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The Use of Problem Posing in Enhancing Understanding of Christian Religious Education at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the Problem Posing approach in enhancing students' understanding of Christian Religious Education at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari. The research employs the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, conducted in two learning cycles. The subjects of the study were 28 fifth-grade students. Data collection was carried out using several techniques, including learning achievement tests to measure students' understanding, observations of students' activities during the learning process, and interviews to gain a deeper insight into students' responses to the applied approach. The results of the study indicate a significant improvement in students' understanding of Christian Religious Education material after the implementation of the Problem Posing approach. In the first cycle, the classical learning mastery rate reached 67.85%, while in the second cycle, it increased to 89.28%. This improvement demonstrates that the Problem Posing approach effectively encourages students to be more active in understanding and exploring the taught material. Furthermore, students' engagement in the learning process also increased, as evidenced by their ability to formulate meaningful questions and solve problems relevant to everyday life. The Problem Posing approach is not only effective in improving conceptual understanding but also in fostering critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills. These skills are highly relevant to the Christian values that form the foundation of religious education, such as honesty, responsibility, and care for others. Thus, this approach contributes positively to the Christian Religious Education learning process, both cognitively and affectively.

Keywords: *Problem Posing, Christian Religious Education, conceptual understanding, elementary school.*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education at the elementary school level plays a highly important and strategic role in shaping the foundation of children's character and spirituality from an early age**.** This education is not merely intended to transfer doctrinal knowledge of the Christian faith but also aims to cultivate a way of life grounded in Christian values.

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According to Groome (2011), Christian Religious Education instruction should integrate cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions so that students not only understand the teachings of faith theoretically but are also able to embody these values in their daily lives. Therefore, the instructional methods employed in Christian Religious Education must be capable of stimulating active student participation, encouraging reflective thinking, and fostering a genuine commitment to faith. Nevertheless, the reality in the field still presents various challenges. Based on preliminary observations conducted at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari, Christian Religious Education instruction tends to be one-directional and dominated by teacher-centered lectures. The teacher remains the sole source of information, while students act merely as passive recipients. This situation has led to low levels of student engagement in the learning process, ultimately resulting in limited comprehension of the subject matter. In fact, effective religious education requires a contextual, dialogical, and participatory approach in which students can relate the teachings of faith to the realities of their lives.

This condition is reflected in the results of the odd-semester assessment for Grade V Christian Religious Education in the 2023/2024 academic year at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari. Data indicate that the average student score reached only 65.4, with a classical mastery rate of 53.57%. These figures fall below the school's established minimum mastery criterion of 70. Findings from interviews with the Christian Religious Education teacher further reveal that many students struggle to grasp abstract concepts such as grace, forgiveness, and the kingdom of God. Moreover, they are unable to connect these teachings with their daily experiences at home, in school, or within their social environments. To address these issues, an instructional approach is needed that can stimulate student interest and active participation in the learning process. One approach considered relevant and potentially effective for Christian Religious Education instruction is the Problem Posing approach. This strategy emphasizes student involvement in formulating problems, questions, and critical reflections based on real-life situations or experiences. Silver (1994) asserts that Problem Posing enables students to become active subjects in the learning process, as they are trained to think, question, and construct meaning independently. This aligns with the constructivist view of education, which highlights the importance of students' active roles in building their own knowledge.

Furthermore, Brown and Walter (2005) explain that the Problem Posing approach not only enhances students' creative and critical thinking skills but also fosters a positive disposition toward the learning process. In the context of Christian Religious Education, this approach is particularly relevant, as the Christian faith is rich with narratives, symbols, and parables that invite deep reflection. When students are encouraged to explore the meaning of biblical texts through self-formulated questions, they go beyond literal comprehension to relate moral and spiritual messages to their own life contexts. Consequently, learning becomes more meaningful, engaging, and transformative. Implementing Problem Posing also provides opportunities for students to cultivate Christian virtues such as empathy, love, and responsibility through discussion and collaborative problem-solving activities. For example, in studying the account of Jesus forgiving the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11), students may be prompted to formulate questions such as: *"Why did Jesus choose not to condemn the woman?"*, *"What can we learn about forgiveness?"*, or *"How can we apply the principle of forgiveness in our*

school life?" Such questions encourage students to reflect on faith-based values contextually and applicatively.

