

# Integrating Inquiry-Based Learning into Islamic Education Worksheets for Early Grade Learners: A Developmental Study

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## Abstract

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### Keywords:

Inquiry-based learning; Islamic Religious Education; student worksheet development; elementary education.

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The current study seeks to explore Islamic religious education at the elementary level with the understanding that it has limitations presented through conventional teacher-centered teaching. Such limitations decrease student engagement and stifle creativity. The purpose of this research was to develop inquiry-based student worksheets with the objective of encouraging critical thinking and the importance of Islamic values in creating active participation in learning for Grade 1. This is a very relevant study, however, because early exposure to inquiry-oriented methods can significantly affect learning outcomes-cognitive and affective-for religious education. In employing the Research and Development (R&D) method through the ADDIE model, 13 Grade 1 students of SDN 05 Babukik participated in this study. The sources of data collection were questionnaires, observations, interviews, and pre- and post-tests, which were analyzed based on descriptive statistics and N-Gain tests. Expert validation was very feasible (content 95%, design 92%, media 87%), while practicality tests showed high acceptability by students and teachers. Effectiveness tests obtained moderate N-Gain score, indicating significant improvement in understanding. Thus, inquiry-based learning is indeed applicable within Islamic Religious Education and presents an innovative instructional model which encompasses the principles of inquiry into its materials. The study articulates the need for resources that are interactive and contextually relevant to promote meaningful understanding-student learning at primary level religious education.

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## Abstrak

*Kata kunci:*  
pembelajaran berbasis inkuiri; Pendidikan Agama Islam; lembar kerja peserta didik; sekolah dasar;

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*Penelitian ini membahas pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di tingkat sekolah dasar yang masih didominasi metode konvensional berpusat pada guru, sehingga mengurangi keterlibatan dan kreativitas peserta didik. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengembangkan lembar kerja peserta didik berbasis inkuiri untuk mendorong berpikir kritis, memperkuat pemahaman nilai-nilai Islam, serta meningkatkan partisipasi aktif belajar di kelas I. Studi ini relevan karena penerapan metode inkuiri sejak dini dapat berdampak signifikan pada hasil belajar, baik ranah kognitif maupun afektif. Penelitian menggunakan metode Research and Development (R&D) dengan model ADDIE, melibatkan 13 peserta didik kelas I SDN 05 Babukik. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket, observasi, wawancara, serta tes awal dan tes akhir, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif dan dengan uji N-Gain. Validasi ahli menunjukkan kelayakan tinggi (materi 95%, desain 92%, media 87%), sedangkan uji kepraktisan menunjukkan penerimaan tinggi dari siswa dan guru. Uji efektivitas memperoleh skor N-Gain kategori sedang, menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pemahaman peserta didik. Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis inkuiri dapat diterapkan dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam dan menawarkan model pembelajaran inovatif yang mengintegrasikan prinsip inkuiri dalam materi ajar. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya sumber belajar interaktif dan kontekstual untuk mendorong pembelajaran bermakna di pendidikan agama tingkat sekolah dasar.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Inquiry-based learning has gained significant attention worldwide as an effective educational approach to develop students' critical thinking and deeper understanding (Arifin et al., 2025; Seprie et al., 2025; Setiyaningsih et al., 2024). In Indonesia, Islamic Religious Education plays a vital role in shaping students' faith and moral character, starting with the teaching of religious beliefs, worship, and ethics (Bucky Wibawa Karya Guna et al., 2024; Pujianti & Nugraha, 2025). However, traditional methods such as rote memorization in Islamic Religious Education classes have been shown to result in students' limited ability to engage critically with religious knowledge and apply Islamic values in real-life situations (Amirudin et al., 2025; Reza et al., 2025). This highlights the urgent need for more interactive and reflective learning models, such as inquiry-based learning, that actively engage students in discovery and problem-solving (Al-Thani & Ahmad, 2025; Thomas et al., 2025). This research is critical as it explores how these models can be implemented in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary level, an area that has received limited attention.

