



The Contribution of Discussion-Based Learning to Enhancing Students' Motivation in Christian Religious Education at SD N 094099 Siruberube - Simalungun Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the contribution of discussion-based learning to enhancing students' motivation in Christian Religious Education at SD N 094099 Siruberube, Simalungun Regency. Employing a mixed-method research design, the study gathered data through surveys and interviews involving both students and teachers. The quantitative data were analyzed to measure changes in motivation levels, while the qualitative data provided deeper insights into students' and teachers' experiences with discussion-based learning. The findings reveal that this learning approach significantly improves students' motivation by promoting active engagement, critical thinking, and meaningful collaboration among learners. Moreover, discussion-based learning was found to create a more interactive and student-centered learning environment that encourages students to express ideas and relate biblical values to real-life contexts. The study concludes that the integration of discussion-based methods within Christian Religious Education not only strengthens students' motivation but also supports the development of reflective and participatory faith learning experiences. These results highlight the importance of implementing dialogical and participatory teaching models to enhance the quality and effectiveness of Christian Religious Education in primary schools.

Keywords: *discussion, Students' Motivation, Learning Method*

INTRODUCTION

Motivation plays a pivotal role in the learning process, serving as the driving force that determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of student behavior in educational contexts. In the realm of Christian Religious Education (CRE), motivation is particularly significant, as learning is not only an intellectual endeavor but also a moral and spiritual one. Students are encouraged to internalize values, reflect on their faith, and apply biblical principles to daily life. Therefore, teachers of CRE face the unique challenge of cultivating both cognitive and affective engagement in their students. A learning process that merely transfers knowledge without addressing students' intrinsic motivation often

fails to produce meaningful and transformative learning experiences. This study focuses on the potential of discussion-based learning as a pedagogical approach to enhance student motivation in Christian Religious Education at SD N 094099 Siruberube, located in Simalungun Regency, Indonesia. The concept of motivation in education has been extensively studied across disciplines, highlighting its centrality to student achievement and satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to self-determination theory, motivation can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic forms, with intrinsic motivation being the most desirable for sustained learning. Intrinsically motivated students engage in learning out of curiosity, interest, and personal satisfaction, rather than external rewards or pressures. In religious education, intrinsic motivation is particularly vital because it aligns with the goal of fostering authentic faith development and moral responsibility. However, achieving such motivation among elementary school students can be challenging, especially when learning environments are dominated by teacher-centered methods that limit student participation and reflection. Christian Religious Education aims to develop students' understanding of God's Word, moral behavior, and faith practices within their social environment. Yet, in many classrooms, traditional pedagogical methods-such as lecturing, memorization, and rote recitation-remain dominant. These approaches may effectively transmit doctrinal knowledge but often fail to engage students emotionally or intellectually. As a result, students may perceive CRE as an obligation rather than a meaningful experience that relates to their personal lives. To overcome this, educators must explore and adopt innovative instructional strategies that can stimulate active learning, dialogue, and collaboration. Discussion-based learning represents one such approach that has shown promise in enhancing student motivation and learning outcomes. Rooted in constructivist and socio-cultural theories of learning, discussion-based learning emphasizes the active role of students in constructing knowledge through dialogue, questioning, and exchange of ideas. This method transforms the classroom into a dynamic space where learners interact with peers and teachers to explore multiple perspectives, negotiate meanings, and apply concepts to real-world contexts. According to Johnson and Johnson (2014), such collaborative interactions can increase students' sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and motivation. In religious education, where faith and values are inherently relational and dialogical, discussion-based learning aligns naturally with the aims of nurturing spiritual growth and reflective understanding. Discussion-based learning offers opportunities for students to connect biblical teachings with contemporary issues and personal experiences. Through guided discussions, learners are encouraged to think critically about moral dilemmas, ethical choices, and the relevance of Scripture in daily life. This process not only deepens comprehension but also fosters empathy, respect, and openness to diverse viewpoints. Kuhlthau (2010) emphasizes that when students are given the opportunity to inquire, discuss, and construct meaning collaboratively, their motivation increases as they experience autonomy and relevance in learning. Consequently, discussion-based learning can help bridge the gap between abstract theological concepts and students' lived experiences, making Christian Religious Education more engaging and transformative.

