

Improving Student Self-Efficacy Through the Discovery Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract

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Low levels of students' self-efficacy in Islamic Education (PAI) learning are reflected in limited classroom participation, low confidence in expressing ideas, and insufficient learning readiness. The condition indicates the need for instructional approaches that address not only cognitive achievement but also students' psychological development. This study aims to examine the implementation of the Discovery Learning model in PAI learning and its contribution to students' self-efficacy. The study aims to explore how Discovery Learning influences students' learning activeness, conceptual understanding, and self-efficacy. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed in this research. The participants consisted of Islamic Education teacher and tenth-grade students from a Muhammadiyah senior high school, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed through data reduction, thematic analysis, and interpretation of participants' experiences. The findings reveal that the use of Discovery Learning encourages active student engagement, improves conceptual understanding, and enhances students' self-efficacy. Increased self-efficacy is indicated by students' greater confidence in asking questions, expressing opinions, and delivering presentations, which is influenced by mastery experiences, teacher encouragement, and emotional regulation during classroom activities. This study concludes that Discovery Learning represents a relevant instructional alternative for PAI learning, as it supports both cognitive development and students' psychological empowerment.

Keywords: *Discovery Learning, Islamic Education, Self-Efficacy.*

Abstrak

Rendahnya self-efficacy siswa dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) berimplikasi pada minimnya keaktifan, keberanian mengemukakan pendapat, dan kesiapan belajar siswa. Situasi ini menegaskan kebutuhan akan model pembelajaran yang tidak semata-mata berfokus pada penguasaan materi, melainkan juga mampu memperkuat dimensi psikologis siswa. Penelitian ini berpusat pada implementasi model Discovery Learning dalam pembelajaran PAI untuk mengeksplorasi kontribusinya terhadap peningkatan self-efficacy siswa. Tujuan penelitian adalah mengkaji bagaimana Discovery Learning berkontribusi pada keaktifan belajar, pemahaman materi, dan self-efficacy siswa. Penelitian ini menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis fenomenologi. Subjek penelitian meliputi guru PAI dan siswa kelas X di SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Jakarta yang dipilih melalui Teknik purposive sampling. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, pengelompokan tema, serta interpretasi makna pengalaman partisipan. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa penerapan Discovery Learning mendorong partisipasi

aktif siswa, memperdalam pemahaman materi, dan memperkuat self-efficacy siswa. Peningkatan self-efficacy tercermin dalam keberanian siswa untuk bertanya, menyampaikan pendapat, dan melakukan presentasi, yang dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman keberhasilan belajar, dukungan instruktur, serta adaptasi emosional siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Discovery Learning dapat berfungsi sebagai alternatif model pembelajaran PAI yang relevan dalam mendukung penguatan aspek kognitif dan psikologis siswa.

Kata Kunci: Discovery Learning, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Self-Efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar in national development because it plays a role in developing human potential in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This aligns with Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 3, which asserts that national education aims to form individuals who are faithful, pious, possess noble character, capable, creative, independent, and responsible (Syamsidah et al., 2022). In the era of globalization, education must be adaptive to changes, particularly through curriculum transformation such as the “Kurikulum Merdeka,” which is designed to improve the quality of learning and fulfill the eight National Education Standards as regulated in Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021 (Fauzi et al., 2025).

Thus, education not only transmits knowledge but also shapes superior human resources (Muhammad Nurhedi et al., 2025). Therefore, teachers play a very important role in enhancing both the quality and quantity of their teaching. Monotonous teacher-centered learning models often cause students to feel bored and less interested in participating in lessons. Teachers tend to rely on lecturing methods, which result in passive students in receiving the material (Irianto et al., 2023).

In the educational process, learning success is not only determined by curriculum quality and teaching methods but also influenced by students’ internal factors, one of which is self-efficacy, or the belief in one’s own abilities (Sahin et al., 2024). Bandura explains that self-efficacy is an individual’s belief in their ability to complete specific tasks, influenced by experiences of success, social support, and environmental conditions (Wachyuni, 2022).

A strategic step to improve students’ self-efficacy is through the implementation of active, constructive, and student-centered learning models, such as Discovery Learning (Zakiah, 2023). The Discovery Learning model encourages students to discover concepts through observation, exploration, and problem-solving processes, thereby fostering confidence in their learning abilities (Khasinah, 2021).