Given its numerous strengths, the implementation of the Problem Posing approach in elementary-level Christian Religious Education instruction warrants deeper investigation. This study is conducted as an effort to develop innovative, participatory, and contextual learning strategies for Christian Religious Education. The primary objectives are: (1) to describe the implementation of the Problem Posing approach in Grade V Christian Religious Education instruction at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari; (2) to analyze the extent to which this approach can enhance students' comprehension of Christian Religious Education content; and (3) to identify various factors influencing the effectiveness of this approach in the context of elementary-level Christian Religious Education learning.

It is expected that this research will produce a learning model that not only improves students' academic achievement but also fosters Christian attitudes and behaviors that reflect the internalization of faith in daily life. Furthermore, this study seeks to contribute to the development of contextual, relevant, and inspiring Christian Religious Education pedagogy capable of addressing the challenges of faith education in an increasingly complex and pluralistic era. Effective Christian Religious Education instruction will not only equip students with knowledge of the faith but also shape them into individuals with Christian character—ready to serve as the light and salt of the earth within society.

METHODS

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which comprises four main stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. This design enables the research to be conducted cyclically, allowing for ongoing evaluation and improvement in each cycle. In this study, two cycles were conducted, each consisting of three meetings, with the aim of improving students' understanding of Christian Religious Education through the Problem Posing approach.

The research subjects were 28 fifth-grade students of Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari in the 2023/2024 academic year, comprising 15 boys and 13 girls. The study was carried out from September to November 2023. The selection of Grade V as the research subjects was based on the importance of fostering a deeper understanding of religion at this developmental stage and the high demand for instructional methods that could stimulate active student participation in the learning process.

Multiple instruments were used for data collection. First, a learning achievement test in the form of essay questions was designed to measure students' understanding of the Christian Religious Education material taught. Second, observation sheets were used to monitor teacher and student activities during the learning process, including peer interactions and student engagement in Problem Posing activities. Third, semi-structured interviews with students and the teacher were conducted to explore their perceptions of the Problem Posing approach in Christian Religious Education instruction. Fourth, field notes were used to document significant events during the learning process, including encountered challenges and achieved successes. Lastly, documentation of students' work—particularly the questions they formulated during Problem Posing activities—served as tangible evidence of their active engagement in learning.

The research procedure began with Cycle I, starting with the planning stage. In this stage, the teacher developed a Lesson Plan (RPP), prepared learning material on *"Love in the Family"*, and designed Problem Posing worksheets and evaluation instruments. The learning process followed the prepared RPP. The stages included an orientation phase, where students were introduced to the context or situation through a Bible story about family. In the exploration phase, students identified key elements of the situation. In the problem formulation phase, they were asked to develop questions based on the given situation. The discussion and elaboration phase involved small-group discussions of the questions formulated, while in the confirmation and reflection phase, the teacher provided feedback on the discussion outcomes, and students reflected on the learning process.

Observation was conducted to monitor teacher and student activities, particularly in terms of interaction and engagement in formulating questions and participating in discussions. After Cycle I, a reflection stage was carried out to analyze collected data—such as test results and observation records—in order to design improvements for the subsequent cycle.

In Cycle II, the procedure mirrored that of Cycle I but incorporated several refinements based on the reflection outcomes from the first cycle. The material for this cycle was *"Living with Gratitude in All Situations"*, with adjustments in the delivery method and Problem Posing techniques informed by the findings from Cycle I. These improvements were intended to address identified weaknesses and enhance student learning outcomes.

Data analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from the learning achievement tests were analyzed to calculate the mean scores and classical mastery percentages. Classical mastery was determined based on the number of students achieving the minimum score of 70, which is the school's Minimum Mastery Criterion. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed descriptively to illustrate the learning process as well as student and teacher perceptions of the Problem Posing approach. This analysis provided a clearer picture of the approach's influence on student understanding and engagement in learning.

The success criteria for this study were set at a minimum classical mastery rate of 80%, meaning that more than 80% of students must achieve a score of ≥ 70. In addition, student learning activities were required to meet a "good" qualification, measured by observing students' active participation in formulating questions and collaborating in group discussions. Accordingly, this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Problem Posing approach in improving Christian Religious Education understanding among Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari students, while also providing insights into the potential application of this method in elementary-level religious education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on preliminary observations, Christian Religious Education instruction in Grade V at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari remained predominantly lecture-based, accompanied by simple question–answer sessions. Students tended to be passive and showed limited engagement in the learning process. Pre-test results indicated an average score of 65.4, with a classical mastery rate of only 53.57% (15 out of 28 students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criterion).

