

Implementation of Problem-Based Learning in Islamic Religious Education: A Systematic Literature Review Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to systematically examine the implementation of Problem-Based Learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning through the Systematic Literature Review approach. The research background is based on the need for learning strategies that are relevant to the characteristics of the digital generation, as well as the demands of strengthening character and high-level thinking skills. By utilizing data from Google Scholar using the Publish or Perish application and the Covidence application, 27 relevant studies were obtained and analyzed using the PICOC-PRISMA criteria. The study's results show that the keyword "problem" is the most frequently used keyword by the authors. The implementation of PBL in IRE has diversified in terms of material (Akidah, Akhlak, Fiqh, Al-Qur'an, and Hadith), all educational levels, and the use of digital technology. In general, PBL has been proven to be effective in improving student learning outcomes in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Although the integration of technology in PBL is still limited, the trend of its use is starting to increase along with the need for digital learning. This study concludes that PBL is a strategic and relevant approach to strengthen the quality of IRE learning in the era of education 4.0, as well as provide direction for pedagogical innovation in the future

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the dynamics of the industrial revolution 4.0 and the development of the digital society, the education system is faced with a great challenge in preparing a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally and spiritually strong. Education is no longer solely about the transfer of knowledge, but also about the formation of character, values, and high-level thinking skills (Zain & Mustain, 2024). Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as an integral part of the national curriculum, has a strategic role in building students' morality and spirituality. PAI aims to instill Islamic values that serve as a guideline for life in the face of the complexity of social, cultural, and technological changes (Munawir et al., 2024).

As the digital generation enters the classroom, conventional learning approaches are beginning to face the challenge of effectiveness. This generation is known to have adaptive characteristics towards technology, likes interactive learning activities, and has a tendency to think critically and creatively (Hasanah & Anwar, 2024). Unfortunately, the PAI learning method, which has been dominant in one direction, often lacks active and contextual student engagement. A fun, participatory, and meaningful learning atmosphere is a key factor in the success of the learning process (Baber, 2020). This shows the urgency of innovating learning strategies that are more relevant and able to answer the needs of 21st-century students (Eliningsih, 2021).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is an innovative approach that emphasizes active student involvement through real-world problem-solving, collaborative discussion, and critical reflection. As a student-centered learning model, PBL has proven effective in improving conceptual understanding and 21st-century skills across various disciplines (Numan et al., 2022). PBL is a potential strategy to encourage students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor involvement in internalizing Islamic values.

Several studies have found that the implementation of PBL has a positive impact on student achievement, including increased understanding and motivation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning (Primadoniati, 2020) and enhanced educational values and problem-solving skills (Syihabuddin et al., 2023). However, there are variations in its application related to materials, education levels, and digital technology integration. Therefore, a systematic review of the literature is needed to identify the pattern of implementation and effectiveness of PBL in the context of IRE comprehensively.

This research aims to produce a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) concerning the implementation of PBL in IRE learning. The research questions (QR) to be answered are: (1) What keywords are the dominant ones used in the publication of problem-based learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education? (2) How to diversify the application of PBL in various IRE learning materials? (3) How effective is PBL in enhancing student learning outcomes from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains at each level of education? and (4) how to integrate digital technology in the implementation of PBL in IRE classrooms?

RESEARCH METHODS

This is qualitative research using the systematic literature review (SLR) approach. SLR is a re-examination of existing similar research using a strict and structured method so that it can answer research questions (Newman & Gough, 2020).

Data was gathered using the help of the Publish or Perish application on the Google Scholar database. The data search used the keywords *problem-based learning*, PBL, Pendidikan Agama Islam, PAI, School, problem-based learning, aqidah, akhlak, fiqh, worship, and muamalat. The resulting data is then screened for data extraction using the Covidence application. The study selection process uses the PICOC-Prisma scheme. In the data screening process, the following eligibility criteria are used:

Table 1. Eligibility Criteria Pisma-PICOC

PICOC	Inclusion	Exclusion
<i>Population</i>	Elementary, junior high, high school/vocational school students, or students who take part in IRE learning	Non-Muslim participants, participants outside of the IRE learning
<i>Intervention</i>	PBL in the learning of IRE (including Moral Faith, Fiqh, Muamalat)	Other learning methods unrelated to PBL
<i>Comparison</i>	Studies with or without comparators (e.g. lecture methods, conventional)	Comparison of two other methods without PBL
<i>Outcome</i>	Outcomes such as: learning outcomes, religious understanding, religious attitudes, critical thinking, creative thinking, motivation, learning activities	Studies that do not report implementation results or only theoretical exposure
<i>Context</i>	The context of IRE learning in a formal school or college Published through scientific journals and proceedings Published in 2019-2025 Full text available	Non-formal learning context Types of publications other than scientific journals and proceedings published before 2019 only abstract or inaccessible

Studies that satisfied the eligibility criteria were then extracted for descriptive analysis. Further, the collection procedure appears in Figure 1.

