

Efforts to Increase Student Learning Interest through Group Discussion Methods in Science Learning in Class V of MI Negeri 12 Nagan Raya

Haris Zulvianda ✉, MI Negeri 12 Nagan Raya, Indonesia

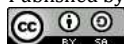
✉ hariszulvianda@madrasah.kemenag.go.id

Abstract: This research is a Class Action Research (PTK) which aims to increase the learning interest of students in class V of MIN 12 Nagan Raya in science subjects, especially Chain of Meaning materials, through the application of group discussion strategies. The background of this research is based on the low interest of students in social studies lessons which is shown by a lack of activeness in learning, lack of participation in discussions, and low learning outcomes. The research was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of the stages of planning, implementation of actions, observation, and reflection. The research subjects were 25 students of class V. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, learning interest questionnaires, learning outcome tests, and documentation. Data analysis uses qualitative and quantitative approaches. The results of the study showed a significant increase in students' interest in learning. In the pre-cycle, only 30% of students had a high interest in learning, while after cycle II it increased to 80%. The average learning outcome score also increased from 65 (pre-cycle) to 81 (cycle II). In addition, students' activeness in group discussions also increased significantly. It can be concluded that the group discussion strategy is effective in increasing students' interest and learning outcomes on Food Chain materials. This strategy is also able to create an active, collaborative, and fun learning atmosphere.

Keywords: Interest in learning, group discussion, IPAS, food chain, classroom action research.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is essentially a conscious and planned effort to develop the potential of students so that they are able to face the challenges of life in the future. In the context of basic education, the development of such potential includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects that are interconnected. The learning process is not only aimed at providing knowledge, but also forming positive learning skills and attitudes. Therefore, the success of education is not only determined by learning outcomes alone, but also by the extent to which students have an interest in learning. Interest in learning is one of the psychological factors that greatly affects students' involvement in the learning process, both in understanding the material and in developing their potential.

However, the reality on the ground shows that there are still many elementary school students who have a low interest in learning, especially in the subject of Natural

and Social Sciences (IPAS). This can be seen from students' reluctance to ask questions, low participation in class discussions, and lack of attention to the material presented by the teacher. Sardiman (2011) stated that learning interest is a tendency to give attention and involvement consistently to learning activities, which are influenced by pleasure, needs, and internal drives. When interest in learning is low, students will find it difficult to achieve optimal learning outcomes because they do not have the motivation to actively engage in learning.

The subject of social studies itself is one of the important subjects in elementary school because it is related to the daily life of students. Food chain materials, for example, not only provide basic knowledge about ecosystems, but also shape students' awareness of the importance of maintaining environmental balance. Unfortunately, this material is often considered difficult by students, thus lowering their interest in learning. In fact, IPAS learning should be designed in such a way that it is interesting, applicable, and fun. According to Trianto (2015), the success of learning is greatly influenced by the selection of the right model or strategy, because appropriate learning strategies can increase students' interest, motivation, and learning outcomes.

Teachers have a strategic role in increasing students' interest in learning by choosing learning strategies that suit the characteristics of elementary school students. One strategy that can be used is group discussions. This strategy provides opportunities for students to work together, exchange opinions, and solve problems collaboratively. Slavin (2015) emphasized that cooperative learning, including group discussions, can increase social interaction, confidence, and student engagement in learning. In other words, group discussions not only train cognitive abilities, but also build positive social attitudes.

Based on the results of initial observations in class V of MIN 12 Nagan Raya, it was found that students' interest in learning food chain material is still low. Of the 25 students, only about 30% showed a high interest in learning, while the rest tended to be passive and not enthusiastic about learning. The learning process is still dominated by teachers, while students receive more information without actively participating. This results in learning outcomes that have not reached the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) that have been set. This condition is in line with the research of Hamalik (2010) who stated that students' low interest in learning is often caused by monotonous learning methods and does not provide opportunities for students to be actively involved.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to find learning strategies that can increase students' interest in learning while improving their learning outcomes. Group discussions are seen as one of the solutions because this strategy provides space for students to actively learn, help each other, and find understanding through interaction. Vygotsky (1978) through the theory of social constructivism emphasized that learning will be more meaningful if students interact with peers, because through these interactions students can build knowledge together.

