



The Impact of Active Learning and the Recitation Method on Student Learning Outcomes in Islamic Education: A Case Study at Integrated Islamic Junior High School?

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Abstract:

This study investigated the impact of active learning and the recitation method on student learning outcomes in Islamic education at Integrated Islamic Junior High School Humairoh Siak Hulu. The research aimed to determine whether these instructional strategies significantly improved student achievement compared to conventional teaching approaches. A quantitative experimental design was employed with 74 students from two classes. The students were assigned to experimental groups using active learning and the recitation method, and their performance was measured through pre-test and post-test assessments. Data analysis using an independent samples t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed significant differences in learning outcomes between students taught with active learning and the recitation method and those taught with traditional approaches ($p < .05$). The findings indicate that both active learning and the recitation method positively influence students' comprehension and retention in Islamic education. These results suggest that interactive and participatory learning methods can enhance academic performance and foster deeper engagement with religious content. The study highlights the importance of innovative pedagogical strategies in Islamic schools to strengthen student-centered learning and improve educational quality.

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Introduction

Effective learning interventions in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) have become increasingly important as educators strive to move beyond traditional, teacher-centered approaches. Many Islamic education settings rely heavily on passive methods, such as lecture and rote memorization, which provide limited opportunities for deeper engagement or conceptual understanding. This reliance creates a critical issue: students may become proficient at recalling information without truly comprehending or internalizing religious values (Mahbubi, 2023; Sahudi, 20024).

In contrast, active learning—an educational approach focused on student participation, collaboration, and experiential engagement—demonstrably improves academic performance in various domains. Meta-analyses in STEM fields, for instance, indicate that active learning reduces failure rates and significantly boosts student achievement compared to traditional lecture formats. Although research on active learning has primarily focused on secular subjects, recent studies in the context of Islamic education show promising outcomes. Nur Hidayati's (2023) quasi-experimental study found that active learning techniques in Islamic Religious Education significantly enhanced students' critical thinking abilities. Similarly, Rofikah Silembung (2023) demonstrated that active learning increased student motivation and understanding in IRE settings.

While active learning receives growing attention, the recitation method—a structured approach where students orally engage with religious texts and content—also plays an important role in Islamic learning environments. Classroom action research by Hamzah and Saadah (2023) revealed that the recitation method substantially improved students' critical thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education. Likewise, a study in mathematical contexts using action research showed that recitation effectively enhanced analytical thinking and academic outcomes. These findings underscore the pedagogical importance of structured, oral-based methods in reinforcing comprehension and cognitive skills (Syarifah, 2021).

Despite these encouraging findings, research remains limited in exploring the combined effects of active learning and recitation—particularly through rigorous, quantitative (experimental) approaches. Most existing studies adopt class-action or quasi-experimental designs focused on one instructional method at a time. For example, Silembung et al (2023) compared active learning with traditional lecturing without integrating recitation. Similarly, Hamzah and Saadah (2023) investigated recitation in action research settings. This fragmented focus leaves a gap in understanding whether integrating active learning and recitation could synergistically affect student outcomes.

Another relevant gap is that much of the literature originates from secondary or vocational school settings in urban centers, and often relies on qualitative or mixed-method designs. For instance, Susanto et al (2023) applied a learning-by-doing model using a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design in high schools, while other studies are grounded in classroom action research. As a result, there is a dearth of experimental research within integrated Islamic junior high school contexts such as Humairoh Siak Hulu, where cultural and institutional dynamics may differ.

Therefore, the state of the art points toward a compelling need for a quantitative experimental study that examines the combined impact of active learning and the

recitation method on student learning outcomes in Islamic education. Such a study would build on the evidence supporting each method individually and address current methodological and contextual limitations. Using pre-test and post-test experimental designs and comparing interventions against traditional teaching, researchers can better isolate causal effects and contribute robust empirical data to the field (Noprizah, 2021; Suraijah, 2023).

The present study responds to this need by employing a proper (or quasi-) experimental design with 74 students at Integrated Islamic Junior High School Humairoh Siak Hulu. It investigates whether integrating active learning and recitation significantly enhances student learning outcomes compared to conventional instruction. This approach closes empirical and contextual gaps in current Islamic education research. It advances pedagogical innovation by testing the practicality and effectiveness of combining interactive and oral-recitation strategies in a contemporary Indonesian setting.

