

Islamic Project-Based Learning Model: An Alternative To Strengthen Independence, Activeness, And Social Studies Learning Outcomes In Junior High School

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Abstract

This study aims to improve students' independence, activeness, and learning outcomes in Social Studies through the implementation of the Islamic Project-Based Learning model at Ihsanul Fikri Integrated Islamic Junior High School in Mungkid. The background of this research is the low level of student engagement in the learning process, as indicated by minimal active participation, a tendency to be passive in discussions, and suboptimal academic achievement. This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) method conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The research subjects were 32 ninth-grade students. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, learning outcome tests, and documentation, and analyzed using descriptive qualitative and quantitative methods. The results showed that the implementation of the Islamic Project-Based Learning model significantly improved students' independence, as seen in their increased initiative in managing group tasks; enhanced activeness, as reflected in their participation in discussions, presentations, and decision-making; and improved learning outcomes, evidenced by the increase in average test scores in each cycle. Additionally, the Islamic Project-Based Learning model successfully integrated Islamic values into Social Studies learning, such as cooperation, responsibility, and appreciation for cultural diversity. Thus, the Islamic Project-Based Learning model can serve as an innovative alternative learning model that not only strengthens students' Islamic character but also optimizes academic achievement.

Keywords: *Islamic Project, independence, activeness, learning outcomes, Social Studies*

INTRODUCTION

Many junior high schools face serious challenges in their efforts to improve the quality of learning, especially in Social Studies subjects, where students tend to be passive in discussions and show low participation, resulting in suboptimal learning outcomes. In this context, a learning model is needed that not only promotes cognitive aspects but also encourages student independence and active participation in an integrated manner. Project-based learning (PBL) combined with Islamic values—often referred to as *Islamic Project Learning*—emerges as a potential alternative because it allows students to engage in meaningful projects that integrate values and academic content.

Several recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of PBL in the context of Islamic education. For example, the study “*Project-Based Learning in Islamic Education: Enhancing Independent Character and Critical Thinking Skills in Junior High School Students*” found that PBL can strengthen students’ independence while sharpening their critical thinking skills, despite challenges in time management and teacher readiness (Fitriani & Rahman, 2021). Similarly, the research “*Learning Islamic Education with the Project-Based Learning Method*” reported that

students' active involvement increased, motivation improved, and creativity as well as critical thinking skills developed through the stages of project planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection (Hidayat, 2022). Meanwhile, the study "*Implementation of Project-Based Learning to Increase Student Engagement and Motivation in Learning Islamic Religious Education*" emphasized that the PBL model can enhance students' engagement and achievement in Islamic Religious Education through the meaningfulness of project activities (Nugraha & Aisyah, 2023).

From these literature reviews, it appears that integrating Islamic values into project-based learning enables the development of both character and active learning processes. However, the implementation of the *Islamic Project* model in Social Studies at the junior high school level has been little explored—particularly within the context of integrated Islamic schools that aim to strengthen students' independence and activeness while also improving their academic achievement in Social Studies. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by implementing the *Islamic Project Learning* model at SMP IT Ihsanul Fikri Mungkid, using Classroom Action Research (CAR) methods with cycles of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection.

Previous studies have shown that the application of project-based learning in Social Studies subjects can improve students' learning outcomes while strengthening their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Kurniawati & Ramadhan, 2022; Yuliani & Hamzah, 2023). In addition, integrating Islamic values into project-based learning models has been proven relevant for building character while developing 21st-century competencies (Mahfud & Wahyudi, 2024). Collaborative project implementation also helps foster cooperation, responsibility, and social awareness among students (Sari & Nugroho, 2022).

