Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan
Vol.17, 4 (December, 2025), pp. 6608-6621
ISSN: 2087-9490 EISSN: 2597-940X, DOI: 10.35445/alishlah.v17i4.7574

Integrating Direct Teaching and Local Cultural Values to Improve Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes in Islamic Religious Education for Fifth Grade Students

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

direct Instruction;
maja labo dahu;
Islamic religious education;
student engagement;
character education

Article history:

Received 2025-04-22
Revised 2025-10-23
Accepted 2025-12-16

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Direct Instruction model integrated with the local cultural values of *Maja Labo Dahu* in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education among fifth-grade students at INPRES Tololara State Elementary School. The integration of cultural elements aimed to make learning more relevant and character-building for students. A classroom action research (CAR) design was employed, conducted over two cycles. Each cycle involved stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The participants were 15 fifth-grade students. Data were collected through structured observations of student learning activities and evaluations of student learning outcomes. The findings revealed notable improvements in both student engagement and academic achievement. Student learning activity increased from 61.67% in the first cycle to 85% in the second, while classical learning completeness rose from 60% to 86.67%. These gains were attributed to clearer instructional guidelines, the integration of culturally familiar content, and the use of demonstration and practice-based teaching techniques. Reflective analysis from the first cycle allowed for refinement of teaching strategies in the second cycle, leading to enhanced student motivation, interaction, and comprehension. Beyond academic improvements, the integration of *Maja Labo Dahu* supported the development of character values aligned with Islamic teachings, such as integrity, respect, and cooperation. In conclusion, combining the Direct Instruction model with local cultural values proved effective in improving both cognitive and character outcomes, offering a viable approach to enhancing the quality of elementary education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamentally viewed as a national endeavor to cultivate human beings who possess faith, devotion, and moral integrity (Nur et al., 2022; Murniarti & Anastasia, 2016). Beyond the development of cognitive abilities, education should serve to humanize individuals, enabling them to actualize their potential as devout and responsible members of society (Sastrawan, 2019). In the Indonesian context, however, there remains a significant gap between expected competencies and actual student achievement (Halim, 2022). This discrepancy indicates that educational practices must evolve, especially in terms of classroom engagement and pedagogical strategies. Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the character and quality of human resources, and as such, it must be responsive to current demands and future challenges (Sa'diyah, 2018).

In today's rapidly changing world, education must not only provide knowledge for routine tasks but also foster skills essential for survival and success in the 21st century (Ridwan, 2014). Central to this goal is student engagement—an essential element of effective learning. Engagement includes both physical and mental activities, such as thinking, interacting, questioning, and performing tasks (Abrori et al., 2023). The more students are actively involved in the learning process, the greater their comprehension and achievement. Learning outcomes, defined as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through instruction, reflect both cognitive gains and behavioral changes (Firmansyah, 2015; Siti Komariyah, 2018). These outcomes are influenced by internal factors such as student motivation, psychological readiness, and personal circumstances (Leni & Sholehun, 2021).

At the elementary school level, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a vital role in instilling religious values and shaping students' character in accordance with Islamic principles. It is intended to nurture faith, piety, and moral behavior aligned with Islamic teachings (Aladdiin, 2019; Ummi Kulsum, 2022). However, in many classrooms, IRE is still perceived as a subject to be memorized rather than understood or practiced, leading to limited student interest and participation (Solehuddin, 2019). This low engagement directly impacts student learning outcomes, reducing the effectiveness of religious education in shaping students' beliefs and behavior.

To address these issues, appropriate and engaging instructional models are needed. One promising approach is the Direct Instruction (DI) model, which involves explicit teaching of concepts and skills through structured steps and guided practice. DI is designed to help students acquire factual and procedural knowledge in a sequential and systematic manner (Sitompul & Hayati, 2019; Setyawan & Riadin, 2020). The model emphasizes clarity, modeling, repetition, and feedback, which are essential for ensuring mastery. Typically, DI follows five key stages: orientation, presentation, guided practice, evaluation with feedback, and independent practice (Amintoko, 2017; Pritandhari & Pendidikan, 2017). This method allows teachers to provide direct support while gradually fostering student independence in learning.