While previous studies have explored inquiry-based learning in secondary and higher education, there is a notable gap in research focusing on its application in early childhood education, especially in the context of Islamic Religious Education. Much of the existing literature on inquiry-based learning has emphasized its effectiveness in developing critical thinking in older students (Ismaniati et al., 2025; Rosidah et al., 2024). However, little attention has been paid to the unique challenges and benefits of applying this model in religious education at the elementary school level (Diamond & Adam, 2023; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023). This gap in research needs to be addressed because early childhood education is the foundational stage for instilling critical thinking skills and moral values in students. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by developing and implementing inquiry-based worksheets specifically designed for Grade 1 Islamic Religious Education students, with the goal of improving both cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

The primary purpose of this research is to design and develop inquiry-based worksheets that promote active learning in Islamic Religious Education and to assess their effectiveness in enhancing students' engagement, critical thinking, and application of Islamic values. Specifically, this study seeks to test the hypothesis that inquiry-based worksheets significantly improve students' critical thinking skills and their ability to apply Islamic teachings in real-life situations, compared to traditional learning methods. This study adopts a development research approach, which includes the process of designing the worksheets, implementing them in the classroom, and evaluating their effectiveness in terms of student learning outcomes. Additionally, the research aims to identify practical challenges faced by teachers in implementing this method, particularly in classrooms with limited resources, and propose solutions to enhance its effectiveness.

In terms of theoretical significance, this study contributes to the integration of inquiry-based learning into Islamic Religious Education, offering new insights into how early childhood education can foster critical thinking and moral development.

Practically, this research provides teachers with a framework for designing inquiry-based worksheets that enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education instruction, making learning more dynamic and relevant to students' lives (. Ultimately, the findings are expected to offer valuable recommendations for educators on how to incorporate creative and effective teaching strategies in Islamic Religious Education.

**METHODS**

The research employs the Research and Development (R&D) method using the ADDIE model. The research subjects are 13 first-grade students from SDN 05 Babukik during the odd semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. Data collection instruments include questionnaires, observations, interviews, and learning outcome tests. The questionnaires are used to measure the validity and practicality of the product based on expert evaluations and feedback from both teachers and students. Observations are conducted in the classroom to assess the implementation of the product in teaching. Interviews with teachers aim to explore perspectives regarding the need for technology-based learning media. Pre-test and post-test assessments are used to measure students' understanding improvements.

The analysis phase includes identifying the competencies students need to master, curriculum analysis, and assessing the school's facilities to support the use of digital media. In the design phase, the researcher designs inquiry-based student worksheets, considering learning strategies and assessments. The development phase involves creating student worksheets that align with the predefined design, accompanied by validation from experts in content, media, and language. In the implementation phase, the product is tested in the classroom by administering pre-test and post-test assessments to evaluate the improvement in students' understanding of Islamic Education (PAI) material. Formative evaluations are conducted throughout the process for improvements, while summative evaluations at the end of the research assess the overall effectiveness of the product.

Data analysis techniques include descriptive statistics and Likert scales for validity and practicality, as well as a Gain Test for effectiveness. Validity and practicality analysis are categorized in percentage ranges, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Classification of Validity and Practicality Percentages

Validity Level	Validity Criteria	Practicality Criteria
81% - 100%	Very Valid	Very Practical
61% - 80%	Valid	Practical
41% - 60%	Less Valid	Less Practical
21% - 40%	Not Valid	Not Practical
0% - 20%	Very Not Valid	Very Not Practical

The data analysis technique using the Gain Test is performed by calculating the gain value (g) to determine the increase in students' understanding:

$$(g) = \frac{\text{Posttest score} - \text{Pretest score}}{\text{Maximum possible score} - \text{Pretest score}}$$

The interpretation of the gain value is shown in the following table:

Table 2. Gain Value Criteria

Gain Value (g)	Criteria
$g > 0.7$	High
$0.7 < g < 0.3$	Medium
$g < 0.3$	Low

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Findings*

#### *Analysis Phase*

From the analysis, several crucial points to be prioritized for the development of Inquiry-Based Student Worksheets for grade one students of Islamic Religious Education were found. From the needs analysis, it was known that about 62% of the students of SDN 05 Tarusan had not reached achievement criteria under minimal learning objectives, with a passing grade of 72. According to interviews with Teacher B, the predominance of the lecture method has led to monotonous instruction, which does not actively engage students. This shows that there must be room for some innovative teaching method that involves more students.

Based on student characteristics analysis, under Piaget's theory, children at the ages of 7 to 11 years are now in the concrete operational stage and thus require learning that is more concrete and more applicative. During the observation, some students were noted as having difficulty with the penmanship and concentrating; nonetheless, they demonstrated lack of enthusiasm for learning. Hence the design of the student worksheet product must take these characteristics into account to facilitate students in understanding the material in an effective and enjoyable manner.

Material analysis showed that the topic "Aku Cinta Al-Quran" consists of four sub-chapters students are expected to master in 24 effective hours per semester. An effective delivery due to limited time is, therefore, in demand. The development of Inquiry-Based student worksheets would increase student engagement while optimizing the use of available facilities and achieving learning objectives in an interactive and practical manner.