In Cycle I, the implementation of the Problem Posing approach focused on the topic *"Love in the Family."* Students were divided into seven groups, each comprising four members, and were provided with Bible stories related to family (such as the story of Joseph and his brothers) as a context for question formulation. During the orientation stage, the teacher presented a short video on family dynamics and linked it to a biblical perspective. In the exploration stage, students identified key values from the story, after which they formulated questions based on the given situation. Examples of student-generated questions included: *"Why did Joseph forgive his brothers who had sold him into slavery?"*, *"How can we show love to family members who often annoy us?"*, and *"What does it mean to love as Jesus teaches within a family?"* In the discussion stage, students exchanged questions between groups and attempted to answer them, while in the confirmation stage, the teacher provided clarification and reinforcement of essential concepts.

The evaluation results for Cycle I indicated an improvement in student understanding, with the average score increasing to 73.2 and the classical mastery rate reaching 67.85% (19 out of 28 students meeting the minimum mastery criterion). Although this reflected progress compared to the initial condition, it had not yet met the predetermined success criteria. Observation of student activities revealed that 64.3% actively participated in group discussions, 57.1% were able to formulate relevant questions, 60.7% could relate the material to daily experiences, and 53.6% expressed opinions during class discussions. Several challenges emerged in the application of the Problem Posing approach: some students still struggled to formulate meaningful and in-depth questions; time allocation for problem formulation and discussion was insufficient; certain groups failed to explicitly connect their questions to Christian values; and some students dominated group activities. In response, the improvement plan for Cycle II included providing clearer examples and guidance in question formulation, extending time allocation for problem formulation and discussion, supplying more structured worksheets to facilitate the integration of Christian values, and restructuring groups to ensure more balanced participation.

In Cycle II, the instruction focused on the topic *"Living with Gratitude in All Situations."* The teacher began by reading the story of Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:16–40) and asked students to identify the values that could be drawn from it. Considering the reflections from Cycle I, the teacher provided concrete examples of how to formulate meaningful questions using Bloom's Taxonomy. Students were also given more structured worksheets to support the question formulation process. Examples of student-generated questions in Cycle II included: *"How could Paul and Silas remain grateful even in prison? What can we learn from their attitude?"*, *"What is the true meaning of gratitude according to the Bible? How can we be grateful when facing problems at school?"*, and *"Why did God allow good people like Paul and Silas to be imprisoned? How does this teach us about God's purposes in hardship?"* The questions formulated in Cycle II demonstrated higher quality than those in Cycle I, with a greater proportion targeting higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and creation.

The evaluation results for Cycle II revealed a significant improvement, with the average score rising to 81.7 and the classical mastery rate increasing to 89.28% (25 out of 28 students meeting the minimum mastery criterion), thereby surpassing the established success criteria. Observation of student activities in Cycle II showed notable increases: 85.7% actively participated in group discussions, 78.6% formulated relevant and

meaningful questions, 82.1% related the material to everyday experiences, and 75.0% expressed opinions during class discussions. The implementation of the Problem Posing approach in Cycle II was more effective than in Cycle I, as students demonstrated enhanced ability to generate meaningful questions, connect them to Christian values, and participate actively in the learning process.

Comparison of Results Across Cycles

Based on the findings, there was a significant improvement across various aspects from the initial condition to Cycle II:

Table 1. Comparison Result

Aspect	Initial Condition	Cycle I	Cycle II
Average Score	65.4	73.2	81.7
Classical Mastery Level	53.57%	67.85%	89.28%
Active Participation in Discussions	42.9%	64.3%	85.7%
Ability to Formulate Questions	–	57.1%	78.6%
Ability to Relate Material	46.4%	60.7%	82.1%
Confidence in Expressing Opinions	39.3%	53.6%	75.0%

Implementation of the Problem Posing Approach in Christian Religious Education

The implementation of the Problem Posing approach in Christian Religious Education (CRE) at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari successfully transformed the learning paradigm from a teacher-centered to a student-centered model. Through the activity of formulating questions, students were encouraged to develop critical and reflective thinking skills regarding the Christian values being studied. These findings are consistent with Brown and Walter (2005), who assert that Problem Posing enriches students' learning experiences through the creation and formulation of problems. In the context of CRE, this approach enables students to explore faith-based values more deeply through questions they generate themselves. Furthermore, the Problem Posing method allows students to connect abstract CRE concepts to real-life experiences, aligning with Groome's (2011) emphasis on the importance of "sharing faith" through critical reflection on life experiences in the light of faith.

