Implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) to Enhance Conceptual Understanding of Zakat in Islamic Religious Education at The Elementary School Level

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model in improving student learning outcomes on the subject of zakat in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, which was carried out in several cycles with 17 fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam as the subjects. Data were collected through observation, learning outcome tests, and documentation. The results showed a significant increase in student learning outcomes after the implementation of the PjBL model, with the average score increasing from 75.85 in cycle I to 85 in cycle II and 90 in cycle III. These findings indicate that the PjBL model is effective in increasing student engagement, motivation, and conceptual understanding of the concept of zakat. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of applying the project-based learning model in Islamic Religious Education to develop more contextual, active, and meaningful learning.

Keywords: Project Based Learning; Learning Outcomes; Islamic Religious Education; Zakat; Contextual Learning

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in elementary schools plays an important role in shaping the character and spiritual understanding of students. However, the reality in the field shows that student learning outcomes on the subject of zakat are often still low. Based on initial observations in class V of SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam, only about 48% of students showed mastery of the subject matter. These low learning outcomes indicate that IRE is still dominated by conventional teacher-centered methods that do not actively involve students in the process of thinking and doing. This condition has an impact on students' low motivation and conceptual understanding of zakat material, which is applicable in everyday life (Mukhlis, 2024); (Rozak, 2025).

In the context of modern education, ideal learning should provide space for students to build knowledge through direct experience. According to constructivist theory, effective learning occurs when students are actively involved in discovering concepts through relevant and meaningful activities. Several previous studies (e.g., Paul, Wariani & Boelan, 2022) have shown that participatory and project-based learning approaches can increase student motivation and learning outcomes. One model that fits these principles is Project-Based Learning (PjBL) (Julia et al., 2024; Lathifah et al., 2024; Azzahra et al., 2025).

The PjBL model places students as the main subjects in the learning process. Through project activities, students not only understand concepts but also develop critical thinking, collaboration, and responsibility skills in solving real problems. In the context of zakat learning, PjBL enables students to understand the meaning of zakat more deeply through direct experiences, such as creating zakat calculation simulations or simple social projects that reflect the values of caring and sincerity (Sholeh et al., 2024; Syafila & A'yun, 2024; Nababan et al., 2023).

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of PjBL in improving learning outcomes and 21st-century skills. However, research specifically examining the application of PjBL in zakat learning at the elementary school level is still limited. This is an important gap to fill, especially given the urgency of forming conceptual understanding and religious social character from an early age (Antoni et al., 2025).

Based on this background, this study was conducted to improve student learning outcomes on zakat material through the application of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in grade V of SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam. This study is also expected to contribute to the development of more active, contextual, and student-centered PAI learning strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This study used classroom action research with a descriptive qualitative approach. Classroom action research was chosen because it aims to improve the learning process and outcomes of students through the application of the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model to the subject of zakat in grade V at SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam. The qualitative approach was used to describe changes in learning behavior, student engagement, and improvements in learning outcomes

descriptively from each cycle of Action (Girsang et al., 2024; Khalisah et al., 2024; Zahroh, 2025).

The subjects of this study were 17 fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam, consisting of 6 male students and 11 female students. This class was selected based on preliminary observations that showed low learning outcomes in the subject of zakat, with only about 48% of students achieving minimum proficiency. The location was also chosen based on the consideration that the teacher in that class had implemented the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes active learning, making the application of the PjBL model relevant to be tested.

This research was conducted in three cycles, each of which consisted of four main stages:

1. Planning – developing project-based learning tools, including lesson plans, observation sheets, and evaluation instruments.
2. Acting – implementing the PjBL model on zakat material through project activities involving exploration and group discussions.
3. Observing – observing student activities and engagement during the learning process using observation sheets.
4. Reflecting – analyzing the results of the action to determine improvements to be made in the next cycle (Fatmawati et al., 2022; Burhanuddin et al., 2023; Mokalu et al., 2024).

