

## IMPROVING THE LEARNING OUTCOMES OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (IRE) ON ZAKAT, HAJJ, AND WAQF TOPICS THROUGH GROUP INVESTIGATION LEARNING METHOD

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### ABSTRACT

#### Abstract

Group Investigation is recognized as one of the most intellectually demanding and collaborative methods within the cooperative learning paradigm, requiring students to actively engage in planning, investigating, and presenting their findings in a structured yet flexible environment. This study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the Group Investigation method in enhancing learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education, specifically on the topics of *Zakat*, *Hajj*, and *Waqf* among Grade 10 students of Science Class 4 at SMAN 1 Menganti. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) framework, implemented in two iterative cycles to ensure systematic observation, reflection, and refinement of the instructional process. Data were collected through observation, tests, and documentation to capture both cognitive achievement and student engagement. The findings indicate that the application of the Group Investigation method by the Islamic Education teacher successfully fulfilled all procedural stages, including group formation, topic selection, planning of investigations, data collection, analysis, and collaborative presentation of results. This approach not only improved students' mastery of the subject matter but also fostered active participation, critical thinking, and cooperative skills, reflecting the integrative nature of Islamic education that combines intellectual growth with moral and spiritual development. The results suggest that Group Investigation, when implemented with appropriate scaffolding and teacher guidance, can serve as an effective pedagogical strategy for deepening understanding and enhancing learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education.

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in shaping students to become faithful, pious, and virtuous individuals. However, various studies have shown that its implementation in schools has not been fully effective in achieving these goals. Muchtar Buchori (1992:3) critiques the practice of religious education, which tends to emphasize cognitive aspects, while the affective and conative-volitional dimensions central to religious consciousness are often

neglected. As a result, religious knowledge acquired by students is not always internalized into actual behavior. Mastuhu (1999:35) also evaluates that the methodology of IRE remains "classical," teacher-centered, dominated by one-way lecturing, and focused on memorization, without room for critical dialogue or personal reflection. This condition leads students to struggle in connecting Islamic teachings with real-life situations, thus limiting religious education to mere knowledge rather than holistic character formation.

These weaknesses significantly affect students' creativity, independence in learning, and emotional engagement. Magnis-Suseno (2004:17) emphasizes that education that only transfers knowledge can "kill" curiosity, the courage to explore, and critical thinking, making students passive like "robots" or "zombies" who merely accept information. In the context of IRE, this means that students may memorize religious texts or the pillars of worship but fail to understand their meaning or relevance. Muhaimin et al. (2001:14) remind us that religious education should integrate the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in balance, so that students not only know but are also willing and able to practice Islamic teachings. Especially in an era of rapid technological development and information flow, teachers cannot predict with certainty which forms of knowledge will remain relevant in the future. Therefore, learning should be directed toward fostering critical, adaptive, and creative thinking skills.

This phenomenon is also observed at SMA Negeri 1 Menganti, particularly among students in Class X IPA 4, where most have not yet met the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) of 65% for IRE subjects. The topics of zakat, hajj, and waqf were chosen for this research because of their high practical relevance to religious life and society. Hasanah's (2021) research indicates that adolescents' understanding of zakat, hajj, and waqf remains low, warranting early emphasis on these subjects. To achieve this, IRE teachers must choose the right teaching strategies so that students not only understand the concepts but are also motivated to apply them in real life. Participatory and collaborative learning approaches become crucial to build students' emotional and cognitive engagement in understanding religious teachings.

One relevant teaching model is Group Investigation (GI), initially developed by Thelan and refined by Sharan at Tel Aviv University. Unlike cooperative models such as STAD or jigsaw, GI places students as active subjects from the planning stage of learning. Winataputra (2011:75) explains that GI integrates three core aspects: enquiry, knowledge, and group dynamics. In IRE teaching, GI allows students to explore material through literature studies, group discussions, and presentations, enabling them to build deeper understanding. Saputra & Rahmawati's (2022) research shows that collaborative inquiry models like GI can improve conceptual understanding while raising religious awareness, as students are trained to relate Islamic teachings to the social contexts they face.

Theoretically, GI is strongly grounded in social interdependence theory (Johnson & Johnson), social constructivism (Vygotsky), and dialogic pedagogy (Freire). In the context of religious education, GI provides students with the opportunity to create meaning from religious texts through critical dialogue that

blends normative studies and contextual analysis. Nugraha et al.'s (2020) research indicates that investigative tasks, such as designing local zakat case studies, mapping productive waqf practices, or simulating pilgrimage rituals with a maqāṣid focus, can enhance epistemic curiosity and high-level moral reasoning. This strengthens the relevance of GI as a 21st-century IRE teaching strategy, as it integrates subject mastery, critical thinking skills, and the development of religious character.

