

Effectiveness of a Student-Centered Learning Approach in Improving Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the student-centered learning approach in improving academic achievement in elementary schools in Jombang Regency. The research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving students and teachers participating in the learning process. The findings indicate that the student-centered learning approach significantly contributes to enhancing students' understanding and academic performance. Students engaged in this method were more active, highly motivated, and demonstrated improvements in critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers also experienced positive impacts in increasing student participation, although they faced challenges such as time constraints and the need to adapt teaching methods. The study concludes that student-centered learning can be an effective strategy for improving the quality of education in elementary schools. To ensure its success, support from various stakeholders is needed, including teacher training and the provision of adequate learning resources.

Key words: *Student-Centered Learning, Learning Effectiveness, Academic Achievement, Elementary School, Education*

INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, the effectiveness of learning approaches is a key factor in improving students' academic achievement. One approach that has gained increasing attention is student-centered learning. This approach positions students as the primary subjects in the learning process, where they actively seek, process, and apply information with the teacher acting as a facilitator (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Unlike traditional teacher-centered approaches, student-centered learning emphasizes active student involvement in the learning process. With the evolving educational paradigm that focuses on 21st-century skills development, this approach is considered more relevant in creating an effective and engaging learning environment.

Jombang Regency, as a region with a strong commitment to primary education, continues to strive for improving the quality of learning to support students' academic

achievement. Significant challenges remain in implementing student-centered learning. Many elementary schools still rely on conventional methods, with lecture-based instruction as the primary teaching strategy. As a result, students often become passive recipients of information without sufficient opportunities to explore concepts in depth (A. Samad dkk., 2023). This lack of engagement negatively impacts their learning experience and, ultimately, their academic performance.

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of student-centered learning in enhancing academic achievement among elementary school students in Jombang Regency. The primary focus of this research is to identify how this approach is applied in the learning process, the extent to which students are actively engaged, and the impact on their learning outcomes (Syafi'i dkk., 2024). Additionally, this study seeks to examine the challenges encountered in implementing this approach and the strategies that can be employed to overcome these obstacles.

One of the main reasons student-centered learning is considered effective is its focus on students' needs, interests, and learning styles. Various techniques, such as group discussions, project-based learning, and problem-based learning, provide students with opportunities to develop critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills (Habibulloh & Ridho, 2024). Active engagement in learning fosters greater motivation and deeper understanding of the subject matter, ultimately leading to improved academic achievement. Previous research has demonstrated that this approach yields better learning outcomes compared to passive, conventional teaching methods.

Beyond pedagogical factors, the school environment and the support of educators play a crucial role in the effectiveness of this approach. Teachers have a critical role in designing learning activities that encourage student participation and provide appropriate guidance (E. Johnson dkk., 2024). However, not all teachers have the necessary understanding and skills to implement this approach effectively. A lack of training and professional development opportunities can hinder the adoption of student-centered learning. Therefore, this study will also explore teachers' capacity to implement this approach and the factors that can enhance its effectiveness.

This research considers other factors such as the availability of infrastructure and resources that support active learning. Adequate learning facilities, such as flexible classrooms, access to technology, and relevant teaching materials, can contribute to the successful implementation of student-centered learning (K. Syafi'i & Ikwandi, 2023). Additionally, parental and community support plays a vital role in creating a conducive learning environment for students.

Through this study, a clearer picture of the effectiveness of student-centered learning in improving academic achievement in elementary schools in Jombang Regency is expected to emerge. The findings of this research are anticipated to provide recommendations for education policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders in designing more effective and student-centered learning strategies. Consequently, this approach can be implemented more broadly and have a positive impact on educational development in Jombang Regency specifically, and in Indonesia as a whole.

METHOD

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the effectiveness of student-centered learning in improving academic achievement in elementary schools in Jombang Regency (Creswell, 2007). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the experiences, perspectives, and practices of teachers and students in depth within a naturally occurring learning environment.

