

The Effectiveness of the Inside-Outside Circle Learning Model in Improving Students' Learning Motivation in Islamic Religious Education at Secondary Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Inside-Outside Circle (IOC) learning model in improving students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education at the junior secondary school level. This research employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design. The research sample consisted of 60 eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Senduro, divided into an experimental group (n=30) and a control group (n=30). The experimental group was taught using the IOC model, while the control group received conventional teaching methods. Data were collected through a Likert-scale learning motivation questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability ($\alpha=0.87$). Data analysis used a paired sample t-test and an independent sample t-test with a significance level of 5%. The results showed that the experimental group experienced an increase in motivation scores from 62.10 to 79.43, while the control group increased from 61.87 to 66.21. Statistical tests indicated a significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.05$) with an effect size of 1.25 (large category). These findings indicate that the IOC model is effective in increasing students' learning motivation through structured interaction and active participation. This study recommends the implementation of the IOC model as an alternative for more interactive learning strategies in Islamic religious education..

Keywords: Inside-Outside Circle, learning motivation, Islamic Religious Education, cooperative learning, junior secondary school.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas model pembelajaran Inside-Outside Circle (IOC) dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa pada mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari 60 siswa kelas VIII SMPN 1 Senduro yang dibagi menjadi kelompok eksperimen (n=30) dan kelompok kontrol (n=30). Kelompok eksperimen diajarkan menggunakan model IOC, sedangkan kelompok kontrol menggunakan metode konvensional. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner motivasi belajar berbasis skala Likert yang telah diuji validitas dan reliabilitasnya ($\alpha=0,87$). Analisis data menggunakan paired sample t-test dan independent sample t-test dengan tingkat signifikansi 5%. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kelompok eksperimen mengalami peningkatan skor motivasi belajar dari 62,10 menjadi 79,43, sedangkan kelompok kontrol meningkat dari 61,87 menjadi 66,21. Uji statistik menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua

kelompok ($p < 0,05$) dengan effect size sebesar 1,25 (kategori besar). Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa model IOC efektif dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa melalui interaksi terstruktur dan partisipasi aktif. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penerapan model IOC sebagai alternatif strategi pembelajaran yang lebih interaktif dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam.

Kata Kunci: Inside-Outside Circle, motivasi belajar, Pendidikan Agama Islam, pembelajaran kooperatif, sekolah menengah pertama

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Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays an essential role in shaping students' moral character, ethical awareness, and spiritual development (Arif et al., 2025; Irpan & Sain, 2024). In addition to providing knowledge about Islamic teachings, this subject is intended to cultivate values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social awareness that guide students in their daily behavior. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education is not only oriented toward cognitive achievement but also toward the internalization of moral and spiritual values as part of character education in formal schooling (Hasanah, 2019) (Umam & Hasan, 2025). The achievement of these objectives requires learning strategies that are able to actively involve students in the learning process so that the values taught can be understood and practiced meaningfully.

However, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education at the secondary school level still faces several pedagogical challenges (Ya' cub et al., 2026). In many classrooms, learning activities are often dominated by teacher-centered approaches such as lecturing, note-taking, and memorization (Afif & Etikoh, 2023; Azizah & Usman, 2023; Nahdliyah & Naelasari, 2024). Although these methods may help teachers deliver material efficiently, they often provide limited opportunities for students to interact, discuss, and express their ideas. As a result, students may become passive during the learning process and show low enthusiasm toward classroom activities. This condition may affect students' learning motivation, which is an important factor in determining the success of the learning process.

Learning motivation refers to the internal drive that encourages students to participate actively in learning activities and persist in achieving academic goals (Winkel, 2009). Students with high learning motivation tend to pay more attention during lessons, participate in discussions, and complete learning tasks with greater responsibility. Conversely, students with low motivation often show limited participation, lack of interest in learning materials, and minimal involvement in classroom interaction. Therefore, increasing students' motivation is one of the key

factors in improving the quality of learning, including in Islamic Religious Education.

Preliminary observations conducted by the researcher at SMPN 1 Senduro indicated that students' participation during Islamic Religious Education lessons was relatively low. Based on classroom observations in grade VIII, the learning process was mostly dominated by teacher explanations, while only a small number of students actively asked questions or contributed to discussions. In one observed class consisting of 30 students, fewer than half of the students were actively involved during the lesson. Most students tended to listen passively and only responded when directly asked by the teacher.