In practice, the learning process in schools is often dominated by lecturing methods, causing students to become passive, less enthusiastic, and not optimally engaged in learning activities (Irianto et al., 2023). A similar situation is identified in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), where teaching often relies on memorization, lacks variety, and does not fully provide meaningful learning experiences (Ihsan et al., 2025).

This condition impacts students' willingness to ask questions, respond, or express opinions, indicating low self-efficacy in learning (KAMILATIKA, 2022).

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete specific tasks, which significantly affects motivation, learning readiness, and academic achievement (Sahin et al., 2024). In the context of PAI, low self-efficacy is reflected in students' tendency to choose easy tasks, give up quickly, and require motivational support to engage actively in learning (Khiyaroh, 2024; Rifdah Rihadatul Aisy, 2025). In fact, PAI learning is expected to foster learning motivation, self-confidence, and moral development (Wahid & Heri, 2024). Therefore, challenges in PAI learning are not only related to teaching methods but also to strengthening students' psychological aspects, particularly self-efficacy.

Overall, PAI learning has not fully facilitated active student engagement and learning readiness. This condition indicates that the ongoing learning process has not entirely promoted active participation and students' learning preparedness. Therefore, a learning approach is needed that can provide more meaningful learning experiences and facilitate the enhancement of students' self-confidence in PAI learning (Rahmanto & Khairul, 2022).

Expectations in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) fundamentally require a learning process that can motivate students, foster confidence in their morality and learning outcomes. Research by Wahid & Heri (2024) shows that PAI teachers play an important role in motivating students through direct interaction, providing encouragement, and applying engaging methods to make students more enthusiastic in learning. Self-efficacy has a significant influence on PAI learning outcomes, so both must be fostered through learning that promotes student independence and confidence (Fahriwalid, 2023).

Low student self-efficacy in PAI learning requires a learning model that actively involves students and provides experiences that enhance self-confidence (Faoziyah et al., 2024). The Discovery Learning model is a relevant solution because this approach helps improve self-efficacy through exploration, concept discovery, and problem-solving activities, allowing students to experience learning success directly. Research conducted by Nugraha & Wulansari (2023) shows that Discovery Learning is effective in improving students' learning outcomes and confidence in their abilities, making them more self-assured in learning.

Previous studies have mostly focused on the role of PAI teachers in motivating students to improve moral values and learning quality, as well as the relationship between self-efficacy and learning interest on PAI learning outcomes. Moreover, research on Discovery Learning generally positions it as a strategy to enhance cognitive learning outcomes, without specifically linking it to PAI learning.

This study aims to analyze the enhancement of students' self-efficacy through the Discovery Learning model in PAI learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Jakarta. This research is directed to reveal how active student involvement in discovering concepts, exploring materials, and solving problems can contribute to strengthening self-

confidence and learning independence. Scientifically, this study contributes to the development of pedagogical studies in PAI by offering a learning approach that not only emphasizes mastery of material but also strengthens students' psychological aspects, which are important prerequisites for learning success.

METHODS

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of teachers and students regarding the implementation of the Discovery Learning model in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and its impact on students' self-efficacy (Nasir et al., 2023). The phenomenological design was deemed appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences and the meanings they assign to those experiences.

The research was conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Jakarta, located in Kramat Jati Subdistrict, East Jakarta, Special Capital Region of Jakarta. The data collection was carried out over a defined period to ensure comprehensive and meaningful insights. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the learning process and included PAI teacher, male student from class X.3, and female student from class X.4.

Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured approach was selected to provide a flexible yet focused framework, allowing participants to express their perspectives in depth while still addressing key research topics (Fadila & Khaddafi, 2025). The interview guide was developed to cover participants' experiences of engagement in learning, forms of student participation, and perceptions of self-confidence in learning. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to capture precise accounts of participants' experiences.

Data Analysis Techniques and Ethical Considerations

The collected data were analyzed using a stepwise qualitative procedure, including: (1) data reduction and organization of interview transcripts, (2) coding and thematic grouping according to the research focus, and (3) interpretation of the meaning of experiences shared by participants. Analysis was conducted interactively and iteratively until consistent findings aligned with the study's context were obtained.

To ensure trustworthiness, data validation was carried out through member checking with participants to confirm the accuracy and consistency of interpretations with their reported experiences. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and safeguarding participants' anonymity throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIN

Results

Based on the study conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Jakarta, the implementation of the Discovery Learning model in the learning process showed significant changes, where students demonstrated increased confidence in expressing their opinions and stronger belief in their own abilities.

