

Implementation of Think-Pair-Share-Based Cooperative Learning in Enhancing Social Skills and Conceptual Understanding in Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract: Limited empirical studies have examined cooperative learning processes in Islamic Religious Education, particularly in vocational school contexts. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Think-Pair-Share-based cooperative learning and its contribution to improving students' social skills and conceptual understanding in Islamic Religious Education. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and learning documentation with eight purposively selected participants. Data were analyzed thematically through systematic processes of data reduction, coding, and interpretation. The findings indicate that the Think-Pair-Share model enhances active student participation, improves interpersonal communication and collaboration, and deepens conceptual understanding of fiqh topics, particularly riba in debt. The learning structure facilitates gradual cognitive engagement and reduces students' anxiety in expressing ideas. Theoretically, this study strengthens social constructivist perspectives by demonstrating the role of structured interaction in knowledge construction. Practically, the findings suggest that cooperative learning can be effectively integrated into Islamic Religious Education to simultaneously develop cognitive competence and social skills among vocational school students.

Abstrak: Keterbatasan kajian empiris mengenai pembelajaran kooperatif dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam, khususnya di sekolah menengah kejuruan, menunjukkan perlunya penelitian yang lebih analitis dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi pembelajaran kooperatif berbasis Think-Pair-Share serta kontribusinya terhadap peningkatan keterampilan sosial dan pemahaman konseptual peserta didik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi pembelajaran terhadap delapan partisipan yang dipilih secara purposif. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik melalui proses reduksi, pengodean, dan interpretasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran kooperatif berbasis Think-Pair-Share meningkatkan partisipasi aktif siswa, kemampuan komunikasi interpersonal, kerja sama kelompok, serta pemahaman konseptual materi fiqh, khususnya tentang riba dalam hutang. Secara teoretis, temuan ini memperkuat konstruktivisme sosial melalui interaksi terstruktur. Secara praktis, penelitian ini merekomendasikan penerapan berkelanjutan pembelajaran kooperatif dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, fostering religious attitudes, and developing social skills (Kholifah, 2022). However, in classroom practice at the secondary school level, Islamic Religious Education is still frequently delivered through conventional, teacher-centered approaches that are predominantly one-way and minimally interactive. Such instructional patterns tend to limit students' active engagement in the learning process, resulting in suboptimal conceptual understanding of religious content and insufficient internalization of Islamic values. In contrast, 21st-century learning demands pedagogical strategies that are capable of integrating cognitive, social, and affective dimensions in a balanced manner.

Empirically, low levels of interactivity in classroom instruction have been shown to negatively affect students' learning motivation and weaken essential social skills, including communication, collaboration, and respect for others' opinions (Triwardhani et al., 2020). This condition indicates a gap between the ideal, transformative objectives of Islamic Religious Education and the reality of instructional practices in classrooms. Cooperative learning emerges as an alternative pedagogical approach that emphasizes collaboration, social interaction, and active student participation, thereby offering potential solutions to these challenges (Rosita and Leonardo, 2013; Wang et al., 2023).

A number of previous studies have demonstrated that cooperative learning contributes positively to the improvement of student learning outcomes. Research conducted by Jannah and Aisyah (2021), for example, found that the implementation of cooperative learning strategies by Islamic Religious Education teachers significantly enhanced students' learning abilities. These findings underscore the importance of social interaction within group settings as a means of supporting students' deeper understanding of religious concepts.

Similarly, a study by Syah and Latif (2024) revealed that cooperative learning models are effective in improving students' cooperation and social skills. Through group-based learning activities, students not only gain academic understanding but also develop attitudes of mutual respect, responsibility, and solidarity. Such findings reinforce the assumption that cooperative learning is relevant and applicable across diverse educational contexts.

