

Implementation of Active Learning Using Card Sort to Enhance Student Engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SDN 3 Karangtalun

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ABSTRACT

Instructional practices that center on the student as the primary focus of learning activities significantly contribute to achieving optimal learning outcomes. This is particularly evident in the implementation of active learning, which requires students to engage actively through thinking, discussion, and problem-solving. One technique applicable within this approach is the "card sort" method a strategy that encourages students to organize and categorize information, thereby strengthening conceptual understanding and enhancing memory retention. Preliminary observations and interviews at SDN 3 Karangtalun revealed that the previous instructional process was teacher-dominated, resulting in suboptimal student engagement. This situation indicated a need to develop teaching methods that are more innovative, interactive, and varied. Consequently, this study focuses on implementing an active learning model using the card sort technique to increase student engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons.

Keywords: Active Learning, Card Sort, PAI, Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Optimal learning can be achieved through active student participation throughout the teaching and learning process. In the context of primary education specifically in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) student engagement is a crucial factor for attaining optimal learning outcome (Muh Qosim, 2024), in practice, instruction remains dominated by the teacher, resulting in limited active participation by students in the learning process. This situation has led to a decline in student learning engagement across mental, emotional, and intellectual dimensions.

In line with evolving educational paradigms, the active learning approach has emerged as an alternative to foster greater student engagement. Active learning models prioritize direct learner involvement through activities such as critical thinking, exchanging ideas, and problem-solving (Anwar, 2025). Previous research indicates that implementing active learning can enhance both student engagement and learning outcomes. For instance, research by Melvin L. Silberman emphasizes that active learning encourages comprehensive student involvement in the learning process (Sudrajat, 2020). Furthermore, studies in educational journals reveal that active learning strategies contribute significantly to increased student participation in the classroom.

One effective active learning method is "card sort," a technique that invites students to categorize and organize information (I Wayan Merta, 2021). Prior research demonstrates that the card sort method can improve students' conceptual understanding and retention. However, these studies have generally focused on cognitive learning outcomes, while the broader dimensions of learning engagement encompassing mental, emotional, and intellectual activity have not been extensively examined, particularly within the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools (Sadue, 2021).

Based on the review, a research gap exists regarding the lack of comprehensive studies on enhancing student learning activity through the application of the "card sort" method within an active learning framework, particularly in Islamic Religious Education settings at the elementary school level (Supiyan, 2021). Furthermore, previous studies have tended to focus on only a single aspect of engagement, thereby failing to provide a holistic picture of the overall development of student engagement (Putri et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study aims to complement and expand upon previous research findings by examining student learning engagement in a more comprehensive manner (Sitanggang et al., 2026). It not only reinforces earlier research on the implementation of active learning but also offers a novel contribution by integrating three dimensions of engagement mental, emotional, and intellectual into a single study. The study's innovation lies in its comprehensive analysis of the learning process using the "card sort" method within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons at the elementary school level an area that has not yet been extensively researched in this specific context.

Based on this background, the primary objective of this study is to describe and analyze the implementation of an active learning model utilizing the card sort method, aimed at enhancing student engagement encompassing mental, emotional, and intellectual aspects during Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons at State Elementary School 3 (SDN 3) Karangtalun, Tulungagung.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach specifically a case study design to conduct an in-depth analysis of the implementation of active learning using the card sort method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons at State Elementary School 3 Karangtalun, Tulungagung. The researcher served as the primary instrument, conducting fieldwork to gather necessary information through observation, interviews, and document collection (Sugiyono, 2018). The research site was selected because the school had already implemented active learning, was supported by competent teachers, and provided adequate access for the research process (Albi Anggito, 2018). The data utilized in this study comprised primary data obtained from the school principal, educators, and students, alongside supplementary data derived from documents and supporting literature (Sarwono, 2006). Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and were continuously analyzed through the processes of data summarization, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Sukmadinata, 2008). To ensure the validity of the findings, the study assessed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through the triangulation of sources, techniques, and timeframes, as well as through prolonged observation (Umar, 2014). The entire research process was conducted systematically spanning preparation, fieldwork, data