Nonetheless, the success of instructional models like DI also depends on their contextual relevance. When adapted to local cultural contexts, such models become more relatable and meaningful for students. Culture can function as a powerful educational tool, enhancing relevance, motivation, and value internalization in the learning process (Muhammad Syazali, 2022). One local cultural value system that aligns closely with Islamic teachings is *Maja Labo Dahu*, a moral philosophy of the Bima people in West Nusa Tenggara. According to Indonesian regulation (Permendagri No. 39 of 2007), local culture refers to the set of values and norms upheld by a community, which guide behavior and contribute to social cohesion (Setiyawan, 2012).

The term *Maja Labo Dahu* literally means "shame and fear." Philosophically, it refers to a person's sense of shame (maja) for committing wrongful acts and fear (dahu) of divine retribution. These values serve as ethical guidelines embedded in the daily lives of the Bima people and were institutionalized during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Salahuddin (1917–1951) (Najamudin & Andang, 2022; Ilmiawan Mubin, 2018). As a form of indigenous wisdom, Maja Labo Dahu is passed down from parents to children as a code of conduct that promotes moral and religious discipline (Salam, 2022). These values

strongly resonate with core Islamic teachings such as honesty, respect for parents and teachers, and mutual care—principles also emphasized in Grade V Islamic Religious Education curricula.

Incorporating *Maja Labo Dahu* into the learning process provides not only cognitive but also affective and spiritual development. It helps students contextualize Islamic teachings within their lived experience, making lessons more meaningful and actionable. Rather than learning in abstraction, students begin to embody values such as responsibility, moral integrity, and piety in their daily lives. This cultural integration supports character education and is consistent with the goals of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritizes contextual and student-centered learning.

Despite the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy, classroom observations at INPRES Tololara Elementary School suggest that fifth-grade students demonstrate low engagement in Islamic Religious Education. Many students appear passive, seldom participate in discussions, and rarely ask questions. Additionally, their learning outcomes fall below the expected standards. This situation is largely attributed to the continued use of traditional, teacher-centered instruction, where students act as passive recipients of knowledge while teachers dominate the learning process.

In light of these challenges, it is necessary to adopt creative and culturally relevant instructional approaches. Integrating the Direct Instruction model with local cultural values such as Maja Labo Dahu offers a promising solution. This approach not only strengthens conceptual understanding but also promotes moral values rooted in both religion and culture. By doing so, it fosters holistic learning—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—thereby improving the quality of Islamic education at the elementary level. Ultimately, this integration can create a more dynamic, meaningful, and effective learning environment for young learners, preparing them not only to excel academically but also to grow as morally grounded individuals.

2. METHODS

This research is a Classroom Action Research. The study uses the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which includes planning, action, observation, and reflection (Prihantoro & Hidayat, 2019). After each cycle is completed, especially after the reflection stage, there is a new plan or revision of the previous cycle's implementation. Based on this new planning, the next cycle is carried out, and this continues so that Classroom Action Research can be done in multiple cycles (Pahleviannur, 2022). The purpose of this research is to improve the quality of student activities and learning outcomes (Ajeng Arini et al., 2019).

In this study, the subjects were fifth-grade students. The object of this study was all fifth-grade students at INPRES Tololara Public Elementary School, consisting of 15 students, 12 female students and 3 male students, who were participating in the learning process.

Data collection techniques include: Observations can be carried out by the teacher themselves. Observations focus on student learning activities and processes, while preparations are made to document the learning process (Firdaus et al., 2023). Interviews or questions are very important for understanding how someone views, thinks about, expresses opinions about, and feels about a symptom, event, fact, or situation (Raco, 2010). Test methods, here the researcher uses written tests as a way of collecting data in the pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II. A written test is an examination in which students answer a number of questions in writing (Arikunto, 2011). There were two tests conducted, namely: Pre-test, which was used when the delivery of material began with the aim of evaluating the extent to which students had mastered the material or subject matter to be taught (Magdalena et al., 2021). Post-test, also known as post test, is carried out at the end of learning a material (Novitasari, 2016). Documentation is in the form of written manuscripts about various activities or events that occurred in the past. All documents related to the research in question need to be recorded as sources of information (Gulo, 2002).

