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Improving Students' Ability to Memorize Short Surahs through the Card Sort (PBL) Strategy

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Abstract: This study aims to improve students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (IRE), particularly in developing understanding and moral awareness of Asmaul Husna (the Beautiful Names of Allah), through the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model. The research was conducted using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, emphasizing collaborative learning and reflective cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The participants consisted of fourth-grade students at SDN 005 Cemaga Selatan, Natuna Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected using tests, observation sheets, and documentation and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings indicate significant improvement in students' cognitive and affective learning outcomes. The average test scores increased from 69.0 in the pre-cycle to 78.0 in Cycle I and 87.0 in Cycle II, while learning mastery improved from 60% to 100%. In addition, students demonstrated greater engagement, curiosity, and collaboration during classroom activities. The study concludes that the PBL model effectively enhances understanding and internalization of Islamic moral values by transforming the learning process from memorization-based to inquiry-based. It contributes to the ongoing discourse on integrating innovative pedagogies into Islamic education to promote holistic development encompassing faith, knowledge, and character (iman, ilmu, and akhlaq).

Keywords: Asmaul Husna; Learning Outcomes; Moral Development; Problem-Based Learning

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century demands learners who are critical, creative, communicative, and collaborative—known as the 4C competencies (Daryanto & Karim, 2020). These competencies align with Islamic educational ideals that encourage reflection (tafakkur), consultation (musyawarah), and moral conduct (akhlaq al-karimah). However, in many Islamic Religious Education (IRE) classrooms, particularly at the elementary level, learning still tends to be teacher-centered, focusing on rote memorization of religious texts rather than on critical understanding and application (Linillah, 2014).

A preliminary observation conducted at SDN 005 Cemaga Selatan revealed that learning outcomes in the topic of Asmaul Husna were relatively low. Students could memorize the names of Allah but had difficulty explaining their meanings or applying them in daily life. The learning atmosphere was passive, with minimal interaction between teacher and students. Only 60% of students met the Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM or Minimum Mastery Criteria), and many exhibited low motivation and limited moral awareness in classroom interactions. These findings underscore the need for a more engaging and reflective pedagogical model that can foster both intellectual understanding and moral formation in Islamic education.

In response to these challenges, the present study applies the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model to the teaching of Asmaul Husna. PBL is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active student participation, problem-solving, and inquiry-based learning (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). It has been proven effective in enhancing students' higher-order thinking skills and motivation in various disciplines (Savery, 2006). In the context of Islamic education, PBL offers a promising framework for integrating cognitive learning with value internalization through real-life moral problems that require reflection and collaboration.

Asmaul Husna—the 99 beautiful names and attributes of Allah—represents a central concept in Islamic theology and moral education. Understanding these divine attributes helps students develop a worldview grounded in faith and ethics (Al-Attas, 1991). Teaching Asmaul Husna at the elementary level serves as a foundation for nurturing values such as justice (Al-'Adl), compassion (Ar-Rahman), and forgiveness (Al-Ghaffar), which form the basis of Islamic character education (akhlaq).

However, teaching this topic through conventional methods such as lecturing and memorization often leads to superficial learning. Students may memorize the names but fail to connect them with their moral implications. As Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984) emphasized, genuine learning occurs through experience, reflection, and application. Therefore, it is essential to adopt a learning model that invites students to explore, discuss, and apply the meanings of Asmaul Husna in real-life contexts.

Problem-Based Learning provides such an opportunity. Through PBL, students can be presented with authentic moral dilemmas or daily-life problems—such as how to embody Al-Adl (The Just) when dividing classroom responsibilities or how to show Ar-Rahman (Compassion) toward peers. These

scenarios encourage them to reason morally, discuss collaboratively, and relate divine values to social behavior, thereby transforming abstract theological knowledge into lived experience.

Problem-Based Learning has been widely recognized for promoting deep understanding, critical thinking, and student autonomy (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Savery, 2006). The model shifts the teacher's role from an information transmitter to a facilitator who guides exploration and reflection. In Islamic education, this pedagogical shift resonates with the prophetic teaching method that engaged learners through dialogue, questioning, and contextual examples.