This study aims to examine the extent to which *Islamic Project Learning* can enhance students' independence, activeness in the Social Studies learning process, and academic achievement, as well as to explore how Islamic values can be integrated into each phase of project learning to create synergy between character development and competency growth.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, as its primary objective was to improve both the learning process and learning outcomes in Social Studies through the implementation of the Islamic Project-Based Learning (Proyek Islami) model. This model integrates academic learning with the cultivation of Islamic character values such as cooperation (ta'awun), responsibility (amanah), and tolerance (tasamuh). The CAR approach was selected because it enables teachers to act directly as researchers who systematically plan, implement, observe, and reflect on their instructional practices for continuous improvement.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at SMP IT Ihsanul Fikri Mungkid, located in Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Participants consisted of 32 ninth-grade students (18 males and 14 females). The class was chosen purposively based on preliminary observations indicating that students exhibited relatively low participation levels and a strong dependency on teacher instructions during Social Studies lessons.

Research Focus and Scope

The study focused on three interrelated dimensions of student development:

Learning Independence – the ability of students to organize, plan, and execute project tasks autonomously, both individually and collaboratively.

Learning Activeness – the level of student engagement in classroom discussions, group presentations, and decision-making processes.

Learning Outcomes in Social Studies – the cognitive achievement and conceptual understanding demonstrated by students following the implementation of the Islamic Project-Based Learning model.

The scope of the intervention encompassed the integration of Islamic values throughout all stages of project implementation—from planning, execution, evaluation, to reflection—thus ensuring that learning was not only academic but also spiritually and morally meaningful.

Procedures

The research was carried out in two action cycles, each following the four systematic stages proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (2014): planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Planning

Learning instruments were designed, including lesson plans, project worksheets, and observation checklists aligned with Islamic Project-Based Learning principles. The selected project theme, “*The Impact of Climate Change on Socio-Economic Life*,” was contextualized through Islamic values such as environmental stewardship (*khalifah fil ardh*). The researcher also developed an implementation schedule, determined group composition, and established evaluation indicators for independence, activeness, and academic achievement.

Acting

The teacher implemented the learning process using the project-based model that emphasized collaboration and Islamic values. Students worked in groups to design, execute, and report their projects. The teacher functioned as a facilitator and motivator, guiding students to internalize Islamic ethics during learning activities.

Observing

Student behaviors and interactions were observed using observation sheets focusing on independence and activeness. Additional data were gathered through field notes, documentation of learning activities, and students’ project products.

Reflecting

Data collected during the first cycle were analyzed to identify challenges and areas for improvement. The reflection results were used to refine the next action cycle, including adjustments to mentoring strategies, project duration, and task complexity.

Data Collection Techniques

Multiple instruments were employed to obtain comprehensive and triangulated data:

Observation: to assess the level of student independence and activeness during classroom activities.

Achievement Tests: administered at the end of each cycle to measure cognitive progress and academic mastery.

Questionnaires: distributed to collect students’ perceptions of the Islamic Project-Based Learning experience.

Documentation: including photographs, teacher’s notes, and students’ project artifacts as supporting evidence of the intervention process.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods.

1. Qualitative data, derived from observations, reflections, and documentation, were analyzed inductively to identify behavioral patterns, attitude changes, and levels of engagement.
2. Quantitative data were processed to calculate mean scores and percentages, illustrating the improvement in students' independence, activeness, and learning outcomes across cycles.

The percentage of learning mastery was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Number of students achieving mastery}}{\text{Total number of students}} \times 100\%$$

Data Validity

To ensure data credibility, source and methodological triangulation were applied. Observation results were cross-checked with data from questionnaires, achievement tests, and documentation. Peer debriefing sessions with fellow teachers were also conducted to confirm the consistency of data interpretation and reflection results.

Indicators of Success

The study was considered successful if the following criteria were achieved:

The proportion of students demonstrating independence and activeness increased by at least 20% from Cycle I to Cycle II.

The average learning achievement score improved by at least 10 points between cycles.

At least 85% of students met or exceeded the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM = 75) established by the school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Improvement of Students' Learning Independence

The findings indicate a significant improvement in students' learning independence following the implementation of the Islamic Value-Based Project-Based Learning (Proyek Islami) model. In Cycle I, most students still demonstrated a high level of dependence on the teacher when completing their projects. They tended to wait for detailed instructions, showed limited initiative in dividing tasks, and were hesitant to make independent decisions within their groups. This condition reflected that the culture of autonomous learning had not yet developed optimally.