#### *Design Phase*

At this stage of design, preparing and developing student worksheets were taking place through processes such as deciding navigation structure and making a flow chart. Flowchart design can be observed in Figure 1.

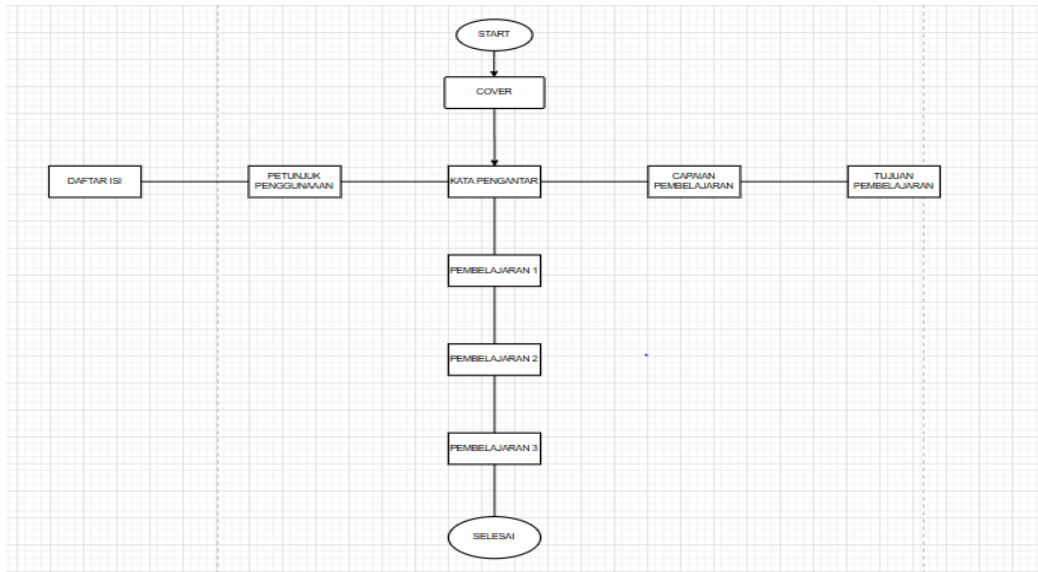


Figure 1. [Flowchart]

### Development Phase

Then we get to the crux, namely to design and develop the product. The development phase is divided into three sub-phases: preproduction, production, and postproduction. If the media need amending by a suggestion or feedback prior to the implementation phase, it will be edited.

### Cover

Figure 2 presents the very first page with information about the material topic and the student worksheet's author.



Figure 2. [Cover]

### *Instructions for use*

This part provides specific information on how to conduct the use of the student worksheet for both teacher and student. It defines the teacher's role in guiding the learning process and supporting students while motivating shy students to prepare well, closely follow the steps, and seek help if needed.



Figure 3. [Instructions for use]

### *Learning Outcomes*

Learning outcomes created for this particular project target the most important objectives for candidates in class one in respect of Islamic Religious Education. The biggest aim of the objectives is to guide students to master some important skills, which include, reading Quranic verses correctly, understanding the meaning of the Quran, and pronouncing Arabic letters accurately. Moreover, students should also appreciate the importance of correct pronunciation, identify the different types of Arabic letters, and recite Surah Al-Fatihah with ease. These outcomes will consequently ensure that students gain both theoretical knowledge and practical experience through structured and engaging activities.



Figure 4. [Learning Outcomes]

*Learning Activities in the Learning Process*

Learning activities in student worksheets are very structured following the inquiry model which then makes students active in observing and wondering. The first learning activity would require students to observe and discuss an image of the Quran with their teacher, preparing them for better comprehension of material content. After this, students will find their way into inquiry and exploration by asking the teacher about the Quran and understanding the terms related to it. This way would really provide a hands-on learning experience to students while they actively engage with newly learned concepts through guided questioning and exploration.



