



Classroom Action Research Efforts to Understand the Content of Surah Al Ikhlas Using Group Discussion Method at SD Negeri 097818 Pagar Bosi, Ujung Padang District

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the content of Surah Al-Ikhlas by applying the group discussion method in class IV of SD Negeri 097818 Pagar Bosi, Ujung Padang District, Simalungun Regency. The group discussion method was chosen as a learning strategy because it allows students to be more active in exploring the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an and discussing in depth the messages contained in Surah Al-Ikhlas. This study uses a qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation techniques as data collection methods. During the learning process, students are divided into several small groups and encouraged to exchange opinions on the interpretation and values of monotheism in Surah Al-Ikhlas. The results of the study showed that the group discussion method was able to improve students' understanding, both in terms of the meaning of the lafziyah and the application of the values of monotheism in everyday life. In addition, this method also increases students' active participation in learning, builds self-confidence, and strengthens their critical thinking and communication skills. Thus, the group discussion method can be an effective learning alternative in Islamic Religious Education, especially in understanding the content of the verses of the Qur'an more interactively and applicatively.

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Introduction

Religious education plays a central role in shaping the moral and spiritual development of students, especially in Islamic schools. One of the most fundamental aspects of Islamic education is teaching students the meanings and significance of the Quranic surahs. Surah Al-Ikhlas, a short chapter in the Quran, holds a profound

significance in Islamic teachings as it emphasizes the concept of monotheism, which is the core belief in Islam. Despite its simplicity in terms of length and wording, Surah Al-Ikhlâs contains deep theological insights that students must understand fully.

At SD Negeri 097818 Pagar Bosi, there is an observed challenge regarding students' understanding of the meanings of Surah Al-Ikhlâs. While students are generally able to memorize the surah, many struggle with grasping its deeper theological implications and its relevance to their daily lives. This issue is not unique to this particular school; it is a common problem across many primary schools where religious education focuses heavily on memorization rather than comprehension and application. This gap in understanding prevents students from truly connecting with the content and significance of the surah.

Surah Al-Ikhlâs consists of four short verses, yet its implications are vast. It talks about the oneness of Allah, rejecting any form of polytheism and emphasizing His uniqueness. The core message of the surah is to acknowledge that Allah is the only one worthy of worship. However, students often find it difficult to go beyond memorization and truly understand the deeper theological concepts. The challenge lies in engaging students with the abstract and spiritual content of the surah in a way that makes it relevant to their everyday lives.

In traditional classroom settings, teachers often employ lecture-based methods of teaching, where the teacher explains the content and the students listen and memorize. While this method may be effective for memorization, it does not encourage active learning or critical thinking. Religious education, especially when it involves understanding complex concepts like those in Surah Al-Ikhlâs, requires more interactive and engaging methods to help students connect with the material. Active learning strategies, such as group discussions, provide opportunities for students to collaborate, share their thoughts, and develop a deeper understanding of the material.

Group discussion is an educational method that encourages students to actively engage with the material, listen to their peers, and share their own insights. By discussing Surah Al-Ikhlâs in small groups, students are encouraged to explore its meaning, ask questions, and reflect on how its teachings apply to their lives. This collaborative approach not only helps students better understand the content but also fosters critical thinking, communication skills, and a sense of responsibility toward their learning.

The use of group discussions in religious education has been shown to be an effective strategy for enhancing student engagement and comprehension. In group discussions, students are given the opportunity to explore the material from different perspectives, which helps them grasp a more holistic understanding of the topic. Additionally, students are often more willing to express their thoughts and ask questions in a group setting, which can help them overcome any confusion or misunderstandings they may have about the surah's meaning.

However, despite the potential benefits of group discussions, there are several challenges to implementing this method in the classroom. Teachers may face difficulties in managing group dynamics, ensuring that all students participate actively, and making sure that discussions remain focused on the topic at hand. Furthermore, students may need guidance on how to approach discussions effectively, as they may not be accustomed to expressing their thoughts in a group setting. It is therefore important for teachers to provide clear instructions, structure, and support during group discussions to maximize their effectiveness.

