

Implementation of Cooperative Learning with a Constructivist Approach for the Development of Students' Soft Skills at MTsN 1 Jember

Siti Nur Aini

Master of Social Science Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Jember

Jl. Kalimantan Tegalboto 37, Jember Regency

Email: sitiaini1982@gmail.com

Abstract : *This study aims to analyze the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach and its impact on the development of students' soft skills at MTsN 1 Jember. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, data were obtained from observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The results showed that cooperative learning strategies, such as group discussions and project-based learning, were able to improve students' communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. The obstacles found, such as differences in student activity levels and time management, can be overcome with intensive guidance and clear task arrangements. These results are in line with the constructivist theory that emphasizes active learning based on social interaction. In addition, teachers and students acknowledged a significant increase in social skills, which are relevant to supporting student success in education and everyday life. This study provides recommendations for teachers, madrasahs, and further researchers to continue developing this approach in various educational contexts .*

. Keywords— Cooperative learning, Constructivist approach, Soft skills, Communication, Teamwork, Problem-solving, Madrasah education

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic era of globalization, the development of soft skills is an urgent need for students to face the challenges of the times. Soft skills, such as communication skills, cooperation, leadership, and problem solving, are important skills that support individual success, both in education and in social life. However, the focus of education in many institutions is often still centered on academic achievement, while the development of students' social and emotional aspects tends to be neglected. In fact, these soft skills are the foundation for students to adapt to change and build healthy relationships in social and professional environments. Therefore, the integration of soft skills development into the learning process is a must in today's education system.

Cooperative learning with a constructivist approach is one of the effective strategies to support the development of soft skills. In cooperative learning, students are invited to work in teams, share ideas, and complete tasks together, so that the values of cooperation, tolerance, and responsibility can be internalized naturally. Meanwhile, the constructivist approach emphasizes active learning, where students build their own understanding through experience and social interaction. The collaboration between these two approaches not only supports academic achievement, but also forms the character of students who are resilient, empathetic, and able to work effectively in groups. This kind of learning process creates space to develop social skills while building a personality with integrity, which is a fundamental need in modern society.

In the madrasah environment, especially in MTsN 1 Jember, the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach is very relevant to support the institution's mission in producing a superior generation with Islamic character. As an educational institution that integrates religious values with science, madrasahs have a responsibility to develop not only students' academic abilities but also their moral and social aspects. With this approach, students are not only taught to think critically and creatively, but are also guided to apply the values of cooperation, empathy, and responsibility in accordance with Islamic teachings. The right implementation in MTsN 1 Jember can be an effective innovative learning model, while creating a generation that is ready to compete in the global era without forgetting their spiritual and moral roots.

Based on the background that has been described, several questions arise that are the focus of this study, namely: How is the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach at MTsN 1 Jember? and what is the impact of implementing this approach on the development of students' soft skills, such as communication skills, cooperation, leadership, and problem solving? This study seeks to answer these questions to understand how the process of implementing this learning is carried out and to what extent its effectiveness is in improving students' soft skills.

This study aims to describe the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach at MTsN 1 Jember, including strategies, processes, and challenges faced in its implementation. In addition, this study also aims to analyze the effectiveness of the approach in developing students' soft skills, such as communication skills,

cooperation, leadership, and problem solving. By evaluating the results of the implementation and its impact, this study is expected to contribute to the development of learning models that support the improvement of students' social competence in the madrasah education environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is an approach to learning that emphasizes cooperation among students in small groups to achieve common learning goals. This model is based on the principle that students learn more effectively when they share knowledge, help, and support each other during the learning process. The basic principles of cooperative learning include positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual and group accountability, social skills, and group reflection. With these principles, cooperative learning not only aims to improve academic understanding, but also develop students' social skills and character.

There are various models in cooperative learning that can be applied according to the needs and learning objectives. One popular model is Jigsaw , where students are divided into groups, and each group member is responsible for learning and teaching a certain part of the material to other group members. Another model is Think-Pair-Share , which involves students to think individually (Think), discuss in pairs (Pair), and then share the results of their discussions with the group or class (Share). In addition, models such as Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) And Team Games Tournament (TGT) is also widely used, emphasizing teamwork and healthy competition to encourage active student participation. These models are designed to create a collaborative and enjoyable learning environment, thereby improving both academic learning outcomes and students' social skills.