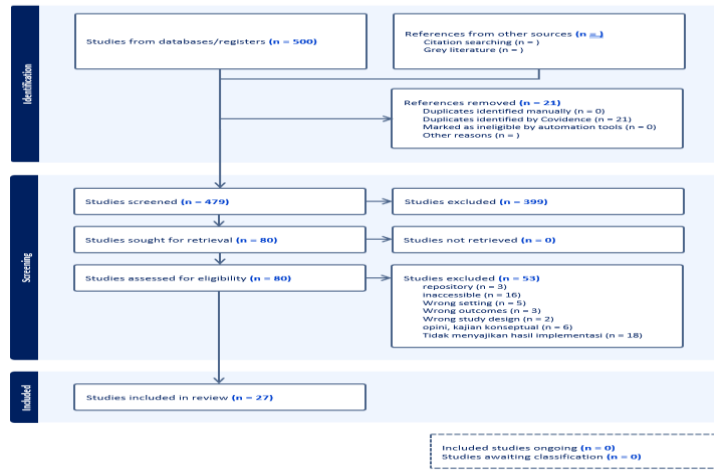


Figure 1. Data Collection Procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1: What keywords are predominantly used in the publication of PBL outcomes in IRE?

The results of research on Problem-Based Learning have been widely published. In the publication, the researchers used a variety of keywords. Figure 1 shows a visualization of the dominant and interrelated keywords.

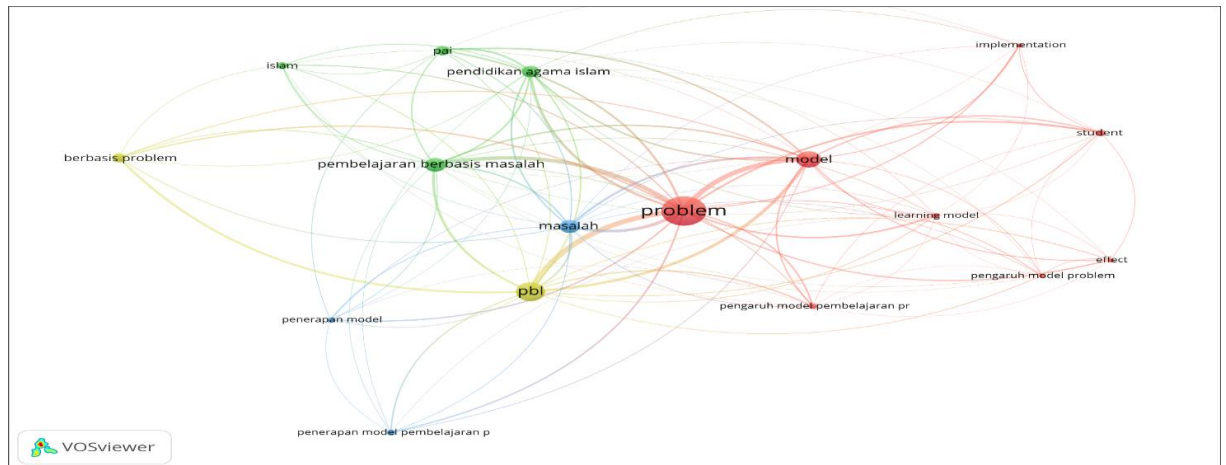


Figure 2. Dominant Keywords

The circle size in Figure 2 represents the significance of a keyword or topic, while the line linking the circles indicates the relationship or relevance among the topics. Large circles are the most frequently used keywords. It appears that the keyword "problem" is used more often in publications. "Problem" is a keyword rich in relevant relationships with various other keywords (Aswat et al., 2025) The keyword "model" also has the second largest circle, indicating that this keyword is related to "problem" or that the two are interconnected. The keyword "pbl" is more commonly used than the keyword "problem-based learning". The keyword "problem" is also often used. Meanwhile, the keyword "Pendidikan Agama Islam" is more often used than its abbreviation, "pai".