Research instruments are devices used by researchers to collect data. Research instruments are one of the important things, namely the tools used to measure the phenomena studied during data collection (Muslihin et al., 2022). Classroom Action Research data analysis techniques can be carried

out using descriptive quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods (Mulyatiningsih, 2021)

The validity of this study was maintained through content and construct validation of the test instruments, observations, and interviews, which were developed based on learning indicators and discussed with teachers. This validity is also reinforced by using multiple sources and methods, such as comparing the results of observations, interviews, tests, and documents. The reliability of the research is ensured by using the same tools in each cycle, applying consistent testing standards between previous and subsequent tests, involving teachers as additional observers to improve the accuracy of the assessment, and recording all data regularly so that it can be accurately rechecked.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the initial data analysis indicated that students' learning activities and academic achievement were still at a low level. Several factors contributed to this condition, including limited student participation during the learning process, the use of monotonous and undiversified instructional methods, and students' insufficient comprehension of the subject matter. These issues highlight the need for a more effective instructional approach. In response, the implementation of the Direct Instruction model integrated with the local cultural values of *Maja Labo Dahu* was proposed as a strategy to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes in the Islamic Religious Education subject for Grade V students at INPRES Tololara State Elementary School.

3.1 Findings I

3.1.1 Observation results of student learning activities cycle I

Student learning activities related to the instructional material in Cycle I were observed using an observation sheet developed by the researcher. The data reflected the implementation of the Direct Instruction model integrated with local cultural values.

Based on observations from two class meetings in Cycle I, student engagement during the first meeting was relatively low. Observation results indicated that learning activity levels fell within the "sufficient" category, with an average score of 61.67%. However, during the second meeting, a slight improvement was recorded, with the average score increasing to 63.33%, placing it within the "high" category. Although the increase was modest, it showed a positive trend in student participation following the initial application of the learning model.

3.1.2 Student learning outcomes cycle I

Evaluation of student learning outcomes is carried out based on tests or evaluations of learning outcomes that have been administered with material about honesty in the sight of Allah and respect and obedience to parents, which consists of 10 multiple-choice questions and 5 essay questions, delivered at Meeting 3.

Calculating the average with the final score divided by the total number of students $\frac{1045.2}{15} = 69.7$

With the number of completions witnessed

$KK = \frac{F}{N}\ x\ 100\%$

KK : Classical Completeness

F : Number of students who scored ≥ 75

N : Number of Students

$KK = \frac{9}{15}\ x\ 100\% = 60{,}0\%$

Based on the analysis of student performance in Cycle I, it was found that 9 out of 15 students achieved scores above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75, indicating that these students had achieved individual mastery. However, initial assessment results revealed that, on average, students

had not yet fully understood or mastered the material presented by the teacher. After completing the learning process in Cycle I, which consisted of two instructional sessions, the average student score increased to 69.7. The highest score recorded was 87.6, while the lowest was 46.5. Despite some progress, only 9 students achieved the expected learning outcomes, while 6 students did not. Consequently, classical completeness for this cycle reached 60.0%, which remains below the targeted research success threshold of 80%.

Furthermore, data on student learning activities showed an average engagement score of 66.7, with the highest at 86.6 and the lowest at 46.5. These results reinforce the conclusion that while the implementation of the Direct Instruction model integrated with *Maja Labo Dahu* values led to some improvement, it had not yet resulted in optimal outcomes. Several students were observed to lack focus and seriousness during the teacher's explanation, indicating a need for further refinement of instructional strategies in the next cycle.