Nevertheless, most existing studies have focused primarily on general education settings or non-religious subjects. Research that specifically examines the implementation of cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education—particularly through a qualitative approach that explores learning processes, meanings, and social dynamics—remains relatively limited. Moreover, previous studies have tended to emphasize cognitive learning outcomes, while the strengthening of social skills within Islamic Religious Education learning has received comparatively little in-depth attention.

In response to these gaps, the present study offers novelty in both focus and approach. The first contribution lies in its analysis of the implementation of Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning within the context of Islamic Religious Education, positioning students' social interaction as an integral component of the learning process. This approach enables students to think independently, engage in

peer discussions, and share their understanding in a whole-class forum, thereby making learning more participatory and meaningful.

The second contribution concerns the scope of analysis, which extends beyond students' conceptual understanding of Islamic Religious Education content to include the development of accompanying social skills. By simultaneously integrating cognitive and social dimensions, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of cooperative learning in shaping learners who not only comprehend Islamic teachings conceptually but are also able to practice them in everyday social interactions.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education and to examine its contribution to enhancing students' conceptual understanding and social skills. In addition, the study seeks to identify learning dynamics and challenges that emerge during the implementation of this instructional method.

This research is grounded in the argument that Islamic Religious Education learning becomes more effective when it is designed as a social process involving active interaction among students. Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning is believed to foster a constructive learning environment in which the understanding of religious concepts and the development of social skills grow simultaneously through dialogue, collaboration, and shared reflection.

This study is significant because it contributes theoretically to strengthening the social constructivist perspective in Islamic Religious Education learning, while also offering practical implications for teachers in designing more interactive and contextualized instructional strategies. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for educators and educational policymakers in developing Islamic Religious Education learning practices that are responsive to students' needs and the contemporary challenges of education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine in depth the implementation of Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to understand the learning process as a complex, contextual, and meaning-laden social phenomenon, particularly in the interactions between teachers and students (Saefullah, 2024). The case study design was used to explore instructional practices intensively within a specific educational context, enabling a comprehensive analysis of learning dynamics, interaction patterns, and students' learning experiences.

The research site was selected purposively based on its relevance to the focus of the study. SMK Sadamiyyah was chosen because the school demonstrates a strong commitment to developing Islamic Religious Education learning through the application of more innovative, student-centered instructional methods. In addition, the school has a heterogeneous student population in terms of academic ability and social background, providing a rich context for examining the effectiveness of cooperative learning. The vocational school setting was also a key consideration,

given that the development of social and collaborative skills is highly relevant to workforce demands, making cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education a particularly significant area of inquiry.

The research participants were determined using purposive sampling with specific criteria, namely direct involvement in the Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning process. The primary informants consisted of an Islamic Religious Education teacher who actively implemented cooperative learning and tenth-grade students who participated in the learning activities. Students were selected by considering variations in academic ability and levels of classroom participation, thereby capturing diverse perspectives on learning experiences and group-work dynamics. This purposive selection of informants was intended to generate rich and relevant data aligned with the research focus, consistent with the qualitative research emphasis on depth of understanding rather than generalizability (Denny & Weckesser, 2022).

Data were collected using three main techniques: participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and learning documentation. Participatory observation was conducted directly during classroom instruction to examine patterns of student interaction, group-work mechanisms, student participation at each stage of the Think–Pair–Share process, and the teacher's role in facilitating discussion and collaboration. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and students to explore in depth their learning experiences, perceptions of cooperative learning, and perceived development of social skills and conceptual understanding during the instructional process (Lochmiller, 2021). Learning documentation, such as lesson plans, students' reflective notes, and group assignment outputs, was used as supporting data to strengthen findings derived from observations and interviews.

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process began with the transcription of interview data and the documentation of observational notes, followed by data reduction to identify information relevant to the research focus. The data were then coded and organized into major themes reflecting the implementation of cooperative learning, students' conceptual understanding, and the development of social skills (Rozali, 2022). The final stage of analysis involved interpretive meaning-making to examine relationships among themes and to explain the learning dynamics observed. The analytical process was conducted iteratively and reflexively to ensure depth and accuracy of interpretation.

