

## Challenges in Using Explanatory Methods in Islamic Religious Education Learning: A Constructivist Perspective

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### Article info

### Abstract

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*This study aims to analyze the problems in the use of the explanatory method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at MTs Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya from the perspective of Lev Vygotsky's constructivist theory, particularly the concept of scaffolding. This study employed a qualitative field research design involving two PAI teachers and twenty students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations conducted during four PAI learning sessions from April to May 2026, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while source and method triangulation were applied to ensure data credibility. The findings reveal that the explanatory method remains dominant and tends to create teacher-centered learning, resulting in limited student participation, low classroom interaction, and a focus on memorization rather than conceptual understanding. Furthermore, scaffolding has not been implemented optimally because teachers tend to provide direct explanations instead of gradual guidance. Therefore, the explanatory method should be integrated with interactive and constructivist strategies to promote active, collaborative, and student-centered PAI learning.*

**Keywords:** Explanation Method, Islamic Religious Education, Constructivism, Scaffolding, Lev Vygotsky.

#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis permasalahan dalam penggunaan metode eksplanasi dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di MTs Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya dari perspektif teori konstruktivis Lev Vygotsky, khususnya konsep Scaffolding. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian lapangan kualitatif yang melibatkan dua guru PAI dan dua puluh siswa yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas yang dilakukan selama empat sesi pembelajaran PAI dari April hingga Mei 2026, wawancara semi terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña, termasuk pengurangan data, tampilan data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, sedangkan triangulasi sumber dan metode diterapkan untuk memastikan kredibilitas data. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa metode penjelasan tetap dominan dan cenderung menciptakan pembelajaran yang berpusat pada guru, menghasilkan partisipasi siswa yang terbatas, interaksi kelas yang rendah, dan fokus pada hafalan daripada pemahaman konseptual. Selain itu, Scaffolding belum diimplementasikan secara optimal karena guru cenderung memberikan penjelasan langsung alih-alih bimbingan secara bertahap. Oleh karena itu, metode eksplanasi harus diintegrasikan dengan strategi interaktif dan konstruktivis untuk mempromosikan pembelajaran PAI yang aktif, kolaboratif, dan berpusat pada siswa.

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**Kata Kunci:** Metode Eksplanasi, Pembelajaran PAI, Konstruktivisme, Scaffolding, Lev Vygotsky.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has an important role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of students. PAI not only functions as a process of religious knowledge transfer, but also as a means of internalizing Islamic values in daily life. Through PAI learning, students are expected to be able to understand religious teachings theoretically as well as implement them in social behavior and community life. Therefore, the PAI learning process needs to be designed effectively in order to be able to build religious awareness, tolerance, and character in accordance with Islamic values and the development of the times (Tafsir, 2016).(Tanyid, 2014)(Tanyid, 2014)

However, in practice, PAI learning in various educational institutions still tends to use the method of explanatory or direct explanation by teachers dominantly. The use of this method makes learning more *teacher-centered learning*, while students play more of a passive listener. This condition causes learning interactions to take place one-way and do not provide opportunities for students to explore their understanding independently (Majid, 2017). The dominance of explanatory methods also results in students being less actively involved in the learning process, so that critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills have not been developed optimally (Suyadi, 2018).

At the Madrasah Tsanawiyah Level, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning has a strategic role in shaping religious understanding as well as the character of students. However, the process carried out in PAI learning still tends to be dominated by explanatory methods or direct explanations by teachers. So that it has the potential to limit the active involvement of students in building the student's understanding. This condition is contrary to the demands of 21st century learning which emphasizes the activeness, collaboration, and critical thinking skills of students (Trianto, 2010) The dominance of explanatory methods also often causes PAI learning to be only oriented to cognitive and memorization aspects, without providing enough space for students to internalize religious values in depth (Majid, 2012)

In the perspective of social constructivism developed by Lev Vygotsky, the learning process should occur through social interaction and the active involvement of learners in building knowledge. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of *the Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), which is the distance between the student's actual abilities and the potential that can be achieved with the help of others, as well as the concept of *scaffolding* as a form of gradual support from the teacher to help students achieve higher understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the use of explanatory methods that are not accompanied by scaffolding strategies has the potential to inhibit students' cognitive development because they do not pay attention to their needs and learning stages.