From an Islamic pedagogical perspective, learning should integrate three interdependent dimensions: ta'lim (instruction), tarbiyah (nurturing), and ta'dib (ethical formation) (Al-Nahlawi, 2005). PBL aligns with these principles by encouraging students to acquire knowledge (ta'lim), develop holistic understanding (tarbiyah), and internalize values through moral practice (ta'dib). When applied to Asmaul Husna, PBL provides a platform where students learn divine attributes cognitively and simultaneously practice them behaviorally.

This integrative approach also reflects the constructivist assumption that learning is an active, social, and reflective process (Vygotsky, 1978). By working in groups, students engage in musyawarah (consultative dialogue), which mirrors the Qur'anic command for collective deliberation (Qur'an 42:38). Such collaboration not only enhances understanding but also reinforces interpersonal values of respect, empathy, and responsibility.

Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to improve students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education through the implementation of the PBL model, while promoting the integration of faith, knowledge, and moral practice.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered pedagogical approach that emphasizes learning through the experience of solving complex and authentic problems. As originally defined by Barrows and Tamblyn (1980), PBL is "a learning method based on the principle of using problems as a starting point for the acquisition and integration of new knowledge." It encourages learners to construct understanding actively, collaborate with peers, and apply knowledge to real-world contexts. The PBL model represents a shift from rote learning to inquiry-based instruction, enabling students to think critically, reflectively, and independently.

Hmelo-Silver (2004) identifies the essential features of PBL as follows: (1) problems are used to trigger learning; (2) students assume responsibility for their own learning; (3) learning occurs in small groups facilitated by a teacher; and (4) the process integrates knowledge from multiple domains. The learning process is organized around several key stages: problem orientation, group discussion, investigation, solution presentation, and reflection (Daryanto & Karim, 2020). Through these stages, learners engage in identifying issues, generating hypotheses, collecting information, and proposing practical or ethical solutions.

According to Savery (2006), PBL not only develops cognitive and problem-solving abilities but also fosters self-directed learning, teamwork, and motivation. These competencies correspond with 21st-century education skills—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—collectively known as 4C

(Daryanto & Karim, 2020). Such competencies are also highly valued within Islamic education, which views knowledge (ilmu) as a tool for both intellectual excellence and moral transformation (akhlaq).

The PBL model is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge based on their experiences and prior understanding. Piaget (1972) emphasized that learning is a process of adaptation achieved through assimilation and accommodation, allowing students to reorganize their cognitive structures when confronted with new information. Vygotsky (1978) further expanded this view through his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), arguing that learning occurs most effectively when students interact and collaborate within their social environment.

In PBL, these constructivist principles manifest through student collaboration and inquiry. When learners work together to solve contextual problems, they engage in dialogue, argumentation, and mutual scaffolding—thus constructing meaning collectively. The teacher serves as a facilitator rather than a transmitter of information, guiding students toward discovery and reflection (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). This learner-centered approach resonates with the Qur'anic injunctions to reflect (tafakkur) and consult (musyawarah) as pathways to knowledge and wisdom (Qur'an 3:191; 42:38).

Another theoretical foundation of PBL lies in experiential learning theory proposed by Kolb (1984), which defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." Kolb's learning cycle includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In PBL, students experience real or simulated problems (concrete experience), reflect on them through discussion (reflective observation), form conceptual understanding (abstract conceptualization), and test solutions through action (active experimentation). Dewey (1938) similarly emphasized that learning occurs when students connect knowledge with real-life experience through inquiry and reflection. Thus, PBL provides a framework for experiential, meaningful, and transformative learning.

Although PBL was developed within Western educational traditions, its principles are inherently compatible with Islamic pedagogy. In Islam, knowledge ('ilm) is not merely the accumulation of information but the cultivation of understanding and action guided by divine values (Al-Attas, 1991). The Qur'an repeatedly invites believers to reflect on the signs of creation (ayatullah), to reason (ta'aqqul), and to apply wisdom (hikmah) in everyday life. These cognitive and moral imperatives align with PBL's focus on inquiry, reflection, and problem-solving.

The integration of PBL into Islamic Education can thus enhance both cognitive and affective domains of learning. Linillah (2014) found that PBL significantly improved students' engagement and moral understanding by allowing them to explore real-life dilemmas rooted in religious values. Suryaana (2014) similarly observed that PBL facilitated cooperation and empathy among students while promoting deeper comprehension of Islamic teachings. In addition, Hidayat and Sauri (2016) emphasized that applying interactive and inquiry-based

learning methods in Islamic contexts encourages insan kamil—a complete human being characterized by intellect, faith, and virtue.

