

***The Effectiveness Of The Cooperative Integrated Reading And Composition CIRC Learning Model On Student Learning Outcomes In Islamic Religious Education***

**Efektivitas Model Pembelajaran Kooperatif Terintegrasi Membaca Dan Menulis (CIRC) Terhadap Hasil Belajar Siswa Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model on students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMP Negeri 36 Bandar Lampung. The research employed a quasi-experimental design using a post-test only control group approach. The sample consisted of two eighth-grade classes selected through simple random sampling, with class VIII.C as the experimental group receiving the CIRC model and class VIII.A as the control group receiving conventional instruction. The research instrument comprised 15 multiple-choice items designed to measure higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), particularly at the cognitive levels of analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6). The instrument was declared valid and highly reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.75. The treatment procedure was conducted in four learning sessions through collaborative reading, group discussion, identification of main ideas, presentation activities, and reflective conclusion stages based on the CIRC syntax. Data analysis included normality and homogeneity tests followed by an independent samples t-test. The findings revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that the CIRC model effectively improved students' learning outcomes and higher-order thinking skills. The novelty of this study lies not only in the application of the CIRC model in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level, but also in its contribution to integrating cooperative learning strategies with the development of higher-order thinking skills and the internalization of religious values in PAI learning. Practically, this study provides an alternative instructional strategy for teachers to create more interactive, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences.*

**Keywords:** CIRC Learning Model, Learning Outcomes, Islamic Religious Education.

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas model pembelajaran Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) terhadap hasil belajar Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) peserta didik di SMP Negeri 36 Bandar Lampung. Penelitian menggunakan desain quasi experimental dengan pendekatan post-test only control group. Sampel penelitian terdiri atas dua kelas VIII yang dipilih melalui teknik simple random sampling, yaitu kelas VIII.C sebagai kelas eksperimen yang menggunakan model CIRC dan kelas VIII.A sebagai kelas kontrol dengan pembelajaran konvensional. Instrumen penelitian berupa 15 soal pilihan ganda yang dirancang untuk mengukur kemampuan berpikir tingkat tinggi (Higher-Order Thinking Skills/HOTS), khususnya pada level kognitif menganalisis (C4), mengevaluasi (C5), dan mencipta (C6). Instrumen dinyatakan valid dan memiliki reliabilitas tinggi dengan koefisien Cronbach's Alpha sebesar 0,75. Prosedur perlakuan dilaksanakan dalam empat pertemuan melalui kegiatan membaca kolaboratif, diskusi kelompok, identifikasi ide pokok, presentasi hasil diskusi, dan penarikan kesimpulan sesuai sintaks model CIRC. Analisis data dilakukan melalui uji normalitas, uji homogenitas, dan independent samples t-test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat perbedaan signifikan antara kelas eksperimen dan kelas kontrol dengan nilai signifikansi 0,000 (<0,05), sehingga model CIRC terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan

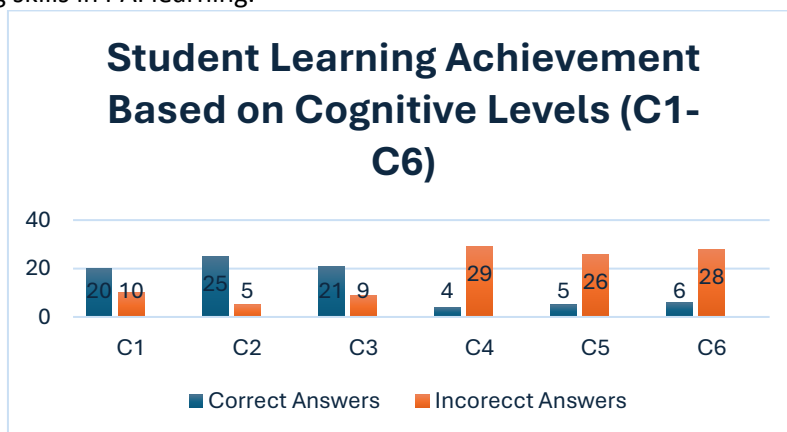
hasil belajar dan kemampuan berpikir tingkat tinggi peserta didik. Kebaruan penelitian ini tidak hanya terletak pada penerapan model CIRC dalam pembelajaran PAI di tingkat SMP, tetapi juga pada kontribusinya dalam mengintegrasikan strategi pembelajaran kooperatif dengan pengembangan HOTS serta internalisasi nilai-nilai keagamaan dalam pembelajaran PAI. Secara praktis, penelitian ini memberikan alternatif strategi pembelajaran bagi guru untuk menciptakan proses belajar yang lebih interaktif, kolaboratif, dan bermakna.