2.2 Constructivist Approach

The constructivist approach to education starts from the basic concept that learning is an active process in which students construct their own knowledge based on experience, interaction, and reflection. In the constructivist view, knowledge is not simply transferred from teacher to student, but is constructed individually through deep and contextual understanding. This approach places students at the center of learning, with the teacher's role as a facilitator who supports exploration, provides direction, and creates a conducive learning environment. The main principles of constructivism include an emphasis on direct experience, the relevance of learning to real life, and the integration of cognitive, social, and emotional aspects in the learning process.

The relationship between constructivism and active learning is very close, because this approach encourages students to be directly involved in the learning process. In active learning, students are involved in activities such as discussions, experiments, group projects, and problem solving, which provide opportunities to test and develop their

understanding. Constructivism emphasizes that active learning helps students connect new concepts with existing knowledge, thereby increasing retention and deeper understanding. Through these activities, students become not only passive participants, but also creative, critical, and independent learning agents, which is the main goal of the constructivist approach.

2.3 Soft Skill

Soft skills are non-technical skills that include interpersonal, communication, and self-management skills that support individuals in interacting and working with others effectively. Key components of soft skills include communication skills , which include conveying ideas clearly and listening actively; teamwork , which emphasizes collaboration and the ability to work with different types of individuals; leadership , which includes the ability to motivate and direct a group toward a common goal; and problem-solving , which is the ability to analyze problems, find creative solutions, and make informed decisions. These skills form a strong foundation for an individual's success in various areas of life.

In the world of education, the development of soft skills is very important to complement the hard skills obtained through the academic process. Soft skills help students to be more effective in learning, working together in groups, and facing challenges inside and outside the school environment. In addition, in everyday life, soft skills are the key to building healthy social relationships, adapting to change, and resolving conflicts constructively. In the era of globalization, where cross-cultural interactions and work complexity are increasing, soft skills are one of the determining factors for individual success, both in the world of work and in social life. Therefore, education must pay more attention to the development of soft skills as an integral part of the learning process.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach or mixed methods to describe and analyze the phenomenon comprehensively. Qualitative descriptive research aims to understand the process of implementing cooperative learning with a constructivist approach and its impact on the development of students' soft skills. This approach emphasizes the collection of data based on experience, observation, interviews, and documents to reveal meaning from the perspective of the research subject. On the other hand, mixed methods allow for the integration of qualitative and quantitative data, resulting in a more complete analysis. Quantitative approaches, such as the use of questionnaires, can provide numerical data to support qualitative results. By combining these two approaches, research can provide a richer and more in-depth picture of the phenomenon being studied, so that the results are more valid and applicable in the educational context.

This research was conducted at MTsN 1 Jember, a madrasah that has a good reputation in integrating academic education and Islamic values. This location was chosen because of its relevance to the focus of the research, namely the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach in developing students' soft skills. The subjects of the research were students from one particular class selected as a sample. The selection of this class was based on certain criteria, such as involvement in cooperative learning that had been implemented by the teacher or the representation of student characteristics in the madrasah. These subjects are expected to be able to provide representative data to describe the learning process and its impact on the development of soft skills, so that the results of the study can provide a real picture that is relevant to the educational context at MTsN 1 Jember.

In this study, the data collection techniques used include several complementary methods to obtain a comprehensive picture of the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach and its impact on the development of students' soft skills.

First, observation of the learning process is conducted to directly observe the implementation of cooperative learning methods in the classroom, interactions between students, and the application of constructivist principles by teachers. This observation aims to understand how students are involved in learning, how group dynamics are formed, and how students' social skills and character develop in the context of active and collaborative learning.

Second, interviews with teachers and students were used to gain in-depth insights into their experiences in participating in cooperative learning, as well as to explore their understanding of soft skill development through a constructivist approach. These interviews allowed researchers to gain more detailed information about the challenges and successes experienced in the learning process.

Third, the questionnaire will be used to measure the development of students' soft skills, such as communication skills, teamwork, leadership, and problem solving. This questionnaire will be designed to obtain quantitative data that can provide an overview of the extent to which students' soft skills develop as a result of the learning that is applied. By combining these three data collection techniques, this study is expected to produce valid and in-depth data regarding the implementation of cooperative learning and its impact on students.

The data analysis technique in this study uses descriptive analysis with data triangulation to provide a deeper and more valid understanding of the research results. Descriptive analysis aims to describe in detail the implementation process of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach and its impact on the development of students' soft skills. Data collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires will be analyzed descriptively to identify emerging patterns,

describe learning dynamics, and explore how students' soft skills develop during the process.