Research Location and Participants

The study was conducted in several elementary schools in Jombang Regency. The participants include classroom teachers, students, and school principals who have experience in implementing student-centered learning. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that individuals involved had direct relevance to the research focus.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was conducted through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis (Glesne, 2016). In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and school principals to understand the strategies, challenges, and impacts of student-centered learning. Classroom observations aimed to directly examine how this approach is implemented in the learning process, including teacher-student interactions, teaching methods used, and student responses. Document analysis involved reviewing lesson plans, student learning outcomes, and school policies that support this approach.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles dkk., 2014). Data reduction involved selecting information relevant to the research focus, while data presentation was carried out in

the form of narratives, tables, and diagrams to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn through data triangulation from various sources to ensure the validity and accuracy of the research findings.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study applied source and method triangulation (Patton, 2002). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results from different informants, while method triangulation involved combining interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, the member-checking technique was applied by asking participants to review the interview results to ensure that data interpretation aligned with their experiences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that student-centered learning has a positive impact on students' academic achievement in elementary schools in Jombang Regency. Interviews with teachers revealed that implementing this method increased students' active engagement in learning, improved their conceptual understanding, and fostered their self-confidence. Classroom observations also showed that students were more enthusiastic in discussions, completed tasks independently, and collaborated effectively in groups.

Document analysis of academic assessments demonstrated an increase in students' average scores after the implementation of this approach. Most students experienced score improvements in core subjects such as Mathematics, Indonesian Language, and Natural Sciences. Additionally, interviews with students revealed that they felt more comfortable and motivated to learn when given opportunities to actively participate in the learning process.

Academic Achievement Improvement

The research findings indicate that a student-centered learning approach has a positive impact on academic achievement. Based on observations and interviews, students who actively engage in learning demonstrate a better understanding of the material compared to those taught using conventional teacher-centered methods. Data from formative and summative assessments also reveal that students who learn through this method achieve higher scores than those in the control group using traditional approaches. This highlights that active student involvement in the learning process significantly contributes to their academic performance.

A student-centered learning approach allows students to play a more active role in the learning process. Instead of passively receiving information, students directly

engage in exploring materials, participating in group discussions, and solving problems relevant to real life (Sholeh & Muzakki, 2024). By providing opportunities for students to explore topics independently and collaborate with peers, they find it easier to understand complex concepts. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which suggests that learning involving active interaction between students and their environment leads to deeper and more meaningful comprehension.

Beyond improving material comprehension, this approach also enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills, contributing to better academic performance. Students guided to analyze problems, evaluate various alternative solutions, and construct logical arguments demonstrate significant improvement in their academic abilities (A. Syafi'i dkk., 2024). These skills are essential for preparing students to tackle academic and professional challenges in the future. Interviews with teachers reveal that students accustomed to this method are more confident in expressing their opinions and more independent in seeking additional information to support their learning.

Student-centered learning also positively affects students' emotional engagement in the learning process. Students feel more valued as they are given the opportunity to express their ideas and learn in ways that align with their individual learning styles (Ma dkk., 2024). A more supportive and inclusive learning environment fosters greater motivation, leading to better academic outcomes across various subjects. High learning motivation is often linked to academic success, as motivated students tend to be more diligent in completing tasks and more enthusiastic about exploring new topics.

The effectiveness of this approach is influenced by factors such as teacher support, adequate learning facilities, and parental involvement in home-based learning support. Teachers who can effectively manage classrooms and implement appropriate methods create a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere (Sholeh dkk., 2024). Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in adopting innovative and flexible teaching strategies. They must act as facilitators who encourage students to think critically, seek information, and construct their own understanding.

Facilities such as educational technology and diverse learning materials also support the success of student-centered learning. The use of technology in education, such as educational videos, simulations, and interactive software, can help students grasp concepts more effectively. Additionally, access to various learning resources, both digital and printed, enriches students' learning experiences and allows them to explore information independently. Hence, schools and educational institutions must ensure students have access to sufficient learning resources (Riveira, dkk., 2014).