analysis, and final report compilation to ensure that the findings were grounded in strong theoretical support and scientifically substantiated by real-world conditions in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementing active learning using the card sort method at SDN 3 Karangtalun has positively contributed to increasing student engagement during the learning process. This improvement is evident in the students' mental, emotional, and intellectual development, fostered through group discussions, card sorting activities, teamwork, and the presentation of learning outcomes. Through this active learning approach, students become more confident in expressing their opinions, capable of collaborating with peers, and skilled at problem-solving, while also demonstrating more critical and focused thinking abilities. Furthermore, the learning atmosphere becomes more interactive and enjoyable, encouraging direct student involvement in every activity; the process shifts away from being teacher-centered, instead offering students opportunities to construct their understanding and learning experiences both independently and collaboratively.

A. Implementation of Active Learning with Card Sort to Enhance Students' Mental Engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SDN 3 Karangtalun

Based on research findings gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation, the active learning approach utilizing the card sort method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons at SDN 3 Karangtalun plays a significant role in enhancing students' mental engagement (Mufidah, 2020). In this study, mental engagement is demonstrated by students' active involvement in thinking processes, comprehending material, problem-solving, expressing opinions, and collaborating during group discussions throughout the lesson (Sitanggang et al., 2026).

The card sort method is implemented by organizing students into diverse, simple groups. Each group receives a set of cards containing fragments of material that must be arranged, matched, and grouped according to specific categories (Putri et al., 2025). This activity requires students to think actively before determining the correct answers. Rather than passively receiving teacher explanations, students must read and understand the card content, discuss it within their groups, and make decisions based on their collective reasoning. It is this process that stimulates student mental activity during the lesson (Supiyan, 2021).

Observations indicate that during the card sort activity, students appear more focused and enthusiastic about the lesson. They actively engage in group discussions, exchange opinions, and strive to find the most accurate answers to the problems presented. The classroom atmosphere becomes more dynamic as nearly all students are actively involved in the learning activities. This engagement is evident when students attempt to understand the card content, connect concepts, and provide rationales for the answers selected by their groups (Marlina et al., 2023).

Research findings also demonstrate that the card sort method enhances students' collaborative problem-solving skills. When students encounter difficulties in categorizing cards, they discuss the issues and assist one another in finding solutions. Such activities not only exercise students' thinking processes but also cultivate their ability to articulate ideas and logically defend

their opinions. 'This demonstrates that students' mental engagement develops through critical thinking processes and interactions during group discussions.

Interviews with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher revealed that implementing the "card sort" active learning method made students more engaged during the teaching and learning process compared to conventional lectures. The teacher explained that previously, some students were passive and lacked confidence, merely receiving explanations without direct involvement in learning activities. However, following the implementation of the card sort method, students became more willing to ask questions, actively participated in discussions, and were able to voice their opinions to their groupmates. This indicates that the card sort method fosters a more communicative learning environment and maximizes students' mental engagement.

Information gathered from student interviews further corroborated these research findings. Students stated that learning via the card sort method increased their enthusiasm, as the lessons were conducted in groups and were not monotonous. They found the material easier to grasp because they could discuss topics and assist one another when facing difficulties. Some students also noted that the tasks of sorting and matching cards challenged them to think critically and collaborate to find the correct answers. This demonstrates that the card sort method effectively stimulates active thinking among students throughout the learning process.

The increase in students' mental engagement observed in this study aligns with Jean Piaget's constructivist theory, which posits that individuals construct knowledge through active learning experiences. According to Piaget, students comprehend material more effectively when they are directly involved in the process of discovering and constructing that knowledge. With the card sort method, students do not merely receive information from the teacher; instead, they actively process it by reading, comprehending, connecting concepts, and drawing conclusions based on group discussions. These activities reflect a process of knowledge construction carried out independently by students through direct learning experiences.

In addition to constructivist theory, the findings of this study align with Lev Vygotsky's theory of social development, which emphasizes the crucial role of social interaction in learning. According to Vygotsky, students' thinking abilities develop through collaboration and interaction with others. In the card sort method, students learn through group discussions and the exchange of ideas with their peers. When students struggle to grasp the material, other group members provide explanations, thereby facilitating a collaborative learning process. This demonstrates that social interaction plays a vital role in enhancing students' thinking skills and mental engagement.