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study employed source and method triangulation by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and learning documentation. In addition, data collection was conducted over a sustained period to allow for the observation of changes and learning dynamics over time (Beigzadeh et al., 2024). These strategies were implemented to enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings, thereby ensuring their scientific rigor and trustworthiness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Transformation of Student Participation Patterns in Cooperative Learning

Observational findings indicate a clear transformation in students' participation patterns during Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning. Student participation was no longer sporadic or dependent on a small number of individuals; instead, it became more evenly distributed across the class. Students who had previously been passive began to engage more actively, particularly after participating in the paired discussion stage.

Student interviews reinforced these observations:

"I feel more confident expressing my opinion because I discuss it with a friend first." (S1)

"After discussing in pairs, I feel more prepared to speak in front of the class." (S3)

These findings suggest that students' confidence does not emerge spontaneously but is formed through a gradual process facilitated by the instructional structure. The *Pair* stage functions as a psychological transition space in which students can test their ideas with minimal social pressure. The data indicate that increased participation is not merely a matter of speaking frequency, but reflects students' cognitive and emotional readiness to articulate their views. Thus, student participation in this context can be understood as the outcome of a learning design that provides a sense of safety, rather than solely the result of instructional prompting.

Quality of Social Interaction and Group Collaboration

In-depth observations revealed that students' social interactions developed in a more collaborative direction. Group discussions were characterized by active listening, constructive responses, and clarification of differing opinions. Differences in viewpoints did not lead to overt conflict; instead, they became a basis for discussion.

This dynamic is reflected in the following student statement:

"If we have different opinions, we discuss them first instead of immediately saying someone is wrong." (S4)

These data indicate that group work functions not only as an academic mechanism but also as a space for social learning. The interactions observed reflect the internalization of dialogical values such as mutual respect and deliberation (*musyawarah*). This finding is significant because it shows that students' social skills develop through authentic learning practices rather than through verbal moral instruction alone. In this way, cooperative learning serves as a medium for social habituation that is integrated into the learning process.

The Teacher's Role as Facilitator and Learning Process Manager

Observational data show that the teacher played an active role in monitoring discussions without dominating the learning process. Conceptual reinforcement

was provided selectively, and interventions were adjusted to students' needs. Interviews with the teacher support this finding:

"I wait for the results of their discussion first, then I clarify if something is not quite correct." (G1)

The teacher's role in this learning process reflects a shift from content transmitter to learning process manager. The teacher not only delivers material but also reads classroom dynamics as a source of pedagogical information. The data indicate that the teacher's decision to delay direct explanation allows students to construct initial understanding independently. This underscores that the effectiveness of cooperative learning depends more on the teacher's sensitivity in managing the timing of interventions than on the intensity of lecturing.

Conceptual Understanding of *Riba* in Debt Transactions

Documentation and interview data indicate that students' understanding of the concept of *riba* developed from a purely normative definition toward a more contextual understanding. Students were able to relate the concept to everyday practices encountered in their surroundings.

*"It turns out that *riba* is not only in banks, but also around us." (S5)*

This finding suggests that students' conceptual understanding is progressive and layered. Group discussions encouraged students to reconstruct abstract concepts into socially meaningful knowledge. Such understanding does not emerge through memorization but through dialogue and the exchange of experiences. Consequently, cooperative learning enables a deeper internalization of religious teachings within the context of students' lived realities.