However, after reflection and revisions in Cycle II — including the provision of project guidance emphasizing the Islamic values of responsibility (amanah) and sincerity (ikhlas, working for the sake of Allah) — there was a remarkable improvement in students' independence indicators. The teacher acted primarily as a facilitator, while students were given greater autonomy to determine project steps, schedules, and role distribution.

Based on the observation results, the following data were obtained:

Table 1.
Percentage of Students' Learning Independence per Cycle

Cycle	Low	Medium	High
I	28%	53%	19%
II	9%	41%	50%

From the table above, it can be seen that:

The percentage of students with low independence decreased from 28% to 9%, indicating a 19-point percentage reduction in teacher dependency.

The medium category also declined from 53% to 41%, as some students shifted into the high category.

Meanwhile, the percentage of highly independent students increased sharply from 19% to 50%, marking a 31-point percentage improvement.

Quantitatively, this increase demonstrates that more than half of the students achieved the ability to:

Take initiative in designing and executing their projects.

Manage time and divide tasks without waiting for teacher direction.

Take responsibility for group outcomes.

Confidently express ideas and opinions during group discussions and class forums.

Interview results supported these findings. One student stated that through the *Proyek Islami* activity, they learned to “*be more disciplined in managing time and not to wait for friends or the teacher to start working, because this is a trust (amanah) from Allah that must be completed sincerely.*”



Figure 1.
Students’ collaborating in a learning environment

Improvement of Students’ Activeness

The study also revealed a significant increase in students’ activeness after implementing the Islamic Value-Based Project-Based Learning (PBL) model. In Cycle I, most students still behaved passively during discussions and project presentations. They tended to listen rather than engage, relying on the teacher or more dominant group members. Observations showed that only about 38% of students actively participated in questioning and discussion activities.

After reflection and strategic adjustments in Cycle II, the teacher strengthened active-learning routines such as group brainstorming, Islamic values reflection sessions after project completion, and rotational group presentations in front of the class. These strategies encouraged students to be more confident in expressing opinions and asking questions.

Observation data showed that the average activeness score increased from 62 in Cycle I to 78 in Cycle II — an improvement of 16 points, indicating a clear shift from passive to active participation.

Table 2.
Distribution of Students’ Activeness per Cycle

Activeness Category	Cycle I	Cycle II
Passive	42%	18%
Moderately Active	40%	36%
Active	18%	46%

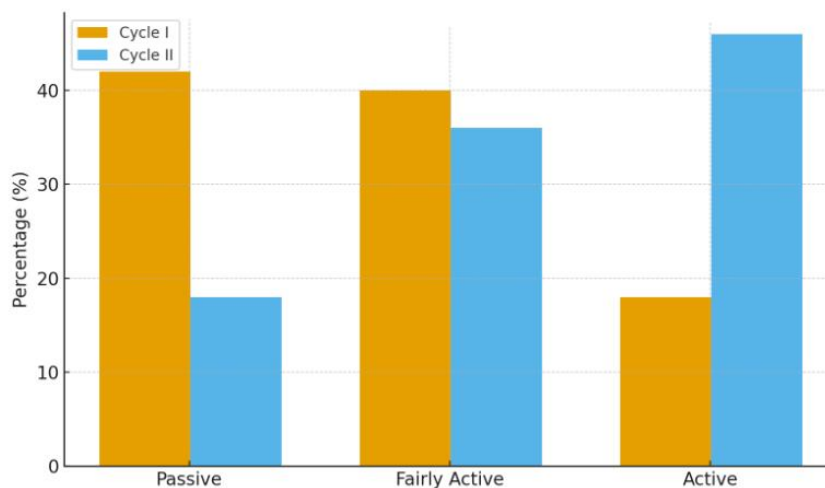


Figure 2.
Chart of Students’ Activeness Improvement

Based on the chart, it is evident that the proportion of active students increased sharply from 18% to 46%, while the passive category decreased drastically from 42% to 18%. This indicates that project activities rooted in Islamic values—such as group collaboration in the spirit of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *amanah* (responsibility)—successfully fostered students’ confidence and willingness to participate actively.