Students' mental engagement is also evident in their improved critical thinking skills during the learning process. Rather than simply receiving direct answers, students must analyze the content of the cards and determine the appropriate categories based on their own understanding. This analytical process encourages learners to think logically and structurally before making decisions. Furthermore, students learn to justify their chosen answers through presentations and class discussions. Thus, the card sort method does more than just boost learner participation; it also enhances critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

The card sort method also fosters a learning atmosphere that is cheerful, enjoyable, and dynamic rather than monotonous. Conducting lessons through group activities cultivates a sense of comfort and boosts learning motivation among students. This contrasts with traditional, teacher-centered instruction, which often leaves students passive and prone to boredom. Through card sorting, students have the opportunity to move around, discuss, and engage directly with the lesson, leading to improved attention and concentration.

Increased mental engagement is also reflected in students' willingness to ask questions and express their opinions during discussions. Previously, some students tended to be shy and lacked confidence when speaking in front of the class. However, following the implementation of the card sort method, students became accustomed to discussing topics and sharing ideas within small groups. This habit gradually boosted their confidence, encouraging active participation in the learning process. Based on the preceding explanation, it is evident that implementing the "card sort" active learning method plays a positive role in enhancing students' mental engagement at SDN 3 Karangtalun. This approach fosters active thinking and enables students to comprehend material independently, solve problems collaboratively within groups, and participate directly in the teaching and learning process. Instruction shifts away from being teacher-centered, instead providing students with the opportunity to become the primary agents of their own learning. Consequently, the card sort method serves as an effective alternative instructional strategy for developing students' mental engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons.

B. Implementation of Active Learning via Card Sort to Enhance Students' Emotional Engagement at State Elementary School 3 Karangtalun

Based on research data gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation, the implementation of an active learning model using the "card sort" technique in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons at SDN 3 Karangtalun demonstrated an improvement in students' emotional engagement during the learning process. This emotional engagement was evident in the students' ability to manage their attitudes, respect differing opinions, collaborate in group activities, and adapt to the dynamics of classroom discussions.

The card sort method was implemented by forming study groups comprising students with varying ability levels. Each group received cards containing subject matter that had to be arranged and sorted into specific categories. Through this activity, students were not only required to understand the lesson material but also to learn how to foster positive social interactions with their group members. This type of learning process provided students with opportunities to practice patience, control their emotions, and learn to respect differing opinions during discussions (Halimatus Sakdiyah, S., & Ifana Sari, 2016).

Field observations indicated that students began to participate in discussions in a more orderly and focused manner. They appeared better able to listen to their peers' opinions fully before offering a response. Furthermore, students began to grasp the importance of maintaining a comfortable and conducive group atmosphere throughout the lesson. When differences in answers arose within the group, students did not immediately impose their own views; instead, they sought solutions through deliberation with their fellow group members.

Interviews with the PAI teacher revealed that the card sort method brought about positive changes in students' emotional attitudes during lessons. The teacher explained that previously, some students were prone to talking out of turn, lacked patience during discussions, and struggled to accept their peers' opinions. However, after the card sort method was introduced, students became better at self-regulation and grew accustomed to respecting others during discussions.

Additionally, the teacher noted that group learning via the card sort method fostered a sense of shared responsibility among the students. Each group member played a role in completing the task, encouraging students to help and support one another. When a group member did not yet grasp the material, other students would offer explanations in a constructive manner, without belittling their peer. This dynamic demonstrates the development of empathy and social concern among students during the learning activity.

These research findings are further supported by student interviews. Most students reported that the card sort method helped them remain calmer and more patient during discussions. They became accustomed to waiting for their turn to speak and listening to their peers' opinions before sharing their own ideas. Furthermore, students learned to accept group decisions, even when their own suggestions were not adopted. This indicates that the card sort learning method fosters tolerance and emotional self-regulation among students.

Increased emotional engagement was also evident in the students' improved ability to build positive friendships within the class. During discussions, students showed greater respect for the speaker and refrained from mocking one another when incorrect answers were given. The learning atmosphere became more comfortable as students began to appreciate the importance of mutual respect and teamwork. Consequently, the learning process focused not only on understanding the subject matter but also on fostering positive social relationships among the students.

