



The Influence of the Discovery Learning Model in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation on the Learning Motivation of Grade X Students at SMA Negeri 1 Siborongborong

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of the Discovery Learning model on students' motivation in Christian Religious Education (CRE) and Character Formation at SMA Negeri 1 Siborongborong. CRE plays a dual role within the Indonesian curriculum by combining cognitive knowledge with spiritual and moral development. However, many students demonstrate low motivation, approaching the subject passively through memorization rather than reflective engagement. Grounded in constructivist theory, Discovery Learning emphasizes inquiry, problem-solving, and reflection, offering potential to foster deeper motivation and character growth. A quantitative quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group was employed. The sample consisted of 60 Grade X students divided into two groups: an experimental group taught using Discovery Learning and a control group receiving traditional lecture-based instruction. Data were collected using validated motivation questionnaires and classroom observations during a six-week intervention. Descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were used to analyze the results. Findings indicate that students in the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher motivation than those in the control group, with notable improvements in persistence, enthusiasm, curiosity, and responsibility. Observations confirmed greater participation, reflective questioning, and collaboration in the experimental group, illustrating the capacity of Discovery Learning to make biblical teaching more relevant and transformative. The study concludes that Discovery Learning positively impacts both academic engagement and character formation in CRE. While challenges such as time constraints and teacher readiness were identified, the model provides a promising pedagogical strategy for integrating faith, motivation, and holistic education.

Keywords: Discovery Learning Model, Christian Religious Education, Learning Motivation

INTRODUCTION

The national curriculum emphasizes that education must prepare students to become both academically capable and ethically responsible members of society. Christian Religious Education (CRE) occupies a unique position. Unlike secular subjects, CRE integrates spiritual formation with cognitive development, seeking to instill values such as faith, honesty, discipline, and responsibility that are deeply rooted in biblical principles (Sinaga, 2020). Thus, CRE serves not only as a body of knowledge but also as a transformative process that molds students' character and worldview. Despite its central role, many students demonstrate low levels of motivation in CRE classes. Motivation is widely recognized as one of the most decisive factors influencing learning outcomes. According to Sardiman (2016), motivation directs behavior, sustains effort, and enhances persistence in the face of challenges. When motivation is low, students tend to approach learning passively, engaging only at a surface level through memorization, without internalizing the moral and spiritual lessons intended. This condition is evident in many Indonesian schools where students often view religious subjects as theoretical, abstract, and less engaging compared to science or vocational disciplines (Nainggolan, 2019). Such tendencies undermine the holistic goals of Christian education, which are not limited to academic excellence but also include the formation of a Christ-centered character. The selection of appropriate learning models becomes critical. Teaching strategies that merely emphasize rote learning are insufficient for achieving the transformative goals of CRE. Instead, pedagogical approaches that encourage active participation, exploration, and reflection are needed to sustain motivation and foster meaningful learning. One such approach is the Discovery Learning model, which originates from constructivist learning theory. Jerome Bruner (1961), the pioneer of this model, argued that learners retain knowledge more effectively when they actively discover concepts rather than receive them passively from teachers. Discovery Learning emphasizes problem-solving, inquiry, and reflection, enabling students to build understanding through their own cognitive processes. Applied in CRE, Discovery Learning has the potential to bridge the gap between biblical teachings and students' lived experiences. Through guided exploration, students can relate Scripture to contemporary issues, personal challenges, and social realities, making religious knowledge more relevant and impactful. For example, rather than merely memorizing Bible verses, students might be encouraged to analyze how biblical principles apply to environmental stewardship or peer relationships. This process not only deepens cognitive understanding but also strengthens affective commitment to Christian values (Bruner, 1966; Lickona, 2013).

The urgency of implementing Discovery Learning is particularly evident in SMA Negeri 1 Siborongborong, where this study is situated. Preliminary classroom observations revealed that many students were passive in CRE learning activities. Teachers noted a reliance on memorization, minimal engagement in classroom discussions, and a lack of reflective thinking in connecting biblical knowledge to daily life. Such learning habits are inconsistent with the goals of character education, which require students to integrate faith into action (Manalu, 2021). The adoption of Discovery Learning is therefore expected to transform classroom dynamics, creating an interactive and student-centered

