

Applying Discovery Learning within a Fitrah-Based Education Framework to Foster Students' Religious Character

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Abstract

This study aims to improve students' religious character through the implementation of *Discovery Learning* integrated with *Fitrah Based Education* (FBE) in Grade III students of SDN Rambutan 05 Pagi, East Jakarta. A Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the Kemmis and McTaggart model was employed, consisting of three cycles with four stages in each: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data were collected using observation, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The findings showed a significant improvement in students' religious character. The percentage of students achieving the minimum mastery criteria (MMC) increased from 37.5% in the pre-cycle to 46.8% in Cycle I, 65.6% in Cycle II, and 90.6% in Cycle III. Integrating FBE principles within *Discovery Learning* proved effective in nurturing values such as worship discipline, politeness, honesty, and responsibility. This approach encourages students to learn and develop according to their natural fitrah, making the cultivation of religious character more meaningful and organic. The study suggests that fitrah-based instructional design serves as a promising strategy for strengthening religious character education in primary schools.

Keyword : Discovery Learning, Fitrah Based Education, religious character, primary education

1 INTRODUCTION

The development of religious character is a fundamental aspect of primary education, as it shapes students' attitudes, moral awareness, and spiritual behavior (Koesoema, 2010). In modern times, digital exposure, lifestyle changes, and communication patterns have contributed to a decline in students' manners, discipline, and spiritual sensitivity, especially among early learners (Daryanto, 2019; Vioreza, 2017). At SDN Rambutan 05 Pagi, preliminary observations indicated that 62.5% of Grade III students scored below the minimum standard in the affective domain. This phenomenon highlights the urgency of designing learning strategies that nurture spiritual growth while engaging students meaningfully.

Fitrah Based Education (FBE), introduced by Santosa (2017), emphasizes that every child is born with natural potential—*fitrah*—including spiritual and moral inclinations. Education, therefore, should aim to nurture these inherent values instead of imposing them externally. When combined with constructivist learning, fitrah-based development enables teachers to guide students in discovering their moral essence.

At the same time, *Discovery Learning* proposed by Bruner (1961) positions students as active learners who construct knowledge through exploration and inquiry (Yonanda et.al., 2025). Studies have shown that discovery-oriented instruction can enhance students' motivation and character awareness (Rahmawati, 2020). Arofah (2021) further notes that inquiry-based and reflective learning contribute to improvements in spiritual behavior and social attitudes among primary students.

However, few studies have integrated *Discovery Learning* with the philosophical foundation of FBE to cultivate religious character. Existing research often focuses on cognitive outcomes or general character development, without aligning learning activities with students' natural spiritual tendencies. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to merge discovery-based exploration with the nurturing of innate fitrah, thereby creating meaningful learning experiences that promote religious consciousness.

Therefore, this research aims to describe the process and outcomes of applying *Fitrah-Based Discovery Learning* to strengthen religious character among primary school students

2 RESEARCH METHODS

According to Bruner (1961), *Discovery Learning* allows learners to construct knowledge through exploration, manipulation of information, and reflective reasoning. This method promotes deeper understanding and long-term retention (Bloom, 1956). Within character education, discovery-oriented learning aligns with constructivist principles by positioning students as agents in developing their own values.

Meanwhile, *Fitrah Based Education* (Santosa, 2017) views children as individuals endowed with innate spiritual and moral potential. Teachers play the role of mentors who help nurture this natural inclination through meaningful guidance. Madjid and Andayani (2011) emphasize that moral and religious development should be built on the purity of a child's heart rather than external pressure. Integrating these two approaches encourages students to explore moral meanings while grounded in their natural spiritual disposition. As such, *Fitrah-Based Discovery Learning* provides both intellectual engagement and spiritual reflection.

The study utilized Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on Kemmis and McTaggart's cyclical model (Atmazaki, et.al., 2023). The research involved 32 Grade III students at SDN Rambutan 05 Pagi. Data collection instruments included observation sheets assessing religious character indicators (worship discipline, politeness, honesty, responsibility), student questionnaires, interviews with teachers, and documentation. Data were validated using triangulation of techniques and sources (Sugiyono, 2018).

The learning procedures followed the six stages of *Discovery Learning* outlined by Hosnan (2016):

1. **Stimulation:** Introducing moral dilemmas, inspirational stories, or Qur'anic verses to build curiosity.
2. **Problem Identification:** Students ask questions related to honesty, worship, responsibility, and daily behavior.
3. **Data Collection:** Students explore real-life situations, observe school environments, or conduct mini investigations.
4. **Data Processing:** Students analyze collected information and discuss moral implications.
5. **Verification:** Students demonstrate the values learned through actions such as helping peers or leading prayers
6. **Generalization:** Students conclude moral lessons and reflect on their application in daily life.