Some previous research supports the use of group discussions to improve interest and learning outcomes. For example, research by Arends (2012) shows that cooperative learning strategies can increase student involvement in the learning process. Another study by Johnson and Johnson (2009) also found that group discussions are able to foster a sense of responsibility and increase students' intrinsic motivation. Thus, the group discussions have a strong theoretical basis for use in this study.

The research gap can be seen from the lack of classroom action research that specifically examines efforts to increase the learning interest of elementary school students in science subjects through group discussion strategies, especially on food chain materials. In fact, this material is very important for students to understand because it is related to daily life. Therefore, this research is here to fill this gap while making a practical contribution for teachers in developing effective learning strategies.

The purpose of this research is to increase the learning interest of students in class V of MIN 12 Nagan Raya on food chain materials through group discussion strategies. With

this research, it is hoped that there will be an increase in interest in learning which is characterized by an increase in students' activeness in asking questions, answering, and discussing, as well as an increase in student learning outcomes to reach KKM. This research is also expected to provide theoretical benefits by enriching the literature on cooperative learning strategies in elementary schools, as well as practical benefits for teachers to improve the quality of science learning.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of Classroom Action Research (PTK). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the phenomenon of student learning motivation in depth and contextual, not just statistical numbers, but the meaning of student involvement in learning. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in a natural context by using descriptions in the form of words. Classroom action research itself is seen as appropriate because it allows teachers and researchers to improve learning practices that take place in the classroom continuously through action cycles (Arikunto, 2015).

Classroom action research is reflective research conducted by teachers in their own classrooms with the aim of improving the quality of learning. The PTK model used in this study refers to the spiral of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) which consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection. This model provides flexibility for teachers to improve learning strategies based on the results of reflection in each cycle. Each cycle in this study lasts for two meetings, so that the researcher can gradually evaluate the development of students' learning interests. The subjects of the study are all students of class V MIN 12 Nagan Raya for the 2023/2024 school year with a total of 25 people, consisting of 12 males and 13 females. The selection of subjects was carried out thoroughly because the number of students was relatively small and allowed for intensive observation. The object of the research is students' learning interest in Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) subjects with a focus on food chain materials. The research location was chosen based on the initial findings that students' interest in learning about IPAS, especially food chain materials, is still low.

The research was carried out in the even semester of the 2023/2024 school year, precisely from May to July 2024. This time span includes the preparation stage, the implementation of two cycles of action, as well as data analysis and report preparation. In the planning stage, the researcher prepares learning tools in the form of Learning Implementation Plans (RPP) with a group discussion model, prepares research instruments in the form of observation sheets, questionnaires, and test questions, and prepares learning media relevant to food chain materials.

The stage of implementing the action is carried out by applying a group discussion strategy. The teacher divides the students into small, heterogeneous groups, provides a topic of discussion about the food chain, and then facilitates them to discuss, exchange opinions, and present the results of the discussion. The observation stage is carried out by researchers and observers by recording students' activities, their participation in discussions, and enthusiasm during learning. Observations also noted the obstacles that arose from both students and teachers. The reflection stage is carried out after the cycle ends by analyzing the results of observations, questionnaires, and tests, then formulating improvements for the next cycle. This stage is important so that learning in the next cycle is more effective in increasing students' interest in learning.

The instruments used in this study included observation sheets, questionnaires, learning outcome tests, and documentation. Observation sheets are used to record student involvement in learning, both from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. The questionnaire was used to measure students' interest in learning, which was compiled based on indicators such as attention, active engagement, and perseverance. The test is used to determine students' cognitive achievement on food chain materials, which is

expected to correlate with increased interest in learning. Documentation in the form of photos and field notes was used as supporting data to strengthen the findings.