In addition, informal interviews with several students revealed that they often perceived Islamic Religious Education learning as repetitive and less interactive, especially when the teacher used conventional lecture-based methods. Some students stated that they preferred learning activities that allowed them to discuss, exchange opinions, and work with their peers. These findings indicate that students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education at SMPN 1 Senduro still needs improvement, particularly in terms of classroom participation and engagement. Therefore, instructional strategies that encourage active student involvement are needed to create a more interactive learning environment.

One instructional strategy that has the potential to increase student participation and motivation is the Inside-Outside Circle (IOC) learning model (Hartini et al., 2018). The IOC model is a cooperative learning technique that encourages students to interact actively through structured pair discussions arranged in inner and outer circle formations (Kagan, 2009; Fitriana et al., 2025). In this model, students partner and systematically exchange ideas, allowing each student to participate in the learning process (Sakdiyah et al., 2024). Such structured interaction can help create a more dynamic classroom atmosphere and provide equal opportunities for students to express their opinions.

Cooperative learning strategies such as IOC are considered effective in increasing students' motivation because they involve communication, collaboration, and active participation (Wahyudi et al., 2024). Through peer interaction, students are encouraged not only to understand the material but also to explain concepts, respond to others' ideas, and build knowledge together. These activities may increase students' interest in learning and reduce boredom during classroom instruction. Previous studies have shown that the IOC learning model can improve students' motivation and learning outcomes in various subjects. The implementation of the IOC model has been proven to significantly increase students' learning motivation and participation (Lase, 2023). Similarly, the use of IOC in language learning has been shown to enhance students' interaction and engagement

in classroom activities (Tiwery, 2019). These findings indicate that cooperative learning strategies can support more student-centered learning..

However, although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the IOC model in several academic subjects, research examining its application in Islamic Religious Education is still limited. Learning in Islamic Religious Education has unique characteristics because it not only emphasizes cognitive understanding but also involves the internalization of moral, ethical, and spiritual values. The learning process therefore requires instructional approaches that allow students to reflect, discuss, and interact actively so that the values taught can be understood deeply. Because of these characteristics, the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies such as IOC in Islamic Religious Education cannot be assumed to be the same as in other subjects and needs to be examined specifically.

In addition, most previous studies focused mainly on learning outcomes, while relatively few studies analyzed the influence of the IOC learning model on students' learning motivation, especially in the context of Islamic Religious Education at the secondary school level. Considering that motivation plays an important role in supporting meaningful learning, it is necessary to investigate how the implementation of the IOC model affects students' motivation in Islamic Religious Education learning.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Inside-Outside Circle learning model in improving students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education at the secondary school level, particularly at SMPN 1 Senduro. Specifically, this study seeks to analyze the effect of implementing the IOC learning model on students' participation, enthusiasm, and engagement during Islamic Religious Education lessons.

The findings of this study are expected to provide several contributions. Practically, the results may offer Islamic Religious Education teachers an alternative instructional strategy that can create a more interactive and student-centered learning environment. Academically, this study may contribute to the development of research on cooperative learning strategies in religious education contexts. In addition, the results may serve as a reference for future studies in developing innovative learning models that can increase students' motivation and participation in value-based subjects.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental method. The research design applied was the non-equivalent control group design, which involved two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received instruction using the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC)

learning model, whereas the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods commonly applied in the classroom. This design was chosen because the researcher could not randomly assign individual students to groups, as the classes had already been formed by the school administration.

The population of this study consisted of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Senduro. The sample was selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria, namely that the selected classes had similar academic backgrounds, were taught by the same Islamic Religious Education teacher, and had comparable learning schedules. Two intact classes were chosen as research samples. Class VIII A was assigned as the experimental group, while class VIII B was assigned as the control group. The total number of participants was 60 students, divided equally into two groups: 30 students in the experimental group and 30 students in the control group. Before the treatment was conducted, both groups were given a pretest to measure the initial level of students' learning motivation. The pretest scores were analyzed to determine whether there were significant differences between the two groups before the intervention. The result of the pretest analysis showed that the two classes had relatively similar levels of motivation, indicating that both groups were comparable at the beginning of the study.