Furthermore, interview results revealed that most students felt more confident speaking in front of the class because the project activities provided them with meaningful and authentic learning experiences combined with spiritual values. One student stated, “*I became more confident to express my opinion because I feel this is part of my group responsibility.*”

Improvement of Students’ Learning Outcomes

Students' learning outcomes were measured through an evaluation test administered after the implementation of the *Proyek Islami* in each cycle. The test assessed indicators of concept understanding, application of Islamic values in social contexts, and analytical ability in addressing real-life issues discussed in the project.

In Cycle I, the average learning score reached 72, with 21 students (66%) meeting the school's Minimum Mastery Criterion (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal*, KKM = 75). Reflection results showed that some students still lacked comprehensive understanding of the project concept and tended to focus more on the final product rather than the learning process.

After improvements were made in Cycle II—such as strengthening reflective guidance, clarifying group role distribution, and emphasizing the Islamic values of responsibility (*amanah*) and excellence in work (*itqan*)—significant progress was observed. The students' average score increased to 82, with 29 students (91%) achieving mastery.

Table 3.
Students' Average Learning Outcomes per Cycle

Cycle	Average Score	Number of Students Achieving Mastery	Mastery Percentage
I	72	21	66%
II	82	29	91%

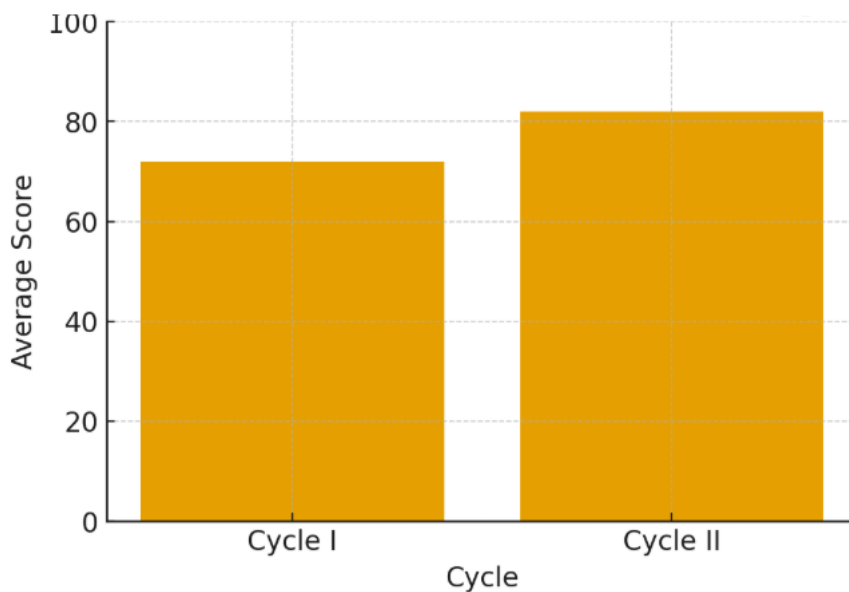


Figure 3a.
Improvement of Average Learning Scores

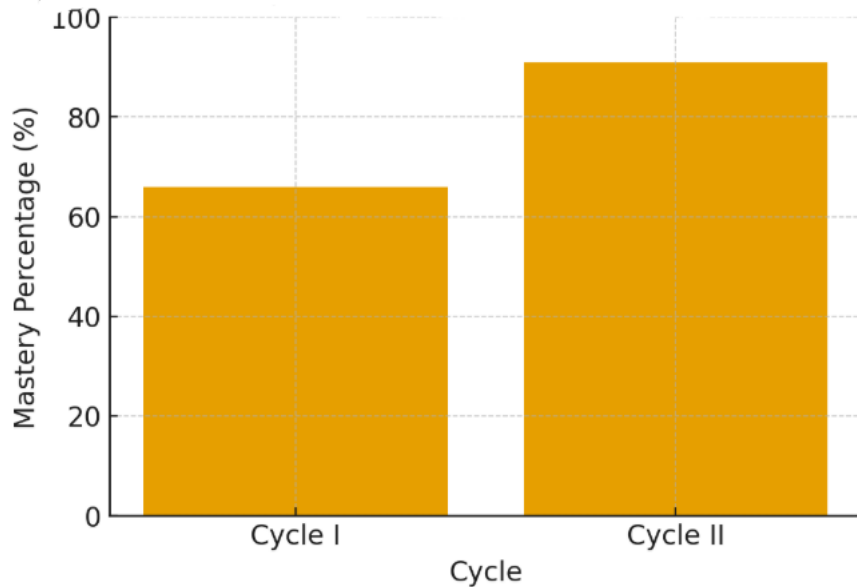


Figure 3b.
Students' Learning Mastery Percentage

Figure 2a illustrates an increase of 10 points in the average learning score from Cycle I to Cycle II.

Figure 2b shows an improvement of 25 percentage points, from 66% to 91%, in the number of students achieving mastery.

This improvement indicates that the Islamic Project-Based Learning approach not only strengthened affective and psychomotor aspects but also had a positive impact on students' cognitive achievement. Students demonstrated better conceptual understanding because they learned through authentic experiences, collaboration, and reflection on Islamic values relevant to their daily lives.

Integration of Islamic Values

In addition to academic improvement, the study also revealed a strong internalization of Islamic values throughout the *Proyek Islami*-based learning process. Through projects designed to integrate values such as responsibility (*amanah*), cooperation (*ta'awun*), honesty (*shidq*), and discipline/excellence (*itqan*), students not only learned to complete tasks but also practiced moral and spiritual principles in their daily school life.

