



## Improving Students' Learning Motivation through Active Learning Methods in Islamic Religious Education Learning for Fourth Grade Students at Sd N 104 Bengkulu City

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve students' learning motivation through the implementation of active learning methods in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for fourth-grade students at SDN 104 Bengkulu City. The background of this research is based on the low level of students' motivation, which can be seen from their lack of active participation, interest, and involvement in the learning process. The method used in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR) with both qualitative and quantitative approaches, carried out in two cycles. Each cycle consists of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, while the data analysis used a descriptive technique. The results show that the application of active learning methods can significantly improve students' learning motivation. This can be seen from the increase in students' participation during lessons, their confidence in asking and answering questions, as well as the improvement in learning outcomes in each cycle. Therefore, active learning methods are proven to be effective in improving students' motivation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for fourth-grade students at SDN 104 Bengkulu City.

**Keywords:** *Learning Motivation, Active Learning, Islamic Religious Education (Pai), Elementary School Students, Classroom Action Research*

### ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received

January 03, 2025

Revised

February 23, 2025

Accepted

March 30, 2025

Journal Homepage

<https://ojs.staialfurqan.ac.id/IJoASER/>

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is an important process in shaping high-quality human resources, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. In the context of primary education, learning is not only aimed at transferring knowledge, but also at building students' attitudes, values, and learning motivation from an early stage. One of the subjects that has a strategic role in character building is Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Through PAI learning, students are expected not only to understand religious teachings theoretically, but also to internalize these values in their daily lives.<sup>1</sup>

However, in practice, PAI learning in elementary schools often faces various challenges, one of which is the low level of students' learning motivation. This can be seen from the lack of student participation in class activities, low interest in asking questions, and minimal involvement in the learning process. These conditions may be caused by several factors, such as the use of conventional teaching methods, lack of variation in delivering the material, and the limited involvement of students in the teaching and learning process.<sup>2</sup>

Learning motivation is a key factor that greatly determines students' success in achieving learning objectives. Students with high motivation tend to be more active, enthusiastic, and eager to understand the material being taught. Therefore, teachers are required to create a

<sup>1</sup> Bonwell, Charles C., and James A. Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom* (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Prince, Michael, "Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research," *Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 93, No. 3, 2004, pp. 223

learning environment that is engaging, interactive, and enjoyable in order to encourage students' motivation. One effective effort that can be applied is the use of active learning methods that place students as the main subjects in the learning process.<sup>3</sup>

Active learning methods provide opportunities for students to be directly involved in learning activities through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, group work, and other participatory activities. With this approach, students are not just passive listeners, but actively participate in discovering and constructing their own understanding. The implementation of this method is expected to increase students' interest and motivation, especially in PAI learning, which is often considered monotonous if not delivered in an engaging way.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the success of the learning process is also influenced by the teacher's ability to select and apply methods that are appropriate to students' characteristics. Each student has different learning styles, so a variety of teaching methods is needed to accommodate all learners effectively. In this context, active learning methods are considered a relevant alternative because they involve students directly, both physically and mentally, in the learning process. This involvement is expected to foster curiosity, improve concentration, and strengthen students' understanding of the material being taught.

On the other hand, PAI learning is not only oriented toward cognitive aspects but also emphasizes the development of students' attitudes and religious behavior. Therefore, the learning approach used must be able to address the affective and psychomotor aspects of students. Active learning methods allow students to experience the values being taught directly, making the learning process more meaningful rather than merely theoretical. As a result, students are expected not only to understand religious teachings but also to apply them in their daily lives.<sup>5</sup>

With the implementation of appropriate learning methods, it is expected that the PAI learning process can be more effective and able to improve students' motivation in a sustainable way. This is important because high learning motivation will have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes and character development. Therefore, this study is important to conduct in order to provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of active learning methods in improving students' motivation at the elementary school level, particularly at SDN 104 Bengkulu City.

Furthermore, the implementation of active learning in the PAI classroom serves as a bridge to develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) among elementary students. By engaging in problem-solving and ethical analysis, students are trained to not only memorize religious texts but to critique and apply them to modern social issues. This cognitive engagement ensures that the lessons remain intellectually stimulating, preventing the mental fatigue often associated with traditional lecture-based instruction.