The data collected were quantitative data concerning students' learning motivation. Data were gathered using a questionnaire based on a Likert scale as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire was developed based on motivation indicators proposed (Winkel, 2009), which include attention during learning, participation in classroom activities, persistence in completing tasks, interest in learning materials, and enthusiasm in following lessons. The instrument consisted of 20 statements with five response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Prior to its implementation, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Content validity was evaluated by two experts in Islamic Religious Education and educational psychology. A pilot test was conducted with students outside the research sample, and the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha produced a coefficient of 0.87, indicating that the questionnaire had high reliability and was suitable for measuring students' learning motivation.

The questionnaire items were constructed based on theoretical indicators of learning motivation, including attention, participation, persistence, interest, and enthusiasm during learning activities. Each statement was designed to represent both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of motivation in the context of Islamic Religious Education. Several items measured students' willingness to participate in discussion, their effort in completing tasks, and their level of interest when the teacher used interactive learning activities.

To ensure the appropriateness of the instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in Islamic Religious Education and educational psychology. Minor revisions were made to improve the clarity of wording and to ensure that the statements were suitable for the students' level of understanding. The revised instrument was then tested outside the research sample before being used in the main study, and the results confirmed that the questionnaire could be used to measure students' learning motivation reliably.

The data collection procedure consisted of several stages. First, a pretest was administered to measure the initial level of students' learning motivation in both groups. Second, the learning intervention was conducted over four instructional meetings. The experimental group was taught using the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC) learning model, while the control group received instruction using conventional teaching methods, such as lecturing, question-answer sessions, and individual assignments, which are commonly used in Islamic Religious Education classes at the school.

The implementation of the IOC learning model followed the cooperative learning procedure proposed (Kagan, 2009). At each meeting, the teacher explained the learning objectives and provided a brief introduction to the material. Students were then divided into two groups forming an inner circle and an outer circle. Each student in the inner circle faced a partner in the outer circle, and the teacher provided discussion questions related to the lesson. Students discussed the questions with their partners for a limited time, after which students in the outer circle rotated to meet new partners. This activity was repeated several times so that students could exchange ideas with different classmates. At the end of each meeting, the teacher concluded the lesson and provided feedback.

Both the experimental and control groups were taught by the same Islamic Religious Education teacher to control for teacher-related differences. The researcher also observed each meeting to ensure that the learning procedures were implemented consistently according to the planned lesson scenario. This step was conducted to maintain the fidelity of implementation during the experiment. After the four meetings of treatment, a posttest was administered to both groups using the same questionnaire to measure students' learning motivation after the intervention. The use of pretest and posttest allowed the researcher to examine changes in motivation within each group as well as differences between groups.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A paired sample t-test was used to determine whether there were significant changes in students' motivation within each group between the pretest and posttest scores. In addition, an independent sample t-test was used to compare the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups to determine whether the IOC

learning model produced a significantly higher level of learning motivation than conventional teaching methods. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 25, with a significance level of 5% ($p < 0.05$). In interpreting the data, the analysis considered both differences between groups and changes within each group. The pretest scores were examined to ensure that the experimental and control groups had relatively similar levels of motivation before the treatment was given. This step was necessary so that the improvement observed after the intervention could be interpreted as the effect of the learning model rather than the result of initial differences between classes.

Although more complex statistical techniques could be applied, the combination of baseline comparison, paired sample analysis, and independent sample comparison was considered sufficient to describe the effect of the treatment within the limitations of the quasi-experimental design used in this study. In the implementation of this quasi-experimental research using a non-equivalent control group design, two groups were involved: the experimental group, which received the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC) learning model, and the control group, which continued to receive conventional instruction. The research procedure is illustrated in the following flowchart.