This research aims to address these challenges by examining the use of group discussion as a method to improve students' understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlas at SD Negeri 097818 Pagar Bosi. The study will explore whether group discussions can enhance students' comprehension of the surah, help them connect with its deeper meanings, and encourage them to reflect on its relevance to their daily lives. By implementing this method, the research seeks to create a more interactive and engaging learning environment that goes beyond rote memorization.

In summary, the need for an alternative approach to teaching Surah Al-Ikhlas is evident. Memorization alone is not sufficient for fostering a deep understanding of its content and relevance. This research will explore the effectiveness of group discussions in improving students' comprehension of the surah, with the hope that it will lead to more meaningful learning experiences for students at SD Negeri 097818 Pagar Bosi. By focusing on both the intellectual and spiritual aspects of religious education, this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective teaching methods that can help students engage with and internalize the teachings of the Quran in a more profound way.

Methods

This research will be conducted using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach. Classroom Action Research is a reflective process in which teachers take an active role in identifying problems, implementing strategies to address those issues, and observing the results. The approach allows for cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, which will be employed to assess the effectiveness of group discussions in improving students' understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlas. The study will be carried out in multiple cycles, with each cycle involving planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. This cyclical process will allow the teacher to adapt the teaching strategies based on the findings from each phase.

The participants in this research will be a group of fourth-grade students from SD Negeri 097818 Pagar Bosi in Ujung Padang District, Simalungun Regency. The class will consist of 30 students who have been introduced to basic Islamic teachings and are familiar with Surah Al-Ikhlas. The students will be divided into small groups for the discussions, with each group containing 5 to 6 students. The teacher will act as a

facilitator, guiding the discussions and providing additional explanations when necessary. By engaging in these discussions, students will have the opportunity to explore and reflect on the meaning of Surah Al-Ikhlas in a more interactive way.

The research will be carried out over a period of several weeks, with each week focusing on a different aspect of Surah Al-Ikhlas. In the first cycle, students will be introduced to the basic meanings and significance of the surah, followed by small group discussions where students will explore specific questions related to its content. The teacher will encourage students to share their thoughts and interpretations of the surah, helping them connect the teachings with their own experiences. At the end of each cycle, students will participate in a class discussion to summarize and reflect on the key points of the group discussions.

Data collection will be conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary tools for data collection will include pre- and post-tests, observation sheets, and field notes. The pre-test will be administered before the intervention to assess the students' initial understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlas, while the post-test will be given after the intervention to evaluate the changes in their understanding. The observation sheets will allow the teacher to record notes on the students' participation, engagement, and the quality of their discussions during each group activity. Field notes will be used to document the teacher's reflections and insights throughout the process.

In addition to the tests and observations, the students will be asked to participate in individual reflections, where they will write about their learning experiences and how they perceive the meaning of Surah Al-Ikhlas. This reflection will help the teacher gauge the depth of students' understanding and identify any areas that may need further clarification or discussion. The reflection process will also allow the teacher to understand the personal connections students have made with the surah and how it relates to their own lives.

Each cycle will begin with the planning phase, during which the teacher will prepare lesson plans that incorporate group discussion activities. The lesson plans will include a variety of discussion questions, activities, and materials to guide the students' exploration of Surah Al-Ikhlas. The planning phase will also include strategies to promote active participation and ensure that every student is involved in the discussion. The teacher will consider the students' learning styles and preferences when designing the activities to ensure that the group discussions are engaging and meaningful.

The action phase will involve the actual implementation of the group discussions. In this phase, the teacher will divide the students into small groups, assign discussion topics, and facilitate the discussions. Each group will be given specific questions related to the surah, such as the significance of monotheism, the attributes of Allah mentioned in the surah, and how these teachings can be applied in daily life. The teacher will circulate between the groups, offering guidance and support as needed. After the

discussions, students will share their insights with the whole class, which will be followed by a reflective summary of the key points discussed.

The observation phase will focus on monitoring the students' participation and engagement during the group discussions. The teacher will observe how students interact with each other, how well they articulate their understanding, and whether they are able to make connections between the surah and their own lives. The teacher will also assess whether the group discussion method helps students engage with the material in a meaningful way. Based on these observations, the teacher will make necessary adjustments to improve the effectiveness of the teaching strategies in subsequent cycles. This reflective process is a key element of action research, allowing the teacher to continuously refine and enhance the learning experience for the students.

