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The Implementation of Make-a-Match Cooperative Learning in Improving Elementary Students' Cognitive Engagement in Islamic Cultural History Learning

Jasuli,[1] Maria Ulfa,[2] Muhammad Riski Mulyono[3]
[1,2,3] Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia
*jazulimita@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning in improving elementary students' cognitive engagement in Islamic Cultural History (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/SKI*) learning. The research focuses on examining the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the learning strategy and its impact on students' participation, interaction, and understanding during classroom activities. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted at MI Ar-Roudhoh Patrang Jember, Indonesia, involving one Islamic Cultural History teacher and 26 fifth-grade students. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings revealed that the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning significantly improved students' cognitive engagement and classroom participation. During the learning process, students actively participated in collaborative activities, including searching for matching cards, discussing concepts, answering questions, and explaining historical materials. The method also increased students' motivation, communication skills, and conceptual understanding of the exemplary story of Uthman bin Affan. In addition, students' daily test scores improved after the implementation of the cooperative learning strategy, with most students achieving scores above the minimum mastery criterion (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/KKM*). The novelty of this study lies in its focus on cognitive engagement within Islamic Cultural History learning at the elementary madrasah level. This study contributes theoretically to the discourse of cooperative learning and student engagement in Islamic education while practically offering an innovative instructional strategy for creating interactive, student-centered, and meaningful learning environments.

Keywords: cooperative learning, Make-a-Match method, cognitive engagement, Islamic Cultural History learning, elementary madrasah

Introduction

Islamic Cultural History Learning (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/SKI*) constitutes an essential component of Islamic education in Indonesian madrasahs because it functions not only as historical knowledge transmission but also as a medium for internalizing moral, spiritual, and social values derived from Islamic civilization. Through SKI learning, students are expected to develop historical awareness, critical thinking, exemplary character, and religious understanding rooted in Islamic teachings. The learning of Islamic history also encourages students to derive *ibrah* (moral lessons) from past events and apply them in contemporary social life (Buna'i, 2019). In this context, Islamic education should not merely emphasize cognitive mastery but also holistic student development through meaningful and engaging learning experiences (Fauzi, 2019).

The importance of studying history has been emphasized in the Qur'an, particularly in Surah Ar-Rum verse 42, which encourages humans to observe the rise and fall of previous civilizations as a source of reflection and wisdom. Historical learning therefore plays a strategic role in fostering contextual thinking, social awareness, and reflective understanding among students. Hermansah (2022) explained that Islamic Cultural History learning has the potential to cultivate students' appreciation of Islamic civilization and strengthen religious identity when delivered through innovative instructional approaches. Similarly, Khairunnisa and Ritonga (2023) argued that effective SKI learning should integrate interactive pedagogical strategies to overcome students' boredom and passivity during classroom instruction.

Despite its importance, SKI learning at the elementary madrasah level frequently encounters pedagogical challenges. Many students perceive SKI as monotonous, text-heavy, and dominated by memorization activities involving names, dates, and historical events. Conventional lecture-based teaching methods still dominate classroom practices, causing low student participation and weak cognitive engagement during learning activities. This condition often results in passive classroom interaction, reduced learning motivation, and limited student understanding of historical concepts. Previous studies revealed that teacher-centered instruction contributes significantly to students' lack of enthusiasm and cognitive involvement in Islamic education classrooms (Khoerunnisa & Aqwal, 2020; Yuhana & Aminy, 2019).

Cognitive engagement has become one of the most important indicators in contemporary learning because it reflects students' psychological investment, active participation, critical thinking, and willingness to construct knowledge meaningfully during the learning process. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), cognitive engagement refers to students' effortful learning strategies, persistence, and active mental involvement in understanding academic content. Likewise, Greene (2015) emphasized that meaningful learning occurs when students are actively engaged cognitively through collaborative interaction, discussion, and problem-solving activities. Therefore, teachers are required to implement innovative and student-

centered instructional methods capable of encouraging active learning participation and deeper cognitive processing.