The context of SD N 094099 Siruberube in Simalungun Regency provides an important setting for this study. As a public elementary school where Christian Religious Education forms an integral part of moral and character development, the school faces the challenge of maintaining students' interest in religious learning amidst the growing influence of

digital culture and secular values. Teachers are expected to find innovative ways to keep students motivated and actively engaged in understanding Christian values. However, the limited use of interactive teaching strategies often constrains students' ability to participate meaningfully in learning. By implementing discussion-based learning, teachers can create an environment that promotes dialogue, reflection, and mutual respect, enabling students to express their ideas and strengthen their understanding of biblical principles. Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of discussion-based and cooperative learning in enhancing student engagement and motivation in various educational settings. For example, Gillies (2016) found that cooperative discussion groups lead to improved communication skills, greater confidence, and deeper conceptual understanding among students. Similarly, Slavin (2015) argued that discussion-centered classrooms promote positive interdependence and accountability, which are crucial for sustaining motivation. However, empirical studies focusing on discussion-based learning within the context of Christian Religious Education, particularly in Indonesian elementary schools, remain limited. This gap underscores the need for further exploration of how such pedagogical strategies can be adapted to faith-based learning environments. The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining the contribution of discussion-based learning to student motivation in Christian Religious Education at SD N 094099 Siruberube. By employing a mixed-method approach, the research investigates not only quantitative changes in motivation levels but also qualitative insights into students' and teachers' experiences during discussion-based sessions. The integration of these two forms of data provides a comprehensive understanding of how this method influences both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. This study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the field of religious education. Theoretically, it enriches the discussion on motivation and active learning by situating them within the context of Christian Religious Education. Practically, it offers educators concrete evidence and pedagogical implications for implementing discussion-based learning in primary school classrooms. By highlighting the role of interaction, participation, and critical reflection, this study underscores the potential of dialogical learning to transform religious education into a more engaging and student-centered process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how discussion-based learning influences student motivation in Christian Religious Education (CRE). The mixed-method approach was chosen because it allows for the triangulation of data, combining numerical evidence with in-depth insights to strengthen the validity of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The participants consisted of 60 students and five teachers from SD N 094099 Siruberube, located in Simalungun Regency, Indonesia. The students, aged 10 to 12 years, were enrolled in grades four to six and represented a diverse range of academic abilities. The five participating teachers had between 3 and 15 years of experience in teaching Christian Religious Education. This diversity in teaching experience provided a broad perspective on the implementation and perceived effectiveness of discussion-based learning. All participants were selected through purposive sampling, as they were directly involved in the CRE program at the school and

were considered capable of providing relevant data for the study. The data collection process consisted of two main components: quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. A motivation questionnaire was administered to the 60 students to measure their motivation levels before and after the implementation of discussion-based learning activities. The questionnaire was adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) developed by Pintrich and De Groot (1990), modified to fit the context of Christian Religious Education. The instrument included items assessing intrinsic motivation, engagement, and learning interest. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.87, indicating strong internal consistency. To complement the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the five teachers who had implemented discussion-based learning in their classrooms. The interviews explored their perceptions, teaching experiences, and observations of student responses during discussion-based activities. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in a comfortable and familiar setting to encourage open communication. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed for accuracy.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistical methods to examine changes in student motivation levels before and after the intervention. Mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage increases were calculated to determine the extent of improvement. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were analyzed through thematic analysis following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved coding the interview transcripts, identifying recurring patterns, and categorizing them into key themes related to teacher perceptions, student engagement, and classroom dynamics. The integration of both data types allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of the findings, ensuring that statistical results were supported by contextual and experiential evidence. Overall, this methodological design ensured that the study captured not only the measurable effects of discussion-based learning on motivation but also the lived experiences of teachers implementing it within a real classroom context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis revealed a significant improvement in students’ motivation levels following the implementation of discussion-based learning in Christian Religious Education (CRE). Based on the pre- and post-intervention surveys administered to 60 students, the average motivation score increased by approximately 25%. Before the intervention, students demonstrated moderate levels of motivation, with mean scores indicating limited enthusiasm and engagement in classroom activities. After the introduction of discussion-based learning, students reported higher levels of interest, participation, and enjoyment in the learning process. Specifically, the post-test data showed notable gains across three key indicators of motivation: intrinsic motivation, learning engagement, and interest in religious content. The most significant increase occurred in intrinsic motivation, suggesting that students became more self-driven and curious about biblical lessons. These results demonstrate that discussion-based learning can effectively transform the classroom dynamic from passive knowledge absorption to