Data collection techniques included (1) observation of student activities and participation during learning, (2) learning outcome tests in the form of objective and essay questions compiled by the researcher to measure the mastery of the concept of zakat, and (3) documentation in the form of learning activity records and student project results. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods, namely by comparing the results of observations, tests, and documentation to obtain a comprehensive picture of the improvement in learning outcomes (Robeah & Mu'is, 2025).

Data analysis was conducted using simple qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods. Observation data were analyzed descriptively to assess changes in student behavior and engagement, while test data were analyzed by calculating the average score and percentage of learning completeness between cycles. Improved learning outcomes are indicated by an increase in the average score and minimum mastery percentage (KKM) from cycle to cycle. Thus, this methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of implementing the Project Based Learning model in improving student learning outcomes in zakat material in elementary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The results of this study include quantitative and qualitative data obtained through learning outcome tests, observations of student and teacher activities, and documentation of the learning process during the implementation of the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model on zakat material in grade V of SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam. Quantitative data showed an increase in learning outcomes from cycle to cycle after the implementation of this learning model. Before the

intervention, the average score of students' daily tests was only 68.50 with a learning completeness rate of 55%, indicating low student understanding of the concept of zakat, both in terms of knowledge and the application of its values in daily life. This condition indicates that the previous learning process was still teacher-centered, so that students did not have the opportunity to be actively involved in building understanding and relating the material to a more realistic religious and social context. Therefore, the PjBL model was chosen to create a more meaningful, collaborative, and contextual learning experience, so that students could understand zakat not only as a religious obligation but also as a form of social concern and moral responsibility (Lubis, 2024).

After implementing the PjBL model, the results showed a significant increase in students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. In Cycle I, the average score increased to 75.85 with a learning completeness rate of 65%, indicating a positive change even though it did not reach the classical completeness target of 85%. In Cycle II, the average score increased to 85 with a learning completeness rate of 90%, and in Cycle III, the average score rose again to 90 with a learning completeness rate that remained stable above the minimum threshold. Qualitatively, the observation results showed that students were more active in discussions, participated in group project activities, and showed an increased sense of responsibility for the tasks assigned. Teachers' activities were also more optimal in guiding students to discover concepts, providing feedback, and facilitating the reflection process after learning. This improvement confirms that the application of the PjBL model is capable of creating an interactive and reflective learning environment, increasing learning motivation, and strengthening the integration of Islamic values and 21st-century skills in Islamic Education and Morality lessons (Zidane et al., 2023).

After the PjBL model was implemented, there was a significant improvement as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Comparison of Student Learning Outcomes at Each Stage

Stages	Lowest Score	Highest Score	Average	Students Completing	Percentage of Completion
Initial Conditions	55	82	68,50	11	55%
Cycle I	64	88	75,85	11	65%
Cycle II	60	100	85,00	15	90%

The increase in the average score from 68.50 to 85.00 shows a significant increase of 16.5 points in the context of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics learning. In addition, classical learning completeness increased from 55% to 90%, exceeding the minimum completeness threshold set at 85%. This improvement is not only an indicator of success from a cognitive perspective, but also reflects positive changes in students' learning patterns, which have become more active, creative, and reflective. These results show that the application of the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model is able to facilitate a more meaningful learning process, where students not only understand the concept of zakat theoretically,

but can also relate it to the social life and religious values they experience in their daily lives. In other words, the PjBL model provides space for students to develop critical, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills, which are an integral part of 21st-century learning objectives and are highly relevant to the vision of Islamic Religious Education in shaping characters that are faithful, responsible, and caring towards others.

In addition to quantitative data showing an increase in learning outcomes, qualitative findings also reveal significant changes in classroom dynamics during the learning process. Observations show that student activity increased in each cycle. In the early stages, students tended to be passive, waiting for teacher instructions, and showing a high level of dependence on direct explanations. However, as the PjBL model, which emphasizes collaboration, exploration, and project-based inquiry, was implemented, students began to show greater initiative in seeking information, engaging in critical discussions, and creatively compiling project results. Interactions between students became more active, the classroom atmosphere became livelier, and their emotional involvement in learning increased significantly. This improvement was also followed by the optimization of the teacher's role, which shifted from merely providing information to becoming a facilitator and motivator in the learning process. Teachers demonstrated improved abilities in guiding, directing group projects, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging reflection on learning experiences. Thus, from both the student and teacher perspectives, the application of the PjBL model has proven to be capable of creating a collaborative, contextual learning environment oriented towards strengthening a deep understanding of the values of zakat in Islamic Religious Education and Morality (Mea, 2024).