environment. Students will be encouraged to collaborate, question, and reflect, ultimately fostering both academic motivation and spiritual growth. Research on Discovery Learning in religious and character education contexts has shown promising results. Previous studies indicate that students exposed to Discovery Learning demonstrate higher motivation, better problem-solving skills, and greater retention of values compared to those taught with conventional methods (Hosnan, 2014; Sani, 2019). In line with this, the present study aims to explore how Discovery Learning can specifically enhance the learning motivation of Grade X students in the subject of Christian Religious Education and Character Formation. Based on these considerations, this research sets out to analyze the influence of the Discovery Learning model on students' motivation to learn CRE. More specifically, it examines how the method contributes not only to academic engagement but also to the cultivation of values central to Christian education. By doing so, the study seeks to offer empirical evidence and practical insights for educators striving to integrate effective pedagogy with character formation, thereby fulfilling the holistic mission of education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group structure. Such a design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to examine the impact of the Discovery Learning model on students' learning motivation while accounting for the realities of classroom settings where true randomization is difficult to implement (Sugiyono, 2019). The quasi-experimental approach made it possible to compare outcomes between the experimental and control groups, thereby assessing the effectiveness of the intervention in a structured yet practical manner. In this design, the experimental group was instructed using the Discovery Learning model, whereas the control group continued with conventional lecture-based methods that are typically used in Christian Religious Education (CRE) classes. The research population consisted of all Grade X students enrolled at SMA Negeri 1 Siborongborong during the 2024/2025 academic year. From this population, a purposive sample of 60 students was selected to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was chosen because it ensured the inclusion of students who shared comparable academic backgrounds and exposure to CRE, thereby minimizing potential confounding variables (Arikunto, 2016). The sample was divided into two groups of equal size: the experimental group, comprising 30 students who received instruction through the Discovery Learning model, and the control group, consisting of 30 students who continued learning through traditional teacher-centered instruction. This division provided a balanced basis for comparison and enhanced the reliability of the statistical analysis. A validated learning motivation questionnaire was used, designed to measure both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of motivation. The instrument was adapted from established frameworks of motivation in education, focusing on indicators such as persistence, enthusiasm, and willingness to participate (Sardiman, 2016). Observation sheets were used to record real-time classroom participation and engagement. These sheets enabled the researcher to capture qualitative aspects of student behavior that complemented quantitative measures. The intervention was carried out over six weeks. During this period, the experimental group engaged in Discovery Learning-based instruction. Lessons were designed to encourage inquiry, group discussions, and student-led presentations on

topics related to biblical texts and moral dilemmas. These activities allowed students to connect abstract biblical principles with real-life contexts, thereby aligning with the constructivist philosophy underpinning Discovery Learning (Bruner, 1961). In contrast, the control group received conventional lecture-based instruction, where the teacher played the central role in delivering information while students primarily acted as passive recipients. At the conclusion of the six-week intervention, both groups were administered the learning motivation questionnaire to assess differences in their motivational levels. In addition, observational data and documentation were systematically compiled to provide supporting evidence for interpreting the questionnaire results. The collected data were analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the mean, standard deviation, and distribution of motivation scores across groups. Inferential statistics, specifically the independent samples t-test, were employed to determine whether the observed differences in motivation between the experimental and control groups were statistically significant (Santoso, 2015). A significance level of 0.05 was applied as the threshold for determining the reliability of the results. The combination of statistical testing with observational and documentary data facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the effect of the Discovery Learning model on students' motivation. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study ensured stronger validity through methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the Discovery Learning model on the learning motivation of Grade X students in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation at SMA Negeri 1 Siborongborong. The results are presented in two categories: quantitative findings derived from questionnaire scores and statistical tests, and qualitative findings based on classroom observations and documentation. Data from the motivation questionnaire, administered before and after the six-week intervention, indicated significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group. The pre-test results showed that both groups had similar average motivation scores, with the experimental group at 67.3 and the control group at 66.8, both categorized as "low to moderate" motivation. Following the intervention, however, the post-test mean score for the experimental group rose sharply to 84.6, categorized as "high" motivation, while the control group only experienced a marginal increase to 70.2. A paired-sample t-test confirmed that the improvement in the experimental group was statistically significant. The calculated t-value ($t = 4.87$, $p < 0.05$) exceeded the critical value at the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the Discovery Learning model had a positive and measurable effect on student motivation. In contrast, the control group's improvement was not statistically significant ($t = 1.24$, $p > 0.05$). These results confirm the hypothesis that Discovery Learning positively influences learning motivation. Further analysis of individual motivational indicators revealed that the most significant gains in the experimental group were in persistence, enthusiasm, curiosity, and responsibility. Persistence improved as students showed greater determination in completing assigned tasks despite challenges. Enthusiasm was evident in students' willingness to volunteer during classroom discussions and their eagerness to complete assignments. Curiosity manifested in an increased frequency of reflective questions about biblical texts and

moral issues. Responsibility was reflected in timely submission of assignments, leadership during group work, and accountability in presentations.