**Kata Kunci:** Pembelajaran CIRC, Hasil Belajar, Pendidikan Agama Islam.

### 1. Pendahuluan

High-quality learning outcomes are reflected not only in students’ mastery of knowledge but also in their ability to think critically, solve problems, and apply learning in real-life situations. In the context of 21st-century education, higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) have become an essential competency that must be developed through meaningful and student-centered learning processes (Pratama et al., 2024; Raniaini et al., 2024). In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the development of HOTS is particularly important because students are expected not only to understand religious concepts theoretically but also to analyze, evaluate, and implement Islamic values in their daily lives. Several recent studies have emphasized that effective religious education should integrate cognitive, affective, and social dimensions to encourage reflective and contextual learning experiences.

However, empirical conditions in schools indicate that students’ higher-order thinking skills in PAI learning remain relatively low. Based on preliminary observations and interviews conducted with PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 36 Bandar Lampung, several problems were identified, including students’ low motivation and participation in learning activities, teacher-centered instructional methods, and limited collaborative interaction during classroom instruction. Students tended to perform adequately at lower cognitive levels such as remembering (C1), understanding (C2), and applying (C3), yet they experienced difficulties in analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking at levels C4, C5, and C6. These findings indicate that conventional teaching approaches are still insufficient to facilitate the development of higher-order thinking skills in PAI learning.



Based on the diagram, students demonstrated satisfactory achievement at the lower cognitive levels, namely remembering (C1), understanding (C2), and applying (C3). However, students experienced considerable difficulties at higher-order cognitive levels, particularly analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6). The large number of incorrect responses at these levels indicates that students’ higher-order thinking skills in PAI learning are still relatively low. These findings suggest the need for an instructional model that promotes active participation, collaboration, and critical thinking in the learning process.

One cooperative learning model that has demonstrated considerable potential is the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) model. CIRC integrates reading, discussion, writing, and group collaboration activities to improve students’ comprehension and

critical thinking skills (Dewi & Pratiwi, 2025; Murti et al., 2025). Previous studies have shown that CIRC positively affects students' literacy achievement, reading comprehension, motivation, and communication skills in language learning contexts (Rahmi & Marnola, 2024; Latifah & Haryadi, 2025). Furthermore, cooperative learning strategies have been widely recognized in international educational research for their contribution to improving higher-order thinking, social interaction, and collaborative learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, despite the growing body of research on CIRC and cooperative learning, several gaps remain unresolved. First, most previous studies have focused primarily on language subjects, literacy skills, or elementary-level education, while limited research has examined the implementation of CIRC in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), particularly at the junior high school level. Second, earlier studies predominantly emphasized reading comprehension and learning motivation, with insufficient attention to the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating within religious education contexts. Third, the integration of cooperative learning strategies with the internalization of religious values in PAI learning has not been extensively explored in recent literature. Therefore, there remains a need for empirical research investigating how CIRC can contribute not only to cognitive achievement but also to meaningful and value-oriented learning processes in Islamic education.

From a state-of-the-art perspective, recent educational studies have increasingly emphasized the importance of collaborative and student-centered learning models in developing HOTS and meaningful learning experiences. Contemporary research suggests that cooperative learning environments can foster critical reflection, creativity, communication, and social responsibility among students. However, studies integrating these approaches into Islamic Religious Education remain limited, especially in Indonesian junior high school contexts. This condition demonstrates the urgency of developing innovative instructional models that support both cognitive development and religious character formation.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model on students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMP Negeri 36 Bandar Lampung. The novelty of this study lies not only in the application of CIRC in PAI learning at the junior high school level but also in its contribution to strengthening higher-order thinking skills through collaborative and value-oriented learning activities. Theoretically, this study expands the implementation of cooperative learning models beyond literacy-based subjects into religious education contexts. Practically, the findings are expected to provide teachers with alternative instructional strategies to improve classroom interaction, students' engagement, and the quality of HOTS-oriented PAI learning.

## **2. Methodology**

The study employed a quasi-experimental design using a post-test only control group design to examine the effectiveness of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model on students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at SMP Negeri 36 Bandar Lampung. The population of the study consisted of all eighth-grade students. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique, resulting in two classes: class VIII.C as the experimental class and class VIII.A as the control class. Each class consisted of 30 students with relatively similar academic characteristics, learning backgrounds, and age range (13–14 years old), ensuring comparability between the groups.

The experimental class received instruction using the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model, while the control class was taught using conventional lecture and question–answer methods. To maintain the internal validity of the study, several control measures were implemented. Both groups were taught by the same teacher, received the same learning materials, were allocated equal instructional time, and completed learning activities within the same academic period. In addition, the classroom environment, learning

objectives, and assessment procedures were standardized to minimize the influence of external variables.