This research is important to be carried out at MTs. Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya because based on the initial phenomenon it was found that the use of the explanatory method is still dominant in PAI learning. This condition has the potential to hinder the implementation of constructivist learning that emphasizes student activity. Therefore, this study aims to describe the use of the explanatory method in PAI learning, identify the problems that arise in its application, and analyze these problems based on the perspective of Lev Vygotsky's constructivist theory, especially the concept of *scaffolding*. This research is expected to be able to contribute to the development of PAI learning strategies that are more interactive, collaborative, and student-centered.

Although previous studies have extensively discussed constructivist learning and the application of scaffolding in various educational contexts, limited research has specifically examined the problems associated with the continued use of the explanatory method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) from the perspective of Vygotsky's constructivist theory. Most existing studies focus on the effectiveness of constructivist learning strategies without critically explaining why teacher-centered explanatory instruction continues to dominate classroom practice and how this affects students' opportunities to construct knowledge. Therefore, this study contributes theoretically by extending the application of Vygotsky's constructivist framework, particularly the concept of scaffolding, as an analytical lens for interpreting the pedagogical limitations of explanatory methods in PAI learning. The findings are expected to enrich the discourse on constructivist pedagogy in Islamic education by providing a conceptual explanation of how teacher-centered instruction can be transformed into more interactive, collaborative, and student-centered learning practices.

## **METHODS**

### **Design and Types of Research**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of field study. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth the phenomenon of the use of the explanatory method in the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as well as the problems that arise in practice at MTs. Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya. Through this approach, researchers can dig up data directly from natural situations in the classroom, thus obtaining a complete and contextual picture.

### **Location and Research Subject**

This study was conducted at MTs Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya between April and May 2026. The participants consisted of 2 Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and 20 students, who were selected using purposive sampling because they were directly involved in the teaching and learning process. Classroom observations were conducted during four PAI learning sessions, each lasting approximately 80 minutes, to examine how the explanatory method was implemented and how students responded during classroom interaction. The selected participants represented different levels of

classroom participation, enabling the researcher to obtain comprehensive information regarding the implementation of the explanatory method. The determination of the research subject was carried out using *the purposive sampling* technique, which is the selection of informants based on certain considerations according to the needs of the research. PAI teachers were chosen because they had a major role in the use of learning methods, while students were chosen to obtain data on their learning experiences and involvement during the learning process.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

The data collection techniques in this study are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation so that the data obtained is more complete and in-depth.

### **Observations**

Classroom observations were conducted during four learning sessions using a structured observation guide developed from the indicators of constructivist learning and Vygotsky's scaffolding theory. The observation focused on teacher instructional behavior, classroom interaction, students' participation, questioning activities, collaborative learning, and the implementation of scaffolding strategies. Field notes were recorded immediately after each observation to minimize researcher bias and maintain data accuracy. Observation was carried out systematically by recording various activities related to the focus of the research.

### **Interview**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all two PAI teachers and ten selected students representing high, medium, and low learning participation. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions concerning instructional methods, classroom interaction, students' learning experiences, difficulties encountered during PAI learning, and teachers' understanding of scaffolding practices. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, was audio-recorded with participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. This technique is used to allow researchers to obtain more detailed data related to teachers' and students' views on the PAI learning process.

### **Data Analysis Techniques and Ethical Considerations**

#### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The analysis is carried out continuously from the data collection process until the research is completed.

#### **Data Reduction**

Data reduction is carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Data relevant to the focus

of the research were retained, while unrelated data were set aside for more targeted analysis.

### **Data Presentation**

The presentation of data is carried out in the form of a descriptive description so that it makes it easier for researchers to understand the relationship between data. The data that has been systematically compiled helps researchers in seeing the patterns of use of explanatory methods and problems that arise in PAI learning.

### **Conclusion Drawing**

The final stage of analysis is carried out by drawing conclusions based on the data that has been reduced and presented. The conclusions in this study were obtained through a continuous interpretation process so as to produce valid findings regarding the problems of the explanatory method in the perspective of Vygotsky's constructivism, especially the *scaffolding concept*.