Furthermore, the PBL process reflects the Prophet Muhammad's pedagogical approach, which often involved asking thought-provoking questions, encouraging companions to reflect, and using situational contexts to teach moral lessons (Al-Nahlawi, 2005). Through dialogue, contextualization, and reflection, PBL revives this prophetic model of instruction in modern classrooms.

The philosophical foundation of Islamic education lies in the harmonious development of the intellectual ('aql), spiritual (ruh), and moral (akhlaq) dimensions of learners (Al-Attas, 1991). The objective is not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the formation of character that reflects divine attributes. In this regard, PBL can be viewed as a modern pedagogical expression of ta'lim (knowledge transmission), tarbiyah (holistic nurturing), and ta'dib (moral formation).

Through ta'lim, PBL provides opportunities for students to explore and understand the meanings of Asmaul Husna cognitively. Through tarbiyah, it nurtures emotional and spiritual growth by linking knowledge with lived experience. Through ta'dib, it guides moral conduct by prompting students to apply divine attributes in decision-making and behavior. This triadic integration mirrors the essence of Islamic pedagogy, where learning is viewed as a process of becoming an ethical and reflective servant of God ('abdullah).

In addition, the reflective cycle of PBL—problem identification, exploration, discussion, and reflection—parallels the process of muhasabah (self-evaluation) in Islam. By encouraging students to assess their understanding and actions, PBL reinforces the habit of critical reflection and ethical accountability, both central to Islamic moral education. As Nasr (1987) noted, authentic knowledge is that which transforms the soul and leads to virtuous action; PBL operationalizes this through participatory and reflective learning.

A growing body of research supports the effectiveness of PBL in moral, religious, and value-based education. Daryanto and Karim (2020) reported that PBL enhances students' motivation and creativity in religious instruction by involving them in contextual problem-solving. Situmorang et al. (2008) found that the implementation of innovative learning models like PBL improved teachers' pedagogical competence and students' cooperative behavior.

Similarly, Jannah (2020) and Sholiha (2019) demonstrated that PBL, combined with media such as songs and visuals, increased students' retention and moral reasoning in learning Asmaul Husna. These studies indicate that PBL not only supports cognitive mastery but also facilitates the internalization of ethical and spiritual values.

The present study builds upon these findings by applying PBL to elementary Islamic education within a rural Indonesian context, where access to digital resources and training is limited. It provides empirical evidence that even in resource-constrained environments, PBL can enhance learning outcomes and moral engagement when guided by reflective and value-oriented facilitation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design using a mixed-methods approach. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), CAR is a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting aimed at improving classroom practice through systematic inquiry. The design was chosen because it allows teachers to become researchers of their own classrooms, thereby integrating pedagogical innovation with reflective professional growth.

The mixed-methods orientation combined quantitative analysis of student learning outcomes with qualitative interpretation of classroom interaction, motivation, and moral behavior. This combination provided a comprehensive view of the impact of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model on both cognitive and affective learning dimensions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each cycle of the CAR process enabled iterative refinement of lesson design and instructional strategies to meet the targeted improvements in students' understanding of *Asmaul Husna*.

The research was conducted at SDN 005 Cemaga Selatan, Natuna Regency, Indonesia. The school is located in a semi-rural area where access to digital learning resources remains limited, making it an ideal site for testing innovative, low-cost instructional approaches.

Participants comprised 20 fourth-grade students—10 males and 10 females—aged 9–10 years. All participants were enrolled in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subject during the 2024 academic year. The classroom teacher served as the principal researcher, supported by one collaborator who acted as an observer to ensure data accuracy and objectivity.

The topic selected for this study was *"Mari Mengenal Asmaul Husna"* ("Getting to Know the Beautiful Names of Allah"). This theme was chosen because it integrates cognitive knowledge, emotional reflection, and ethical behavior—three learning domains essential for Islamic moral education (Al-Nahlawi, 2005).