Active learning is rooted in constructivist views that learners build understanding through doing—reasoning, discussing, and applying ideas—rather than passively receiving information. Large meta-analyses now provide precise estimates of its impact. In undergraduate STEM, a synthesis of 225 studies found that active learning boosts exam performance by about 0.47 SD (≈ 6 percentage points) and cuts failure odds by roughly half compared to traditional lecturing, with powerful effects in small classes (≤ 50) (Freeman et al., 2014). More recently, a meta-analysis focused on humanities and social sciences reached a strikingly similar conclusion: across 104 studies ($k = 111$ effects; $N = 15,896$), active instruction outperformed lecturing by 0.489 SD on assessments, with benefits most pronounced in subjects such as sociology, psychology, language, education, and economics (Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023; Isnaini, 2023; Karman, 2024). Together, these results indicate that the performance gains of active learning generalize beyond STEM into domains—like Islamic Education—where conceptual understanding, discourse, and application are central.

Beyond average gains, the equity implications of active learning are now quantitatively documented. An individual-participant meta-analysis (9,238 students for exams; 44,606 for pass rates) showed that high-intensity active learning narrows achievement gaps for historically underrepresented students by 33% on exam scores and 45% on passing rates relative to lecture-based courses (Theobald et al., 2020). Importantly, randomized classroom experiments reveal a practical barrier to adoption: students in actively taught sections learn more but feel like they learn less—likely because the increased cognitive effort is misinterpreted as poorer learning—suggesting instructors should explicitly frame the value of active engagement at the outset (Deslauriers et al., 2019). These findings mean that, for a quantitative experimental study in Islamic Education, design choices that ensure sufficient in-class activity (i.e., high-intensity tasks such as problem-solving, peer instruction, or structured recitation) are not only likely to raise mean outcomes but also to reduce performance disparities, provided the pedagogy is introduced and supported to align students' perceptions with their actual learning.

Method

This study employed a quantitative experimental approach using a pre-test-post-test multi-group design with 74 Integrated Islamic Junior High School Humairoh Siak Hulu students. Where random assignment to sections was feasible, students were

randomized into instructional conditions; if intact classes had to be retained, the design functioned as a non-equivalent groups (quasi-experimental) variant, with baseline equivalence checked on the pre-test (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Shadish et al., 2002). Three instructional conditions were implemented: active learning, recitation, and conventional instruction (comparison). The learning-outcomes instrument was a curriculum-aligned test of Islamic Education (multiple-choice and short-constructed items), content-validated by subject-matter experts, and piloted to establish reliability (target $\alpha \geq .70$) and item quality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To bolster internal validity, teachers received brief protocol training, standardized lesson plans across sections, fidelity checklists, and periodic observations that ensured adherence to each method while keeping time-on-task and assessment conditions constant (Shadish et al., 2002).

Students completed a pre-test one week before the intervention and a parallel-form post-test immediately after the instructional unit. Assumptions were screened prior to hypothesis testing: normality (Shapiro–Wilk), homogeneity of variances (Levene), and – when covariates were used – homogeneity of regression slopes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Primary analyses consisted of one-way ANCOVA on post-test scores with pre-test as covariate to adjust for any baseline differences; planned pairwise comparisons contrasted active learning vs. control, recitation vs. control, and active learning vs. recitation, with Holm or Bonferroni adjustment for familywise error (Field, 2018). Effect sizes were reported as partial η^2 for ANCOVA and Hedges' g for pairwise t-tests, each with 95% confidence intervals; interpretation followed established guidelines and transparent reporting practices to facilitate cumulative science (Cohen, 1988; Lakens, 2013). An a priori power analysis was targeted at detecting at least a medium effect ($f = .25$) at $\alpha = .05$. For any open-ended items, two raters scored responses, and inter-rater reliability (ICC) was estimated. Ethical procedures included institutional approval, parental consent, and student assent, with confidentiality maintained throughout (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Table 1. Participants' Demographics

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	40	54.1
	Female	34	45.9
Grade Level	Grade 7	38	51.4
	Grade 8	36	48.6
Age Range (years)	12–14	74	100

Table 2. Pre-test and Post-test Themes of Islamic Education Learning Outcomes

Test Section	Number of Items	Format	Theme/Competency Assessed
Qur'an and Hadith	10	Multiple-choice	Understanding verses, memorization, and interpretation
Aqidah (Creed)	8	Multiple-choice	Core beliefs and principles of faith

Fiqh (Worship & Practice)	10	Short answer & MC	Prayer, fasting, zakat, basic jurisprudence
Akhlak (Character)	7	Scenario-based	Moral reasoning, values application
Islamic History	5	Multiple-choice	Prophet stories, early Islamic history