One instructional strategy considered effective in promoting active learning and student engagement is cooperative learning. Cooperative learning emphasizes collaborative interaction among students through shared responsibilities and collective problem-solving activities (Slavin, 2015). Among various cooperative learning models, the *Make-a-Match* technique developed by Lorna Curran has attracted considerable attention because it combines educational content with enjoyable learning activities through matching cards containing questions and answers. This method encourages students to think critically, communicate actively, collaborate with peers, and respond quickly during classroom activities (Juhji, 2017). Research by Febriana (2011) demonstrated that the *Make-a-Match* model effectively improved students' classroom participation and learning outcomes in elementary education settings. Similarly, Sari (2020) found that the method increased students' enthusiasm and learning achievement because students were actively involved in interactive learning activities rather than merely listening to teacher explanations.

Several recent studies also support the effectiveness of cooperative learning in enhancing student engagement and learning achievement. Chordiati and Bahari reported that *Make-a-Match* learning positively influenced students' participation and understanding in social science learning. Tohir (2023) further found that cooperative learning activities created enjoyable classroom environments that enhanced students' learning motivation and collaborative skills. In Islamic education contexts, Fauzi and Sabila (2022) explained that interactive learning strategies significantly improved students' participation and comprehension during Islamic learning activities. Likewise, Fauzi (2023) highlighted the importance of instructional innovation in SKI learning to create meaningful and engaging classroom experiences for students.

Although previous studies have widely discussed the effectiveness of cooperative learning and *Make-a-Match* methods in improving learning outcomes, most studies primarily focused on students' academic achievement and classroom activeness in general subjects. Research specifically examining the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning in improving elementary students' cognitive engagement within Islamic Cultural History learning remains limited. Furthermore, many previous studies concentrated on quantitative measurement of learning achievement without deeply exploring how cooperative learning activities shape students' cognitive participation, interaction patterns, and engagement processes during SKI learning. Therefore, this study offers a significant contribution by focusing specifically on cognitive engagement as the central dimension of analysis in Islamic Cultural History learning at the elementary madrasah level.

This study was conducted at MI Ar-Roudhoh Patrang Jember, where preliminary observations indicated that many fifth-grade students experienced boredom, passivity, and low concentration during SKI learning

due to the dominant use of conventional lecture methods. Students tended to perceive historical learning as difficult and monotonous because they were required to memorize historical facts without engaging in interactive learning activities. Consequently, there is an urgent need for innovative instructional strategies capable of transforming passive learning environments into collaborative and engaging classroom experiences.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning in improving elementary students' cognitive engagement in Islamic Cultural History learning. Specifically, this research examines the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the *Make-a-Match* method in SKI classrooms. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of cooperative learning discourse in Islamic education and practically to provide alternative instructional strategies for enhancing students' cognitive engagement in elementary madrasah learning contexts.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning in improving elementary students' cognitive engagement in Islamic Cultural History (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/ SKI*) learning. A qualitative approach was selected because this study aimed to understand deeply the learning processes, classroom interactions, student participation, and instructional experiences occurring naturally during the implementation of the cooperative learning model. Qualitative research enables researchers to investigate educational phenomena holistically and contextually by emphasizing meaning, interpretation, and participants' experiences within their natural settings (Rukin, 2019; Samsu, 2017). Furthermore, qualitative inquiry is considered appropriate for examining classroom-based instructional practices because it allows researchers to capture social interaction patterns, cognitive participation, and behavioral responses comprehensively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research was conducted at MI Ar-Roudhoh Patrang Jember, East Java, Indonesia, during the 2024/2025 academic year. This institution was selected purposively because preliminary observations indicated that students experienced low participation and boredom during SKI learning due to the dominance of lecture-based instruction. The participants of this study consisted of one Islamic Cultural History teacher and 26 fifth-grade students who actively participated in the implementation of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning activities. The selection of participants used purposive sampling techniques because the selected participants were considered capable of providing rich and relevant information regarding the implementation of cooperative learning in Islamic education classrooms (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation techniques. Classroom observations were