Observational data reinforced the quantitative findings. Students in the experimental group were consistently more engaged compared to their peers in the control group. They actively participated in group discussions, demonstrated confidence in asking and answering questions, and collaborated effectively with peers. Teachers noted that students who were initially passive or reluctant to contribute became more vocal and enthusiastic as the intervention progressed. One notable example occurred during a lesson on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Students in the Discovery Learning group were asked to explore the narrative through group inquiry, analyzing the cultural, social, and moral dimensions of the parable. Observations revealed that students not only engaged deeply with the biblical text but also related it to contemporary issues such as social justice and empathy toward marginalized communities. Such engagement demonstrated how Discovery Learning encouraged students to link classroom learning with real-life contexts, making the lessons both meaningful and transformative. Teachers also reported that the experimental group displayed greater self-confidence and collaboration. For instance, when tasked with presenting their group findings, students demonstrated effective communication skills, critical reasoning, and respect for differing viewpoints. These behaviors reflected the growth of intrinsic motivation, as students were not merely responding to teacher directives but were genuinely invested in the learning process. Students in the control group, who continued with conventional lecture-based instruction, were observed to remain largely passive. Their participation was limited to note-taking and responding when called upon by the teacher. They displayed less enthusiasm, rarely asked questions, and demonstrated limited engagement with the material beyond rote memorization. This stark contrast highlights the distinctive impact of Discovery Learning in fostering motivation. The findings of this study affirm the effectiveness of the Discovery Learning model in enhancing student motivation in Christian Religious Education (CRE). The combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence reveals how Discovery Learning not only improved motivational indicators but also supported character formation aligned with biblical values. The discussion is organized into five main areas: Discovery Learning and student motivation, alignment with constructivist theory, implications for Christian education and character formation, challenges and limitations, and recommendations for practice.

The significant improvement in motivation among students in the experimental group can be attributed to the key features of Discovery Learning: active exploration, problem-solving, and reflection. Bruner (1961) argues that knowledge discovered through active engagement is more meaningful and enduring than knowledge transmitted passively through lectures. The results of this study confirm Bruner's claim, as students exposed to Discovery Learning displayed greater persistence, curiosity, and enthusiasm in engaging with biblical content. Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory further explains why Discovery Learning fosters motivation. By providing autonomy, competence, and relatedness, Discovery Learning created an environment where students felt ownership of their learning. Autonomy was experienced when students had choices in group activities; competence was developed through solving biblical and moral problems; and relatedness was nurtured through peer collaboration. These elements align with the increased motivation observed in the experimental group. The control group's limited

improvement can be explained by the constraints of teacher-centered instruction. Lecture-based teaching often restricts autonomy, reduces opportunities for collaboration, and positions students as passive recipients of information. As a result, the control group demonstrated minimal gains in motivation, reinforcing the argument that traditional pedagogies may be insufficient to engage students in religious studies.

The results also resonate with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that students construct knowledge through active interaction with their environment. Discovery Learning, as an application of constructivism, allowed students to explore biblical texts, discuss interpretations, and apply moral lessons to personal experiences. This process not only deepened cognitive understanding but also nurtured critical thinking and problem-solving skills. For example, when students explored the story of David and Goliath, they were encouraged to identify themes of faith, courage, and resilience. Rather than simply memorizing the story, students reflected on personal challenges in their lives where they could apply these values. Such activities exemplify the constructivist principle that learning is most effective when it connects prior knowledge with new experiences. Beyond motivation, the study demonstrates that Discovery Learning supports the holistic aims of Christian education, which include spiritual growth and character formation. Christian Religious Education is tasked with not only imparting biblical knowledge but also nurturing values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility. The findings reveal that Discovery Learning provided a pedagogical avenue for integrating these values into the learning process. Group collaboration, for instance, required students to practice honesty and responsibility in completing tasks. Teachers observed that students became more disciplined in managing their time and more respectful of peers' contributions. These outcomes align with Lickona's framework of character education, which emphasizes the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral actio. Through Discovery Learning, students not only learned biblical principles but also practiced them in classroom interactions, thereby embodying the values central to Christian education. The implementation of Discovery Learning was not without challenges. First, some students initially struggled with the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Accustomed to passively receiving information, they were hesitant to take initiative or work independently. Teachers had to provide scaffolding to guide students through the discovery process, gradually reducing support as students developed confidence. This finding echoes previous research suggesting that effective implementation of Discovery Learning requires careful planning and teacher facilitation. Time constraints posed a significant limitation. Discovery Learning requires more classroom time than lecture-based methods, as students need space to explore, discuss, and reflect. Teachers reported that covering the full curriculum while allowing adequate time for discovery posed logistical challenges. This suggests the need for curriculum adjustments or blended approaches to balance depth of learning with breadth of content. The success of Discovery Learning depended heavily on teacher readiness and creativity. Teachers had to design engaging activities, prepare guiding questions, and manage group dynamics effectively. Without adequate training and support, the effectiveness of Discovery Learning could be diminished. Thus, institutional support for teacher professional development is essential. Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, CRE teachers should be encouraged to adopt Discovery Learning as a pedagogical model to enhance motivation and character formation. Training workshops