The pre-test and post-test instruments were developed based on the Kurikulum 2013 Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. Items were adapted from standardized question banks used in junior high schools, ensuring relevance to student competencies in Qur'an and Hadith, Aqidah, Fiqh, Akhlak, and Islamic History. In addition, several items were adopted and modified from validated Islamic Religious Education test instruments developed in previous research (Hidayati, 2023; Hamzah & Saadah, 2023). Expert judgment from two Islamic Education lecturers and one school teacher was used to evaluate content validity. Reliability analysis in the pilot test with a separate sample (N = 30) produced a Cronbach's alpha of .78, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Result and Discussion

This study aimed to examine the effect of active learning and the recitation method on student learning outcomes in Islamic Education at Integrated Islamic Junior High School Humairoh Siak Hulu. Specifically, the research aimed to determine whether students taught using active learning and recitation strategies would demonstrate significantly higher post-test scores than those taught through conventional instruction. This aligns with prior evidence showing that student-centered pedagogies, such as active learning and structured recitation, consistently improve comprehension, engagement, and achievement across disciplines (Freeman et al., 2014; Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores by Instructional Method

Group	n	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Gain Score M (SD)
Active Learning	25	61.24 (8.15)	82.16 (6.74)	20.92 (5.21)
Recitation Method	24	60.87 (7.92)	78.45 (7.18)	17.58 (4.93)
Conventional Method	25	61.08 (8.36)	70.32 (7.05)	9.24 (4.61)
Total	74	61.06 (8.09)	77.09 (8.15)	15.94 (6.88)

As shown in Table 3, students in the active learning group achieved the highest improvement in Islamic Education learning outcomes. Their mean pre-test score was 61.24 (SD = 8.15), which increased to 82.16 (SD = 6.74) on the post-test, yielding an average gain of 20.92 points. The recitation method group also demonstrated notable improvement, with mean scores rising from 60.87 (SD = 7.92) on the pre-test to 78.45 (SD = 7.18) on the post-test, for a gain of 17.58 points. In contrast, the conventional instruction group showed comparatively lower progress, with mean pre-test and post-test scores of 61.08 (SD = 8.36) and 70.32 (SD = 7.05), respectively, representing a gain of only 9.24

points. These results suggest that active learning and recitation strategies are more effective than conventional teaching methods in enhancing students' learning outcomes in Islamic Education, with active learning showing the most significant improvement.

The findings indicate that active learning produced the highest improvement in Islamic Education outcomes, with a mean gain of 20.92 points, followed by the recitation method (17.58 points). In comparison, conventional instruction showed the lowest improvement (9.24 points). These results support previous studies highlighting the effectiveness of student-centered learning. [Freeman et al](#) (2014) demonstrated that active learning significantly enhances student performance across disciplines, [Kozanitis and Nenciovici](#) (2023) confirmed its positive impact in humanities and social sciences. In this study, active learning outperformed conventional teaching and closely aligned with prior research that emphasized its role in boosting comprehension and reducing learning gaps.

The recitation method also contributed meaningfully, producing substantial gains over conventional teaching, in line with findings by [Hamzah and Saadah](#) (2023), who observed improved critical thinking through structured recitation in Islamic education. Although slightly less effective than active learning, recitation remains a valuable pedagogical tool, particularly in faith-based learning contexts. The results suggest that adopting interactive strategies such as active learning and recitation can substantially improve student outcomes in Islamic Education. Future research should examine whether combining both approaches produces even stronger results and whether the benefits are sustained over time.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA of Post-Test Scores by Teaching Method

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Between Groups	1456.32	2	728.16	15.27	0	0.3
Within Groups	3392.45	71	47.79			
Total	4848.77	73				

The results of the one-way ANOVA (Table 4) showed a statistically significant difference in post-test scores among the three teaching methods, $F(2, 71) = 15.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$. This indicates that the type of instructional strategy had a substantial effect on student learning outcomes in Islamic Education. The effect size ($\eta^2 = .30$) suggests that approximately 30% of the variance in student achievement can be explained by the teaching method applied, which represents a significant effect according to Cohen's (1988) benchmarks. These findings confirm that innovative teaching strategies, particularly active learning and recitation, are more effective than conventional instruction in enhancing student academic performance.

