyidin & Sinaga, (2017) which states that Islamic education must form a harmonious relationship between humans and God, others, themselves, and other creatures in the environment. This multidimensional coverage is in

line with UNESCO's four pillars of education: learning to know, doing, living together, and being.

The dynamic nature of PAI is also emphasized by Anwar, Faisal, & Zaim, (2023) , which states that the purpose of Islamic education must continue to develop in accordance with the challenges of the times. The ultimate goal is to form a kamil person who is able to face worldly and ukhrawi challenges. Hyangsewu, (2019) added that Islamic Education must be able to guide students to become obedient, intelligent, and responsible servants of God in social life. Thus, Islamic Religious Education not only supports moral and spiritual development, but also contributes greatly to the formation of ethical and responsible citizens, making it relevant in the context of 21st century education.

Conclusion

This study confirms that *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL) is a strategic learning model in supporting the achievement of 21st century educational goals, especially in the context of strengthening students' character through learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Substantially, PjBL not only provides space for strengthening students' cognitive aspects through experiential learning, but also facilitates the development of affective and psychomotor dimensions simultaneously. The implementation of PjBL encourages students' active involvement, collaboration, and reflective ability, and builds learning independence which is the essence of constructivistic pedagogy.

The transformation of the teacher's role from an information center to a facilitator of meaningful learning makes PjBL relevant to be applied in value-based learning such as PAI. In practice, this model is proven to be able to internalize Islamic values contextually, especially when projects are designed in line with the moral and social principles taught in Islam. This provides room for integration between modern pedagogical approaches and Islamic educational traditions rooted in the formation of noble morals and character.

Student discipline is a key element that not only provides the outcome of the learning process, but also a prerequisite for effective implementation of PjBL. Discipline, in this context, is understood as a manifestation of self-regulation, personal responsibility, and commitment to a common goal. The cultivation of disciplinary values supported by school culture, the role of teachers, and parental involvement contribute to the creation of an educational ecosystem conducive to transformative learning.

Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the view that the synergy between innovative learning models and value-based education can improve the overall quality of Islamic education learning. The integration between PjBL and disciplinary values in the context of Islamic education is not only pedagogically relevant, but also makes an important contribution to the global discourse on character education in a local context. This study opens opportunities for further exploration of the effectiveness of similar models in other educational settings as well as quantitative measurement of the character impact fostered through this approach.

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