Table 1. Results of Cooperative Learning Observations

Observed Aspect	Qualitative Indicator	Empirical Findings
Student Engagement	Frequency and quality of verbal participation	Participation increased and became more evenly distributed; previously passive students began to actively express opinions after the <i>Pair</i> stage
Group Collaboration	Interaction, role distribution, mutual respect	Discussions were collaborative; informal role distribution and mutual respect emerged
Teacher's Role	Facilitation, monitoring, conceptual clarification	The teacher did not dominate but actively monitored and provided reinforcement when necessary
Classroom Atmosphere	Learning focus and discussion dynamics	The classroom remained conducive despite simultaneous discussions
Content Understanding	Ability to relate concepts to context	Students were able to provide examples of <i>riba</i> in everyday life

This table illustrates the interrelated aspects of learning that form a unified process. Student engagement, group collaboration, the teacher's role, and content understanding do not operate independently but mutually influence one another. Observational data show that improvements in content understanding occurred alongside enhancements in the quality of social interaction. This indicates that,

within cooperative learning, cognitive and social outcomes develop simultaneously as a result of a structured instructional design.

Table 2. Interview Findings from Teacher and Students

Respondent	Interview Focus	Verbatim Quotation	Main Finding
G1 (Teacher)	Cooperative learning process	“I wait for the results of their discussion first, then I clarify.”	Teacher positions self as facilitator
S1 (Student)	Confidence in expressing opinions	“I feel more confident expressing my opinion.”	Increased self-confidence
S2 (Student)	Social interaction	“The discussion feels better because everyone gets a chance.”	More inclusive interaction
S5 (Student)	Conceptual understanding	“ <i>Riba</i> also exists around us.”	Applied understanding

This table demonstrates consistency between the teacher's perspective and students' subjective experiences. The teacher emphasizes changes in learning behavior, while students highlight feelings of safety and social support. This alignment suggests that the observed changes are authentic and directly experienced by participants, rather than being solely the researcher's interpretation.



Figure 1. Interview with the Teacher



Figure 2. Learning Process

Visual documentation strengthens observational and interview findings by illustrating the real learning context. The images show a non-dominant teacher position and classroom configurations that support discussion. This confirms that cooperative learning is reflected not only at the methodological level but also in spatial arrangements and physical interactions within the classroom.

Overall, the findings indicate that Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning produces fundamental changes in the Islamic Religious Education learning process. These changes include increased student participation, improved quality of social interaction, a shift in the teacher's role, and deeper conceptual understanding of religious content.

The findings further suggest that the effectiveness of cooperative learning lies not merely in group work itself, but in the structured and sequential interaction design. The processes of individual thinking, limited peer discussion, and sharing in a whole-class forum create a learning cycle that simultaneously supports cognitive and social development. Empirical data show that students do not only learn about Islamic teachings, but also learn through the practice of Islamic values such as deliberation (*musyawarah*), mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

The novelty of this study lies in its approach, which positions the learning process as the primary focus of analysis rather than emphasizing quantitative learning outcomes alone. This study presents detailed and in-depth empirical data on how Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning is enacted in Islamic Religious Education classrooms, including student interaction dynamics, teacher facilitation strategies, and changes in participation and confidence in expressing opinions. In doing so, the study enriches the body of Islamic Religious Education research, which has often prioritized final cognitive outcomes over the pedagogical processes that underpin them.

Another contribution of this study is the explicit integration of conceptual understanding and social skills as two learning outcomes that develop simultaneously. The findings show that improvements in students' understanding of religious content occur in parallel with the development of social skills, such as communication, collaboration, and respect for differing opinions. This integration demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education functions not only as a medium for transmitting normative knowledge but also as a space for cultivating social competencies relevant to students' everyday lives.

Furthermore, this study conceptualizes the Think–Pair–Share model not merely as a discussion technique, but as a psychopedagogical mechanism that systematically facilitates the transition from individual thinking to broader social interaction. The stages of thinking, paired discussion, and class sharing provide a safe space for students to construct understanding and build confidence before expressing ideas in a larger forum. This perspective extends the understanding of the function of Think–Pair–Share within the context of Islamic Religious Education.