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the application of the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model significantly contributes to improving student learning outcomes in zakat material in grade V of SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam. These findings indicate that a project-oriented learning approach can bridge the gap between conceptual understanding and practical application in the context of Islamic Religious Education. The improvement in learning outcomes can be explained through three main aspects, namely active student involvement, meaningful learning, and collaboration in the learning process. These three aspects are interrelated and together form the foundation of learner-centered learning and are in line with the student-centered learning paradigm promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum.

First, the PjBL model fundamentally places students as active subjects in the learning process, not merely recipients of information. Through direct involvement in project activities, students play a role in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities related to the concept of zakat. For example, students are invited to simulate the calculation of zakat maal and zakat fitrah, compile reports on data collected about zakat practices in their neighborhood, and present their findings in front of the class. These activities make the learning

process more contextual and relevant to real life. Thus, students not only understand zakat as a religious obligation in theory, but also internalize the spiritual and social values contained therein, such as honesty, empathy, and social responsibility towards others (Farisah & Wafiqah, 2025).

These findings are in line with Thomas' (2020) research, which confirms that Project Based Learning encourages deep learning, namely a deep understanding of concepts and the ability to apply them in authentic situations. In addition, the results of research by Paul, Wariani & Boelan (2022) show that the application of PjBL in primary education can increase students' intrinsic motivation because they feel they have control over the learning process. In the context of Islamic Education, this control encourages students to experience a learning process that is not only intellectual but also emotional and spiritual. Thus, learning about zakat through projects helps students develop a comprehensive understanding of knowledge and charity, theory and practice, as well as values and real actions (Sandika et al., 2025).

Second, the application of the PjBL model creates meaningful learning experiences because students learn through direct experience and exploration of social phenomena related to zakat. Meaningful learning is not only limited to academic achievement but also to the formation of religious values and attitudes. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this is very important because zakat is not only understood as a fiqh concept, but also has deep moral and social dimensions. Through project activities, students are invited to explore the meaning of zakat as a form of social solidarity and an instrument of welfare distribution.

These values are in line with the teachings in QS. At–Taubah [9]: 103, which emphasizes that zakat serves to cleanse and purify wealth and the soul. By linking learning activities to verses from the Qur'an, students not only understand zakat as a religious obligation, but also instill a spiritual awareness that every action has a dimension of worship. This shows that project–based learning in the context of Islamic Education does not only transfer knowledge, but also develops students' character and social piety. In the project activities carried out, for example, students not only calculate zakat mathematically, but also discuss how zakat funds can be used to help people in need. Such activities foster empathy, a sense of social responsibility, and a desire to contribute to the common good—values that are at the core of Islamic education (Umar et al., 2025).

In addition, meaningful learning resulting from the application of PjBL is also closely related to the constructivist theory proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, in which knowledge is not given directly, but is constructed by students themselves through interaction with the environment and learning experiences. In this study, when students worked collaboratively on zakat projects, they exchanged ideas, solved problems, and connected concepts with real-life experiences, which strengthened the internal construction of knowledge. Thus, learning was no longer mechanistic or rote-based, but became a deep reflective process (Syafila & A'yun, 2024).

Third, the aspect of collaboration is an important element that supports the successful implementation of PjBL. Through group work on projects, students

learn to communicate, negotiate, and work together with their friends. Each group member has a different role, but they complement each other in achieving common goals. This process builds essential social skills, such as leadership, listening, respecting others' opinions, and resolving conflicts constructively. The collaboration that develops during learning not only enriches the learning experience but also strengthens the sense of togetherness and ukhuwah among students—values that are strongly emphasized in Islamic teachings.