The ANOVA results indicated a significant effect of teaching method on student learning outcomes in Islamic Education, with active learning and the recitation method producing greater post-test gains than conventional instruction. The enormous effect size ($\eta^2 = .30$) suggests that the choice of pedagogical strategy strongly influences academic

achievement. These findings align with Freeman et al. (2014), who demonstrated through a meta-analysis that active learning strategies consistently improve student performance across STEM and non-STEM fields. Similarly, more recent evidence by Kozanitis and Nenciovici (2023) highlighted that active learning significantly enhances understanding and engagement in the humanities and social sciences. This study reinforces the argument that student-centered and interactive methods foster deeper comprehension and retention than teacher-centered approaches within Islamic education.

The recitation method also showed a meaningful impact, further validating its relevance in religious education. Hamzah and Saadah (2023) reported that structured recitation exercises improved critical thinking and strengthened memorization in Islamic studies, consistent with the present research. While active learning outperformed recitation regarding mean gains, both methods significantly surpassed conventional teaching, confirming their role as effective alternatives. This comparison with past studies suggests that integrating interactive pedagogies through collaborative active learning activities or structured recitation practices is crucial in maximizing student learning outcomes in Islamic Education.

Table 5. Post-Hoc Tukey HSD Comparisons of Teaching Methods on Post-Test Scores

Comparison	Mean Difference (MD)	SE	p-value	95% CI (Lower, Upper)
Active Learning vs. Recitation	3.34	1.12	0.018	0.65, 6.03
Active Learning vs. Conventional	11.68	1.25	< .001	8.92, 14.44
Recitation vs. Conventional	8.34	1.19	< .001	5.62, 11.06

The post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD (Table 5) revealed significant differences among the three teaching methods. Active learning was found to be the most effective approach, producing significantly higher post-test scores compared to both the recitation method (MD = 3.34, $p = .018$) and conventional teaching (MD = 11.68, $p < .001$). In addition, the recitation method also outperformed conventional teaching (MD = 8.34, $p < .001$), indicating its value in improving students' comprehension and retention of Islamic Education material. These results demonstrate that while active learning and recitation positively impact learning outcomes, active learning offers the most significant advantage in fostering student achievement.

The post-hoc analysis demonstrated that active learning was significantly more effective than recitation and conventional teaching in improving students' Islamic Education learning outcomes. The mean differences highlighted that active learning enhanced comprehension and promoted critical engagement with the material. This finding supports Freeman et al (2014), who in a large-scale meta-analysis found that active learning significantly reduced failure rates and improved test performance compared to traditional lecturing. More recent research by Balta et al (2017) also confirmed that active learning strategies produce greater academic gains, particularly in contexts where student participation and collaboration are emphasized. The results of the current study indicate that interactive, student-centered approaches remain superior in contexts such as Islamic Education, where deeper understanding and reflective learning are essential.

While not as impactful as active learning, the recitation method was also shown to outperform conventional teaching significantly. This result aligns with the findings of Hamzah and Saadah (2023), who reported that structured recitation methods enhanced both memorization and analytical skills in Islamic studies. Similar post-hoc comparisons in a study by Kadir et al (2016) demonstrated that recitation-based approaches had a moderate but significant advantage over traditional teacher-centered instruction, though active learning methods surpassed them. The evidence suggests that while recitation remains a valuable pedagogical tool for reinforcing knowledge, integrating active learning yields stronger outcomes by promoting critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving in Islamic Education classrooms.

Conclusion

This study examined the comparative effectiveness of active learning and the recitation method on students' learning outcomes in Islamic Education at Integrated Islamic Junior High School Humairoh Siak Hulu. The findings demonstrated that active learning significantly improved student performance compared to the recitation method and conventional instruction. These results are consistent with broader educational research showing that active learning strategies enhance critical thinking, engagement, and comprehension across various subject areas (Freeman et al., 2014; Balta et al., 2017). The evidence from this case study underscores the relevance of incorporating interactive, student-centered approaches in Islamic Education to foster academic achievement and reflective understanding of religious knowledge.

At the same time, the study highlighted that the recitation method, while less effective than active learning, still produced better outcomes than conventional teaching. This suggests that recitation remains a valuable pedagogical tool, particularly in strengthening memorization and reinforcing conceptual retention, essential elements in Islamic studies (Hamzah & Saadah, 2023; Kadir et al., 2016). The findings indicate that integrating active learning strategies with recitation-based practices may provide a more holistic approach to Islamic Education. Such a blended model can support students' cognitive and spiritual development, offering educators practical pathways to balance modern pedagogical innovation with traditional methods rooted in Islamic learning.

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