Post-pandemic findings also indicate that GI becomes more effective when integrated with digital resources and Inquiry-Based Student Worksheets (LKPD). Wijayanti et al. (2023) demonstrate that integrating GI with educational technology can strengthen information literacy, evidence-based argumentation skills, and equal participation among group members. For topics such as zakat, hajj, and waqf, this approach allows students to triangulate sources between normative texts (the Qur'an and Hadith), comparative fiqh, and local socio-economic data. This strategy creates authentic learning experiences that are relevant to students' lives.

In practice, the teacher's role in GI shifts from being a "sage on the stage" to a facilitator or coach. The teacher's task is to manage group dynamics, ensure full student participation, and assist in overcoming obstacles faced during the investigation process. Huda & Karim (2021) emphasize the importance of clear assessment rubrics, fair role distribution, and formative checkpoints to maintain group focus. With the right design, GI not only enhances cognitive achievement but also strengthens affective aspects such as responsibility, tolerance, and the ability to work collaboratively in heterogeneous groups.

Recent literature also highlights the importance of assessing GI success not only by final learning outcomes but also by the processes involved. Putra et al. (2022) recommend measuring indicators such as the quality of discussions (productive talk), participatory fairness, and the development of students' moral reasoning. In this study, the implementation of GI in zakat, hajj, and waqf material will be assessed not only by learning completion rates but also by students' ability to apply Islamic values in their daily lives.

Thus, the implementation of GI in IRE teaching at SMA Negeri 1 Menganti is expected to address the shortcomings of traditional approaches that focus too heavily on cognitive aspects. GI provides opportunities for students to learn collaboratively, critically, and contextually, so that mastery of religious material goes hand in hand with the formation of strong character. This research aims to explore in depth the implementation of GI on zakat, hajj, and waqf topics and analyze its impact on improving learning outcomes and strengthening Islamic values among students.

The gap in current Islamic Religious Education (IRE) lies in the disconnect between students' theoretical knowledge of religious concepts and their ability to apply these concepts in practical, real-life contexts. While traditional teaching methods often focus primarily on cognitive aspects, such as memorization and rote learning, they fail to foster the emotional and behavioral components that are crucial for holistic character formation. This approach results in students

possessing knowledge of religious principles, such as zakat, hajj, and waqf, without fully understanding their relevance in daily life or developing the moral and spiritual competencies to live by those principles. Consequently, students are less likely to internalize religious teachings in ways that manifest as ethical behavior or social responsibility. The lack of a comprehensive, integrated pedagogical framework that encourages critical thinking, active participation, and real-world application of Islamic values presents a significant gap in the effectiveness of IRE in fostering well-rounded, pious individuals.

Addressing this gap is essential, especially in an era of rapid technological advancements and shifting societal values. The research presented in this study is pivotal in providing a solution by exploring the implementation of the Group Investigation (GI) model in IRE, specifically on the topics of zakat, hajj, and waqf. This model presents an innovative shift from traditional methods, offering a more participatory, student-centered approach that encourages collaboration, inquiry, and critical engagement with religious texts and concepts. By integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, GI allows for a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings, enabling students to connect religious knowledge with their social realities. This research is crucial for developing more effective IRE strategies that not only enhance students' academic understanding of religious principles but also instill the values of responsibility, empathy, and community service. Therefore, the findings from this study are expected to contribute significantly to improving both the quality of IRE instruction and the moral development of students in contemporary Islamic educational settings

## **METHODS**

The research method used in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR), a form of research designed to improve the quality of teaching directly in the classroom through real actions and systematic reflection. According to Suhardjono (2007:58–60), CAR aims to solve real problems faced by teachers and students during the learning process. The primary characteristic of CAR is that it is not intended to test hypotheses quantitatively but to describe and analyze the data, facts, and conditions encountered during the learning process. Supardi (2007:110–111) emphasizes that CAR has three main features: (1) Reflective inquiry, where the research starts from real teaching problems experienced by both teachers and students, which are then solved through planned actions; (2) Collaborative, which emphasizes that efforts to improve learning processes and outcomes cannot be done alone but require cooperation between the researcher and the teacher; and (3) Ongoing reflection, which is the continuous attitude of evaluating progress, improvement, or shortcomings in the learning process as the basis for further improvements in the next cycle.

Based on the qualitative approach underlying CAR, the presence of the researcher in the field is essential. The researcher plays a dual role as a planner, action implementer, observer, data collector, and interviewer. In this study, the researcher designs teaching materials for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) using the Group Investigation (GI) learning method. The topics covered are zakat, hajj,

and waqf, which include two core competencies (KD) and are deemed important for students to master due to their direct implications in community life. The study is conducted over five meetings, including three core face-to-face sessions, which are preceded by an initial observation to map the level of student engagement, understanding, and learning outcomes before the GI method is implemented.