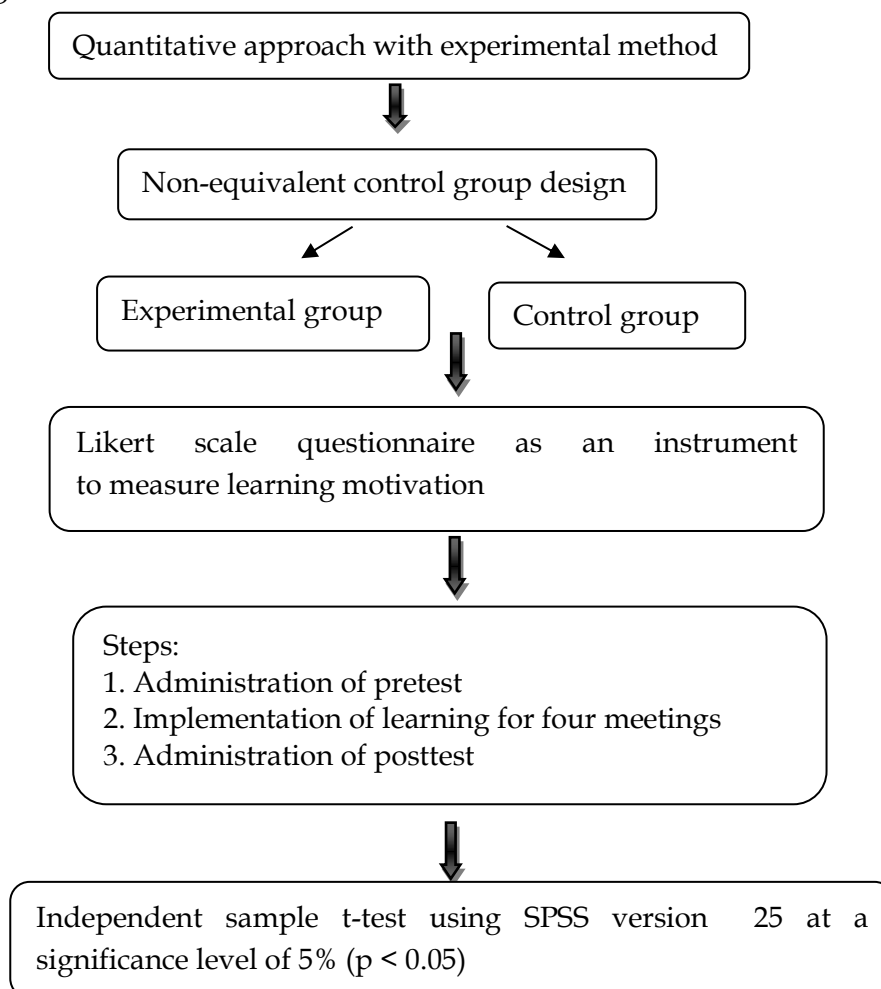


Figure 3.1 flowchart

Source: Creswell (2014)

Figure 3.1 illustrates that the research procedure was designed in a systematic and logical sequence, beginning with the identification of the research groups, followed by the pretest, treatment, posttest, and data analysis. The visualization demonstrates that the experimental process was conducted comparatively between two groups with a clear control structure in order to examine the effect of the Inside-Outside-Circle learning model on students' learning motivation. Therefore, this figure strengthens the methodological clarity and validity of the research design.

Results and Discussion

Results

This study aimed to identify the extent to which the implementation of the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC) learning model influences students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education at the junior secondary school level. The analysis was conducted using pretest and posttest data obtained from the learning motivation questionnaire administered to both the experimental and control groups. At the initial stage (pretest), the average score of students' learning motivation in the experimental group was 62.10, while the control group showed an average score of 61.87. An independent sample t-test conducted on the pretest scores showed that the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the experimental and control groups had comparable levels of motivation before the treatment. This result confirms that the two groups were equivalent at baseline and suitable for comparison in the experimental study.

After the treatment, the experimental group that received instruction using the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC) learning model showed an increase in the average motivation score to 79.43. Meanwhile, the control group, which received conventional teaching methods, showed a smaller increase, with a posttest mean score of 66.21. A paired sample t-test was conducted to examine changes within each group. The results showed that the increase in motivation in the experimental group was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), while the control group also showed a significant but smaller improvement.

To examine differences between groups after the intervention, an independent sample t-test was conducted on the posttest scores. The analysis showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that there was a statistically significant difference in learning motivation between students who were taught using the IOC learning model and those who received conventional instruction.

Table 1. The Mean Scores of Students' Learning Motivation in Pretest and Posttest

(Model Inside-Outside-Circle dan Model Konvensional)

Kelompok	N	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Selisih (Δ)	Std. Deviation
Eksperimen (IOC)	30	62.10	79.43	17.33	5.42
Kontrol (Konvensional)	30	61.87	66.21	4.34	4.97

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Notes:

N: Number of participants

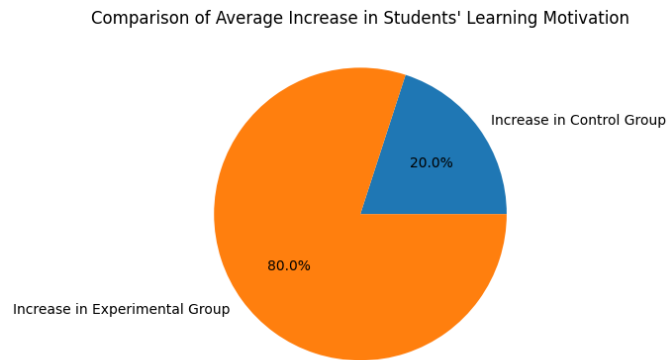
Mean: Average score of students' learning motivation

Δ (Difference): The difference between the posttest and pretest scores

Std. Deviation: The standard deviation of each group

Although the difference in gain scores between the two groups appears large, the interpretation of improvement was not based solely on gain comparison. To evaluate the practical significance of the difference, the effect size was calculated using Cohen's *d* based on the posttest scores. The result showed an effect size of 1.25, which can be categorized as a large effect. This indicates that the difference between the experimental and control groups is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. The interpretation of the results was not based solely on the difference in gain scores. The similarity of the pretest results indicates that the two groups started from comparable levels of motivation. Therefore, the higher posttest score in the experimental group, supported by the within-group improvement shown in the paired test, suggests that the learning activities implemented during the intervention contributed to the increase in motivation. The consistency of these findings strengthens the conclusion that the observed difference was related to the learning model used during the experiment.

In addition, the comparison of pretest and posttest results indicates that both groups experienced improvement over time, but the increase in the experimental group was substantially higher. This pattern suggests that the learning model used during the intervention may have contributed to the difference in motivation levels. However, the interpretation of the results was based on both within-group changes and between-group differences to ensure that the conclusion was supported by appropriate statistical evidence.



The graph shows that the experimental group demonstrated a greater increase in learning motivation compared to the control group. This finding is consistent with the statistical analysis, which indicates that the use of the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC) learning model is associated with higher levels of students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education at the secondary school level. Nevertheless, the conclusion is based on the combination of baseline equivalence testing, within-group analysis, and between-group comparison to provide a more accurate interpretation of the experimental results.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC) learning model was associated with a higher increase in students' learning motivation compared to conventional teaching methods. However, the discussion of these findings needs to go beyond simply stating that the IOC model is effective. It is important to explain the pedagogical and psychological mechanisms that may underlie the observed improvement in motivation.

From the perspective of cooperative learning theory, the IOC model promotes active engagement through structured peer interaction. According to (Kagan, 2009), cooperative learning activities increase students' motivation because they provide opportunities for participation, social support, and immediate feedback from peers. In the IOC model, students are required to move, interact with different partners, and exchange ideas repeatedly. These activities may stimulate attention and reduce monotony, which in turn can enhance intrinsic motivation. From a psychological perspective, such interaction supports the basic learning needs described in motivation theory, including the need for relatedness, competence, and active involvement in the learning process. When students feel that they are actively participating rather than passively listening, their interest and enthusiasm for learning are more likely to increase.

The findings of this study are in line with previous research showing that cooperative learning strategies can improve students' affective outcomes, including

motivation (Huda, 2014). However, compared to earlier studies, the present research specifically examined the use of cooperative learning in the context of Islamic Religious Education. Learning in this subject often emphasizes understanding of values and attitudes, which may benefit from interactive discussion rather than one-way explanation. The IOC model allows students to express opinions, ask questions, and respond to peers, which may help them connect the learning material with personal experiences. This characteristic may explain why the experimental group showed a greater increase in motivation compared to the control group.

Nevertheless, the results also show that the control group experienced a moderate increase in motivation, although the improvement was smaller than in the experimental group. This finding suggests that the increase in motivation cannot be attributed solely to the IOC model. Several factors may explain why the control group also improved. First, the use of pretest and posttest may have increased students' awareness of the learning objectives, which could influence their motivation regardless of the teaching method. Second, students may show increased motivation simply because they are involved in a research activity, a phenomenon often referred to as the Hawthorne effect. Third, teacher enthusiasm during the experimental period may influence students' engagement in both groups, especially since the same teacher taught the experimental and control classes.

In addition, the standard deviation values in both groups indicate that students did not respond uniformly to the intervention. Some students showed very high improvement, while others changed only slightly. This variability suggests that the effectiveness of the IOC model may depend on individual differences such as prior motivation, learning preferences, or social confidence. Therefore, although the average score increased significantly, the model may not have the same impact on all students.