3.2 Findings II

3.2.1 Observation results of student learning activities cycle II

Student learning activities during Cycle II were observed using an observation form developed by the researcher. These observations aimed to assess student engagement following the continued implementation of the Direct Instruction model integrated with local cultural values.

The results showed a significant improvement in student activity. In the first meeting of Cycle II, the average level of student participation increased to 75.33%, falling within the "high" category. This positive trend continued in the second meeting, where average participation rose to 85%, also categorized as "high." Overall, student involvement in the learning process demonstrated substantial progress. Learners were noticeably more proactive, engaged, and enthusiastic throughout the instructional sessions, indicating that the applied learning model had a positive impact on their motivation and participation.

3.2.2 Student learning outcomes of the cycle II

Assessment of student learning outcomes is based on the evaluation or test given at the third meeting, with the material "Respect and Obedience to Teachers and the Beauty of Mutual Appreciation". This test consists of 10 questions, which include 5 multiple choice questions and 5 essay questions.

The average student learning outcomes are calculated by dividing the total final score by the total number of students, namely : $\frac{1211,64}{15} = 80.78$

$KK = \frac{F}{N}\ x\ 100\%$

KK : Classical Completeness

F : Number of students who scored ≥ 75

N : Number of Students

$KK = \frac{13}{15}\ x\ 100\% = 86,67\%$

Based on the table above, 15 students took the learning outcomes test. Based on the results of the cycle II evaluation, there were 13 students who achieved a score of $\geqslant 75$ (complete), while 2 students had not yet reached completeness. Overall, the student completeness rate reached 86.67%, which shows very satisfying results.

In accordance with the agreement reached between the researcher and the Religion Teacher of the Islamic School, the results of the V-grade students' assessments at the INPRES Tololara Elementary School indicate that the assessments are indeed meaningful. It is evident that the percentage of students who have demonstrated mastery of the learning objectives has increased to 86.67% in cycle II, thereby meeting the established standard.

The assessment results in Cycle II showed that the application of the Direct Instruction learning model, integrated with local culture, significantly improved students' activities and learning outcomes. Cycle II was declared a success because it had met the specified success indicators, with an average score of 80.78 and classical completeness reaching 86.67%. Of the 15 students who participated in the evaluation, 13 passed, while 2 did not meet the passing criteria.

3.3 Finding III

This study demonstrates that implementing the Direct Instruction model integrated with the local cultural values of *Maja Labo Dahu* not only enhances student engagement and learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), but also significantly contributes to character development. The integration reinforces key moral values rooted in both Islamic teachings and Bima cultural traditions, such as honesty, respect, obedience, and mutual regard.

Through lessons such as “Honest People are Loved by Allah,” “Respect and Obedience to Parents and Teachers,” and “The Beauty of Mutual Respect,” the cultural philosophy of Maja Labo Dahu becomes an effective vehicle for instilling deep moral awareness in students. The principle of “Maja”—a sense of shame in committing dishonesty or misconduct—encourages students to prioritize honesty in both academic activities and social interactions. In parallel, “Labo Dahu”—the fear of consequences resulting from immoral behavior—nurtures students’ respect for parents and teachers, while fostering a sense of responsibility and discipline in fulfilling their roles as learners.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that incorporating local cultural values into the learning process enhances students’ empathy and social sensitivity. This integration helps students internalize the importance of mutual respect and cooperation in daily interactions. Evidence of this can be seen in their more balanced peer relationships, greater willingness to assist others, and a heightened sense of solidarity within the classroom. These outcomes affirm the value of culturally contextualized instruction in fostering both academic and character development in primary education.

Discussion

Analysis of Student Learning Activities Cycle I

Based on the observations made during Cycle I, there was an increase in student learning activities from the first meeting to the second meeting. In the first meeting, the average student participation fell into the "Fair" category, with a value of 61.67%. In the second meeting, it increased to the "High" category, with a value of 63.33%. This shows an increase in students' reaction to the *Direct Instruction* learning model that integrates local cultural values "*Maja Labo Dahu*".