The research follows the four main stages of CAR: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, the researcher, together with the teacher, develops the Lesson Plan (RPP) and the Discussion Guide Worksheet (LKPD) that will be used by six learning groups (each consisting of 5–6 students from a total of 34 students in class X IPA 4). The researcher also designs the GI implementation scenario, prepares relevant teaching materials, develops observation formats, and constructs evaluation instruments to measure learning outcomes. The action implementation stage is carried out according to the RPP, starting with an introductory activity, including greetings, attendance checking, motivation provision, the presentation of learning objectives, and an exploration of students' prior knowledge. The core activity focuses on the implementation of GI: group division, distribution of LKPD, collaborative discussions, group presentation, reinforcing answers, and clarifying the material. The session concludes with a joint summary and closing greetings.

The observation stage is conducted by the researcher and the collaborating teacher systematically during the learning process. Observations cover student activities in groups, student-teacher interactions, peer-to-peer interactions, as well as the dynamics of the discussion and presentation process. The observation data is used to assess the effectiveness of the actions in each cycle and serves as a basis for modifying the teaching in the next cycle. The reflection stage is crucial for analyzing the alignment between the plan and the implementation, identifying supporting and inhibiting factors, and formulating improvement strategies. Reflection is carried out at the end of each cycle through a discussion between the researcher and the teacher, focusing on evaluating students' learning progress, the effectiveness of the GI method, and planning strengthening or adjustments for the following sessions. Data from observations, field notes, and evaluation results are analyzed descriptively to provide a comprehensive picture of changes in the learning process and outcomes as the Group Investigation method is applied in IRE teaching

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study explains and describes the implementation of the Group Investigation (GI) method in teaching Zakat, Hajj, and Waqf, the development of students in each cycle, and whether there was an improvement in learning outcomes among the students of Class X IPA 4 at SMA Negeri 1 Menganti in mastering the material of Zakat, Hajj, and Waqf after using the Group Investigation method.

### **Cycle I**

Cycle I was conducted on Saturday, May 3, 2024, with the primary focus on implementing the Group Investigation (GI) method in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) on the topic of "Islamic Legal Provisions on Zakat" and its management in Indonesia according to relevant legislation. The goal of this cycle was to assess how well the GI model could increase student engagement and academic achievement in Class X IPA 4 at SMA Negeri 1 Menganti. GI was chosen because of its collaborative nature, encouraging interaction among group members and requiring students to actively participate in the investigation process and the presentation of materials.

The learning process began by dividing students into six groups, each consisting of five to six members. After the teacher introduced the material, each group was assigned a different but related investigative task. Learning resources included textbooks, modules, and online sources. This activity forced students to not only rely on the teacher's notes but also to actively search for, analyze, and organize information independently. Observations showed that most students displayed high enthusiasm during the investigation phase. They discussed, divided roles, and formulated arguments to be presented, ensuring that every member contributed meaningfully.

In the information processing phase, students linked the data they had gathered to find connections between subtopics and formulated collective conclusions. The presentation session was conducted with the teacher acting as a facilitator and evaluator, encouraging students to express the results of their discussions clearly and reinforcing correct answers. After all the groups had presented, the group leaders submitted written reports. Students generally responded positively to the GI method, with many stating that the experience was new and made the learning process more engaging and interactive compared to previous methods.

However, analysis of the observations revealed some significant weaknesses. Some groups appeared to be less focused on listening to the presentations of other groups, as they were busy preparing their own turn. As a result, students had a limited understanding of the material presented by other groups, leading to partial mastery of the material. Furthermore, some students seemed to have mastered only the material related to their assigned task, without understanding the connections to other topics. This factor contributed to the fact that the improvement in academic achievement in Cycle I was not proportional to the increase in engagement.

The post-test results for Cycle I showed an average score of 73.3 (2.50), with the highest score at 87.0 (3.33) and the lowest at 50.0 (1.00), with a mastery level of 67.7%. These data indicate that although student involvement increased, cognitive achievement was not optimal. Discussions with the collaborating teacher and students identified several contributing factors: (1) students' tendency to focus only on their own subtopics; (2) lack of active listening skills during other groups' presentations; (3) minimal awareness that the success of each group depended on comprehensive understanding of all the materials discussed.