Observation and interview results indicated that:

87% of students demonstrated *ta'awun* (cooperation) by dividing tasks fairly and respecting others' contributions.

81% of students showed strong *amanah* (responsibility) in completing their tasks on time and with dedication.

75% of students exhibited improved *adab* (Islamic manners) during presentations, such as greeting (*salam*), reciting prayers before starting, and speaking politely.

Table 4.

Indicators of Islamic Values Internalization

Islamic Value	Behavioral Indicator	Percentage of Students Demonstrating the Behavior
<i>Amanah</i> (Responsibility)	Completing tasks properly and on time	81%
<i>Ta'awun</i> (Cooperation)	Helping peers and being active in group work	87%
<i>Shidq</i> (Honesty)	Reporting project results truthfully	79%
<i>Itqan</i> (Discipline and Diligence)	Consistent attendance and participation in project activities	84%
<i>Adab</i> and Islamic Morality	Greeting, praying, and behaving respectfully	75%

Discussion

The results of the study show that the implementation of the *Islamic Project-Based Learning* model has a positive impact on students' independence, activeness, and learning outcomes in social studies. The findings indicate that when students are involved in meaningful real-life projects integrated with Islamic values, they become more confident in taking initiative, participate more actively, and demonstrate academic improvement. This interpretation aligns with Fauzi et al., who found that Project-Based Learning (PBL) within the context of Islamic education can strengthen independent character while sharpening critical thinking skills through collaborative projects that require problem-solving and ethical decision-making.

In terms of independence, the improvement from the first to the second cycle shows that students gradually shifted from dependence on teacher instructions to managing tasks independently. This indicates that the project structure (planning, task distribution, and monitoring) provided space for students to develop both individual and group responsibility. El Zakiya's study similarly found that the application of Project-Based Learning significantly enhances students' learning independence in religious education. The novelty of this research lies in its specific integration of *Islamic Project-Based Learning* within social studies classes, whereas most previous studies focused on Islamic religious education (PAI). Therefore, this research expands the understanding that project models based on Islamic values are also effective in the social sciences field.