Data collection was carried out through observation, questionnaires, tests, and documentation. Observation is used to obtain direct data on student activities in learning. The questionnaire was used to find out students' perception of learning with a group discussion strategy. Tests are used to obtain quantitative data on learning outcomes, while documentation provides a visual picture of learning activities. According to Sugiyono (2016), the use of various data collection techniques in qualitative research can strengthen the validity of findings through triangulation.

The data is analyzed descriptively by combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. Qualitative data from observations and questionnaires were analyzed to see the pattern of changes in students' learning interests from pre-cycle to cycle II. Quantitative data from test results were analyzed using percentage techniques. The percentage formula is used to determine the improvement in student learning outcomes in each cycle. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), qualitative data analysis is carried out through three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses a triangulation technique, which is comparing results from various data sources such as observations, questionnaires, tests, and documentation. With triangulation, the data obtained is more credible and objective (Moleong, 2017). The reliability of the data is maintained by using the same instrument in each cycle and involving other observers to minimize subjectivity. This research is considered successful if there is an increase in student learning interest which is characterized by at least 80% of students being in the category of high learning interest based on questionnaires and observation results. In addition, student learning outcomes are also expected to increase, with at least 80% of students achieving grades above KKM.

The ethical aspect of research is considered by asking permission from the principal and class teacher before carrying out the research. Students were also given an explanation that this research aims to improve the quality of their learning. All student data is kept confidential and is only used for academic purposes. With this research method, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of group discussion strategies in increasing students' learning interest in food chain materials in class V MIN 12 Nagan Raya.

RESULTS

This class action research was carried out in two cycles with the aim of increasing the learning interest of students in class V of MIN 12 Nagan Raya in the subject of Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS), especially food chain materials through group discussion strategies. The subjects of the study were 25 students, consisting of 12 males and 13 females. The research was conducted collaboratively with classroom teachers. The research stages include pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II. Data was obtained through observation, learning interest questionnaires, learning outcome tests, and documentation, then analyzed descriptively, quantitatively, and qualitatively.

Based on the results of observations in the pre-cycle, it is known that students' interest in learning food chain materials is still low. This is shown by the passivity of students when the teacher explains, the low number of students asking questions, as well as the lack of involvement in class discussions. From the results of the questionnaire, only about 30% of students showed high interest in learning, while the rest were in the medium to low category. This is in accordance with the opinion of Sardiman (2011) that low interest in learning can be seen from the behavior of students who are indifferent, do not pay attention to lessons, and rarely actively participate.

The results of the pre-cycle test also showed an average score of 65, below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) set at 70. Only 8 out of 25 students or 32%

achieved grades above the KKM. This data reinforces the finding that low interest in learning has an impact on low student learning outcomes. In the first cycle, teachers began to implement a group discussion strategy. Students are divided into small groups heterogeneously in order to help each other. The teacher provides contextual problems about the food chain, and then students discuss to find answers together. During learning, there is a change in student behavior compared to the pre-cycle. Students seem more enthusiastic, start to dare to ask questions, and engage in group discussions.

The observation results showed an increase in student involvement, although it was not evenly distributed. Some students are still passive and tend to rely on more active friends. The results of the questionnaire showed that 52% of students were in the category of high learning interest, a significant increase compared to the pre-cycle. The average score of the first cycle test also increased to 73, with 15 students or 60% achieving scores above the KKM.

Despite the improvement, reflection shows that there are several obstacles. First, some students still lack confidence in expressing their opinions. Second, group discussions have not been effective in all groups because there are students who dominate and some who are passive. This obstacle needs to be overcome in cycle II with a repair strategy. Based on the reflection of the first cycle, the teacher made several improvements. First, teachers provide clear rules about the role of each group member so that all students are actively involved. Second, teachers provide more intensive guidance to groups that tend to be passive. Third, teachers give awards to groups that actively participate in discussions.