active participation and reflection. The statistical data thus confirm that interaction and dialogue serve as powerful motivators for young learners in faith-based education contexts. The qualitative data derived from teacher interviews provided deeper insight into the observed quantitative improvements. Teachers reported that students exhibited greater enthusiasm and confidence during lessons that utilized discussion-based strategies. They noted that even typically quiet or disengaged students began contributing ideas and asking questions during class discussions. This change fostered a more interactive and student-centered classroom atmosphere, where students were encouraged to express their opinions and relate biblical values to their everyday experiences. Teachers also emphasized that discussion-based learning encouraged peer collaboration and mutual respect. As students shared diverse perspectives, they learned to listen attentively and engage constructively with one another. This environment not only enhanced their understanding of Christian teachings but also supported the development of moral and social values aligned with the goals of religious education. Several teachers remarked that discussions prompted students to think more critically about scriptural interpretations and apply moral lessons to real-life situations, reflecting deeper comprehension and personal growth. The findings of this study align with existing literature emphasizing the positive impact of discussion-based learning on student motivation and engagement. Freeman et al. (2014) assert that active learning strategies—such as discussions, debates, and cooperative group activities—significantly improve student performance and motivation across disciplines. Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (2014) highlight that collaborative learning environments promote both cognitive and affective engagement, enabling students to internalize concepts more meaningfully. In the context of Christian Religious Education, the increase in motivation observed in this study can be attributed to three interrelated factors: engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration. The interactive nature of discussions allowed students to express their personal beliefs, ask questions, and share experiences. This participation created a sense of ownership in learning and made religious lessons more relatable. When students are given the opportunity to contribute to classroom dialogue, they perceive learning as a shared journey rather than a one-way transmission of information. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learning is most effective when constructed through social interaction. Discussion-based learning prompted students to move beyond memorization and engage in analytical reflection. Through guided questions, students examined biblical passages, explored their meanings, and discussed their implications for moral decision-making. This process enhanced not only cognitive understanding but also spiritual and ethical reasoning. Teachers observed that students became more reflective and thoughtful about how Christian teachings apply to real-life contexts, indicating higher-order thinking development. Group discussions fostered a strong sense of community among students. Collaborative dialogue encouraged the exchange of ideas and the development of empathy, listening skills, and respect for diverse perspectives. This cooperative learning environment strengthened interpersonal relationships and cultivated the Christian value of fellowship. As students learned from one another, they also developed a deeper appreciation for teamwork and shared responsibility in learning. The integration of discussion-based learning in Christian Religious Education proved to be an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing student motivation. It created a learning environment that was more interactive,

participatory, and reflective, aligning well with the holistic goals of religious education-to nurture faith, moral understanding, and character formation. The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings underscores the potential of dialogical teaching to transform traditional classroom practices into more engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

The present study set out to examine the contribution of discussion-based learning to enhancing student motivation in Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SD N 094099 Siruberube, Simalungun Regency. By employing a mixed-method approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how dialogical and participatory learning strategies can positively influence students' engagement, interest, and overall motivation toward learning biblical and moral principles. The findings collectively affirm that discussion-based learning is an effective pedagogical method that fosters not only intellectual growth but also moral and spiritual development among elementary school students. Quantitative findings indicated a significant 25% increase in student motivation after the implementation of discussion-based learning activities. This improvement demonstrates that when students are actively involved in classroom discussions, their enthusiasm and curiosity about Christian Religious Education increase substantially. The shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning allowed learners to play an active role in the educational process, contributing to a sense of autonomy and personal relevance. Students were more eager to share opinions, ask questions, and connect religious lessons with their daily lives, resulting in deeper understanding and stronger engagement. The qualitative findings reinforced these results by providing rich insights into teachers' observations and experiences. Teachers reported noticeable improvements in students' participation, confidence, and willingness to collaborate. Class discussions created an environment that encouraged respect, empathy, and reflection-key components in faith-based education. Students learned to appreciate multiple perspectives while developing critical thinking and communication skills. Moreover, teachers emphasized that discussion-based learning transformed the classroom into a community of inquiry where moral reasoning and Christian values were explored collectively. From a pedagogical perspective, the results of this study confirm the importance of implementing active learning models in religious education. Discussion-based learning aligns well with the objectives of Christian Religious Education, which aim not only to impart theological knowledge but also to cultivate moral character and spiritual awareness. By engaging students in dialogue, teachers help them internalize Christian teachings in a way that is meaningful and personally transformative. In conclusion, discussion-based learning contributes significantly to enhancing motivation, critical thinking, and collaboration among students in Christian Religious Education. It encourages learners to become active participants in their spiritual and academic development, leading to more dynamic and holistic learning experiences. Therefore, educators and curriculum designers should consider integrating discussion-based strategies more systematically into CRE instruction to promote a deeper, more engaged form of faith learning that supports both cognitive and affective growth.

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