Implementation of Discovery Learning

Teachers did not merely act as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators responsible for guiding students to discover knowledge independently. Interviews with PAI teachers and students revealed that Discovery Learning was chosen because it helps students gain a deeper understanding of the material. The PAI teacher stated that one-way teaching often fails to reach all students, whereas giving students the opportunity to search for, process, and explain the material themselves leads to faster and more meaningful understanding.

Through the implementation of Discovery Learning, students were trained to read, identify key information, and organize it into systematic explanations, ensuring they not only receive information but truly understand the essence of the lesson. From the students' perspective, Discovery Learning provided a different learning experience. One student stated that independent exploration improved their comprehension because they had to think carefully about what to present. Another student emphasized that this approach helped them focus more since the material presented was their own work, not just the teacher's explanation. Thus, the choice of Discovery Learning aligns with both the teacher's considerations and students' learning experiences.

Structured Learning Process

In practice, teachers did not simply give students freedom but ensured that the learning process was systematic and structured. According to interviews, the Discovery Learning implementation began with determining the material, dividing groups, selecting subtopics, exploring information, organizing content, and concluding with presentations. The teacher actively guided students by highlighting key points effectively during class sessions. This structured approach ensured learning was active, controlled, and aligned with instructional goals.

From a student's perspective, this structured process helped them work efficiently. Students stated that the teacher's guidance made tasks clearer and less confusing. Another student noted that a clear learning structure facilitated understanding, from information search to presentation. Therefore, Discovery Learning not only provides freedom but also follows a well-managed instructional framework.

Increased Student Engagement and Participation

Discovery Learning also enhanced student engagement and participation. The teacher explained that through task distribution within groups, each student had

responsibilities, and group leaders were accountable for reporting non-contributing members. This approach motivated passive students to participate actively.

A student reported that their engagement increased because they were actively involved in exploring and presenting material. Another student mentioned that initially, participation was driven by group tasks, but over time, they became accustomed to and comfortable with discussions. Therefore, Discovery Learning fosters a culture of active learning among students.

Measurable Student Understanding

Teachers ensured that learning did not stop at presenting the material but also verified students' understanding. After presentations, a Q&A session was conducted to measure comprehension. Teachers emphasized that all group members must understand the material since anyone could be called to answer. For students who had not yet understood, additional tasks such as summaries were assigned for review.

Students reported that this system encouraged them to study more seriously, as they needed to understand the material thoroughly. Another student mentioned feeling more responsible for learning the content. Thus, Discovery Learning ensures both learning activity and adequate understanding.

Enhancing Students' Self-Efficacy

Discovery Learning also impacted students' affective aspects, particularly courage and self-efficacy. Teachers noted that through the habit of presenting in front of the class, students gradually became more confident. Teachers provided both motivation and guidance to ensure students completed their tasks. Courage developed progressively through repeated practice.

Students' experiences reinforced this finding. One student admitted feeling nervous initially but gradually became more confident in presenting and speaking. Another student noted that frequent presentations boosted self-confidence. Thus, Discovery Learning improves not only cognitive abilities but also students' personality and self-efficacy.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

No.	Focus of Discussion	Summary of Findings
1	Implementation of Discovery Learning	Teachers chose Discovery Learning to enhance students' understanding through material exploration; students reported better comprehension compared to passive listening.
2	Structured Learning Process	Learning followed systematic stages: material selection, group division, material exploration, content organization, presentation, and teacher correction.
3	Increased Engagement and	The model motivated passive students to

	Participation		participate actively due to task assignments and group responsibilities, fostering a culture of active learning.
4	Measurable Understanding	Student	Teachers conducted Q&A sessions after presentations to ensure all students understood the material; additional tasks were provided for students needing reinforcement.
5	Enhancing Students' Self-Efficacy		Discovery Learning improved students' courage and self-efficacy by providing repeated opportunities to present, respond, and actively participate in learning.

Discussion

The results of the study revealed that the implementation of the Discovery Learning model in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) contributed significantly to increasing learning activity, material comprehension, and students' self-efficacy. These findings indicate that students' active participation in the concept discovery process results in more meaningful learning experiences, thereby fostering students' confidence in their own learning abilities.

This aligns with the research objective, which emphasizes the relevance of participatory learning models to improve students' readiness and self-confidence in the context of PAI. Thus, the results reinforce the argument that PAI learning, which is still dominated by conventional approaches, tends to limit students' active participation and provides insufficient opportunities for strengthening learning experiences that influence students' psychological aspects, particularly self-efficacy (Fauzi et al., 2025).