The implementation of cycle II showed a more significant increase. Students seem more confident in expressing opinions, supporting each other in discussions, and showing a sense of responsibility for group tasks. The results of observations show that almost all students actively participate. The learning interest questionnaire showed an increase, where 80% of students were in the category of high learning interest. The average score of the second cycle test also increased to 81, with 22 students or 88% achieving scores above the KKM. These results are in line with the opinion of Slavin (2015) who states that cooperative learning can increase students' intrinsic motivation because they feel responsible for the success of the group. In addition, social interaction in group discussions helps students understand concepts more deeply, in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism that emphasizes the importance of peer interaction.

When compared between pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II, there is a significant increase. In the pre-cycle, only 30% of students have a high interest in learning. In the first cycle, the figure increased to 52%, and in the second cycle it reached 80%. Similarly, learning outcomes, from an average score of 65 in the pre-cycle, increased to 73 in the first cycle, and finally reached 81 in the second cycle. The percentage of learning completeness also increased from 32% in the pre-cycle, to 60% in the first cycle, and 88% in the second cycle. This improvement shows that group discussion strategies are effective in improving students' interest and learning outcomes. Students become more active, confident, and responsible in the learning process. These results are consistent with the research of Johnson and Johnson (2009) which stated that cooperative learning can increase student participation, motivation, and achievement.

Some of the important findings from this study include: first, the group discussion strategy is able to increase students' interest in learning because it gives them the opportunity to actively participate and exchange ideas. Second, group discussions train social skills such as cooperation, communication, and a sense of responsibility. Third, the increase in interest in learning is directly proportional to the increase in learning outcomes, because motivated students tend to be more diligent and active in understanding the material. This strategy is able to create an active, collaborative, and fun learning atmosphere, so that students not only understand concepts, but are also motivated to continue learning.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the application of group discussion strategies is able to increase the learning interest of students in class V of MIN 12 Nagan Raya in science subjects, especially food chain materials. The improvement is evident from the pre-cycle to cycle II conditions, both in terms of student involvement, activeness in questioning, answering, and in achieving learning outcomes. These findings provide an idea that student-centered learning strategies can be an effective solution to overcome the low interest in learning that has occurred due to the dominance of lecture methods.

In the pre-cycle, students tend to be passive, less enthusiastic about learning, and rarely actively involved in discussions. This shows that traditional teacher-centered learning patterns are less able to encourage students to develop an interest in learning. According to Arends (2012), teacher-centered learning often makes students only passive recipients of information, so their participation and motivation decrease. This condition is in accordance with the initial findings of the research in class V MIN 12 Nagan Raya, where only about 30% of students showed high interest in learning.

After actions were taken in the first cycle by implementing a group discussion strategy, students' interest in learning began to increase. Students seem to be more courageous to ask questions, answer questions, and engage in discussions. However, engagement is not even because there are still students who are passive or dependent on more active friends. This finding is in line with the research of Slavin (2015) who stated that the success of cooperative learning is inseparable from the role of teachers in organizing groups so that all students contribute equally.

The improvements made in cycle II gave better results. With clear rules regarding the role of each group member, more intensive mentoring, and awarding, student engagement increases significantly. The results of the observation showed that almost all students actively participated, while the results of the questionnaire revealed that 80% of students already had a high interest in learning. The average test score also increased to 81, and most students achieved KKM. This shows that the strategy of group discussion not only increases interest, but also has a positive impact on learning outcomes.

If it is associated with learning theory, the results of this study are consistent with the theory of social constructivism put forward by Vygotsky (1978). According to him, learning will be more meaningful if there is social interaction between students, both with peers and with teachers. In group discussions, students exchange knowledge, clarify understanding, and build new knowledge together. This process triggers students' intrinsic motivation to learn because they feel directly involved in the process of discovering knowledge.