Success indicators included at least 80% of students achieving MMC ≥ 70 and observable improvement in religious behaviors.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the result of the research data collected to compile the research report and obtained from the results of observations, interviews, and questionnaires conducted at SDN Rambutan 05 Pagi, this

research was conducted in July 2025, starting with observation activities, interviews, and pre-research actions. The subjects studied were 32 grade 3 students, with a composition of 18 female students and 14 male students.

3.1 Pre Cycle

During the pre-cycle, only 12 out of 32 students (37.5%) met the MMC in the affective domain. Many students displayed low worship discipline, lack of politeness, and limited awareness of social responsibility. These findings align with concerns raised in educational research regarding declining moral sensitivity among elementary-level students (Daryanto, 2019).

3.2 Cycle 1

The implementation stage in Cycle 1 was carried out in two meetings. The action was conducted based on the lesson plan (RPP) that had been prepared beforehand, using the **Discovery Learning method integrated with Fitrah Based Education**. Activities in Cycle 1 focused on strengthening students' religious character through themes aligned with the textbook content, namely *self-identity*, *friends*, and *family*. During the implementation, a collaborator was involved to observe the researcher's teaching performance and ensure alignment between the teaching process and the established lesson plan. This collaborative observation helped identify strengths and weaknesses throughout the learning activities. Several shortcomings were identified during Cycle 1, including the following :

Harap diingat Pada tahap ini, beberapa kekurangan pada pelaksanaan kegiatan siklus 1, yaitu sebagai berikut :

1. **Many students were still using inappropriate or impolite language** when expressing their opinions.
2. **A number of students were not yet fully focused or reverent** when reciting prayers before starting the activities.
3. **Students frequently engaged in arguments or small conflicts** with their peers during the learning process.
4. **The teacher experienced time constraints** in delivering the material due to the need for repeated classroom management, which reduced the time available for deeper exploration of the lesson content.

3.3 Cycle 2

The reflection stage in Cycle 2 indicated a noticeable improvement in students' religious character, although the progress was not yet substantial. This development can be observed from the results of the student questionnaires administered during this cycle. The questionnaire data showed that **only 65.6% of students achieved the mastery criteria**, demonstrating partial improvement compared to the previous cycle. Based on these findings, the researcher identified several shortcomings in the learning process that required attention. These shortcomings served as a foundation for determining further corrective steps in the next cycle. Since the results of Cycle 2 had not yet met the predetermined success criteria, it was necessary to implement improvements in the subsequent cycle to ensure better outcomes. The adjustments planned for the next cycle aimed to optimize learning activities and strengthen students' religious character more effectively, in line with the overall goal of this classroom action research.

3.4 Cycle 3

The observation stage in Cycle 3 demonstrated a significant improvement in students' religious character. This progress can be seen from the results of the student questionnaires administered during this cycle. The data revealed that **90.6% of students achieved the mastery criteria**, indicating a substantial increase compared to the

previous cycles. In addition to the questionnaire results, the researcher's observations showed clear advancements in religious character. During learning activities, students were able to consistently apply proper learning etiquette, such as showing respect, maintaining discipline, and demonstrating appropriate behavior toward their peers and teacher. These findings suggest that the implementation of Fitrah-Based Discovery Learning in Cycle 3 effectively strengthened students' religious character, making this cycle the most successful phase of the action research process.

3.5 Discussion of research results

Tabel Nilai Hasil Kuesioner Peserta Didik						
No.	Nama	KKM	Pra Siklus	Siklus I	Siklus II	Siklus III
1.	Adhyastha Faeyza Puthasa	75	80	83,75	85	87,5
2.	Adzrina Aulia Ramadhani	75	80	82,5	83,75	85
3.	Ahmad Aditya Lesmana	75	40	45	50	62,5
4.	Alesha Shaqueena Humaira	75	55	58,75	61,25	76,25
5.	Alif Teguh Bahtiar	75	60	62,5	65	77,5
6.	Annisa Fatimatuzzahra	75	82,5	85	86,25	88,75
7.	Arshaka Affan Ramadhansyah	75	80	82,5	83,75	85
8.	Arsyila Latief Rahmadhani	75	85	87,5	88,75	90
9.	Azizah Talita Jahra	75	65	68,75	75	78,75
10.	Chesya Arya Rahmadiani	75	80	81,25	82,5	83,75
11.	Chiko Adriansyah Saputra	75	60	63,75	65	78,75
12.	Fariza Safina Zahira	75	65	67,5	75	77,5
13.	Ghaziya Gloria Hafiza	75	70	75	76,25	80
14.	Haidar Rabbani Baghiz	75	70	75	76,25	77,5
15.	Harfan Zain Mahendra	75	65	68,75	75	78,75
16.	Khiar Aqlan Ramadhan	75	50	55	57,5	60
17.	Muhammad Riza	75	85	86,25	87,5	88,75
18.	Muhammad Azka Rabani	75	65	67,5	75	77,5
19.	Muhammad Firly Sabian	75	60	62,5	63,75	75