Figure 5. [Learning Activities]

This step involves validation by content experts, language experts and educational media experts for recommendations and constructive criticism towards the development of the learning media. Results of this validation can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Overall Product Validation Results

No	Aspect	Percentage	Category
1	Media	95%	Highly Valid
2	Content	90%	Highly Valid
3	Language	90%	Highly Valid

#### Implementation Phase

At this level, the media has been evaluated by experts and applied to 13 first-grade students from SDN 05 Tarusan. The assessment for the media is categorized in three aspects: the appearance of the media product, the delivery of the material, and the advantages. In this regard, students expressed their opinions towards the practicality of the learning media. The use of trial media can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Student Practicality Results

No	Aspect	Percentage	Category
1	Appearance	84%	Very Practical
2	Presentation of Material	83%	Very Practical
3	Benefits	83%	Very Practical

The practicality trial results of Inquiry-Based Student Worksheets for grade one students in Islamic Religious Education, presented in Table 4, project unimpeachable endorsement from the students. The appearance of the media obtained an 84% score

classified as "Application," suggesting that the students found the visual design of the worksheets appealing and user-friendly. The presentation of the material obtained a similarly high response of 83%, signaling that the content was organized and clearly laid out for better comprehension. The third equally 83% rating suggests that learning media in themselves, or in other words, how useful they were in teaching-learning, were seen by students as a great help in learning with these worksheets. This gave the media an overall average practicality of 83%, which professes its usability and practicality in classroom settings.

Table 5. Teacher Practicality Results

No	Aspect	Percentage	Category
1	Appearance	92%	Very Practical
2	Presentation of Material	73%	Practical
3	Benefits	92%	Very Practical
Total		87%	Very Practical

Practicality assessments were also given to Inquiry-Based Student Worksheets with two teachers, as indicating Table 5. The results report a high level of practicality. In the aspect of appearance, it garnered 92 percent placing it in the category Very Practical as shown that the teachers enjoyed the design of the worksheets considering it suitable for the students. The presentation of the materials scored 73 percent which places it under the heading Practical indicating that while indeed the presentation of the materials was effective, however, there could have been more clarity and delivery. The benefits part also scored 92 percent which places it under the heading Very Practical reflected on the favorable views of the teachers about the usefulness of the worksheets in the process of learning. In general, the level of average performance on the worksheets was 87 percent practicality which shows how applicable these materials are in education.

The use of Inquiry-Based Student Worksheets in primary-level Islamic Religious Education was shown to improve student learning outcomes as measured by the increase in scores resulting from the pretest and posttest. Students' learning outcomes are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. N-Gain Score Results for Learning Outcomes

Test	Lowest Score	Highest Score	Average Score	Criteria
Pretest	30	70	50.00	0.55 Medium
Posttest	60	90	80.00	

By Table 6, relatively improving learning outcomes for students after application of the Inquiry-Based Student Worksheets of Islamic Religious Education falls within the medium criteria, suggesting that there is somewhat improved understanding by the students in terms of the material. The result shows that the worksheets had some effects in engaging students and improving their knowledge on the subject.

### *Evaluation Phase*

Reflection and revision were undertaken at this point for the whole process from analysis to implementation. The results of this evaluation provided feedback for the research that has been carried out. During the development phase, the media were subjected to validation from the experts. As for the learning content, the media obtained 95% in highly suitable criteria rating, for the learning design it obtained 92%, while 87% as highly suitable from the educational media experts.

In the practicality test phase, the findings from the student trials showed that the Inquiry-Based Student Worksheets were very practical for use. The look aspect scored 84% (very practical), the presentation of material received a score of 83% (very practical), whereas the usefulness of the media attained a score of 83% (very practical). Generally, these results from trials indicate that this media is highly useful in the learning process and can engage students very well.

As for the effectiveness test phase, after the pretest and the posttest, it indicated that there was a significant improvement in the student learning outcomes, and such improvements show the possible effect of Inquiry Based Student Worksheets in improving students' understanding toward Islamic Religious Education material. With moderate improvement as shown by the N-Gain Score on this media which can be considered effective in aid of the attainment of learning objectives, it can conclude its effectiveness. However, it still needs improvements; the effectiveness test has indicated that the developed product has positively contributed to students' learning outcomes.

### **Discussions**

Based on these findings, the development of Inquiry-Based Worksheets for Islamic Education intended for children in Grade 1 primary school adheres to validity and practicality as well as effectiveness parameters at a very high level. The relative rates of 95%, 92%, and 87%, as scored by all experts in all criteria valid in respect of aspect content, instructional design, and media, respectively, are regarded as highly feasible. In a theoretical sense, this level of feasibility indicates the alignment of content, instructional structure, and media components with the principles of inquiry-based instructional material development emphasizing active student involvement in knowledge construction through systematic investigative stages. This is in accordance with Nurzana et al. (2025), according to whom inquiry-based modules systematically designed could reach high feasibility and improve students' understanding effectively.