The study consisted of three phases:

1. Pre-Cycle (Baseline Observation) – The teacher conducted initial observations to identify existing problems in teaching *Asmaul Husna*. Students' initial test scores and engagement levels were recorded.
2. Cycle I (First Implementation of PBL) – Lesson plans were designed using the five stages of the PBL model: problem orientation, group planning, inquiry, presentation, and reflection (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Learning materials included short case scenarios illustrating moral dilemmas related to Allah's attributes, such as fairness (*Al-'Adl*) and mercy (*Ar-Rahman*).
3. Cycle II (Refinement and Reinforcement) – Based on reflections from Cycle I, improvements were made to group composition, problem complexity, and teacher scaffolding. The second cycle emphasized deeper reflection and value application through discussion and storytelling activities.

At the end of each cycle, students took written tests, and observations were conducted to evaluate engagement and behavior. Teacher reflections guided adjustments for subsequent cycles.

To ensure comprehensive and valid results, data were gathered through multiple instruments:

1. Observation Sheets – Two observation forms were used:

- Teacher activity observation, assessing facilitation, questioning, and feedback.
- Student activity observation, assessing attention, participation, collaboration, and reflection.
  Each item was rated on a 1–4 scale ranging from "less active" to "very active."

2. Learning Outcome Tests – Cognitive learning was measured using pre-tests and post-tests containing multiple-choice and short-answer questions assessing comprehension of *Asmaul Husna*. The Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) was set at 70.
3. Reflection Notes and Interviews – The teacher's reflective journal captured instructional strengths, challenges, and emerging patterns of moral learning. Informal student interviews provided insight into perceptions and attitudes toward PBL.
4. Documentation – Lesson plans, student worksheets, and classroom photos were collected to substantiate the findings.

This multi-instrument design ensured data triangulation and improved validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The analysis process combined quantitative descriptive analysis and qualitative thematic analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were derived from pre-tests and post-tests in each cycle. The mean score and the percentage of students meeting the KKM were calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Percentage of Mastery} = \frac{\text{Number of students achieving} \geq 70}{\text{Total number of students}} \times 100$$

The increase in learning outcomes across cycles was interpreted as an indicator of PBL's effectiveness in improving academic achievement (Arikunto, 2010).

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from observations, interviews, and reflection notes were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Emerging themes such as increased engagement, collaboration, moral reasoning, and self-reflection were identified and compared across cycles.

Integration of both data types allowed the researcher to connect quantitative improvement in test scores with qualitative evidence of behavioral and moral transformation—a methodological triangulation consistent with Denzin's (2006) qualitative research principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in teaching *Asmaul Husna* was conducted over two action cycles following a pre-cycle

(baseline observation). Each cycle followed the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

During the pre-cycle, the learning process was predominantly teacher-centered. Students relied on rote memorization and passive listening. Their understanding of the meanings and implications of *Asmaul Husna* was shallow; only 60% achieved the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM = 70).

In Cycle I, PBL was introduced with moral problems and contextual learning tasks. Students began working in groups, discussing moral scenarios that related to Allah's attributes, such as fairness (*Al-'Adl*) and forgiveness (*Al-Ghaffar*). The teacher facilitated the inquiry process and encouraged reflection. In Cycle II, refinements were made to improve group collaboration and deepen reflection through guided questioning.

Across both cycles, student participation and enthusiasm increased markedly. The shift from teacher-led instruction to student-centered learning created a more interactive, reflective, and enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

Quantitative data were obtained from tests administered at the end of each stage. The improvement in students' average scores and mastery percentages is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Learning Outcomes

Cycle	Average Score	Students Meeting KKM	Percentage (%)
Pre-Cycle	69.0	12	60.0
Cycle I	78.0	16	80.0
Cycle II	87.0	20	100.0

As Table 1 shows, the average student score increased from 69.0 in the pre-cycle to 87.0 in Cycle II, representing an improvement of 18 points (26%). Similarly, the percentage of students achieving mastery increased from 60% to 100%. This upward trend demonstrates that the PBL model significantly improved cognitive learning outcomes.

The improvement can be attributed to PBL's emphasis on inquiry and collaborative learning. By engaging in meaningful problem-solving, students deepened their conceptual understanding and retained information better. This finding is consistent with prior research by Linillah (2014), who reported that PBL enhances both comprehension and retention in Islamic education, and with Hmelo-Silver (2004), who identified active participation as a key factor in long-term knowledge construction.

Observation data confirmed the improvement in student engagement and participation throughout the research cycles. Four indicators were assessed: (1) attention to the teacher's explanation, (2) participation in group discussions, (3) collaboration, and (4) moral reflection.