### **Data Validity**

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation techniques and triangulation methods. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained from teachers and students, while method triangulation is carried out by comparing observation, interview, and documentation data. The use of triangulation aims to increase the validity and credibility of research data so that research results can be trusted.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **The Use of Explanatory Methods in PAI Learning**

Based on the results of observations and interviews at MTs. Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya, the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is still dominated by the use of explanatory methods. Teachers are the main center in the learning process by providing material explanations directly to students. Learning takes place through lectures, explanation of concepts, giving examples, and assignments related to the material that has been explained by the teacher. *"I often use direct explanations or lectures because there are quite a lot of PAI materials and must be explained in detail so that students understand the material first before doing assignments."* (PAI teacher, personal communication, May 2, 2026).

The use of the explanatory method was chosen because it was considered more practical and efficient in delivering a fairly wide range of PAI material in a limited time. The teacher assessed that this method makes it easier for students to understand basic religious concepts before entering the practice and learning evaluation stages. In addition, teachers also find it easier to control the classroom because the learning process runs in a structured and systematic manner. *"With the explanation method,*

learning is easier to control and the material can be completed according to the learning target." (PAI teacher, personal communication, May 2, 2026). In this case, according to the teacher, the use of the explanatory method helps the classroom management process to be more directed.

Interview data indicated that students tended to listen more frequently than actively participating in classroom discussions. Most students reported waiting for the teacher's explanation before attempting to answer questions or solve learning tasks.

**Table.** Classroom Observation Data on the Use of Explanatory Methods

| Observation Aspect             | Meeting 1 | Meeting 2 | Meeting 3 | Meeting 4 |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Teacher explanation (minutes)  | 52        | 55        | 50        | 54        |
| Student questions              | 3         | 2         | 4         | 3         |
| Teacher questions              | 15        | 17        | 16        | 18        |
| Students answering voluntarily | 5         | 4         | 6         | 5         |
| Group discussion activities    | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |
| Teacher scaffolding episodes   | 2         | 1         | 2         | 1         |

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all two Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and ten students purposively selected from the twenty student participants to represent high, moderate, and low levels of classroom participation. The interviews explored participants' perceptions of the implementation of the explanatory method, classroom interaction, learning experiences, challenges encountered during PAI instruction, and teachers' understanding and application of scaffolding practices. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was developed based on the research objectives and Vygotsky's constructivist framework to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing participants to elaborate on their responses. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, was conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded with participants' informed consent, and transcribed verbatim. To enhance the credibility of the findings, interview transcripts were reviewed through member checking with teacher participants before being included in the data analysis.

However, the results of observations show that learning still tends to be one-way. Teachers are more active in explaining the material, while students only listen, take notes, and answer simple questions. This condition causes learning interactions to be limited so that students lack the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and actively express opinions. This finding is in line with research that states that teacher-centered learning causes students to be more passive because teachers are the main source of knowledge in the learning process (Sarnoto, 2021).

The teacher admitted that during the learning took place students still tended to be passive. This can be seen from the low courage of students in asking questions and discussing. The teacher stated: *"When asked, usually only a few students actively answer. Most of them are still waiting for an explanation from the teacher."* (PAI teacher, personal communication, May 2, 2026). In addition, the teacher also said that the discussion method had been applied in learning, but it had not run optimally because not all students were actively involved. *"Group discussions have been conducted, but*

*usually only certain students are active, while others are still dependent on friends or waiting for the teacher's direction."* (PAI teacher, personal communication, May 2, 2026).

Regarding learning assistance to students, the teacher explained that the assistance provided is still in the form of direct explanations when students have difficulty understanding the material. The teacher said: *"Usually I re-explain the material or immediately give additional examples so that students quickly understand the lesson."* (PAI teacher, personal communication, May 2, 2026). The results of the interview show that the use of the explanatory method still dominates PAI learning because it is considered practical in delivering material. However, this condition causes learning to be more teacher-centered so that the active involvement of students in the learning process is still relatively low. The monotonous learning atmosphere makes some students less enthusiastic about participating in PAI learning. Some students seem to lack focus when the teacher explains the material for a long time. This condition shows that the dominant use of explanatory methods can affect students' learning motivation if not combined with other more interactive learning methods.