In practicality tests, the worksheets were evaluated as very practical by students which with 84 % for appearance, 83 % for material presentation, and 83 % in the usefulness. The findings suggest that the worksheets are simple to operate and very attractive and suitable for the needs of learners. From the constructivist perspectives of learning theory, it is important for practicality because enables students to educate themselves within ownership in learning through the practice of construction facilitator, as stated by Saputry et al. (2024), who said the importance of inquiry-based worksheet

construction adjusted to student characteristics for creating understanding and increasing interest in learning.

With respect to effectiveness, the significant and low N-Gain value indicates the moderate improvement of learning outcomes from pretest to posttest as a result of the inquiry-based worksheet focusing positively on Islamic Education concepts in understanding. Theoretically, this indicated that inquiry learning can lead pupils to discover, test, and formulate knowledge independently, leading to deeper learning experience. This is similar to the research findings which show that inquiry model's implementation in Islamic Education and Character Education could significantly improve students' cognitive learning outcomes, according to Polem et al. (2023). Like that of Kumalasari et al. (2021) in regard to inquiry-based worksheets integrated with Qur'anic and Hadith values that not merely improve cognitive performance but also formulate the religious character of students.

Theoretical foundations of the inquiry model: Students as active subjects in charge of their own learning and even more, students ask questions, formulate hypotheses, explore and test their results. Dessani et al. (2025) mentioned that inquiry strategies are very effective in developing critical thinking skills, independence, and active participation. Kismatun (2021) explicated in the context of Islamic education that the inquiry strategy balances the development of the cognitive domain with the affective and psychomotor domains, allowing religious content to be understood not only textually but also contextually.

Even in inquiry-based learning, one might consider these also in the perspective of educational neuroscience. According to Rukmini et al. (2024), integrating inquiry with principles of neuroscience optimizes brain function to develop a better understanding of religious material. Since inquiry relies on a whole-brain functioning to perceive understanding through sensory engagement, this is particularly relevant. Ningsih & Saflidarti (2024) also confirmed that implementing inquiry in Islamic Education increases students' activeness, enthusiasm, and critical thinking skills, essential indicators in worksheet-based learning.

From the instructional design point of view, inquiry-oriented worksheets should include higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Rahayu et al. (2025) mentioned that teaching materials designed to promote critical thinking will have a direct effect on the quality of learning. Nelvarina et al. (2024) further pointed out that guided inquiry is more effective than structured inquiry when it comes to developing students' systems thinking skills, which can also be considered when designing worksheets for Islamic Education.

According to Rosita (2023), the inquiry method in teaching Islamic Education has proven in a strong way with respect to teaching Surah Al-Kausar in Year 3, for example, as it raised the achievement of learners from the pretest of 0 percent mastery to 93 percent in Cycle II. Likewise, in accordance with the finding of Wati et al. (2023), which showed that the inquiry-based devices for teaching Grade 6 Islamic Education, developed via ADDIE, were both practicable and useful with an average learning gain

of 19.5 points. In conclusion, systematic integration of inquiry principles in worksheets has great potential for revolutionizing Islamic Education instruction at different levels.

However, there is still room for improvement concerning the moderate N-Gain value, as content difficulty levels can be adjusted, contextual examples can be enriched, or interactive media can be added. This is parallel with the continuous improvement principle of formative evaluation as the basis for revising instructional products, where it must go in line with continuous development.

Thus the inquiry-based worksheets developed for Islamic Education are best theoretically and empirically established in a solid foundation for enhancing its active engagement, deep understanding, and internalization of religious values among students.

## CONCLUSIONS

The inquiry-based Student Worksheet of Islamic Religious Education is feasible, practically applied, and effective for Grade 1 primary level, as the main finding of this study showed. This finding was only observed after test implementation, which indicates a significantly promising enhancement in students' learning outcomes and participation in a discipline that often appears abstract and memorizing. Inquiry principles can be effectively contextualized in the teaching of Islamic Religious Education at the primary level.

Academically, this study provides evidence for the inquiry method as an effective methodology comprising elements of previous studies. However, it sheds new light through the innovative perspective of inquiry embedded in the Student Worksheet for Islamic Religious Education. This combination allows for cognitive reinforcement and embedding religious values into the modern paradigm of learning, which is critical, contextual, and student-centered.

Some limitations of the studies are a narrow sample from a single school and a single grade and a relatively short length of implementation. Further studies, on a larger scale, at different educational levels, and over longer durations, should be conducted in order to get more sufficient results to serve as a better basis for formulating educational policy in the development of inquiry-based Student Worksheets for Islamic Religious Education.

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