The implementation of the CIRC model was carried out in six stages. First, students were divided into small heterogeneous groups consisting of 4–5 members. Second, the teacher distributed reading materials related to the Islamic Religious Education topic. Third, students collaboratively read the text, identified the main ideas, discussed the content, and completed worksheets provided by the teacher. Fourth, each group presented the results of their discussion, followed by teacher feedback and clarification. Fifth, reinforcement and reflection activities were conducted to strengthen students’ understanding. Finally, the teacher and students concluded the lesson together. The treatment was implemented over four meetings, with each meeting consisting of two instructional hours.

The research instrument consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions designed to measure higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), particularly at the cognitive level of C4 (analyzing). The indicators of C4 included students’ ability to differentiate concepts, analyze relationships between ideas, identify causes and effects, organize information systematically, and draw logical conclusions related to Islamic Religious Education content. The instrument was developed based on Bloom’s revised taxonomy and adjusted to the learning objectives of the subject matter.

Prior to implementation, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Content validity was evaluated through expert judgment involving lecturers and PAI teachers to ensure alignment between the indicators, learning objectives, and HOTS criteria. Empirical validity testing showed that all 15 items were valid, with correlation coefficients ( $r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}} = 0.36$ ). The reliability test using Cronbach’s Alpha produced a coefficient of 0.75, indicating a high level of reliability.

After the treatment process was completed, both classes were administered a post-test using the validated instrument. The data were analyzed through prerequisite tests, including normality and homogeneity tests, followed by hypothesis testing using an independent samples t-test to determine differences between the experimental and control groups. In addition, effect size analysis was conducted to measure the magnitude of the influence of the CIRC learning model on students’ higher-order thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education learning.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### Result

##### Normality Test

The normality test is conducted to determine whether the distribution pattern of the obtained data follows a normal distribution, with a significance criterion of  $> 0.05$ . This test is carried out by comparing the results of the experimental group using the STAD model with those of the control group applying conventional learning methods. The results of the normality test are presented in the following table:

**Figure 1. Results of the Normality Test for the Experimental and Control Classes**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Kontrol	,111	30	,200*	,959	30	,296
Eksperimen	,108	30	,200*	,961	30	,330

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the results of the Shapiro–Wilk normality test shown in Figure 1, the significance value obtained was 0.330, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the distribution of students’ learning outcome scores in both the experimental and control classes was normally distributed. Therefore, the data fulfilled the assumption required for further parametric statistical analysis.

The fulfillment of the normality assumption indicates that the learning outcome scores from both groups were distributed proportionally and did not deviate significantly from the normal distribution pattern. This condition strengthens the validity of the subsequent hypothesis testing using parametric analysis.

**Homogeneity Test**

The homogeneity test was conducted to determine whether the variances of the two groups were equal. Data are considered homogeneous when the significance value exceeds 0.05.

**Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
HasilBelajar	Based on Mean	1,557	1	58	,217
	Based on Median	1,578	1	58	,214
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1,578	1	56,437	,214
	Based on trimmed mean	1,559	1	58	,217

**Figure 2. Result of the Homogeneity Test**

Based on the results of Levene’s Test shown in Figure 2, the significance values obtained from several approaches were above 0.05, namely Based on Mean = 0.217, Based on Median = 0.214, Based on Median with adjusted df = 0.214, and Based on Trimmed Mean = 0.217. These findings indicate that there was no significant difference in variance between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data were homogeneous and suitable for further parametric testing.

**Hypothesis Test**

The hypothesis testing in this study employed the independent samples t-test to identify differences in learning outcomes between the experimental class using the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) model and the control class using conventional learning methods.

**Figure 3. Results of the Independent Samples t-Test**

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
HasilBelajar	Equal variances assumed	1,557	,217	-15,363	58	,000	-12,733	,829	-14,392	-11,074
	Equal variances not assumed			-15,363	56,023	,000	-12,733	,829	-14,394	-11,073

Based on the results presented in Figure 3, the calculated t-value was -15.363 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, it can be concluded that there was a significant difference between the learning outcomes of students taught using the CIRC learning model and those taught using conventional learning methods.

The mean difference of -12.733 indicates that students in the experimental class achieved significantly higher learning outcomes compared to the control class. These findings

demonstrate that the implementation of the CIRC learning model effectively improved students' higher-order thinking skills, especially at the cognitive level of C4 (analyzing).

In addition, classroom observations showed that students in the experimental class participated more actively during discussions, collaborated effectively with group members, and demonstrated greater confidence in presenting their ideas. This suggests that the CIRC model not only improves cognitive achievement but also strengthens students' participation and collaborative learning skills.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model significantly improved students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMP Negeri 36 Bandar Lampung. The improvement was particularly evident in higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), especially at the cognitive level of C4 (analyzing). Students who learned through the CIRC model achieved better results compared to those who learned through conventional lecture-based instruction. These findings indicate that cooperative learning strategies provide more meaningful learning experiences and encourage students to become actively involved in the learning process.