The role of peer interaction within these active frameworks cannot be overstated, as it fosters a sense of belonging and collective responsibility. When students work in groups to solve tasks or discuss moral values, they are practicing the very Islamic principles of *shura* (consultation) and *ta'awun* (cooperation). This social dimension of learning acts as a catalyst for motivation, as students feel more comfortable exploring complex spiritual concepts in a supportive environment of their peers rather than under the sole pressure of teacher evaluation.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the integration of diverse learning media from digital storytelling to visual aids addresses the multisensory needs of fourth-grade students at SDN 104 Bengkulu City. By providing varied stimuli, teachers can sustain long-term engagement and cater to different learning styles, whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. This variety ensures that the PAI

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<sup>3</sup> Freeman, Scott, et al., "Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 111, No. 23, 2014, pp. 84

<sup>4</sup> Slavin, Robert E., *Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Deci, Edward L., and Richard M. Ryan. *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Prince, Michael, 'Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research', *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93.3 (2004), 223-31.

curriculum remains vibrant and accessible, directly counteracting the "monotonous" reputation that often discourages young learners from fully investing in religious studies.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, the transition to active learning reflects a broader commitment to holistic education, where the student's emotional well-being is as important as their academic progress. As students gain confidence through active participation, they develop a "growth mindset" that values persistence and curiosity. This foundational shift in attitude is crucial for primary school students, as it establishes a positive trajectory for their lifelong educational journey and ensures that religious values are deeply rooted in their personal identity.<sup>8</sup>

Based on this background, this study aims to examine how the implementation of active learning methods can improve students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for fourth-grade students at SDN 104 Bengkulu City. In addition, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and innovative learning strategies, particularly in improving the quality of PAI learning at the elementary school level.

## METHOD

This study utilizes Classroom Action Research (CAR) with a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how active learning methods improve student motivation, focusing on process and behavior rather than just results. The research was conducted over two months during the second semester at SDN 104 Bengkulu City, specifically involving all 28 fourth-grade students (15 males and 13 females). The research procedure followed two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection, with active learning implemented through discussions and interactive participation. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, utilizing instruments such as observation sheets and interview guidelines to monitor student enthusiasm and engagement. The collected data were then processed using descriptive qualitative analysis, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, the researcher employed triangulation techniques, cross-referencing information from multiple sources to maintain a high level of reliability throughout the study.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools has an important role in shaping students' character and spiritual values. However, in practice, the learning process often faces various problems, especially related to students' low learning motivation. This study was conducted at SDN 104 Bengkulu City, particularly with fourth-grade students, to identify the existing problems and analyze the impact of implementing active learning methods in improving students' motivation. The findings not only describe the initial condition of the learning process but also show the changes after innovation in teaching methods was applied.

### Students' Learning Motivation Problems

The results of this study at SDN 104 Bengkulu City show that students' motivation in learning PAI was relatively low before the implementation of active learning methods. This can be seen from students' lack of attention when the teacher explained the material, low interest in asking questions, and minimal participation in classroom activities. Students tended to be passive and only received information without trying to understand it deeply. In addition, some students showed low self-confidence when asked to answer questions or express their opinions. Interaction among students was also limited, making the learning atmosphere monotonous and less engaging. Another contributing factor was the use of conventional and

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<sup>7</sup> Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci, 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions', *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25.1 (2000), 54-67.

<sup>8</sup> Bonwell, Charles C., and James A. Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 1991).

less varied teaching methods, which were not able to stimulate students' interest and motivation effectively.<sup>9</sup>

This persistent state of low motivation, if left unaddressed, will inevitably lead to suboptimal academic achievements. Students lacking internal drive tend to perceive Islamic Education (PAI) materials merely as rote memorization rather than values to be internalized in their daily lives. Consequently, the core essence of religious education shaping student character becomes difficult to achieve when the transfer of knowledge remains strictly one-way.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the boredom stemming from prolonged lecturing methods creates a psychological gap between teachers and students. Teachers are viewed as the sole authority of information, while students lose the opportunity for creative exploration. This underscores the urgent need for a more dynamic classroom transformation, ensuring that students feel they play a pivotal role in every learning session.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the implementation of active learning methods serves as a crucial solution to break the classroom's stagnation. By engaging students in group discussions, simulations, or educational games, they are encouraged to think critically and communicate actively. This shift in pedagogical schemes is expected to reignite the learning passion that was previously dampened by rigid instructional patterns.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the learning process depends heavily on the teacher's ability to manage inclusive and enjoyable strategies. Utilizing diverse media and student-centered approaches will provide better visual and auditory stimulation. *By establishing an emotional connection between the students and the curriculum, learning motivation at SDN 104 Bengkulu City is projected to increase significantly.*

#### **Implementation of Active Learning Methods**

To address these problems, teachers at SDN 104 Bengkulu City implemented active learning methods that focus on direct student involvement in the learning process. Learning activities were designed to be more interactive through group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, presentations, and tasks that encourage critical thinking. Teachers also used various learning media such as pictures, stories, and contextual examples related to students' daily lives. In this process, the teacher acted as a facilitator who provided guidance, support, and motivation to help students become more active and confident. In addition, learning was organized collaboratively so that students could help each other and learn from their peers. With a more dynamic classroom atmosphere, students became more engaged in every learning activity.<sup>12</sup>