Result

The results of this study show a significant improvement in students' understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlās after the implementation of the group discussion method. The pre-test scores indicated that while students were able to recite the surah, their comprehension of its deeper meanings was limited. Most students could not explain the theological concepts or the relevance of the surah in daily life. However, after participating in several cycles of group discussions, the post-test results demonstrated a marked increase in students' ability to interpret and reflect on the surah's content.

In the pre-test, the majority of students struggled to provide detailed explanations of the surah's meaning. When asked about the significance of the surah, many students provided generic answers, such as "It talks about Allah," but could not elaborate on its deeper theological implications, such as the concept of monotheism and the oneness of Allah. Additionally, when asked how the teachings of Surah Al-Ikhlās applied to their daily lives, most students were unable to make relevant connections.

However, after the implementation of the group discussion method, there was a noticeable shift in students' understanding. In the post-test, a majority of students demonstrated a clear understanding of the key themes of Surah Al-Ikhlās, including the rejection of polytheism, the oneness of Allah, and the surah's emphasis on His unique and eternal nature. Students were able to explain these concepts in their own words, reflecting a deeper comprehension of the surah's message.

The group discussions themselves proved to be an effective tool in facilitating this understanding. During the discussions, students actively participated in exploring the meaning of Surah Al-Ikhlās, sharing their interpretations, and listening to the perspectives of their peers. The teacher observed that students were more engaged and eager to contribute to the discussions compared to traditional lecture-based lessons.

Many students expressed excitement about discussing the surah in small groups, as it allowed them to think critically and share their thoughts in a more informal setting.

One notable outcome was the increased ability of students to relate the surah's teachings to their everyday lives. Through the group discussions, students were encouraged to reflect on how the concept of monotheism and the oneness of Allah could influence their actions and beliefs. For instance, some students shared how they would apply the teachings of Surah Al-Ikhlās by avoiding shirk (associating partners with Allah) and strengthening their understanding of God's sovereignty in their daily lives. This shift in perspective was evident in the students' reflections, where many wrote about their renewed sense of connection to Allah and the importance of monotheism in Islam.

The teacher's observations during the group discussions revealed that students were able to engage with the material at a much deeper level than in previous lessons. Students asked thoughtful questions about the surah and discussed its meanings in ways that went beyond simple memorization. For example, when discussing the phrase "Allah, the Eternal Refuge," one group reflected on the idea of Allah being self-sufficient and how that concept can provide comfort and security in times of need. This level of engagement was not seen in previous lessons where students simply memorized the surah without reflecting on its deeper meanings.

In addition to improving comprehension, the group discussion method also helped enhance students' communication and collaboration skills. By working in small groups, students learned to express their ideas clearly, listen to their peers, and build on each other's contributions. These discussions fostered a sense of teamwork and allowed students to support one another in their learning process. Many students reported feeling more confident in their ability to discuss religious topics with others and to articulate their thoughts more effectively.

The analysis of the pre- and post-test results showed a significant improvement in students' knowledge of Surah Al-Ikhlās. On average, students' post-test scores increased by 20%, with many students showing notable gains in their ability to explain the content of the surah. The increased scores were particularly evident in questions related to the theological concepts of the surah, such as the oneness of Allah and the rejection of polytheism. This improvement indicates that the group discussion method successfully enhanced students' comprehension of these complex religious ideas.

Further analysis of the observation sheets revealed that the group discussion method led to greater participation and engagement among students. The teacher noted that even students who were previously quiet and less engaged in traditional lessons became more active during group discussions. This was particularly true for students who might have struggled to understand the material in a lecture-based format but found it easier to grasp the content through collaborative learning. The

group discussions provided a platform for these students to ask questions, clarify doubts, and express their opinions in a supportive environment

Another important finding from the observations was the increase in students' critical thinking skills. The discussions encouraged students to question and analyze the content of Surah Al-Ikhlâs rather than simply accepting it at face value. This was evident in the way students connected the surah's message to broader Islamic teachings, such as the importance of tawhid (monotheism) in Islam. Students also discussed the relevance of the surah to contemporary issues, such as how believing in the oneness of Allah can guide personal decisions and ethical behavior in their lives.