Enhancing Students' Understanding through Problem Posing

The results indicate a marked improvement in students' understanding of CRE material following the implementation of the Problem Posing approach. This improvement is evidenced by the increase in average test scores and classical mastery percentage from the initial condition to Cycle II. Several factors contribute to this enhancement. First, the process of formulating questions requires students to analyze the material more deeply. Second, group discussions provide opportunities for peer scaffolding. Third, responding to questions posed by other groups allows students to explore multiple perspectives on the content.

These findings support Christou et al. (2005), who found that Problem Posing activities can improve students' conceptual understanding through a more meaningful knowledge construction process. In the CRE context, this deeper understanding encompasses not

only cognitive aspects but also affective and spiritual dimensions, as reflected in students' ability to connect Christian values to daily life.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Problem Posing

Several factors were identified as influencing the effectiveness of Problem Posing in CRE instruction:

1. Quality of the stimulus. The use of relevant and engaging Bible stories as a context for question formulation significantly affected the quality of students' questions. This supports English's (1997) view on the importance of rich contexts in facilitating Problem Posing.
2. Teacher scaffolding. In Cycle II, providing clear examples and guidance for question formulation using Bloom's taxonomy proved effective in improving the quality of student-generated questions, highlighting the teacher's critical role in facilitating the process, particularly in the early stages.
3. Group dynamics. Positive interaction and balanced participation within groups significantly influenced the quality of the questions produced.
4. Relevance to students' experiences. Questions connected to students' personal experiences were more meaningful and stimulated deeper discussion, aligning with Parrett and Kang's (2009) emphasis on contextualizing religious education by linking faith values to real-life contexts.

Pedagogical Implications

This study offers several pedagogical implications for CRE instruction at the elementary school level Developing questioning skills**,** problem Posing can be regularly integrated into CRE lessons to foster students' ability to ask meaningful questions—an essential skill within the Christian tradition that values inquiry and deepening of faith. Contextualizing CRE learning**,** by formulating their own questions, students can contextualize Christian values in their lives, supporting the goal of CRE to cultivate transformative and relevant faith. Fostering reflective learning communities, problem Posing encourages the creation of reflective learning communities where students learn from one another through diverse questions and perspectives, aligning with the communal dimension of Christian faith formation. Differentiated instruction, this approach allows differentiation according to students' cognitive and spiritual development, enabling each learner to formulate questions that reflect their abilities and interests.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Problem Posing approach in CRE at Primary School Tamansiswa Bangunsari was successfully implemented through the following stages: orientation, exploration, problem formulation, discussion and elaboration, and confirmation and reflection. The process effectively shifted the paradigm from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. The emphasis on student participation and critical thinking led to increased engagement, enabling learners to take an active role in constructing their understanding of CRE material. The approach proved effective in improving students' understanding, as demonstrated by the increase in average scores from 65.4 initially to 81.7 in Cycle II, and the rise in classical mastery from 53.57% to 89.28%. These gains indicate that Problem Posing not only enhances engagement but also

fosters deeper comprehension by encouraging students to explore, pose meaningful questions, and solve problems relevant to their lives.
The effectiveness of Problem Posing was influenced by the quality of learning stimuli, teacher scaffolding, group dynamics, and the relevance of questions to students' personal experiences. High-quality stimuli, such as thought-provoking questions and real-life scenarios, stimulate curiosity and critical thinking. Teacher scaffolding, especially in the early stages, plays a key role in guiding students through the problem-solving process. Positive group dynamics encourage collaboration, while relevant questions make the learning experience more meaningful and applicable.
Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, CRE teachers may adopt Problem Posing as an alternative instructional strategy to enhance comprehension and active participation in elementary-level CRE. Second, in applying the approach, teachers should ensure that learning stimuli are thought-provoking and relevant, while also providing sufficient scaffolding to enable effective student engagement. Facilitating positive group dynamics is equally essential to create a collaborative environment where students feel comfortable sharing ideas and learning from one another.
Third, schools should support CRE teachers' professional development by providing opportunities such as workshops, seminars, or collaborative learning communities focusing on innovative strategies like Problem Posing to foster critical thinking and active learning in religious education. Future research could explore the application of Problem Posing in CRE across different grade levels and subject areas, as well as develop more comprehensive tools to measure its impact on multiple learning outcomes. Extending the research to investigate the long-term effects of Problem Posing on cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions would also provide valuable insights for improving educational practice in CRE and other disciplines.

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