In addition to interviewing PAI teachers, they also asked the students. As a result of interviews with several students, it is known that PAI learning is more often done through direct explanations from teachers. One of the students said: *"Usually the teacher explains the material in front of the class, then we take notes and do the assignment."* (Students, personal communication, May 2, 2026). Students also revealed that they rarely conduct group discussions in PAI learning. *"Sometimes there are discussions, but not often. Usually I listen more to the teacher's explanations."* (Students, personal communication, May 10, 2026). In addition, there were some students who admitted that they felt bored when the teacher's explanation lasted too long. This was conveyed by one of the students. *"If the explanation is too long, sometimes you become unfocused and sleepy."* (Students, personal communication, May 10, 2026). The results of the interviews showed that students still experienced limitations in active involvement during the learning process.

### **Problems with the Use of Explanatory Methods in PAI Learning**

The main problem found in this study is the low active involvement of students in the learning process. Most students tend to only receive information from the teacher without deep exploration or discussion. Students also do not dare to ask questions and prefer to wait for direct explanations from the teacher when they have difficulty understanding the material. *"If learning takes place, usually only a few students actively ask questions or answer. Most are still shy to speak and are more waiting for an explanation from the teacher."* (PAI teacher, personal communication, May 2, 2026).

This condition causes learning to be more oriented to memorization than conceptual understanding. Students are able to remember the material delivered by the teacher, but still have difficulty connecting the PAI material with daily life or providing a critical analysis of a problem. This shows that the learning process has not fully

helped students build meaningful understanding. In that case, the continuous use of the explanatory method causes students to feel bored and less motivated to participate in learning. *"If the explanation is too long, sometimes it becomes boring and difficult to focus."* (Students, personal communication, May 10, 2026). The lack of variety in learning methods makes social interaction between students minimal. In fact, social interaction has an important role in the learning process because through discussion and cooperation students can build a deeper understanding. This finding is in accordance with the research of Budyastuti and Fauziati who explained that constructivistic learning is able to increase active interaction of students through communication, discussion, and feedback in the learning process (Budyastuti & Fauzati, 2021)

### **Application of the Scaffolding Concept in PAI Learning**

Based on the results of the research, the application of the scaffolding concept in PAI learning has not been running optimally. Teachers do provide assistance to students when they have difficulty understanding the material, but the assistance has not been carried out gradually and systematically according to the learning needs of students.

In learning practice, teachers provide more direct answers than guide students to find their own solutions through the process of active thinking. *"Because of limited learning time, I usually immediately help students so that the material is completed quickly."* (PAI teacher, personal communication, May 2, 2026). As a result, students become dependent on the teacher's explanations and are less accustomed to learning independently or working with peers. In addition, the results of interviews with students show that students are still used to relying on teachers' explanations when experiencing learning difficulties. One of the students stated: *"If you don't understand, you usually wait for the teacher to explain again."* (Students, personal communication, May 2, 2026). Another student also said: *"Sometimes if we are given difficult questions, we immediately ask the teacher."* (Students, personal communication, May 2, 2026). According to Lev Vygotsky's theory of constructivism, scaffolding is a temporary help provided by teachers so that students are able to achieve higher learning abilities. The assistance should be carried out in stages until students are able to complete the assignment independently. Research on scaffolding strategies shows that providing gradual instructions, guidance, and tasks that are in accordance with the level of development of students can improve student activities and learning outcomes (Hidayanto et al., 2021).

Based on the results of the learning documentation, learning activities are still dominated by teacher explanations and individual problem exercises. The findings show that the application of the scaffolding concept in PAI learning has not been running optimally because the learning assistance provided by teachers is still direct and has not been carried out gradually according to the level of development of students. Thus, the results of the study show that PAI learning at MTs. Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya still requires the development of a more constructivistic learning strategy so that students can be actively involved in building knowledge and developing critical thinking skills.