The effectiveness of the CIRC model is closely related to cooperative learning theory proposed by Johnson and Johnson, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed more effectively through collaboration and social interaction. During the implementation of CIRC, students worked in small groups to read texts, analyze concepts, exchange ideas, and formulate conclusions together. This collaborative process encouraged students to participate actively, communicate their opinions, and develop analytical thinking skills. The learning environment became more student-centered because students were directly involved in constructing understanding rather than passively receiving information from the teacher.

The improvement in higher-order thinking skills occurred because the CIRC model required students to engage in analytical and reflective activities throughout the learning process. Students were asked to identify main ideas, analyze relationships between concepts, compare information, and formulate arguments related to Islamic Religious Education materials. These activities align with Bloom's revised taxonomy, particularly at the C4 cognitive level, which focuses on analyzing abilities. Through repeated discussion and problem-solving activities, students became more accustomed to critical thinking and collaborative reasoning.

The findings are also relevant to constructivist learning theory developed by Lev Vygotsky, which explains that learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative experiences. In the CIRC learning process, students actively exchanged ideas, corrected misunderstandings, and supported each other in understanding learning materials. This interaction helped students internalize concepts more deeply and meaningfully. Compared to conventional learning methods, the collaborative nature of CIRC created greater opportunities for students to build understanding collectively and develop confidence in expressing ideas.

The results of this study are consistent with several previous international studies related to cooperative learning and higher-order thinking skills. Slavin explained that cooperative learning improves academic achievement because students become more responsible for both individual and group learning outcomes. Similarly, research conducted by Gillies and Johnson & Johnson showed that cooperative learning environments enhance communication skills, critical thinking, participation, and student motivation. The present study strengthens these findings by demonstrating that the CIRC model is also effective when applied in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level.

Another important finding of this study is the increase in students' classroom participation and collaboration. Students in the experimental class were more active in asking questions, expressing opinions, responding to peer arguments, and presenting discussion results. This occurred because the CIRC model provided equal opportunities for all group members to participate in learning activities. In addition, collaborative discussion activities

reduced students' fear of making mistakes and encouraged them to become more confident in communicating their ideas.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the CIRC model also contributed to the development of meaningful and contextual learning experiences. Students were encouraged not only to understand religious concepts theoretically but also to analyze moral issues, relate Islamic values to everyday life, and formulate solutions collaboratively. Through discussion and reflection activities, students developed deeper understanding of religious values while simultaneously improving social skills such as cooperation, responsibility, and respect for others' opinions. These findings indicate that cooperative learning is highly relevant for value-based subjects such as Islamic Religious Education.

Overall, this study confirms that the CIRC learning model is effective in improving students' learning outcomes, participation, collaboration, and higher-order thinking skills. The novelty of this research lies in the application of the CIRC model in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level, particularly in strengthening analytical thinking skills. Therefore, this study contributes both theoretically and practically by expanding the implementation of cooperative learning beyond literacy and language learning into broader educational contexts.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study concludes that the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model is effective in improving students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMP Negeri 36 Bandar Lampung. The implementation of the CIRC model significantly enhanced students' higher-order thinking skills, particularly at the cognitive level of analyzing (C4), while also increasing classroom participation, collaboration, communication, and learning motivation. Students became more actively involved in discussing Islamic Religious Education materials, expressing opinions, solving problems collaboratively, and connecting religious concepts to real-life situations.

The findings of this study contribute theoretically to the development of cooperative learning research, particularly regarding the application of the CIRC model in value-based and religious education contexts. While previous studies have primarily focused on literacy and language learning, this research demonstrates that the CIRC model can also effectively strengthen higher-order thinking skills and meaningful learning experiences in Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level. Therefore, this study expands the scope of cooperative learning implementation beyond language instruction into broader educational contexts.

Practically, the findings provide important implications for Islamic Religious Education teachers and curriculum developers. Teachers are encouraged to apply interactive and collaborative learning strategies such as CIRC to create more student-centered learning environments that support critical thinking, communication, and active participation. In addition, curriculum developers may consider integrating cooperative learning approaches into Islamic Religious Education curricula to support the development of 21st-century competencies, including collaboration, problem-solving, and reflective thinking.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research involved a limited sample size from only one school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Second, the use of a quasi-experimental design without random assignment of individual participants may limit the control of external variables that could influence students' learning outcomes. Third, the study focused primarily on cognitive learning outcomes at the C4 level and did not comprehensively examine affective and psychomotor aspects of Islamic Religious Education learning.

Therefore, future studies are recommended to investigate the implementation of the CIRC learning model in different educational contexts, subjects, and school levels. Further research may also involve larger and more diverse samples, apply experimental designs with stronger control procedures, and examine the long-term effects of CIRC on students' cognitive,

affective, and social development. In addition, future researchers are encouraged to explore the integration of CIRC with digital learning technologies to support more innovative and adaptive learning environments in the 21st century.

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