The increase in students' emotional engagement aligns with Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, which defines the concept as a person's competence in understanding and controlling their own emotions, empathizing with others, and building harmonious social relationships. Through the card sort method, students learned to manage their emotions during disagreements, understand their groupmates' perspectives, and maintain cooperation to achieve shared learning goals.

The findings of this study align with the concept of active learning proposed by Melvin L. Silberman, which posits that active learning engages students holistically physically, mentally, and emotionally. When the card sort method is applied, students are not merely engaged in cognitive tasks and problem-solving; they also actively communicate, collaborate, and manage their behavior during discussions. Consequently, learning becomes more meaningful as students gain firsthand experience through social interaction within their groups.

Beyond improving emotional regulation, the card sort method helps students build confidence in their interactions with peers. Students who were previously disengaged from learning activities begin to feel comfortable expressing their opinions during group discussions. The small-group learning environment fosters a sense of comfort, encouraging students to speak up and participate actively. Thus, the card sort method helps students gradually develop both the courage to participate and essential social skills.

The card sort method also plays a role in fostering discipline and a sense of responsibility among students during lessons. Through discussions, students learn to adhere to group norms such as waiting for their turn to speak, completing tasks within the allotted time, and maintaining orderliness. These practices gradually instill a sense of discipline and responsibility in the students.

An interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere makes students feel at ease during lessons. Collaborative group work boosts student engagement, preventing boredom and keeping interest levels high. These conditions make it easier for students to regulate their emotions and enjoy the classroom learning process.

Based on this overview, it is evident that implementing the card sort method a form of active learning positively impacts students' emotional engagement at SDN 3 Karangtalun. Through discussion and group collaboration, students learn to regulate their emotions, respect the opinions of others, cultivate tolerance, and build positive friendships with their peers. Thus, instruction using the card sort method not only helps improve understanding of the material but also plays a role in shaping students' character and emotional development throughout the learning process.

C. Implementation of the Card Sort Active Learning Method to Enhance Students' Intellectual Engagement at State Elementary School 3 Karangtalun

Based on findings from direct observation, interviews, and documentation, the implementation of the "card sort" active learning model in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons at SDN 3 Karangtalun resulted in increased student intellectual engagement during the learning process. This intellectual engagement was evidenced by improvements in students' ability to comprehend the material, think critically, analyze information, articulate opinions logically, and solve problems through group discussions and presentations of their work (Azizah, 2026).

The card sort method was implemented by forming study teams; each team was given cards containing specific topics to match and group according to predetermined categories. Through this activity, students did not merely receive passive explanations from the teacher but were actively involved in the learning process by reading, comprehending card content, discussing, and determining answers based on collective reasoning. These activities encouraged students to make greater use of their cognitive abilities during the lesson (Sholekah, 2023).

Observations indicated that students appeared more focused and serious when participating in lessons using the card sort method. They endeavored to understand the content of the cards before assigning them to the appropriate categories. When differences of opinion arose among group members, students attempted to provide reasons and explanations based on their individual understandings. This demonstrates that the learning process successfully engaged students' intellectual faculties through collaborative thinking, analysis, and decision-making. Furthermore, the card sort method helped students deepen their understanding of the learning material. During the sorting process, students were required to read and carefully examine the content to avoid errors in categorization. This activity trained students to connect concepts, distinguish between pieces of information, and draw conclusions based on analyses conducted with their groups. Consequently, students did not simply memorize the material but gained a more focused and meaningful understanding of the subject matter.

Discussions with the PAI teacher confirmed that the implementation of the card sort method had a positive impact on the development of students' intellectual abilities. The teacher explained that the teaching and learning process became more active because students were directly involved in thinking activities and group discussions. Through card-matching activities and the presentation of discussion outcomes, students grew more confident in expressing their opinions and were able to provide reasons for their chosen answers. Furthermore, the teacher observed an improvement in the students' understanding of the subject matter, as they learned firsthand through the experience of discussion and group collaboration.