## **Discussion**

### **The Dominance of Teacher-Centered Learning in PAI Learning**

The dominance of *teacher-centered learning* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) remains one of the major challenges in creating active and meaningful learning environments. In this learning model, teachers become the primary source of information, while students tend to act as passive recipients who only listen, record, and memorize learning materials. This condition causes classroom interaction to become one-directional and limits students' opportunities to actively participate in the learning process (Msonde, 2021). From the perspective of constructivist learning theory, the dominance of teacher-centered instruction is considered less effective because it does not fully facilitate students in constructing their own understanding through exploration, discussion, and social interaction. Constructivism emphasizes that learning should encourage students to actively engage in the learning process by connecting new knowledge with prior experiences (Jemberie, 2021). However, when teachers dominate classroom activities, students often become dependent on teachers' explanations and show limited critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In the context of PAI learning, teacher-centered approaches may also reduce students' opportunities to internalize religious values meaningfully. Learning activities that focus mainly on memorization and content delivery tend to emphasize cognitive achievement rather than reflective understanding and character development. Therefore, PAI learning requires more interactive and student-centered approaches that allow students to discuss, collaborate, and develop understanding independently through guided learning activities (Risal & Astutik, 2021).

The results of the study show that PAI learning at MTs. Nahdlatul Athfal Surabaya is still dominated by a teacher-centered learning approach. Teachers are the main center in delivering material, while students play more roles as recipients of information. This condition shows that the learning process is still oriented towards knowledge transfer rather than the development of students' active thinking skills. From a modern educational perspective, the teacher-centered learning approach is considered incompatible with the demands of 21st-century learning that emphasizes collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking skills. Ahmad Zain Sarnoto explained that constructivism learning places students as active subjects who build knowledge through learning experiences and social interaction (Ahmad Zain Sarnoto, 2021). In addition, Waruwu explained that the constructivism learning model emphasizes the active formation of knowledge by students through the process of thinking and learning experiences (Waruwu, 2021). Therefore, the dominance of the explanatory method in PAI learning has the potential to hinder the development of students' critical thinking skills because students are less involved in the process of knowledge exploration. The use of explanatory methods is actually still necessary in PAI learning, especially to explain basic religious concepts that require initial understanding from teachers. However, these methods need to be combined with other learning strategies such as

group discussions, problem-based learning, inquiry learning, and collaborative learning so that students can be actively involved in the learning process.

### **Learning Problems in the Perspective of Constructivism**

From the perspective of constructivism, learning is an active process of building knowledge based on social experience and interaction. However, the results of the study show that PAI learning is still dominated by teachers' activities so that students do not have the opportunity to construct their own knowledge. Learning problems occur when the learning process does not provide students with opportunities to actively construct knowledge through interaction, exploration, and meaningful experiences. Constructivism emphasizes that students should become active participants in learning rather than passive recipients of information. However, in many classroom practices, learning still tends to be dominated by teacher-centered approaches in which teachers act as the primary source of knowledge, while students merely listen and memorize information. This condition limits students' ability to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Almulla, 2023).

One of the major learning problems in constructivist learning environments is the low level of student participation during the learning process. Students often become passive because learning activities focus more on lectures and direct explanations than on discussion, collaboration, and inquiry-based activities. As a result, students have limited opportunities to connect new knowledge with their prior experiences and social interactions. According to constructivist theory, meaningful learning can only occur when students are actively involved in constructing their own understanding through engagement with real-life situations and collaborative learning experiences (Sioukas, 2023). Another significant issue is the insufficient implementation of student-centered learning strategies. In many cases, teachers still prioritize completing instructional materials rather than facilitating students' cognitive development. Consequently, classroom interaction becomes one-directional, and students depend heavily on teachers' explanations. This condition is inconsistent with constructivist principles, particularly the concept of scaffolding proposed by Lev Vygotsky, which highlights the importance of gradual guidance and collaborative interaction in supporting students' learning development (Masava et al., 2023).

Furthermore, constructivist learning problems are also associated with students' limited opportunities to develop independent learning skills. When learning activities rely excessively on memorization and repetition, students may struggle to apply knowledge critically in different contexts. This issue can reduce students' motivation and engagement in the learning process because they are not encouraged to explore ideas independently or participate in problem-solving activities (Lama Soubra et al, 2022). Therefore, teachers need to create interactive and collaborative learning environments that encourage students to ask questions, share opinions, and actively construct understanding through social interaction and experiential learning (Lombasari et al, 2022). This condition causes learning to emphasize the memorization

aspect more than deep understanding. Students tend to only understand the material theoretically without being able to relate the material to real life. Herianto and Lestari explained that constructivistic learning is able to create more active learning because students are directly involved in the process of discovering and understanding learning concepts (Herianto & Lestari, 2021).