Table 2. Extraction Results of the studies analyzed

Yes	Author (Year)	School Level	Research Variables	Technology
1	Aisyah et al. (2021)	SHS	PBL and Learning Motivation	Yes
2	Asked about et al. (2024)	SHS	PBL and Learning Outcomes	Not
3	Astuty & Asra (2023)	ES	PBL and Learning Outcomes	Not
4	Harahap et al. (2025)	ES	PBL and Critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving	Not
5	Hermawan et al. (2024)	JHS	PBL and learning motivation, learning activities	Not
6	Holiday (2023)	JHS	PBL, Critical Thinking, and Reasoning	Not
7	Hilmansah (2023)	JHS	PBL and learning outcomes	Yes
8	Irnowatiet al. (2021)	ES	PBL and learning outcomes	No
9	Jalaludin & Ilahiyah (2023)	SHS	PBL and critical thinking, creative thinking, communication	No
10	Kandiri & Puadi (2021)	JHS	PBL and learning outcomes	No
11	Mubarak et al. (2024)	ES	PBL and learning outcomes	No
12	Nasir et al. (2023)	JHS	PBL and learning outcomes	No
13	Niam (2021)	SHS	PBL and Religious Understanding	Yes
14	Novita & Hadi (2019)	SHS	PBL and learning motivation	No
15	Numan et al. (2022)	SHS	PBL and learning outcomes	No
16	Nurjanatin (2021)	SHS	PBL and learning outcomes	No
17	Primadoniati (2020)	JHS	PBL and learning outcomes	No
18	Saenab et al. (2019)	JHS	PBL and Learning Motivation	No
19	Salahuddin et al. (2022)	HE	PBL, problem-solving skills, and interest in learning	No
20	Sawitri (2020)	SHS	PBL and Learning Motivation	No
21	Sholihah (2022)	JHS	PBL, learning outcomes, and learning activity	No
22	Fatimah et al. (2021)	SHS	PBL and Higher-Level Thinking	Not
23	Sumarni (2022)	JHS	PBL and learning outcomes	Not
24	Syihabuddin et al. (2023)	JHS	PBL and learning outcomes	No
25	Tazkiyah & Suryapermana (2020)	SHS	PBL and learning outcomes	Not
26	Waldohuakbar et al. (2023)	JHS	PBL and learning activities	Not
27	Ziplin (2021)	SHS	PBL and learning motivation	Not

Information:

- ES = Elementary School
- JHS = Junior High School
- SHS = Senior High School
- HE = Higher Education

RQ 2: How to diversify the implementation of PBL in IRE learning?

The implementation of PBL in IRE learning has diversified the learning materials. Initially, perhaps only focusing on basic materials, the implementation of PBL has now penetrated into various fields in IRE, ranging from Moral Faith, Fiqh, to Al-Quran and Hadith. Research by Astuty & Asra (2023) Hilmansah (2023) and Apriliyani et al. (2024) reveals the application of PBL in the learning of Moral Faith, while Jalaludin & Ilahiyah (2023) Mubarak et al. (2024) and Syihabuddin et al. (2023) implement PBL in Fiqh learning. Niam (2021) even researched the implications of the PBL model in learning the Quran Hadith on the internalization of Islamic religious values. Diversification can also be seen from the thematic focus and level of education. Hermawan et al. (2024) applied PBL to junior high school IRE materials that include religious understanding that is applicable in the social realm of students. Kandiri & Puadi (2021) explore the linkages of conceptual content to PBL. These findings show that the PBL approach is applied to various topics with a wider and more diverse learning context according to the needs of students and educational levels.

RQ 3. How effective is the PBL learning model in improving IRE learning outcomes?