Research findings also indicate that the card sort method can enhance students' critical thinking skills during the teaching and learning process. When students encounter cards that are difficult to understand, they seek solutions through group discussion and by connecting new material to their existing knowledge. This process trains students to think logically and avoid rushing when making decisions; they learn to consider various opinions before settling on the answer they deem most appropriate.

In addition to fostering critical thinking, the card sort method helps students develop intellectual communication skills. Following the discussion, students are required to present their team's work to the class. This presentation activity trains them to explain their answers in a coherent, clear, and systematic manner. Students do not merely report the discussion outcomes; they also articulate the reasoning and thought processes used to categorize the cards. These activities demonstrate that learning via the card sort method cultivates students' ability to convey ideas and thought processes in a scientifically sound yet accessible way.

Interviews with students reveal that they find it easier to grasp the material when using the card sort method. Students noted that the tasks of sorting and matching cards stimulate more active thinking than simply listening to a teacher's explanation. Furthermore, team-based learning facilitates the exchange of ideas and allows students to explain concepts to one another when understanding is lacking. This dynamic fosters greater student engagement and prevents boredom during lessons.

The increase in students' intellectual engagement observed in this study aligns with Jean Piaget's constructivist theory. According to Piaget, knowledge is not directly transferred from teacher to student but is instead constructed by the students themselves through active learning experiences. Through the card sort method, students are directly involved in comprehending the material by reading, analyzing, comparing, and drawing conclusions based on group discussions. These activities demonstrate that students build their own understanding through tangible learning experiences. Furthermore, the findings of this study align with Melvin L. Silberman's concept of active learning, which emphasizes that active learning must directly involve students in thinking, discussing, problem-solving, and sharing ideas. With the card sort method, students do not merely sit and listen to the teacher's explanations; instead, they actively participate in the entire learning process—from comprehending the content on the cards and discussing it within their groups to presenting their findings to the class. Consequently, the learning experience becomes more meaningful as students gain firsthand learning experiences.

Students' intellectual engagement is also evident in their increased self-confidence and willingness to express their opinions. Initially, some students were hesitant to speak in front of the class;

however, following the implementation of the card sort method, they became accustomed to sharing ideas and group discussion outcomes. Small-group learning fosters a sense of comfort, encouraging students to speak up and voice their views. This practice gradually helps students develop both their critical thinking skills and their confidence in communication.

In addition, the card sort method cultivates student independence in learning. During the activity, students are required to understand the material before engaging in group discussions. This approach fosters a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning processes. Rather than relying solely on the teacher's explanations, students actively seek out and comprehend information independently before sharing their insights with the group (Nurhidayati, 2017).

Instruction utilizing the card sort method fosters a classroom atmosphere that is increasingly active and interactive. Students appear more enthusiastic about the lesson because they are directly involved in the learning activities. The learning environment becomes more dynamic as students actively engage in discussions, ask questions, offer responses, and collaborate to complete group tasks. Consequently, instruction is not solely teacher-centered; instead, it provides space for students to optimize their intellectual capabilities. Based on this overview, it is evident that implementing the card sort method a form of active learning positively impacts students' intellectual engagement at SDN 3 Karangtalun. Through activities such as discussion, card sorting, and presenting their findings, students engage in active thinking, interpret and analyze topics, and gain the confidence to express their opinions in a coherent and logical manner. The teaching and learning process becomes more meaningful due to the students' direct involvement and their acquisition of active, collaborative learning experiences. Therefore, the card sort method serves as an effective instructional choice for optimizing students' intellectual engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes (E. N. Hanifah, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of active learning using the "card sort" method effectively enhances student engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons across the board. This engagement is reflected in the mental aspect through student involvement in thinking and problem-solving; the emotional aspect through self-management and collaborative skills; and the intellectual aspect through the development of critical and analytical thinking abilities and the confidence to express opinions. These findings demonstrate that student-centered, activity-based learning not only deepens understanding of the subject matter but also shapes behavior and social skills. Conceptually, the study indicates that active learning utilizing card sorting is an appropriate strategy for integrating students' cognitive, affective, and social dimensions, thereby fostering a more meaningful and comprehensive learning process.

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