conducted directly during the learning process to identify students' cognitive engagement, interaction patterns, participation intensity, collaborative activities, and classroom responses during the implementation of the *Make-a-Match* strategy. Observation is essential in qualitative educational research because it allows researchers to examine authentic classroom behavior and instructional interaction in real learning contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the SKI teacher and several students to explore their perceptions, experiences, and responses regarding the effectiveness of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning model in enhancing classroom engagement and understanding of historical materials. The semi-structured interview format provided flexibility for researchers to obtain in-depth information while maintaining consistency with the research focus (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Documentation techniques were also utilized to support research findings through lesson plans, students' learning outcomes, classroom photographs, and school learning records related to SKI instruction.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, this study employed triangulation techniques involving source triangulation, technique triangulation, and prolonged engagement during classroom observations. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from teachers, students, and classroom documentation. Technique triangulation was carried out by comparing findings from observation, interview, and documentation data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation enhances the credibility and dependability of qualitative findings by minimizing researcher bias and increasing interpretative accuracy. Additionally, the researcher continuously reviewed field findings and conducted member checking to confirm the consistency of collected information with participants' perspectives.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing field data relevant to the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning and students' cognitive engagement. Data display was conducted through narrative descriptions and thematic categorization to facilitate interpretation and understanding of classroom interaction patterns. Finally, conclusions were drawn continuously throughout the research process by identifying recurring themes, instructional patterns, and relationships between cooperative learning activities and students' cognitive participation.

This study focused specifically on three main aspects of the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning: learning planning, instructional implementation, and learning evaluation. Meanwhile, students' cognitive engagement was analyzed through several indicators, including students' active participation during discussions, questioning behavior, collaborative problem-solving, responsiveness during learning activities, and involvement in matching card tasks. These indicators were adapted from

student engagement theory, which emphasizes behavioral and cognitive involvement as essential dimensions of meaningful learning processes (Fredricks et al., 2004). Therefore, this study not only examined instructional procedures but also explored how cooperative learning strategies encouraged deeper cognitive participation among elementary students in Islamic Cultural History learning contexts.

Results and Discussion

Results

Planning of Make-a-Match Cooperative Learning in Islamic Cultural History Learning

The planning stage of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning implementation consisted of three main aspects: formulating instructional objectives, selecting learning materials, and preparing instructional media. These components became the foundation for creating an interactive learning environment capable of enhancing students' cognitive engagement during Islamic Cultural History (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/SKI*) learning activities.

1. Formulating the Learning Objectives

At the planning stage, the teacher first formulated the instructional objectives to be achieved through the implementation of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning strategy. Based on the interview conducted with Ustad Y. Arif Cahyadi, the primary objective of using the *Make-a-Match* method was to improve students' cognitive understanding in SKI learning. He stated: "*The purpose of using the Make-a-Match learning method is to improve students' understanding in the cognitive aspect of SKI learning*."

Based on the interview findings, it can be interpreted that the teacher intentionally designed the learning activities to increase students' comprehension, participation, and active engagement during classroom instruction. Classroom observations also showed that students appeared more interested and enthusiastic during the learning process compared to conventional lecture-based instruction. Students actively participated in discussions and demonstrated better comprehension during daily assessments. These findings indicate that the planning process emphasized not only cognitive achievement but also collaborative and communicative learning experiences.

2. Selecting the Learning Materials

After formulating the instructional objectives, the teacher selected learning materials considered appropriate for the implementation of the *Make-a-Match* strategy. According to Ustad Arif Cahyadi: "*The material I chose is about the exemplary story of Uthman bin Affan as a companion and caliph. This chapter discusses how Uthman became a caliph*."