20.	Naomi Lavina Adelia	75	55	57,5	60	75
21.	Naura Putri Yamin	75	65	68,75	75	80
22.	Nur Assyifah	75	60	63,75	65	76,25
23.	Putri Nessa Sunandi	75	60	61,25	62,5	75
24.	Qiandra Al Yissa El Jabbar	75	82,5	83,75	85	86,25
25.	Rafardhan Firaz Al Qadaffi	75	75	77,5	78,75	80
26.	Raffi Alfian Iskandar	75	80	81,25	82,5	83,75
27.	Raina Kharunnisa	75	82,5	83,75	85	87,5
28.	Rehan Al Fiansyah	75	45	52,5	55	61,25
29.	Saskia Ningrum	75	60	65	67,5	76,25
30.	Shanum Azalea Nazneen	75	70	76,25	78,75	80
31.	Shaqueena Azahra Alfa Tunnisa	75	65	68,75	75	77,5
32.	Adhyastha Faeyza Puthasa	75	85	88,75	90	91,25
Jumlah			2.182,5	2.287,5	2.372,5	2.538,75
Rata-rata			68,2	71,51	74,14	79,33

The data presented in the table above clearly shows a significant improvement in students' religious character throughout the intervention cycles. These findings indicate that the **Discovery Learning method proved effective in enhancing students' religious character**. The improvement is evident from the steady increase in mastery percentages from the pre-cycle to Cycle III:

1. **Pre-Cycle:** 37.5% or 12 students achieved mastery.
2. **Cycle I:** 46.8% or 15 students achieved mastery.
3. **Cycle II:** 65.6% or 21 students achieved mastery.
4. **Cycle III:** 90.6% or 29 students achieved mastery.

The number of students who did not achieve mastery decreased gradually. In the pre-cycle, **62.5%** (20 students) had not yet reached mastery. In Cycle I, this decreased to **53.2%**, and in Cycle II it dropped further to **34.3%**. Finally, Cycle III showed a substantial decline, with only **9.4%** of students remaining below the mastery threshold. In addition to quantitative improvements shown through student questionnaires, the researcher identified several contributing factors that initially caused the low level of religious character among students. Through pre-research observations, several key factors were found:

1. Home Environment Factors
There was inconsistency or weak parental control in reinforcing religious character at home. Some students were also influenced by peer environments that did not support religious values. Furthermore, the effects of globalization and digital exposure contributed to the erosion of students' religious sensitivity.
2. School Environment Factors
Teachers tended to use conventional lecture-based methods, resulting in passive learning and limited opportunities for students to explore, analyse, and internalize

religious values. Additionally, the learning process did not sufficiently cultivate students' *fitrah of faith*, which contributed to their low religious character.

3. Subject-Matter Factors

In this study, the subject used was *Pancasila Education*. Instruction in this subject had traditionally focused heavily on cognitive aspects—such as memorizing principles and points of practice. There was a clear disconnect between religious values and Pancasila values, creating a conceptual gap for students. As a result, students were unable to see the relationship between religious values and the moral principles embedded in Pancasila.

4 Conclusion

After completing all stages in each cycle, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Discovery Learning method integrated with Fitrah Based Education successfully improved the religious character of Grade III students at SDN Rambutan 05 Pagi. This improvement is evident when comparing the results across the stages—from the pre-action phase to Cycle III—where continuous progress was observed. Throughout the cycles, the researcher consistently refined the teaching and learning process using the Fitrah-Based Discovery Learning model as an effort to strengthen students' religious character in the Pancasila Education subject. This effectiveness was achieved through the synergy between the active, student-centered pedagogical framework of Discovery Learning, which facilitates meaningful exploration, and the value-oriented foundation of Fitrah Based Education, which provides spiritual purpose and divine context to every learning experience.

Despite this success, the study also identified several challenges that initially hindered the development of religious character. These include family-related factors such as inconsistent parental supervision in instilling religious values, peer environments that do not support religious practices, and the influence of globalization and technology that tend to erode moral and spiritual sensitivity. School-related factors also contributed, such as teachers' reliance on conventional lecture-based instruction and the limited opportunities given to students to explore or internalize religious values independently. Additionally, a conceptual divide between religious values and Pancasila values further complicated the integration of these principles in students' understanding. Overall, the Fitrah-Based Discovery Learning method succeeded in creating learning experiences that not only foster cognitive understanding but also nurture the affective and spiritual dimensions of students. Consequently, this model effectively enhanced the religious character of Grade III students at SDN Rambutan 05 Pagi.

5 Suggestions

This study is expected to provide valuable insights for addressing the ongoing crisis of religious character among students and to offer guidance on how to apply the Fitrah-Based Discovery Learning method effectively for Grade III students at SDN Rambutan 05 Pagi. It is also hoped that this research contributes meaningful perspectives and new understandings within the academic community regarding strategies to overcome the decline in students' religious character. The implementation of the Fitrah-Based Discovery Learning approach may serve as an alternative solution for educators seeking methods that are both pedagogically effective and spiritually grounded.

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