Finally, the study offers contextual novelty through its focus on Islamic Religious Education practices at the vocational secondary school level, which remains relatively underexplored in in-depth qualitative research. By examining vocational students' learning experiences, this study provides empirical insights into how Islamic Religious Education can be designed in a more dialogical and

contextual manner aligned with vocational learners' characteristics. Therefore, this research makes a significant empirical contribution to the development of Islamic Religious Education practices that emphasize not only content mastery but also attitude formation, social skills, and the meaningful application of religious values in real-life contexts.

DISCUSSION

Think–Pair–Share–Based Cooperative Learning in Islamic Religious Education

The findings of this study confirm that improvements in student participation and the quality of interaction in Islamic Religious Education are not merely the result of group work itself, but rather of the pedagogical structure that governs how interaction unfolds. Think–Pair–Share functions as a cognitive and social transition mechanism that enables students to move gradually from individual thinking to collective discourse. This structure explains why students who were previously passive became more willing to express their opinions after engaging in paired discussions, as demonstrated in the research findings.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings deepen the understanding of social constructivism by showing that knowledge construction does not occur automatically through interaction alone, but requires instructional designs that reduce students' psychological risk. In other words, productive social interaction is not simply about "having discussions," but about how discussion spaces are managed to ensure students feel academically safe. This extends the work of Severe et al. (2024) and Van Ryzin et al. (2020), which emphasize the importance of active participation, by adding psychological readiness as a determining factor.

Compared with previous studies that primarily highlight general increases in learning engagement (Namusoke & Rukundo, 2022; Iraola & Romero, 2024), this study demonstrates that the quality of student participation (characterized by more structured and contextualized argumentation) is a more meaningful indicator in Islamic Religious Education. This is particularly important because religious education demands not only verbal participation, but also depth of understanding and value-based reflection.

Integrating Conceptual Understanding and Social Skills as Simultaneous Learning Outcomes

One of the main contributions of this study is its demonstration that conceptual understanding and social skills develop simultaneously rather than as separate learning outcomes. Cooperative discussions encourage students to connect the concept of *riba* with everyday experiences while simultaneously fostering communication skills, empathy, and respect for differing viewpoints.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings affirm that conceptual understanding in Islamic Religious Education is dialogical and situational in nature. Religious knowledge is not constructed solely through textual internalization, but through processes of meaning negotiation within social contexts. This study extends the work of Guo et al. (2024) and Khong et al. (2023) by showing that dialogue not only deepens cognitive understanding but also shapes students' social dispositions.

In contrast to studies by Srianti (2024) and Mardani (2020), which emphasize the role of Islamic Religious Education in value inculcation, this research provides empirical evidence that values such as deliberation (*musyawarah*) and social responsibility are not only taught but actively practiced through cooperative learning design.

The Teacher's Role as a Manager of Cognitive and Social Risk

The results indicate that the teacher's role in cooperative learning cannot be reduced to that of a facilitator alone. Rather, the teacher functions as a manager of cognitive and social risk in the classroom by determining when intervention is necessary and when students should be given space to explore ideas independently.

Conceptually, these findings enhance the understanding of cooperative pedagogy by positioning teacher sensitivity to classroom dynamics as a key factor. Intervening too early may hinder students' thinking processes, while intervening too late may allow misconceptions to persist. This study reinforces the findings of Anggraeni and Effane (2022) and Ratu Langit (2024), while adding a dimension of context-based pedagogical decision-making.

The Impact of Cooperative Learning on 21st-Century Skills in the Context of Islamic Religious Education

The observed improvements in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills indicate that cooperative learning contributes directly to the development of 21st-century skills. What distinguishes these findings from previous research (Irwan et al., 2022; Kokkoniemi & Isomöttönen, 2025) is the religious context as the medium for developing these competencies.

The discussion of *riba* provides an authentic context for students to apply analytical and reflective skills. This supports the findings of Adenansi (2024) and Kamalia and El-Yunusi (2024), while also demonstrating that Islamic Religious Education can serve as a strategic space for developing 21st-century competencies without losing its normative dimension.