and peer mentoring can equip teachers with the necessary skills to design and implement discovery-based lessons effectively. Second, schools should consider integrating Discovery Learning into the broader curriculum, particularly in subjects where values and critical reflection are central. This integration would align with Indonesia's emphasis on character education as a national priority. Third, collaboration between teachers, parents, and church communities is crucial to reinforce the values cultivated in the classroom. Discovery Learning can be extended beyond the classroom through service projects, youth groups, and family devotions, ensuring consistency across the various contexts of a student's life. Further research could explore the long-term impact of Discovery Learning on both academic achievement and moral development. While this study focused on motivation, future studies could investigate how sustained use of Discovery Learning influences students' faith commitment, ethical reasoning, and community engagement. The findings of this study provide robust evidence that the Discovery Learning model positively influences student motivation in Christian Religious Education. By fostering autonomy, competence, and collaboration, Discovery Learning enhanced persistence, enthusiasm, curiosity, and responsibility among Grade X students at SMA Negeri 1 Siborongborong. The model not only improved cognitive engagement but also supported the broader goals of Christian education by integrating character formation into the learning process. While challenges such as student readiness, time constraints, and teacher preparation remain, the overall impact of Discovery Learning was positive and transformative. These results highlight the potential of Discovery Learning as a pedagogical strategy that bridges academic instruction with spiritual and moral growth, offering a holistic approach to education in line with biblical and national values.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the influence of the Discovery Learning model on the motivation of Grade X students in Christian Religious Education (CRE) and Character Formation at SMA Negeri 1 Siborongborong. The findings provide compelling evidence that Discovery Learning is not only effective in enhancing students' learning motivation but also in supporting the holistic mission of Christian education, which integrates academic growth with moral and spiritual development. The results revealed that students in the experimental group taught through Discovery Learning experienced significant gains in persistence, enthusiasm, curiosity, and responsibility compared to their peers in the control group who continued with conventional lecture-based instruction. Statistical analysis confirmed these improvements as significant, while classroom observations reinforced the data by demonstrating that Discovery Learning fostered greater participation, reflective questioning, and collaborative engagement. These findings affirm Bruner's constructivist principle that learning becomes more meaningful when students actively discover knowledge for themselves, rather than passively receiving it. By engaging in inquiry-based tasks and collaborative problem-solving, students not only developed cognitive understanding but also practiced values such as honesty, discipline, and accountability. This aligns with Lickona's framework of character education, which emphasizes the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Discovery Learning thus emerges as a pedagogical approach capable of bridging biblical principles with students' lived experiences, making CRE more relevant

and transformative. Some students initially struggled with independent learning due to long-standing habits of passive engagement. Time constraints also posed limitations, as discovery-based lessons required more classroom hours for exploration and reflection. Furthermore, the success of the model was highly dependent on teacher readiness, creativity, and facilitation skills. These challenges underscore the need for institutional support in the form of professional development, curriculum adjustments, and collaborative strategies that involve parents and church communities in reinforcing values outside the classroom. The Discovery Learning model offers a promising pathway for revitalizing Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. By stimulating intrinsic motivation and nurturing Christ-centered character, it provides a holistic framework that resonates with the national curriculum's dual emphasis on academic competence and ethical responsibility. While refinements and sustained support are necessary for long-term effectiveness, the study affirms that Discovery Learning has the potential to transform passive learning into an active, meaningful, and faith-driven educational experience.

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