Another point that needs to be considered is the comparison between the IOC model and what was described as conventional teaching. In this study, conventional teaching consisted mainly of lecturing, question-answer sessions, and individual assignments, which are commonly used in Islamic Religious Education classes at the school. Because these methods provide fewer opportunities for peer interaction, the difference in motivation may partly reflect the contrast between interactive and non-interactive learning rather than the specific superiority of the IOC model itself. Future studies should compare IOC with other active learning strategies to determine whether the effect is unique to this model.

The increase in students' motivation in the experimental group can also be explained from the perspective of active learning theory. Learning activities that involve interaction, movement, and communication tend to maintain students' attention and reduce the feeling of boredom during the lesson. In the IOC model,

students are required to interact with different partners and respond to discussion questions repeatedly. Such activities create a more dynamic learning situation that encourages students to stay involved in the learning process.

From the viewpoint of motivation theory, students are more likely to show positive learning behavior when they feel involved, capable, and connected with others. The structure of the IOC model allows students to express their ideas, listen to their classmates, and receive immediate responses, which may support the development of interest and enthusiasm during the lesson (Wahyudi et al., 2024).

This study also has several methodological limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, consisting of only four meetings. Such a short period may not be sufficient to fully evaluate the long-term effectiveness of a teaching model. The observed improvement in motivation may reflect a novelty effect, where students become more interested simply because the learning method is new and different from their usual experience. Longer experimental periods are needed to determine whether the increase in motivation can be maintained over time.

Second, although the pretest results indicated that the two groups had similar initial motivation levels, the analysis was limited to basic statistical comparisons. A more rigorous design, such as mixed-design ANOVA or ANCOVA using pretest scores as a covariate, would provide stronger evidence of the interaction between teaching method and time. Without this type of analysis, the conclusion that the IOC model caused greater improvement should be interpreted with caution.

Third, the sample size in this study was relatively small and involved only one school. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to all Islamic Religious Education contexts. Differences in school culture, teacher style, and student characteristics may influence the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies.

Despite these limitations, the findings suggest that interactive cooperative learning approaches such as the IOC model have the potential to enhance students' motivation in Islamic Religious Education (Dangchamroon, 2024). The results highlight the importance of designing learning activities that encourage participation, discussion, and collaboration rather than relying solely on teacher-centered instruction. For Islamic Religious Education teachers (Ayumi & Nasution, 2025; Hasan & Aziz, 2023), the IOC model may serve as one alternative strategy to create a more engaging classroom environment, although its effectiveness should be further examined through longer and more rigorous experimental studies (Murniati et al., 2025).

Another possible explanation for the increase in motivation is related to the variation of learning activities experienced by the students. When students are accustomed to teacher-centered instruction, the introduction of a more interactive

model may create a new learning atmosphere that feels more interesting. This situation may lead to higher enthusiasm during the lesson, especially when the activities require students to move, communicate, and cooperate with their classmates. For this reason, the results of this study should be interpreted carefully. The improvement in motivation may not only be caused by the characteristics of the IOC model itself, but also by the change in learning experience compared to the usual classroom practice. Further research with longer duration and different learning contexts is needed to examine whether the increase in motivation can be maintained over time.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Inside-Outside-Circle (IOC) learning model has a significant effect on improving students' learning motivation in the subject of Islamic Religious Education at the secondary school level. The higher average learning motivation score of students in the experimental group compared to the control group indicates that this approach is effective in creating a more interactive and collaborative learning experience.

The IOC model has been proven to encourage students' active participation in the learning process, strengthen their understanding of the material through discussion and exchange of ideas, and build a more positive and motivating classroom atmosphere. Based on these findings, Islamic Religious Education teachers are recommended to adopt the IOC model as an innovative alternative learning strategy. Furthermore, future research is expected to expand the implementation of this model to other subjects and different levels of education in order to examine its effectiveness more comprehensively.

The findings of this study indicate that the selection of an appropriate learning model plays an important role in creating a more engaging learning environment in Islamic Religious Education. Because this subject is closely related to values, attitudes, and student participation, learning activities that encourage discussion and interaction may be more effective than methods that rely mainly on explanation. The Inside-Outside-Circle learning model provides opportunities for students to be actively involved in the learning process through structured interaction with their classmates. This situation may help students feel more interested and motivated during the lesson. Even though the results of this study show a positive effect, further research with larger samples and longer implementation is needed so that the effectiveness of the model can be examined more comprehensively in different educational settings.

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