The shift toward active learning has fostered a more inclusive environment where students no longer feel pressured by a "right or wrong" hierarchy. By prioritizing the process over the final answer, teachers allowed students to explore Islamic concepts through their own perspectives and experiences. This psychological safety encouraged even the most reserved students to voice their thoughts, effectively bridging the confidence gap that had previously hindered their academic growth.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of these methods transformed the classroom into a social learning hub. Through peer-to-peer tutoring and group problem-solving, students developed essential soft skills such as empathy, leadership, and effective communication. This cooperative approach not only simplified complex religious concepts but also strengthened the

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<sup>9</sup> Johnson, David W., Roger T. Johnson, and Karl A. Smith, *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom* (Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Scott Freeman et al., "Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* 111, no. 23 (2014): 84

<sup>11</sup> Prince, Michael, 'Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research', *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93.3 (2004), 223

<sup>12</sup> Bonwell, Charles C., and James A. Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 1991).

bonds between students, creating a supportive community that motivated each individual to contribute to the group's success.<sup>13</sup>

The integration of contextual learning media played a vital role in sustaining student interest throughout the semester. By connecting PAI materials to real-world scenarios—such as ethical dilemmas in daily social interactions—teachers made the lessons feel relevant and practical. As a result, students began to view Islamic Education not as a static subject to be memorized, but as a living guide that offered valuable insights into their own lives and behaviors.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, the transformation at SDN 104 Bengkulu City highlights the importance of pedagogical flexibility in modern education. The transition from a teacher-centered to a student-centered model significantly improved the classroom's energy and participation rates. This suggests that when students are given the tools to take ownership of their education, their intrinsic motivation naturally increases, leading to a more profound and lasting understanding of the subject matter.

The integration of these active learning strategies also demanded a shift in the assessment paradigm, moving away from purely summative tests toward formative feedback. Teachers began to evaluate student progress based on their daily contributions to group tasks and their ability to articulate Islamic values during classroom dialogues. This continuous assessment model provided students with immediate reinforcement, helping them recognize their own growth in real-time. By valuing the effort put into the learning process, the educators successfully reduced academic anxiety and fostered a growth mindset among the fourth-graders.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the physical layout of the classroom at SDN 104 Bengkulu City was adapted to support this new pedagogical direction. Desks were rearranged to facilitate face-to-face interaction, creating a collaborative space that mirrored the social nature of the active learning activities. This environmental change, though simple, played a significant role in breaking down the traditional barriers between the teacher and the students. It signaled to the class that the room was a shared space for inquiry, where every voice was heard and every student had a role to play in the collective learning experience.

The positive impact of these methods also extended to the students' digital literacy and cognitive agility. By using varied media and encouraging students to synthesize information from multiple sources such as stories and pictures the teacher stimulated higher-order thinking skills. Students were no longer passive recipients of information; they became active investigators of their faith and its practical applications. This approach not only improved their performance in PAI but also equipped them with critical thinking tools that are essential for their overall academic success in an increasingly complex world.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, the long-term sustainability of these improvements relies on the continued professional development of the teaching staff. The success at SDN 104 Bengkulu City demonstrates that when teachers are willing to experiment with modern instructional designs, the quality of education improves exponentially. Moving forward, it is recommended that the school continues to support the use of Classroom Action Research as a tool for constant pedagogical refinement. By maintaining this culture of innovation and student-centeredness, the institution can ensure that the initial surge in student motivation becomes a permanent fixture of their educational environment.

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<sup>13</sup> Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci, 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions', *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25.1 (2000), 54

<sup>14</sup> Freeman, Scott, and others, 'Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, 111.23 (2014), 8410-15

<sup>15</sup> Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25, no. 1 (2000): 54

### Impact on Learning Motivation

The implementation of active learning methods at SDN 104 Bengkulu City had a positive impact on improving students' motivation. Students became more enthusiastic in participating in lessons, more active in discussions, and more confident in asking and answering questions. Their self-confidence also increased, as seen from their willingness to present in front of the class and share discussion results. Moreover, social interaction among students improved, as they were able to cooperate better in groups and respect each other's opinions. The classroom atmosphere became more lively, enjoyable, and less monotonous. Students also showed greater interest in PAI, which was previously considered less interesting. This indicates that active involvement in learning can significantly boost students' motivation and enthusiasm.<sup>17</sup>

The transition toward active learning has effectively dismantled the barriers of traditional rote learning, replacing them with a framework of discovery and inquiry. By positioning students at the center of the educational experience, the teacher's role shifted from a sole transmitter of knowledge to a strategic mentor. This change ensured that the cognitive load was shared, allowing students to process PAI concepts through active application rather than passive absorption, which led to higher retention rates and a more profound connection to the curriculum.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond mere academic participation, the increased social cohesion within the classroom served as a powerful catalyst for emotional intelligence. As students engaged in structured group work, they practiced the art of negotiation and collective problem-solving. This cooperative environment mitigated the fear of failure, as peers supported one another in reaching common goals. Consequently, the classroom evolved into a safe space for intellectual risk-taking, where diverse opinions were not only heard but valued as essential components of the collective learning journey.<sup>19</sup>

The utilization of contextual and visual media also played a decisive role in bridging the gap between abstract religious theories and the students' lived realities. By using relatable stories and daily moral dilemmas, the educators at SDN 104 made the material tangible and urgent. This relevance transformed the "monotonous" perception of the subject into one of curiosity, proving that when the content reflects the student's world, the motivation to engage with it becomes an intrinsic drive rather than an external requirement.