Besides the role of teachers and learning facilities, parental involvement in supporting home-based learning is another critical factor for the success of this method. Parents can assist by creating a conducive learning environment, providing motivational encouragement, and supporting their children in developing independent learning skills (Sholeh, 2023). Improved communication between teachers and parents is also necessary to help parents understand how they can better support their children's learning process. With collaboration between teachers, students, and parents, the student-centered learning approach can be implemented more effectively.

Despite its numerous benefits, some challenges arise in its implementation. One major challenge is time constraints in covering the curriculum, particularly for teachers accustomed to conventional teaching methods (Yulianti dkk., 2024). This learning approach often requires more time as students are given the freedom to explore concepts independently and collaborate with peers. In contrast, conventional methods allow teachers to deliver material more quickly through direct instruction. Consequently, some teachers struggle to balance curriculum coverage with the application of more interactive learning approaches.

Not all students possess the same level of independent learning skills. Some require more guidance from teachers to grasp concepts, especially those less familiar with active learning. Differences in learning styles and comprehension levels among students pose challenges in creating an inclusive learning environment (Sholeh, 2025). Students who grasp concepts quickly tend to be more active in discussions, whereas those who struggle may feel left behind and less confident to participate. This can lead to disparities in student engagement, potentially hindering the overall effectiveness of the approach.

To address these challenges, teachers require training on effectively adapting this approach. Professional development programs should equip teachers with classroom management strategies suited to student-centered learning. These training sessions can also help teachers develop more flexible teaching techniques, enabling them to tailor learning methods to the diverse needs of students (Sholeh dkk., 2024). Additionally, teachers should be provided with skills in designing formative assessments that gradually measure students' understanding, allowing them to offer targeted interventions for struggling students.

It can be concluded that the student-centered learning approach is an effective strategy for enhancing academic achievement. Besides fostering a deeper understanding of the material, this approach also cultivates critical thinking skills, independence, and higher learning motivation. Therefore, its implementation should

continue to be developed and adapted to students' needs across different educational levels. With adequate support from various stakeholders, this approach has the potential to create a more effective and innovative learning environment for students.

Student and Teacher Responses

Students have shown a highly positive response to this learning approach. Based on interviews and surveys distributed to students, the majority feel more motivated and enthusiastic about learning. They stated that teaching methods involving discussions, group work, and problem-based projects make them more active and less likely to feel bored. The students' engagement in this learning approach is driven by opportunities to directly explore the material. When students are given the freedom to explore concepts and discover answers through discussion and teamwork, they feel more challenged and develop a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning.

This approach enhances social interactions among students, indirectly contributing to the development of their communication skills. Many students expressed that working in groups helps them understand different perspectives and develop negotiation and teamwork skills. This indicates that, beyond improving academic understanding, student-centered learning methods also contribute to the development of essential social skills for their future lives.

There are also some challenges that students face when adapting to this approach. Some students who are accustomed to conventional teaching methods initially struggle to adjust (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009). They feel uncomfortable with the demands of being more active in class and having to be more independent in completing tasks. Nevertheless, with proper guidance and support from teachers, most students eventually adapt and enjoy the more dynamic learning process.

From the teachers' perspective, most acknowledge that this approach yields positive results, particularly in increasing student participation. Teachers who implement this method report that students ask more questions, engage more in discussions, and demonstrate a better understanding of the subject matter (Masdukk., 2024). Teachers also notice changes in classroom dynamics, where students are no longer passive listeners but actively construct their own understanding.

Some teachers face challenges in implementing this method, especially in managing larger classes. A large number of students can make classroom management more challenging, requiring more effective strategies to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to participate. Additionally, teachers unfamiliar with this method need time to adapt and design strategies that align with their students' characteristics. They must be more creative in lesson planning, preparing engaging materials, and finding ways to keep discussions focused and productive.