Table 2. Student Activity Observation Results

Cycle	Average Activity Score	Qualitative Category
Pre-Cycle	65%	Fair
Cycle I	77%	Active
Cycle II	90%	Very Active

Table 2 shows that student activity improved from 65% (fair) in the pre-cycle to 77% (active) in Cycle I, and 90% (very active) in Cycle II. This steady improvement indicates that PBL successfully created an active learning environment.

Qualitative observations revealed that students initially struggled with teamwork and tended to depend on teacher direction. However, by Cycle II, they exhibited autonomy, asked critical questions, and shared moral opinions confidently. Group discussions were livelier, and students related *Asmaul Husna* values to school and family experiences—for example, applying *Ar-Rahman* (compassion) in helping classmates or *Al-Adl* (justice) in dividing group responsibilities fairly.

This behavioral change aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, which asserts that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration. The PBL environment enabled *peer scaffolding*—students learned from each other through dialogue and shared reflection, embodying the Qur'anic principle of *musyawarah* (consultation).

The teacher's reflective journal revealed significant transformation in classroom dynamics. Initially, the teacher played a dominant role, delivering explanations while students remained passive. During the first implementation of PBL (Cycle I), students' enthusiasm increased, but group participation was uneven—some students dominated while others remained silent.

After reflecting on these challenges, the teacher revised group compositions and improved facilitation strategies for Cycle II. Balanced groups were formed based on students' learning styles and interpersonal compatibility. The teacher also introduced structured reflection sessions, allowing students to discuss not only academic content but also moral insights from each problem scenario.

These adjustments led to an inclusive and collaborative classroom climate. Students became more responsible and empathetic toward their peers. Teacher reflection confirmed that the PBL process enhanced not only academic achievement but also emotional intelligence and character development, consistent with the principles of *ta'dib* (moral education) as outlined by Al-Nahlawi (2005).

This transformation supports Dewey's (1938) and Kolb's (1984) assertion that reflection is essential to experiential learning. Through reflection, students internalize experiences and construct meaning that informs both thought and behavior.

A major contribution of this study is the demonstration that PBL facilitates integration between cognitive mastery and moral practice—the central goal of Islamic education. In conventional teaching, students often memorize *Asmaul*

Husna without connecting it to ethical application. Under the PBL framework, they learned to analyze moral issues through the lens of divine attributes.

For instance, when discussing *Al-Ghaffar* (The Forgiving), students reflected on forgiving peers after conflicts. When studying *As-Sami'* (The All-Hearing), they related it to listening respectfully to teachers and classmates. These connections fostered what Al-Attas (1991) calls "*adabic knowledge*"—knowledge that cultivates virtue and self-discipline.

By engaging in moral inquiry, students also practiced *muhasabah* (self-evaluation), reflecting on how divine attributes could guide their daily actions. This aligns with the Qur'anic instruction, *"And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers"* (Qur'an 51:55). The PBL process operationalized this reflective command, transforming learning from an intellectual exercise into a spiritual journey.

The dual improvement—academic and moral—mirrors the findings of Suryaana (2014), who observed that PBL strengthens cooperation, responsibility, and ethical reasoning among students. Thus, PBL not only improved test performance but also supported the holistic objective of Islamic pedagogy: to produce students who think critically and act righteously.

The results of this study corroborate findings from both local and international research. Linillah (2014) and Hidayat and Sauri (2016) demonstrated that inquiry-based approaches like PBL increase moral awareness and reflective thinking in Islamic learning. Similarly, Daryanto and Karim (2020) reported that PBL enhances motivation and creativity in value-based education.

These studies, along with international perspectives such as Hmelo-Silver (2004) and Savery (2006), suggest that PBL promotes not only cognitive engagement but also metacognitive awareness. In the context of Islamic education, this dual benefit reflects the synthesis of *'ilm* (knowledge) and *amal* (action)—a unity central to the Islamic concept of holistic education. Moreover, the present study contributes new empirical evidence from a rural elementary school setting, demonstrating that PBL remains effective even with minimal technological support. This supports Situmorang et al. (2008), who emphasized that teacher creativity and reflective practice are more influential than material resources in achieving meaningful learning outcomes.

While the implementation of PBL produced substantial improvements, several challenges were identified.