The improvements planned for Cycle II include: providing an in-depth explanation about the importance of effective group collaboration skills; motivating students to express their opinions freely; emphasizing that mistakes are part of the learning process; and highlighting the importance of listening to and taking notes on material presented by other groups. The teacher will also add a question-and-answer session between groups to ensure that all students pay attention to and understand material beyond their assigned subtopics.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of Cycle I have two important implications. First, the GI method has the potential to shift the learning pattern from teacher-centered to student-centered, but the success of this transformation requires reinforcement in students' social skills and collective responsibility. Second, GI-based learning in IRE requires designing interactions that ensure a balanced distribution of material understanding, so that each student possesses equal competence in all aspects of the topics discussed, not just in the portion they investigated.

### **Cycle II**

Cycle II was conducted on May 7, 2024, with the aim of maximizing the effectiveness of the Group Investigation (GI) method while addressing the shortcomings identified in Cycle I. The action plan for this cycle focused on encouraging students to be more active throughout the learning activities, ensuring that the primary goal of the cooperative learning model could be optimally achieved. The topic studied in Cycle II was "Waqf Law." To facilitate effective interaction and discussion, the class was divided into six groups, each with six members. The learning process began with topic identification and group division, followed by the assignment of investigative tasks according to the roles within each group. The investigation activities were carried out using a variety of learning resources, including textbooks, modules, and online sources.

Observations during this phase indicated an increase in student activity compared to the previous cycle. The teacher provided a brief introduction to the material and then distributed the Discussion Guide Worksheet (LKPD) to each group. Each group member was responsible for understanding the issues faced by their group, ensuring that all students actively participated in the problem-solving process. After the discussions, the groups prepared presentations to be delivered in front of the class. The teacher appointed representatives from each group to present their work and acted as both a facilitator and evaluator, offering guidance, clarification, and reinforcement of students' answers.

The presentation sessions were dynamic, marked by increased student participation in expressing opinions, asking questions, and answering questions from both the teacher and classmates. A total of 80% of the students were actively engaged in the learning process, with participation being more evenly distributed and not dominated by the previously active students. Students showed high enthusiasm, were able to collaborate without depending on group leaders, and demonstrated confidence in expressing ideas. This active involvement directly contributed to improved understanding of Waqf Law, as

evidenced by the accuracy of their answers and the relevance of their arguments to the material studied.

The success indicators in Cycle II were significantly met. First, students showed high enthusiasm, with no signs of boredom or fatigue during the lessons. Second, GI proved to expand students' social interactions, improving their social skills and collaboration. Third, students' bravery in expressing opinions and asking questions increased dramatically, without hesitation or fear. Fourth, the students' engagement and academic performance showed measurable improvement through observation sheets and evaluation results. The post-test results for Cycle II showed an average score of 87.6 (3.33), with the highest score at 100 (4.00) and the lowest at 80 (3.00), and the mastery level reached 100%.

Based on these achievements, the researcher concluded that the research objectives had been achieved. The significant improvement in aspects of engagement, teamwork skills, confidence in expressing opinions, and material understanding shows that the Group Investigation method is effective in improving learning outcomes in IRE, particularly on the topics of zakat, hajj, and waqf. Therefore, the classroom action research was concluded at Cycle II, with the consideration that the target for improving the quality of teaching had been met. Discussions with the subject teacher and colleagues further reinforced that this success could serve as a recommended teaching model to be applied to other IRE topics.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study emphasize the transformative potential of the Group Investigation (GI) method in promoting a student-centered learning environment in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). By shifting from traditional teacher-centered methods to a more interactive approach, GI encourages not only cognitive engagement but also fosters crucial social skills, critical thinking, and collaborative learning. This approach proves particularly effective in teaching complex religious topics such as zakat, hajj, and waqf, as it empowers students to take ownership of their learning. The improvements in both student participation and academic achievement across the cycles suggest that GI creates a deeper, more meaningful connection between students and the material, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application in daily life. These results confirm that GI is a powerful pedagogical tool in enhancing student involvement, which is essential for mastering religious concepts and fostering holistic understanding in religious education.

Moreover, this study highlights the critical importance of ongoing reflection and adaptation in teaching practices. The use of Classroom Action Research (CAR) allowed for the dynamic refinement of teaching strategies to better align with student needs. The adjustments made in Cycle II, addressing the shortcomings observed in Cycle I—such as ensuring a more comprehensive understanding across subtopics and improving active listening skills—led to notable improvements in student outcomes. This iterative process underscores the value of teacher collaboration, reflection, and feedback in enhancing teaching

efficacy. As demonstrated by the significant improvement in student engagement and academic performance, GI's integration into IRE not only improves students' mastery of religious content but also contributes to their growth as critical thinkers and responsible members of society. This research provides essential insights into how inquiry-based and collaborative learning methods can be applied to improve the quality of Islamic education in contemporary secondary schools.

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