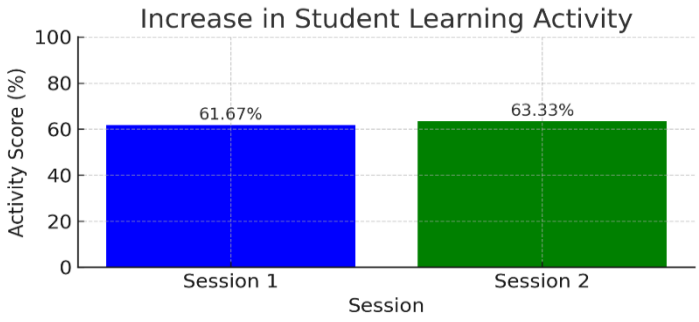

Figure 1. Students’ Response Improvement through the Direct Instruction Model Based on *Maja Labo Dahu* Local Culture

The graph illustrates an increase in student learning activity from Meeting 1 to Meeting 2. This suggests that the implementation of the Direct Instruction model in the teaching and learning process contributed to an improvement in students' comprehension of the material. The use of structured interactions such as face-to-face discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and teacher–student engagement played a role in facilitating this progress (Albakir, 2024).

Nevertheless, the increase observed remains relatively modest and has not yet reached the desired level of effectiveness. Certain indicators—such as students' readiness to participate and their enthusiasm during the learning process—were still low, particularly during the first meeting. These findings indicate that further adjustments are needed to the instructional approach to make it more engaging and capable of promoting higher levels of student involvement.

Analysis of Student Learning Outcomes Cycle I

The results of the evaluation carried out at the third meeting showed that the students' classical pass rate was still below the research success standard. Out of a total of 15 students, only 9 obtained scores exceeding the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) set at 75, with an average score of 69.7. The percentage of classical complet

This increase has not yet reached the specified success indicator, so it continues to cycle II. There were several obstacles to implementing cycle I actions, resulting in learning outcomes that did not meet expectations (Made Sulastriningsih et al., 2021).

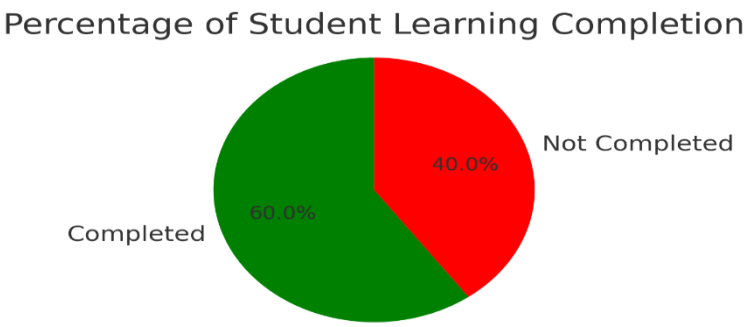

Figure 2. Student Learning Outcomes

The figure above presents a pie chart illustrating the percentage of students who achieved learning completeness. Based on the data, 60% of students met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), while the remaining 40% did not achieve the required standard. The score distribution revealed a notable disparity between students who achieved the highest score (87.6) and those with the lowest score (46.5). This gap highlights a variance in students' comprehension levels, which may be attributed to differences in learning pace, limited active participation during lessons, and inadequate understanding of the material delivered.

These findings indicate the presence of several learning challenges that require immediate attention. The evaluation conducted after Cycle I revealed key issues: (1) Student participation in learning activities remained suboptimal, (2) Learning outcomes had not yet met the expected criteria for mastery, and (3) Many students demonstrated a lack of focus and seriousness in following the teacher's instructions.

To address these challenges, a series of improvements was planned for Cycle II. Drawing on the results of reflective analysis, the following strategies were identified: (1) Increase student participation through more engaging and interactive learning methods, (2) Provide clearer and more structured instructions during lessons, (3) Enhance assessment practices and offer timely feedback, and (4) Deliver additional support to students who did not meet the learning objectives. These steps align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of reflection and adjustment in improving learning

outcomes (Made Sulastriningsih et al., 2021; Santra, 2021). It is expected that these targeted interventions will lead to better results and higher levels of mastery in Cycle II.