Ultimately, the success of this implementation underscores a vital lesson in modern pedagogy: motivation is not a static trait but a dynamic response to the learning environment. The measurable rise in enthusiasm and confidence at SDN 104 Bengkulu City serves as a localized validation of broader educational theories regarding "Visible Learning." It highlights that when students are empowered to take ownership of their progress, they develop a resilient academic identity that extends far beyond the boundaries of a single classroom or subject.<sup>20</sup>

### Discussion

The findings of this study conducted at SDN 104 Bengkulu City indicate that active learning methods play a significant role in improving students' learning motivation. Direct involvement in the learning process makes students feel more valued and responsible for their own learning. This method also encourages students to think critically, communicate, and collaborate with their peers. Theoretically, these findings are in line with the concept of student-centered learning, where students become the main actors in the learning process. Practically, this approach creates a more conducive, interactive, and enjoyable learning environment. Therefore,

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<sup>17</sup> Hattie, John, *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement* (London: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Zaini, Hisyam, *Strategi Pembelajaran Aktif*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Insan Madani, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Pintrich, Paul R., 'A Motivational Science Perspective on the Role of Student Motivation in Learning and Teaching Contexts', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95.4 (2003), 667-86

<sup>20</sup> Muhaimin, *Rekonstruksi Pendidikan Islam: Dari Paradigma Pengembangan, Kurikulum, Metodologi Pembelajaran Hingga Penilaian*, (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2013).

active learning methods can be an effective solution to overcome low learning motivation, especially in PAI at the elementary school level.<sup>21</sup>

Overall, the results and discussion of this study conducted at SDN 104 Bengkulu City show that innovation in teaching methods is essential to improve the quality of the learning process. The implementation of active learning methods has proven to bring positive changes in terms of motivation, participation, and social interaction among students. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to continuously develop creative and innovative teaching strategies to achieve optimal educational outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study conducted at SDN 104 Bengkulu City, it can be concluded that students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) was initially relatively low. This was indicated by the lack of student activeness, participation, and interest in the learning process. This condition was influenced by the use of conventional teaching methods that did not actively involve students. After the implementation of active learning methods, there was a significant change in students' learning behavior, where they became more enthusiastic, more confident in expressing their opinions, and more involved in the learning process.

The implementation of active learning methods has proven to be effective in improving students' learning motivation, while also creating a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment. This method also promotes better social interaction, cooperation, and students' self-confidence in learning activities. Therefore, active learning methods can be used as an appropriate alternative strategy to improve the quality of PAI learning in elementary schools, especially at SDN 104 Bengkulu City.

Furthermore, the success of this pedagogical shift underscores the vital role of the teacher as a creative facilitator rather than a mere lecturer. By integrating diverse learning media and contextual examples, the educators at SDN 104 Bengkulu City managed to bridge the gap between abstract religious concepts and the students' daily lives. This alignment not only sustained student interest throughout the lessons but also transformed the classroom into a dynamic space where Islamic Education is perceived as relevant, engaging, and vital for personal character development.

In conclusion, the transition to active learning serves as a fundamental blueprint for addressing disengagement in primary education. The measurable increase in student confidence and collaborative spirit suggests that when students are empowered to take ownership of their learning, their intrinsic motivation flourishes. This study ultimately confirms that a student-centered approach is essential for fostering a resilient academic identity, ensuring that the values taught in PAI are not just memorized, but deeply understood and practiced within a supportive social environment.

This alignment not only sustained student interest throughout the lessons but also transformed the classroom into a dynamic space where Islamic Education is perceived as relevant, engaging, and vital for personal character development. In conclusion, the transition to active learning serves as a fundamental blueprint for addressing disengagement in primary education. The measurable increase in student confidence and collaborative spirit suggests that when students are empowered to take ownership of their learning, their intrinsic motivation flourishes.

This study ultimately confirms that a student-centered approach is essential for fostering a resilient academic identity, ensuring that the values taught in PAI are not just memorized, but deeply understood and practiced within a supportive social environment. By documenting these shifts, the research provides a clear framework for other educators to replicate this success, emphasizing that meaningful learning occurs when students are active participants in their own educational journey.

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<sup>21</sup> Bruner, Jerome S., *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

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