In terms of implementation, the Discovery Learning model facilitates understanding of the material through students' direct participation in searching, processing, and explaining information. Such participation allows students to construct knowledge autonomously, making conceptual understanding more efficient compared to one-way teaching methods. These findings confirm that the exploration and discovery process in Discovery Learning plays a crucial role in creating meaningful learning, where students do not merely receive information but actively engage in knowledge construction.

The results are consistent with the view that Discovery Learning promotes active and meaningful learning through students' direct learning experiences (Khasinah, 2021). Students' perceptions that the learning is more interesting and easier to understand further strengthen the argument that active involvement in the learning process significantly contributes to improved material comprehension (Sari Atika Parinduri, 2025).

In this study, the Discovery Learning model was implemented through systematic stages, including material selection, group division, exploration, result

compilation, and teacher connection. The application of these stages indicates that the success of Discovery Learning is not spontaneous but depends on structured pedagogical planning and design. A clear learning structure helps students understand the sequence of learning activities, allowing exploration to proceed more systematically and without confusion. These findings support the view that discovery-based learning still requires the teacher's role in guiding and controlling the learning process to achieve learning objectives optimally (Khasinah, 2021).

The Discovery Learning model significantly contributes to increasing students' activity and participation in PAI learning. Students who were previously passive are encouraged to engage actively through group responsibilities and the teacher's instructive role, ensuring participation from every individual during the learning process. This creates a more interactive and collaborative learning environment, where students are not merely information recipients but also actively participate in knowledge construction. These findings indicate that an active learning approach can reduce the dominance of traditional lecture methods and promote more equitable student engagement, as supported by previous research on the effectiveness of active learning in enhancing student participation (Irianto et al., 2023; Wahid & Heri, 2024).

The Discovery Learning model not only increases students' learning activity but also facilitates a more measurable understanding of the material. Evaluation mechanisms through Q&A sessions and comprehension verification by the instructor ensure that all group members achieve a deep understanding of the studied material. From the students' perspective, presentation activities play an important role in deepening understanding because students are required to articulate the material they have learned. These findings indicate that a discovery process accompanied by reflection and clarification can strengthen students' conceptual understanding, consistent with research that confirms the effectiveness of discovery-based learning in improving conceptual comprehension (Nugraha & Wulansari, 2023).

The implementation of the Discovery Learning model positively affects students' self-efficacy, reflected in their increased courage to present, ask questions, and explain material after repeated practice in presentations and group discussions. Although some students still experience nervousness when presenting, they report an increase in confidence during the learning process.

According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, this improvement is influenced by students' successful experiences obtained through active learning activities, social support and persuasion from the instructor during the learning process, and students' ability to manage emotional responses when presenting in front of the class (Sahin et al., 2024). Therefore, the study's findings indicate that active learning through Discovery Learning not only affects cognitive aspects but also contributes to strengthening students' self-efficacy, reinforcing previous research on the effectiveness of active learning in enhancing students' readiness and confidence in learning (Fahriwalid, 2023; Nugraha & Wulansari, 2023).

Overall, the results reveal that the implementation of Discovery Learning in PAI learning successfully creates an active, meaningful learning process aimed at strengthening both the cognitive and psychological dimensions of students. Intensive student participation through exploration, discussion, and presentation activities not only improves material understanding but also develops students' self-efficacy as a crucial foundation for learning readiness.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Discovery Learning model in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) contributes positively to increasing students' learning activity, conceptual understanding, and self-efficacy. Through active participation in exploration, discussion, and presentation activities, students gain meaningful learning experiences, which in turn build confidence, courage to express opinions, and readiness to learn. This study indicates that the challenges in PAI learning are not solely related to teaching methods but also involve strengthening students' psychological dimensions, particularly self-efficacy, as identified in the introduction.

The implications of this study suggest that Discovery Learning can serve as a relevant alternative learning model for PAI, creating an active learning environment oriented toward both cognitive and psychological development of students. PAI teachers are encouraged to design discovery-based learning in a structured manner to ensure that students' exploration remains directed and effective. For future researchers, this study can be expanded by involving a larger number of participants or integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the impact of Discovery Learning on self-efficacy more comprehensively. Additionally, further research can explore the application of this model in different subjects or educational levels.

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