Learning Motivation as an Outcome of Ownership in the Learning Process

Students' learning motivation increased because they perceived themselves as having roles and voices in the learning process. This emotional engagement explains why cooperative learning positively influences intrinsic motivation, as reported by Syah and Latif (2024) and Beigzadeh et al. (2024). This study adds to existing knowledge by suggesting that motivation is driven not merely by methodological variation, but by meaningful learning experiences that foster a sense of recognition and value.

Implementation Challenges as Part of Pedagogical Reality

The identification of challenges such as differences in students' abilities, time constraints, teacher readiness, and facility limitations confirms that cooperative learning is not a challenge-free approach. These findings are consistent with those of Mawardah et al. (2025), Alfiah et al. (2025), and Mahfudoh and Mastoah (2025). However, this study emphasizes that such challenges are structural and systemic in nature, rather than purely technical.



Figure 3. Outcomes of Cooperative Learning Enhancement

This figure represents the simultaneous relationship among active participation, social skills, conceptual understanding, and learning motivation as outcomes of Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning in the context of Islamic Religious Education.

The practical implications of this study suggest that the implementation of cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education should be designed as a structured interaction system rather than merely as student grouping. Teachers need to be trained to manage discussion dynamics, assess students' cognitive and emotional readiness, and determine appropriate timing for intervention. Furthermore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum at the vocational secondary school level should provide greater opportunities for dialogical learning and contextual case-based instruction to ensure that students' religious understanding becomes more meaningful and applicable.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on cooperative learning by demonstrating that Think–Pair–Share functions as a psychopedagogical mechanism that bridges individual and social knowledge construction. It also expands the discourse on Islamic Religious Education by emphasizing that the strengthening of religious values can be achieved through pedagogical practice, not solely through normative transmission.

The empirical contribution of this study lies in its presentation of in-depth qualitative data on cooperative learning processes in the vocational secondary school context, which has received relatively limited attention in Islamic Religious Education research. Accordingly, this study not only reinforces previous findings but also offers a new perspective on how Islamic Religious Education can be designed in a dialogical, reflective, and contextually relevant manner to meet the needs of contemporary learners.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Think–Pair–Share–based cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education at SMK Sadamiyyah functions as an effective pedagogical mechanism for integrating students' cognitive and social learning processes. The main findings indicate that the staged interaction structure

promotes more equitable participation, deepens students' conceptual understanding of religious content, and fosters social skills and communication ethics aligned with Islamic values. Accordingly, the effectiveness of cooperative learning lies not merely in group work itself, but in the design of interactions that enable students to develop understanding and self-confidence simultaneously.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this study enriches the literature on Islamic Religious Education by providing empirical evidence that the Think-Pair-Share model operates as a psychopedagogical mechanism bridging individual and social knowledge construction. It also extends theoretical insights into cooperative learning by demonstrating that conceptual understanding and social skills develop concurrently through dialogic practices, rather than as separate outcomes. Thus, this study strengthens the social constructivist perspective in the context of Islamic Religious Education, a field in which empirical studies remain relatively limited, particularly at the vocational secondary school level.

The practical implications of this study suggest that Islamic Religious Education should be designed as a structured dialogic process rather than merely the transmission of normative content. Teachers are encouraged to develop competencies in managing cooperative interactions, determining appropriate moments for instructional intervention, and utilizing contextual religious issues as discussion materials. Furthermore, schools need to provide institutional support in the form of pedagogical training, flexible instructional time management, and adequate facilities to support collaborative learning, thereby enabling the sustainable implementation of this model.

The limitations of this study lie in its restricted scope of participants and context, which was confined to a single class and one educational institution, as well as the use of a qualitative approach with a relatively short observation period. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ longitudinal designs, involve multiple school contexts, and integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the consistency of findings and the long-term impact of cooperative learning. Further studies may also explore other variations of cooperative learning models in Islamic Religious Education to enrich pedagogical strategies that are responsive to the needs of contemporary learners.

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