Finding II

In Cycle II, the findings revealed a substantial improvement in both student learning activities and learning outcomes following the implementation of the Direct Instruction model integrated with local cultural values. The learning process, which was conducted across three instructional sessions, was more systematically organized as a result of reflections and revisions made after Cycle I. These adjustments contributed to a more effective and focused learning environment.

Learning outcomes represent the competencies acquired by students after completing the learning process. In instructional practice, teachers are not only responsible for delivering learning materials but also for ensuring the effectiveness of instruction through systematic assessment of teaching and learning outcomes (Firmansyah, 2015). Learning outcomes serve as essential indicators in evaluating students' mastery of instructional objectives, reflecting the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through learning experiences (Andriyani, 2020). The discussion below presents the results obtained in Cycle II.

Observational data collected during Cycle II indicated a notable increase in student learning activities. Student engagement during the first session reached 75.33% and further increased to 85% in the second session, demonstrating a significant enhancement in active participation throughout the learning process. This improvement suggests that the revised instructional strategies were effective in fostering student involvement.

Learning activities encompass both physical and mental engagement. Learning occurs through various forms of activity, and students' active participation is a critical factor in improving their understanding of learning materials and problem-solving abilities (Abrori et al., 2023). Physical activity involves students actively using their bodies in tasks such as practicing, discussing, or working collaboratively, rather than passively listening. Mental activity, on the other hand, reflects students' cognitive engagement, including thinking, analyzing, and processing information. The combination of physical and psychological activity is essential for successful learning and was clearly evident during the implementation of Cycle II (Abrori et al., 2023).

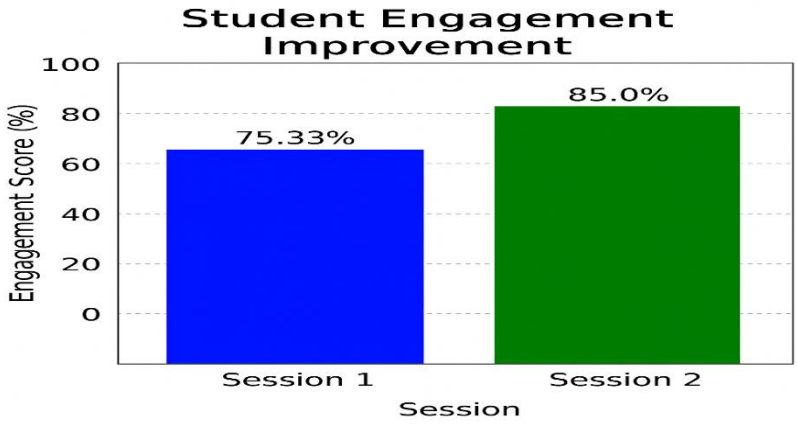

Figure 3. Student Learning Activity Results

The figure illustrates an increase in student learning activities from Meeting 1 to Meeting 2. This trend indicates that the implementation of the Direct Instruction model contributed positively to student engagement during the learning process.

The Direct Instruction approach has been shown to enhance students' learning enthusiasm and motivation. Previous findings indicate that students taught using the Direct Instruction model demonstrate higher average learning motivation compared to those taught using conventional methods (Dalimunthe, 2017). The observed improvement in this study suggests that students became more

actively involved in classroom activities. This increase in participation can be attributed to several factors. First, the systematic and explicit delivery of instructions in the Direct Instruction model enables students to clearly understand learning objectives and procedures at each stage of instruction. Second, the integration of local cultural values such as *Maja Labo Dahu* makes the learning content more relevant and meaningful to students, thereby increasing their interest and engagement. Third, the use of demonstrations and guided practice allows students to actively apply concepts rather than passively receive information, which further strengthens their involvement in the learning process.