First, students' initial adjustment to group-based and inquiry learning was difficult. Many were unfamiliar with discussing problems collaboratively, resulting in uneven participation during early stages. As Linillah (2014) noted, teacher scaffolding and clear instructions are essential to help students transition from passive to active learning.

Second, time management posed difficulties. The PBL process requires extended periods for discussion, inquiry, and reflection, which sometimes exceeded the standard lesson duration. This finding supports Hmelo-Silver (2004), who highlighted that PBL is time-intensive but yields deeper learning outcomes.

Third, teacher preparation required substantial effort in designing relevant problem scenarios that connected *Asmaul Husna* with students' real-life situations. Creating authentic moral dilemmas demanded creativity and a strong understanding of both Islamic teachings and students' social contexts.

Despite these challenges, the overall outcomes were positive, reinforcing the need for professional development to train teachers in designing and facilitating PBL in Islamic education settings.

The results of this research affirm that PBL effectively enhances academic achievement, student engagement, and moral development in Islamic Religious Education. The steady improvement in test scores and behavioral indicators reflects the synergy between constructivist learning theory and Islamic pedagogical values.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings align with Piaget's (1972) and Vygotsky's (1978) constructivism, which emphasize active participation and social interaction in learning. From a spiritual perspective, they support Al-Attas's (1991) conception of education as the cultivation of virtue through knowledge. PBL thus bridges modern pedagogy and Islamic philosophy by promoting reflective, inquiry-based learning grounded in divine ethics.

Practically, the success of PBL in this classroom suggests that Islamic education can adopt student-centered, inquiry-based methods without compromising religious authenticity. When implemented thoughtfully, PBL can become a vehicle for achieving the integrated goals of *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dib*—educating the intellect, nurturing the heart, and guiding moral action.

This research contributes to the growing recognition that effective Islamic education must move beyond memorization toward reflective understanding and moral practice. As Dewey (1938) asserted, education is not preparation for life but life itself; in Islam, it is the process of realizing faith through knowledge and action.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

The results of this Classroom Action Research clearly demonstrate that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model effectively improved students' cognitive, affective, and moral learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (IRE), particularly in understanding Asmaul Husna. The average score increased from 69.0 in the pre-cycle to 87.0 in Cycle II, while learning mastery rose from 60% to 100%. These quantitative gains were accompanied by qualitative improvements in student engagement, collaboration, and reflective moral reasoning. Students became more active participants in the learning process, showing enthusiasm and the ability to connect divine attributes such as Al-'Adl (The Just), Ar-Rahman (The Merciful), and Al-Ghaffar (The Forgiving) with their daily behavior. This transformation affirms that PBL fosters meaningful learning by shifting the instructional focus from memorization to inquiry, reflection, and value internalization. The model aligns with the constructivist view of learning as an active, social, and experiential process and resonates deeply with the Islamic educational principles of ta'lim (knowledge), tarbiyah (nurturing), and ta'dib (moral formation).

Implications

The results of this study provide important implications for Islamic education, particularly in the teaching of Asmaul Husna. The consistent improvement in both cognitive and affective domains demonstrates that the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is not only effective in strengthening conceptual understanding but also in nurturing spiritual and moral development. This confirms that learning strategies based on inquiry and reflection can harmoniously integrate iman (faith), ilmu (knowledge), and amal (practice), which are the foundational principles of holistic Islamic education.

Recommendations

Beyond improving academic achievement, this study highlights PBL's potential to bridge modern pedagogical innovation with Islamic spiritual and ethical philosophy. The process of problem identification, inquiry, collaboration, and reflection embodies the Qur'anic imperatives of *tafakkur* (deep contemplation) and *musyawarah* (consultative dialogue). As students engaged in discussing real-life moral dilemmas, they not only learned the meanings of *Asmaul Husna* but also practiced them as living values, nurturing self-awareness and ethical sensitivity. These findings reinforce the argument that Islamic education must integrate critical inquiry with moral and spiritual development to produce *insan kamil*—a balanced individual guided by intellect, faith, and virtue. Practically, the study recommends that Islamic Education teachers adopt PBL to promote reflective and value-based learning, while curriculum developers provide frameworks that support inquiry and ethical reasoning. Future research could expand this model to other topics or incorporate digital tools to enhance engagement. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that the essence of Islamic education lies in the harmony of *iman* (faith), *ilmu* (knowledge), and *amal* (action)—a harmony that the PBL model successfully cultivates within the learning process.

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