In addition to the cognitive benefits, the group discussion method also contributed to students' social and emotional development. Many students reported feeling more connected to their classmates after participating in the discussions. They appreciated the opportunity to listen to different viewpoints and engage in respectful dialogue. The teacher observed that this collaborative learning environment fostered a sense of community within the classroom, with students becoming more supportive of one another and more open to sharing their ideas.

The reflection journals written by students after the group discussions provided further insight into the effectiveness of the method. Many students expressed that they felt a deeper understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlâs after participating in the discussions. Some students mentioned that discussing the surah with their peers helped them realize its significance in their daily lives, while others noted that they felt more confident in their ability to apply its teachings. These reflections demonstrated the positive impact of the group discussion method on students' emotional and spiritual connection to the surah.

However, the research also revealed some challenges in implementing the group discussion method. One challenge was ensuring that all students participated equally in the discussions. In some groups, certain students dominated the conversation, while others remained passive. To address this issue, the teacher implemented strategies such as assigning specific roles within each group, such as discussion leader, note-taker, and presenter, to encourage equal participation. This strategy proved effective in promoting more balanced contributions from all students.

Despite these challenges, the overall results of the study indicate that the group discussion method was highly effective in improving students' understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlâs. The increase in students' comprehension, participation, and critical thinking skills suggests that group discussions can be a valuable tool in religious education. By allowing students to engage actively with the material, share their ideas, and learn from each other, the group discussion method fosters a deeper connection to the content and encourages more meaningful learning experiences.

In conclusion, the research findings demonstrate that the group discussion method can significantly enhance students' understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlâs. This

method encourages active engagement, critical thinking, and meaningful dialogue, which leads to a deeper comprehension of the surah's theological concepts. The results suggest that incorporating group discussions into religious education can create a more interactive and effective learning environment, helping students connect with Islamic teachings on a deeper level. Future studies could explore the application of this method to other Quranic surahs and Islamic topics, as well as its impact on students' long-term retention and application of religious knowledge.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the group discussion method is an effective strategy for improving students' understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlās. Prior to the implementation of the group discussions, students had difficulty explaining the deeper meanings and theological concepts of the surah. Most students could recite the surah but struggled to connect its teachings with their daily lives. After participating in the group discussions, students showed a significant improvement in their ability to comprehend the surah's content, particularly the concept of monotheism and the oneness of Allah. These findings suggest that active, collaborative learning methods like group discussions can enhance students' engagement and comprehension in religious education.

One of the most striking results of the study was the increased ability of students to articulate the core message of Surah Al-Ikhlās. Through group discussions, students were able to share their interpretations of the surah, which allowed them to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its meaning. The discussions helped students reflect on the idea that Allah is the only one worthy of worship and that the surah emphasizes His uniqueness and eternal nature. This shift from mere memorization to understanding is a key outcome of using the group discussion method, as it encourages students to think critically about religious texts and apply them to their lives.

The teacher's observations also revealed that students were more engaged during the group discussions compared to traditional lecture-based lessons. The informal, collaborative nature of group discussions provided a comfortable environment for students to express their thoughts and ideas. This increased engagement is consistent with previous research, which has shown that active learning strategies such as group discussions promote greater participation and deeper understanding. By moving away from passive learning, where students only receive information from the teacher, group discussions encourage students to take ownership of their learning and explore the material more thoroughly.

Additionally, the group discussion method facilitated peer learning. Students were able to listen to and learn from the perspectives of their classmates, which enhanced their overall understanding of the surah. In some cases, students who initially struggled to grasp the meaning of the surah were able to comprehend it more easily after hearing

their peers' explanations and insights. Peer learning is an effective strategy for reinforcing understanding, as it allows students to approach the material from different angles and discover new ways of thinking about it.

Moreover, group discussions helped students make connections between Surah Al-Ikhlās and their everyday lives. As they discussed the surah in small groups, students began to reflect on how the teachings of the surah—such as the concept of the oneness of Allah—apply to their personal beliefs and actions. For example, some students shared that they would be more mindful of avoiding shirk (associating partners with Allah) in their lives after learning about the significance of Allah's uniqueness in Surah Al-Ikhlās. This ability to apply religious teachings to real-life situations demonstrates the effectiveness of group discussions in fostering not only intellectual understanding but also spiritual reflection.