Furthermore, data triangulation is used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. Triangulation refers to the use of different data sources, data collection techniques, or perspectives to check the consistency of the results obtained. In this study, data triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews with teachers and students, and data from questionnaires that measured the development of students' soft skills. In this way, if the results from various sources or methods show similarities or support each other, then the findings are considered more valid and reliable. Data triangulation also allows researchers to see phenomena from various perspectives, thus providing a more holistic and in-depth picture of the influence of the applied learning approach.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach

In the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach at MTsN 1 Jember, various strategies are applied to facilitate effective and in-depth learning. One of the main strategies is project-based learning, where students work in groups to complete tasks or projects that are relevant to the learning material. Each group is given a role or part of the material to be studied in depth, then they teach each other the results of their understanding to other group members. In addition, the Think-Pair-Share method is also used, where students are given time to think individually, discuss with a partner, and then share their findings with the whole class. This strategy successfully creates active interaction between students, improves communication skills, and strengthens collective understanding of the material.

However, in its implementation, there are several obstacles faced by teachers and students. One of the main obstacles is the difference in ability and activity levels between students, which sometimes makes it difficult for some groups to work optimally. In addition, some students who are more dominant in the group tend to take over tasks, reducing the opportunity for other group members to develop. Another obstacle is related to time management, where cooperative activities often take longer than traditional learning, especially when group discussions last longer than expected. To overcome this, the solution implemented is to divide tasks more clearly and ensure that each group member has an equal opportunity to contribute. In addition, teachers provide more intensive guidance to groups that are having difficulties and manage time more efficiently so that the learning process continues to run smoothly and according to schedule. However, these obstacles can be overcome with the right approach, and the overall implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach has a positive impact on the development of students' soft skills.

4.2 Influence on Soft Skill Development

The influence of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach on the development of students' soft skills is seen in the improvement of communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Based on the results of observations and questionnaires, it can be seen that students experienced a significant increase in their communication skills. Students were more active in discussions, expressing opinions, and listening to and responding to ideas from group members. In addition, activities based on collaboration, such as group projects and discussions, also improved students' teamwork skills. They learned to work together, respect other people's opinions, and complete tasks together by sharing responsibilities. Students' problem-solving skills also developed rapidly, because they were faced with real problems that required creative thinking and joint solutions in groups. In group discussions, students exchanged ideas to find the best solution, which not only involved understanding the material but also the application of critical thinking skills.

From the perspective of students and teachers, both acknowledged significant positive changes. Students felt more confident in communicating and collaborating with their classmates. They expressed that cooperative learning provided a space to share knowledge and learn from peers who had different perspectives. Several students also noted that they were more open in expressing their ideas and more active in discussions after engaging in cooperative learning. From the perspective of teachers, they saw an increase in social and leadership skills in students. Teachers also noted that this more interactive learning made students more engaged and enthusiastic in participating in learning. Overall, the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach proved effective in improving students' soft skills, and these changes were appreciated by both students and teachers.

4.3 Relation of research results to theoretical studies

Interviews with grade VIII students at MTsN 1 Jember revealed that they generally viewed religious education materials as important and relevant in everyday life. Most students felt that religious lessons provided moral and spiritual guidance that helped them face life's challenges. They understood the materials taught, such as teachings on morals, worship, and Islamic law, as practical guidelines that could be applied in social interactions and personal worship. However, some students expressed that the way the teacher delivered the materials was sometimes felt to be too theoretical, so that it did not provide enough space for deeper or critical discussions.

Students' perceptions of religious values passed on by teachers show a significant influence on their mindset and behavior. Values such as discipline, responsibility, and respect for parents are considered an integral part of the religious education they internalize. Students also mentioned that these values helped them shape their identity as religious individuals in the school and family environment. However, some students felt that the religious values taught were

sometimes too normative, so that they did not fully reflect the diversity of religious understandings in society. This shows the hegemonic influence of religious values in shaping students' worldviews, which are accepted without much discussion, while also providing challenges in creating space for a more inclusive understanding of religion.

4 CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach at MTsN 1 Jember has been running well, resulting in active interactions between students in groups, and encouraging them to share knowledge and understanding. This collaboration-based learning has proven effective in developing students' soft skills, such as communication skills, cooperation, leadership, and problem solving. These findings are in line with the principles of constructivism theory which emphasize the importance of direct experience and social interaction in learning. Thus, this approach not only improves students' academic understanding but also strengthens social skills that are very important in everyday life and the world of work. The implementation of cooperative learning with a constructivist approach can be an effective model in education, especially for the development of students' character and soft skills.

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