Improved Student Learning Outcomes

Results can be understood as the outcomes of activities that lead to functional changes in the input. In the context of education, learning is defined as a positive transformation in an individual that occurs as a result of instructional experiences. Learning outcomes, therefore, refer to observable changes in knowledge, skills, or behavior that occur after a person engages in teaching and learning activities, aligned with the predetermined educational objectives (Siti Komariyah, 2018).

The evaluation conducted during the third meeting of Cycle II demonstrated a notable improvement in student learning outcomes. Of the 15 students who participated in the assessment, 13 achieved a score of 75 or higher, resulting in a classical completeness rate of 86.67%. The class average score reached 80.78, indicating a significant improvement compared to the previous cycle and reflecting the effectiveness of the instructional interventions implemented.

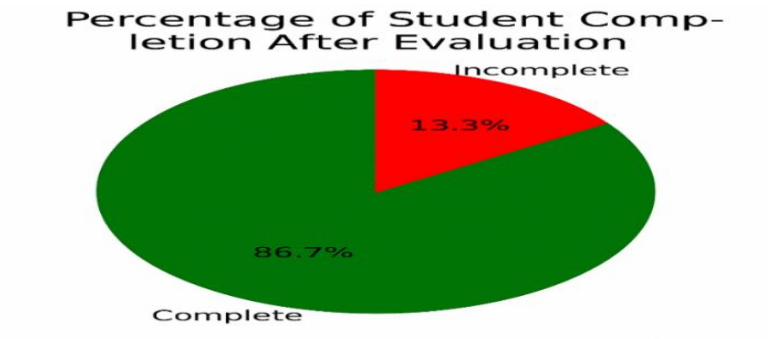

Figure 4. Student Learning Outcomes

The figure presented is a pie chart illustrating the percentage of student learning mastery following the final evaluation. The data shows that 86.7% of students achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), represented in green, while 13.3% of students had not yet achieved mastery, represented in red. This high rate of completeness indicates substantial progress compared to the previous cycle.

Several key factors contributed to the improvement in student learning outcomes. First, the learning approach in Cycle II was more efficient and targeted. Adjustments made based on the reflection from Cycle I led to a more focused strategy, with increased attention given to students experiencing difficulties. Second, deeper conceptual understanding was facilitated through hands-on activities and dialogic interaction. Unlike passive learning, this approach allowed students to internalize concepts through practice, discussion, and reflection. Third, the use of formative assessment—implemented through structured guidance, individual practice, and step-by-step evaluation—enhanced student readiness and confidence in facing the final evaluation of the cycle.

The Direct Instruction model proved effective in increasing learning activity and classroom engagement. Through clear explanations, demonstrations, and guided practice, students were able to grasp concepts that would have been difficult to understand through lecture alone. As a result, the

learning environment became more conducive and active, supported by the teacher's improved instructional mastery (Yanti, 2019).

Reflection carried out after Cycle II confirmed the positive impact of the Direct Instruction model when integrated with local cultural values, specifically *Maja Labo Dahu*. Three major insights emerged from this reflection: (1) the increased effectiveness of the instructional method, (2) the significant role of student motivation and participation, and (3) the meaningful contribution of cultural integration in enriching the learning experience. These findings highlight the importance of contextually relevant pedagogy in improving both student performance and engagement.

Indicators of successful implementation of the Direct Instruction model were clearly observed. Students appeared more enthusiastic and attentive during lessons, completing assignments on time with minimal resistance. Additionally, students demonstrated a heightened curiosity, actively asking questions and engaging in discussions with confidence. This behavioral change suggests that students no longer feared participating in the learning process. Most notably, there was a marked improvement in learning outcomes across the two cycles, further confirming the model's effectiveness (Urath, 2023).

Findings III

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Direct Instruction model integrated with the local cultural values of *Maja Labo Dahu* had a significant impact on improving both student learning activities and outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Beyond academic gains, the integration of cultural values also contributed meaningfully to character development, particularly in fostering honesty, respect, obedience, and mutual appreciation among students.