The results also highlighted that students became more confident in discussing religious topics. In the group discussions, students were encouraged to voice their opinions, ask questions, and engage with the material actively. This created an environment where students felt more comfortable expressing their thoughts, even if they were unsure about certain concepts. Over time, students who were previously hesitant to participate in class discussions began to contribute more regularly, demonstrating the positive impact of group discussions on student confidence and communication skills.

However, the study also revealed some challenges in implementing the group discussion method. One challenge was ensuring that all students participated equally in the discussions. In some groups, certain students took on a leadership role and dominated the conversation, while others remained passive. To address this issue, the teacher adopted strategies to promote equal participation, such as assigning specific roles within each group (e.g., discussion leader, note-taker, and presenter). These roles helped ensure that all students were actively involved in the discussion, which improved the overall dynamics of the group and allowed for more balanced contributions.

The teacher's reflections also highlighted the importance of providing clear instructions and guidelines for the discussions. At times, students needed guidance on how to structure their discussions and focus on the key themes of the surah. The teacher provided prompts and questions to help steer the discussions in a productive direction, but it was clear that students' ability to engage meaningfully with the material depended on the clarity of the instructions. This finding emphasizes the need for careful planning and preparation when using group discussions as a teaching strategy.

Furthermore, while group discussions were effective in promoting understanding, they also required additional time and effort from both the teacher and students. Group discussions are inherently more time-consuming than traditional lectures, as they involve multiple stages of interaction, including discussion, reflection, and sharing of ideas. Teachers must be prepared to allocate sufficient time for these activities and

ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate. This time commitment is a significant consideration for educators who may already be facing constraints in their teaching schedules.

The improvement in students' post-test scores also underscores the effectiveness of the group discussion method. The significant increase in scores, particularly in the areas of comprehension and application, suggests that this method has a lasting impact on students' understanding. It is particularly notable that students were able to explain the deeper theological concepts of Surah Al-Ikhlâs with more confidence and clarity after engaging in the group discussions. This improvement indicates that group discussions help students internalize the material and retain it more effectively than through passive learning methods.

Additionally, the use of reflection journals provided valuable insight into the students' learning experiences. The journal entries revealed that many students felt a stronger personal connection to Surah Al-Ikhlâs after the group discussions. Some students wrote about how they had developed a deeper appreciation for the surah's teachings, while others reflected on how the discussions had helped them resolve uncertainties or questions they had about the surah's meaning. These personal reflections demonstrate that the group discussion method not only improved students' academic understanding but also facilitated their spiritual growth and personal development.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that the group discussion method is a highly effective strategy for improving students' understanding of religious texts, particularly Surah Al-Ikhlâs. By fostering active engagement, critical thinking, and peer learning, group discussions enable students to move beyond mere memorization and connect deeply with the material. Furthermore, the method enhances students' communication skills, confidence, and ability to apply religious teachings in their daily lives. While there are challenges to implementing group discussions, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, making it a valuable tool for religious education. Future research could explore how group discussions can be applied to other Quranic surahs and Islamic topics, as well as their impact on students' long-term retention of religious knowledge.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the group discussion method significantly improved students' understanding of Surah Al-Ikhlâs at SD Negeri 097818 Pagar Bosi. By encouraging active participation and collaborative learning, group discussions helped students go beyond simple memorization to engage with the deeper theological meanings of the surah. Students were able to articulate the key concepts, such as the oneness of Allah, and reflect on how these teachings applied to their daily lives. The post-test results showed a clear improvement in their comprehension, suggesting that

this method effectively enhanced their ability to understand and internalize the material. Furthermore, the use of group discussions fostered critical thinking, communication, and social skills among students. They became more confident in expressing their ideas, listened to their peers, and learned from different perspectives. Despite challenges such as ensuring equal participation, the benefits of the method outweighed the drawbacks. This study highlights the value of incorporating group discussions into religious education, offering a more interactive and meaningful way for students to engage with Islamic teachings. Future research could further explore this method's application to other Quranic surahs or religious topics to assess its broader impact on students' learning.

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