In addition, monotonous learning also affects students' learning motivation. The lack of variety in learning methods makes students quickly feel bored and lack focus on learning. In constructivist learning, teachers should create an interactive learning atmosphere through discussions, group work, and problem-solving so that students are more active and motivated in learning. Vygotsky's constructivism learning emphasizes the importance of social interaction in building students' knowledge through observing, questioning, trying, reasoning, and communicating learning outcomes (Dewi & Fauziyati, 2021). Thus, PAI learning should not only be oriented to the delivery of material, but also provide space for students to discuss, ask questions, and actively develop their understanding.

### **Analysis of the Concept of Scaffolding Vygotsky Perspective**

The concept of scaffolding in Vygotsky's constructivist theory emphasizes the importance of gradual assistance from teachers to learners in the learning process. The assistance is provided according to the needs of students until they are able to study independently. In this study, the application of scaffolding has not been optimally run because teachers are still more dominant in providing direct explanations rather than guiding students to find understanding gradually. In the perspective of Lev Vygotsky, learning is viewed as a social process in which students construct knowledge through interaction with teachers, peers, and their surrounding environment. One of the central concepts proposed by Vygotsky is *scaffolding*, which refers to temporary assistance provided by teachers or more capable peers to help students achieve higher levels of understanding. This assistance is gradually reduced as students become more independent in completing learning tasks (Vinner & Leikin, 2021).

The concept of scaffolding emphasizes that effective learning should not merely focus on transferring information from teacher to student. Instead, teachers are expected to guide students through questioning, discussion, collaborative activities, and problem-solving processes that encourage active participation. In this context, the teacher acts as a facilitator who supports students in developing their cognitive abilities within the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), namely the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance (Huda, 2021). In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, scaffolding becomes highly relevant because students require gradual guidance to understand religious concepts critically and contextually. Through scaffolding, teachers can encourage students to actively interpret Islamic values, connect learning materials with real-life experiences, and participate in collaborative discussions (Ainiyah, 2020).

However, when learning is dominated by the explanation method (*teacher-centered learning*), students tend to become passive recipients of information. As a result, opportunities for students to explore ideas, ask questions, and construct understanding independently become limited (Rozali & Irianto, 2022). Therefore, the implementation of scaffolding in PAI learning is essential to create interactive and student-centered learning environments. Teachers should combine explanation methods with collaborative and inquiry-based activities to support students' cognitive and social development. In this way, learning not only emphasizes memorization but also promotes critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and meaningful learning experiences (Febriana, 2022). In fact, scaffolding has an important role in helping students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Research by Hidayanto, Wiyanto, and Purwanti shows that scaffolding strategies are able to improve students' activities and learning outcomes because students receive assistance gradually according to their level of development (Hidayanto et al., 2021).

In addition, research on instructional scaffolding also explains that providing the right learning support can help students achieve learning goals more effectively (Camara et al, 2021), PAI teachers need to apply scaffolding through the provision of triggering questions, group discussions, gradual guidance, and the provision of problem-solving-based assignments so that students are more active in the learning process. With the optimal application of scaffolding, PAI learning is not only oriented towards mastering the material, but also able to develop students' critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and independent learning skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the explanatory method remains widely used in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning because it allows teachers to present conceptual materials efficiently and systematically. However, its dominant use tends to make learning teacher-centered, resulting in limited student participation, passive learning behavior, minimal discussion and exploration, and a stronger emphasis on memorization than meaningful understanding. From the perspective of Lev Vygotsky's constructivist theory, these conditions indicate that IRE learning has not fully facilitated students' active construction of knowledge through social interaction and learning experiences. The implementation of scaffolding is also not yet optimal, as teacher support tends to focus on explaining materials rather than gradually encouraging students to develop independent understanding. Therefore, the explanatory method should be complemented by discussion, problem-based, inquiry-based, and collaborative learning, supported by gradual scaffolding through guidance, questioning, feedback, and problem-solving activities to promote students' active participation, critical thinking, independence, collaboration, and deeper understanding of Islamic Religious Education.

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