The cultural philosophy of *Maja Labo Dahu*, rooted in the Bima (Dou Mbojo) community, is centered on two fundamental values: *maja* (shame to do wrong) and *labo dahu* (fear of consequences or divine retribution). These values are deeply connected to both social morality (*hablun minannas*) and spiritual obedience (*hablun minallah*). In the context of Islamic education, these cultural principles align closely with the moral teachings promoted in the curriculum, such as *"Honest People are Loved by Allah," "Respect and Obedience to Parents and Teachers,"* and *"The Beauty of Mutual Respect."* When integrated into the learning process, these values support the formation of students' moral identity, encouraging them to apply ethical behavior in both academic and social contexts.

From an instructional perspective, the Direct Instruction model provided a structured and clear framework that facilitated student understanding through explicit teaching, demonstration, guided practice, and regular feedback. The model's clarity and step-by-step procedures were especially beneficial for students who previously struggled to understand abstract or theoretical content. This was evident in student and teacher interviews, which revealed that prior to the intervention, students often found lessons confusing and disengaging. In contrast, after the implementation of the culturally integrated Direct Instruction model, students reported greater clarity, increased enthusiasm, and a more active role in learning.

Empirical data from classroom implementation further supports these observations. In the pre-cycle phase, student learning outcomes were relatively low, with an average score of 55 and minimal participation. In Cycle I, after the initial implementation of the model, student activity began to improve, though mastery learning was only achieved by 60% of the class. However, by Cycle II, significant progress was evident: student participation reached 85%, and classical completeness rose to 86.67%. According to teacher reflections, this improvement was not only academic but also behavioral—students became more disciplined, cooperative, and respectful in the classroom setting.

These findings are consistent with previous research showing that culturally relevant pedagogy—when appropriately integrated—can enhance motivation and deepen student engagement by making learning more meaningful and contextually grounded (Gaol & Simarmata, 2019; Armadi & Astuti, 2018). Culturally grounded learning helps students connect educational content to real-life experiences, which increases their sense of relevance and ownership over the learning process. When students

recognize their own values and cultural identities within classroom materials and activities, they are more likely to engage deeply and perform better academically.

Furthermore, the use of culturally contextualized learning models serves a dual function: improving educational outcomes while preserving and promoting local wisdom. As this study demonstrates, schools not only act as institutions for academic instruction but also as spaces for nurturing cultural identity and character development. Integrating *Maja Labo Dahu* into the curriculum helped reinforce the students' moral awareness and pride in their cultural heritage, leading to improved behavior and increased academic motivation.

In sum, the success of this instructional intervention is attributed to three main factors: (1) the effectiveness of the Direct Instruction model in providing structured and accessible learning, (2) the role of student motivation and active participation in driving engagement, and (3) the positive influence of culturally integrated content in supporting both cognitive and character development. These findings align with broader educational goals of holistic development, where academic performance is accompanied by strong moral and cultural grounding (Hermawansyah, 2019; Muhammad Syazali, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Direct Instruction model integrated with the local cultural values of *Maja Labo Dahu* effectively improved both student learning activities and learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education. Prior to the intervention, student engagement was relatively low, as reflected in limited participation and interaction, with learning activity levels reaching only 61.67% and 63.33% during the initial cycle. Following the systematic application and refinement of the model across two cycles, student participation increased substantially, indicating that structured instruction combined with culturally relevant content can enhance student motivation and involvement. In terms of academic achievement, student learning outcomes also showed significant improvement, rising from an average pretest score of 55 to 69.7 in Cycle I, and further increasing to 80.78 in Cycle II, with classical completeness reaching 86.67%. These results demonstrate that clear instructional procedures, reinforced practice, discussion, and formative evaluation play a crucial role in supporting student mastery. Despite these positive findings, this study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single school context, which may restrict the generalizability of the results. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, explore cross-cultural applications of culturally integrated Direct Instruction models, and examine their long-term impact on both academic achievement and character development.

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