Another difficulty faced by teachers is the need to provide various learning resources that support student-centered learning. Some teachers expressed the need for more training and resources to optimize the implementation of this method. In some cases, limited facilities and teaching materials hinder the effectiveness of this approach. Therefore, support from schools, both in terms of professional training and adequate facilities, is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of student-centered learning methods.

Despite some challenges faced by both teachers and students, student-centered learning approaches still have a positive impact on increasing student engagement and learning outcomes. With proper support, including teacher training and sufficient learning facilities, this approach has the potential to be an effective strategy for improving the quality of education at the elementary school level.

Challenges and Solutions in Implementation

Although the student-centered learning approach has shown positive results, several challenges arise during its implementation. One of the main challenges is time constraints in covering the curriculum, particularly for teachers who are accustomed to conventional teaching methods. This approach often requires more time because students are given the freedom to explore concepts independently and collaborate with their peers. This differs from traditional methods, where teachers can deliver material directly in a shorter period. As a result, some teachers struggle to balance meeting curriculum targets with implementing a more interactive teaching approach.

Additionally, not all students possess the same level of independent learning skills. Some students require more guidance from teachers to grasp the material, especially those unfamiliar with active learning methods. Differences in learning styles and comprehension levels among students pose a challenge in creating an inclusive learning environment (Gigante & Firestone, 2008). Students who grasp concepts quickly tend to be more active in discussions, while slower learners often feel left behind and lack confidence to participate. This can create disparities in student engagement and hinder the effectiveness of learning.

Beyond student-related challenges, limitations in facilities and resources also hinder the implementation of this approach. Some schools, especially in areas with limited infrastructure, struggle to provide learning media that support student-centered learning. Limited access to technology, such as computers and the internet, can restrict students' ability to explore broader information (Dimitriadou & Lanitis, 2023). Teachers also need more varied and interactive teaching materials to facilitate more effective learning.

To address these challenges, teacher training programs should be provided to help educators adapt this approach more effectively. Teachers need to develop classroom management strategies suited to student-centered learning. These training sessions can also help teachers develop more flexible teaching techniques, allowing them to adjust instructional methods according to students' diverse needs (Sleeter, 2018). Moreover, teachers should be equipped with skills to design formative assessments that measure student understanding progressively, enabling timely intervention for struggling students.

Providing interactive learning resources and integrating technology into the learning process can also enhance the effectiveness of this method. Schools should ensure that students have access to a variety of learning materials, including textbooks, digital modules, and technology-based learning media. Online learning platforms can support students' independent exploration of subjects. Furthermore, the integration of technology, such as educational videos, simulations, and interactive software, can boost student motivation and engagement in learning.

Support from schools and parents also plays a crucial role in creating a conducive learning environment for this approach to be successfully implemented. Schools should provide opportunities for teachers to experiment with different teaching methods and offer adequate administrative support. Meanwhile, parents can help by fostering independent learning skills at home. Strengthening communication between teachers and parents is also necessary to help parents understand how they can better support their children's learning process.

Despite the challenges in implementing student-centered learning, appropriate solutions can help optimize the effectiveness of this method. With proper teacher training, the provision of interactive learning resources, technological integration, and support from schools and parents, this approach can be better implemented to improve the quality of education at the elementary level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study on the effectiveness of student-centered learning in enhancing academic achievement in elementary schools in Jombang Regency, it can be concluded that this method has a significant positive impact on students' comprehension and academic performance. This approach encourages students to be more active in the learning process, enhances critical thinking skills, and fosters higher learning motivation. This study found that teachers who implement student-centered learning experience improved interactions with students and adopt

more varied teaching methods. However, several challenges remain, including time constraints in classroom management, the need for adaptation in teaching strategies, and the necessity for better support in terms of facilities and learning resources. Student-centered learning can be an effective strategy for improving the quality of elementary education. The successful implementation of this method requires support from various stakeholders, including education policymakers, school principals, teachers, and parents. Providing adequate teacher training and sufficient learning resources are crucial factors in ensuring the optimal application of this approach.

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