This research also reinforces the view of Johnson and Johnson (2009) who affirm that cooperative learning can improve students' motivation, responsibility, and social skills. In the context of this research, students not only learn the concept of the food chain, but also learn to respect the opinions of others, work together, and take responsibility for the success of the group. Thus, the group discussion strategy contributes to the development of students' cognitive and affective aspects. The findings of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Laksana (2018), which showed that the application of the cooperative learning model can increase the interest and learning outcomes of elementary school students. Nabila's research (2018) also found that group discussions are able to encourage students to be more active and motivated in science learning. Both studies support the results of this study that group discussion strategies are a relevant method to increase the learning interest of elementary school students.

The practical implication of this study is the need for teachers to integrate group discussion strategies in science learning. This strategy has been proven to be able to create a more lively, interesting, and fun learning atmosphere compared to the lecture method. In addition, group discussions provide students with opportunities to develop critical thinking, communication, and cooperation skills. Hamalik (2010) stated that learning

strategies that actively involve students can foster interest in learning while improving learning outcomes. The theoretical contribution of this study is to strengthen the empirical evidence on the effectiveness of group discussion strategies in increasing learning interest. The results of this study show that group discussions not only increase student engagement, but also have an impact on the achievement of learning outcomes. This is relevant to Sardiman's (2011) view that learning interest is an important factor that is closely related to student learning achievement. In other words, increasing interest in learning through group discussion strategies will be followed by an increase in learning outcomes.

Although the results of this study are positive, there are several challenges that need to be considered. In the first cycle, some students still showed passive tendencies. This shows that the implementation of group discussions requires consistent adaptation and guidance from teachers. In addition, time management is also an obstacle because group discussions often take longer than lecture methods. This obstacle is in line with the opinion of Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006) who remind that discussion-based learning or discovery requires adequate scaffolding to run effectively.

To overcome these challenges, teachers can provide clearer direction, divide roles in groups, and provide consistent positive reinforcement. This way, all students can be actively involved in the discussion. In addition, teachers need to manage their time well so that each stage of the discussion goes according to plan. If these challenges can be overcome, group discussion strategies can be one of the sustainable and effective learning approaches in elementary schools. Overall, this study proves that the group discussion strategy is effective in increasing students' interest in learning and learning outcomes in food chain materials in class V MIN 12 Nagan Raya. This strategy not only increases students' activeness in learning, but also strengthens social interaction, critical thinking skills, and a sense of responsibility. Thus, group discussions can be used as an alternative learning strategy that is relevant for elementary school teachers to improve the quality of learning in social studies and other subjects.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of class action research that has been carried out in two cycles, it can be concluded that the application of group discussion strategies has proven to be effective in increasing the learning interest of class V MIN students in Food Chain materials. Before the action was taken, students' interest in learning was relatively low, with many students being passive, lacking enthusiasm, and average scores below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). After the implementation of the group discussion strategy in cycle I, there was a significant increase, although student involvement in discussions was still uneven. The improvements made in cycle II, namely clearer division of roles, the provision of discussion guides, and appreciation for activeness, succeeded in making almost all students actively involved in learning. Student interest in learning increased to 80% in the high category, and the average student score also exceeded the KKM. The application of group discussions not only increases interest in learning, but also develops critical thinking skills, teamwork, and student confidence. With discussions, students are directly involved in the learning process, exchange ideas, and build a collective understanding of the material. These findings reinforce the theory that student activity-based learning is more effective in improving motivation and learning outcomes than passive lecture methods. Therefore, the strategy of group discussion is worthy of continuing to be applied and developed in history learning and other subjects that require active student involvement. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended for MI teachers to use group discussion strategies more often as an alternative learning method, especially in analytical materials such as the Food Chain. Teachers also need to pay attention to discussion management techniques, such as clear assignment divisions, providing question guides, and providing motivation so that all students can actively participate. For

further research, it is recommended to examine the use of group discussion strategies combined with innovative learning media, such as the use of digital technology, in order to further increase students' interest and learning outcomes. In addition, similar research can also be applied to other educational and subject levels to test the consistency of the effectiveness of these strategies in various learning contexts.

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