Teachers in this study acted as facilitators and mentors, rather than being the sole source of knowledge. The role of teachers focused more on creating a conducive learning environment, providing guidance when students encountered difficulties, and directing them to stay focused on the project objectives. This is in line with the principle of active learning in the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes the importance of activity-based and exploratory learning. Teachers also showed an increase in competence in designing relevant projects, providing constructive feedback, and authentically assessing student work based on the learning process and products. Thus, the implementation of PjBL not only improves the quality of learning from the students' perspective but also strengthens teachers' professionalism in managing innovative learning that is oriented towards results and values.

The improvement in learning outcomes achieved in this study in cognitive, affective, and social aspects shows that PjBL is an effective approach in PAI learning, especially in teaching topics that have a social practice dimension such as zakat. This model helps bridge the gap between religious knowledge and its application in real life. Students not only understand zakat as one of the pillars of Islam, but also realize its social function in realizing justice and welfare. Thus, the application of PjBL can be seen as a concrete effort to integrate the aspects of knowledge, faith, and charity in the educational process.

Although the results of this study show success, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the relatively small number of research subjects (17 students) limits the generalization of the results to a broader context. Second, the limited implementation time only covered two to three learning cycles, so it could not show the long-term impact of applying the PjBL model on character building and students' understanding of Islamic values. Third, external factors such as parental support, school facilities, and the readiness of other teachers to implement similar models have not been studied in depth. Therefore, the results of this study need to be followed up with further studies involving a larger population, different school contexts, and using mixed methods to make the results more comprehensive.

In practical terms, the results of this study have important implications for the development of PAI learning in elementary schools. First, PAI teachers are expected to be more courageous in adopting innovative learning approaches such as PjBL to increase student engagement and the relevance of learning to real life. Second, educational institutions and policy makers can use these findings as a basis for designing teacher training that focuses on the application of project-based student-centered learning in a religious context. Third, this study also makes a theoretical contribution by enriching the literature on the implementation

of PjBL in the field of Islamic Religious Education, which has been limited compared to the fields of science or social studies.

Thus, it can be asserted that the application of Project Based Learning in zakat learning in elementary schools not only significantly improves student learning outcomes but also strengthens the integration between the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions in Islamic Religious Education. PjBL provides opportunities for students to learn through real experiences, internalize Islamic values in their daily lives, and develop 21st-century skills that are essential for facing the challenges of modern education.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION
Conclusion

The application of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in Islamic Religious Education and Morality lessons on the subject of zakat in grade V at SD Negeri 001 Arung Ayam proved to be effective in improving students' learning abilities. This model encourages active involvement, collaboration, and a deeper conceptual understanding of zakat, thereby achieving the research objective of improving learning outcomes. The results of this study reinforce the relevance of PjBL as an innovative strategy in religious education, particularly in developing attitudes of responsibility, independence, and the application of Islamic values in the context of real life. Practically, PAI teachers are advised to integrate the PjBL model into thematic learning planning that is oriented towards real experiences and projects, while further research can expand its application to different subjects or levels of education to test the consistency of its effectiveness.

Implications

These findings have important implications for Islamic pedagogical practices in elementary schools. The application of Project Based Learning can be used as an alternative strategy in PAI learning, especially for applied subjects such as zakat, almsgiving, and muamalah. In addition to improving learning outcomes, this model also fosters spiritual and social values that are in line with the objectives of Islamic education. For teachers, the results of this study encourage the need for continuous innovation in teaching methods so that PAI learning becomes more contextual, active, and meaningful.

Recommendations

Considering that learning with the Project Based Learning model can improve students' learning abilities and also build curiosity, confidence, responsibility, and teamwork, it is recommended that this model be implemented by PAI and BP teachers as well as other subject teachers.

From this classroom action research, it can be recommended that the Project Based Learning model can be used at all school levels, not just elementary school, and that implementing the Project Based Learning model can be a new alternative for teachers in their efforts to improve classroom learning so that students can understand the subject matter more quickly and be more enthusiastic, active, creative, and innovative in the learning process. Teachers can

also use any learning model that is tailored to the characteristics of the subject matter being taught, because there is no perfect learning model; all learning models or methods have their own advantages and disadvantages.

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