In terms of activeness, the finding that students asked more questions, responded to peers' opinions, and participated in decision-making illustrates a shift from passive to interactive learning. This is consistent with reports that PBL in Islamic education increases student engagement and motivation, as well as Al Jauhari's observation that combining the scientific approach with PBL makes students more active in the stages of observing, asking, trying, reasoning, and communicating. The significant findings of this study show that student activeness increased not only quantitatively but also qualitatively—for example, students' questions became more critical, and group reflections more in-depth. This represents a new value introduced by the study: not merely more students speaking, but more *meaningful and deliberative* discourse.

The learning outcomes aspect shows an increase in both the average score and the percentage of students who achieved mastery in the second cycle. This improvement indicates that the project process was not only successful but also elevated academic achievement. In the field of religious education, many studies have shown a positive correlation between PBL and student learning outcomes. However, within the context of social studies integrated with Islamic values, this study adds that embedding Islamic values in projects can strengthen students' intrinsic motivation, which in turn deepens their conceptual understanding—not merely rote memorization.

Theoretically, these findings contribute to the development of project-based learning models in social and religious education. The *Islamic Project Model* developed in this study can be considered a modification or extension of classical PBL theory—where not only cognitive competence and 21st-century skills are emphasized, but Islamic character becomes an integral component at every stage of the project (planning, implementation, reflection). This is the study's novel contribution: integrating Islamic character formation with the reinforcement of independence, activeness, and mastery of social studies content.

Practically, the implications of this research are important for teachers, schools, and curriculum developers. Teachers can adopt the Islamic Project framework as a more holistic alternative strategy for social studies instruction: they should design projects relevant to students' social lives that include Islamic values and guide students not only to complete the tasks but to internalize the learning process. Schools should provide flexible time allocation and supporting resources (e.g., project spaces, media tools) to ensure effective project implementation. Curriculum developers may consider including Islamic Project modules or guidelines within social studies materials—not only in religious education—so that character and academic competencies can develop harmoniously.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Yuliani and Hamzah (2023), who confirmed that project-based learning in social studies improves students' critical and collaborative thinking skills. Similarly, Kurniawati and Ramadhan (2022) found increased social learning outcomes through similar strategies. The novelty of this research lies in emphasizing the *Islamic Project* approach that integrates spiritual values into the learning process, as recommended by Mahfud and Wahyudi (2024). In this way, students gain not only academic achievements but also character skills relevant to 21st-century needs (Sari & Nugroho, 2022).

Nevertheless, the study also shows that success depends on teacher readiness and time management. Some students initially remained dependent and required more intensive guidance. These obstacles mirror challenges reported in the literature regarding PBL implementation, including teacher preparedness, time constraints, and group management. Future research may explore moderating variables such as learning motivation, emotional intelligence, or facility support to further maximize the effects of *Islamic Project-Based Learning*.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the *Islamic Project-Based Learning* model in Social Studies subjects at SMP IT Ihsanul Fikri Mungkid successfully improved students' independence, activeness, and learning outcomes. Students' independence was reflected in their increased initiative in organizing group roles and completing tasks without relying on the teacher. Student activeness also improved significantly through active participation in discussions,

presentations, and decision-making processes, while learning outcomes showed notable progress as indicated by the rise in average scores and the percentage of mastery across each cycle.

Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values within the project effectively strengthened students' character traits—such as responsibility, cooperation, and respect for diversity—so that Social Studies learning became not only cognitively oriented but also character-building in accordance with Islamic ethics. Thus, this research confirms that the *Islamic Project* model serves as an innovative alternative for Social Studies instruction that addresses the challenge of low student engagement while enriching Project-Based Learning theory with Islamic character dimensions.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that Social Studies teachers implement the *Islamic Project* model more broadly in their teaching practices to enhance student engagement and simultaneously foster character aligned with Islamic values. Schools are also encouraged to provide sufficient time, facilities, and teacher training to ensure optimal project implementation.

In addition, curriculum developers are advised to consider integrating the *Islamic Project-Based Learning* approach as an alternative instructional strategy in Social Studies to strengthen the synergy between academic achievement and character education. Future research may expand the scope to different educational levels or incorporate additional variables such as learning motivation, 21st-century skills, and social intelligence to enrich findings and examine the consistency of the *Islamic Project* model's effectiveness across various learning contexts.

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