A study of studies linked with the application of PBL in IRE learning reveals an interesting narrative about how this method can enhance the quality of IRE in the modern era. From a series of studies analyzed, it was revealed that the implementation of PBL in IRE learning successfully enhanced student learning outcomes across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. On the cognitive aspect, research conducted by Hidayat (2023) Tazkiyah & Permana (2020) and Fatimah et al. (2021) consistently demonstrates that PBL has the potential to enhance students' critical thinking and reasoning skills in understanding IRE material. Hidayat (2023) revealed that students educated with the PBL method showed significant improvements in reasoning and critical thinking ability compared to students taught by conventional methods. This is reinforced by Irnawati et al. (2021) and Nasir et al. (2023), which proves a significant improvement in the learning outcomes of primary and secondary school students through the implementation of PBL. Sumarni (2022) added that IRE learning management with the PBL approach also improves students' overall academic achievement. This shows that this model is able to facilitate students to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts in IRE, not just memorizing, but also analyzing and applying those concepts in a real context.

PBL implementation in IRE contributes positively to the affective aspects of students. A series of studies conducted by Novita & Hadi (2019) Sawitri (2020) and Ziplin (2021) revealed that the use of PBL led to an increase in students' motivation to learn. Saenab et al. (2019) also emphasized that this approach can build students' fascination with learning, enhanced through active engagement in learning activities. The students show increased enthusiasm and are actively involved in IRE learning when they are confronted with contextual issues relevant to their lives. Research by Waldohuakbar et al. (2023) and Sholihah (2022) also highlighted the increase in student activity in IRE learning through the implementation of PBL. Nurjanatin (2021) reinforces that PBL not only improves learning outcomes but also student learning activities significantly. Niam (2021) found that PBL has positive implications for the internalization of

Islamic religious values in students. These findings indicate that PBL is not only an academically effective learning method, but also able to facilitate the formation of religious character and values in students.

Although not as much research on cognitive and affective aspects, several studies have also shown the effectiveness of PBL in improving the psychomotor aspects of students in IRE. Research by Syihabuddin et al. (2023), Jalaludin & Ilahiyah (2023) and Mubarak et al. (2024) revealed that PBL can improve students' practical skills in understanding and applying Islamic laws, especially in Fiqh learning. Salahudin et al. (2022) also found that this approach encourages real problem-solving and fosters a passion in learning, which has an impact on students' skills in active and reflective learning activities. Through a problem-based approach, students not only learn about Islamic laws theoretically, but are also encouraged to apply them in real contexts, which in turn improves their practical skills.

The effectiveness of PBL in IRE learning is not limited to certain levels of education, as presented in Table 2. From elementary to high school levels, PBL has been proven to improve IRE learning outcomes, albeit with different emphases. At the elementary school level, as researched by Harahap et al. (2025) the implementation of PBL focuses more on developing basic understanding and initial skills in solving simple problems related to IRE. At the junior high school level, the implementation of PBL is more directed at the fostering of critical thinking skills and student engagement, as evidenced by Hermawan et al. (2024) and Nasir et al. (2023) At the high school level, PBL is more effective when it is directed at developing high-level thinking skills, learning motivation, and internalization of Islamic religious values.

RQ 4: What is the trend of integrating digital technology through the implementation of PBL in IRE learning?

The development of digital technology also affects the use of PBL in IRE learning. Although still limited, several studies show that there are efforts to integrate digital technology in the implementation of PBL. Aisyah et al. (2021) a PBL-based E-Module in IRE subjects, while Hilmansah (2023) utilized the Google Classroom platform in the implementation of PBL for learning Akidah Akhlak. The COVID-19 pandemic has also become a catalyst for the integration of digital technology in IRE learning, as indicated by Eliningsih (2021) and Baber (2020) Hermawan et al. (2024) and Nurjanatin (2021) imply that the use of supporting media and problem-based contextual approaches opens up space for the utilization of digital technology as a medium of learning. This opens up further exploration opportunities in future research to integrate learning management systems (LMS), interactive videos, and other digital resources into the PBL IRE scenario.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of PBL in IRE learning approve significant diversification both in terms of materials, school levels, and technological approaches. PBL has been used in various aspects of IRE, such as Moral Faith, Fiqh, and Al-Qur'an Hadith, and is applied from elementary to upper secondary levels. Its effectiveness is proven through enhancing student learning outcomes in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This approach not only encourages deep conceptual understanding but also shapes the religious character and values of learners. On the other hand, although still limited, the trend of technology integration in the implementation of PBL in IRE is starting to show positive developments, especially with the presence of E-Modules, LMS, and online learning platforms. Thus, PBL not only answers today's pedagogical challenges but also opens up space for IRE learning innovations that are more contextual, relevant, and meaningful in the digital era.

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