The selected material focused on the genealogy, personality, leadership, and struggles of Uthman bin Affan as one of the prominent companions of

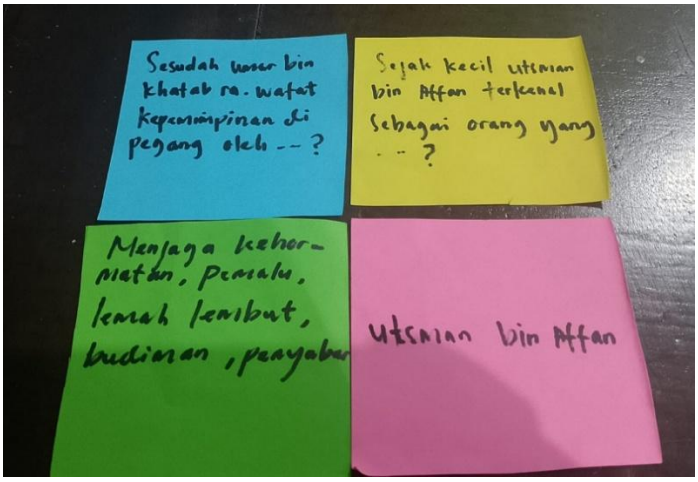
Prophet Muhammad. The teacher considered this topic suitable for cooperative learning because it contained conceptual and historical information that could be transformed into question-and-answer card activities.

Based on classroom observations, the teacher delivered the material systematically by explaining the historical background, exemplary values, and moral messages embedded in the story of Uthman bin Affan. Students appeared more engaged because the material was connected with contextual examples from daily life. This instructional approach encouraged students to participate cognitively through questioning, responding, and discussing historical concepts collaboratively.

3. Preparing the Make-a-Match Learning Media

The final aspect of the planning stage involved preparing the learning media and instructional materials required for implementing the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning strategy. Ustad Arif Cahyadi explained: "*The Make-a-Match method must be prepared carefully so that it does not waste classroom time. Therefore, I prepare everything long before teaching. I prepare materials such as buffalo paper, scissors, rulers, and pens. Then I measure and cut the paper into card shapes and write questions and answers on the cards.*"

Based on the interview and classroom documentation, the preparation process included several stages: preparing colored buffalo paper, measuring the cards into rectangular shapes measuring 7 cm × 5 cm, cutting the cards according to the number of students, and writing questions and answers related to the learning materials on each card. The preparation stage demonstrated the teacher's effort to create interactive and student-centered learning media that could stimulate active participation during classroom activities.



Gambar 1. Question and Answer Cards of the Make-a-Match Method

Overall, the planning stage showed that the teacher systematically designed the instructional process by integrating cognitive objectives, relevant historical materials, and cooperative learning media. The planning process aimed not only to improve students' academic understanding but also to

encourage communication skills, collaboration, and active participation during Islamic Cultural History learning.

Implementation of Make-a-Match Cooperative Learning in Islamic Cultural History Learning

The implementation of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method in SKI learning was carried out through three major instructional phases: preliminary activities, core activities, and closing activities. The implementation process emphasized collaborative interaction, active student participation, and cognitive engagement during classroom learning.

1. Preliminary Activities

The learning process began with preliminary activities conducted to prepare students psychologically and cognitively before entering the main learning session. Ustad Arif Cahyadi explained: "*Before implementing the method, there are preliminary activities including greeting the students, praying together, and briefly reviewing the previously learned material about the exemplary story of Uthman bin Affan as a companion and caliph.*"

Based on classroom observations, the teacher opened the lesson by greeting students, leading prayers, conducting attendance checks, and providing motivational encouragement. The teacher also briefly reviewed the previous material concerning the genealogy, personality, and struggles of Uthman bin Affan. This activity was intended to activate students' prior knowledge before entering the cooperative learning session.

The teacher further stated: "*Usually, I explain the material first before implementing the learning method so that students understand the material properly. If we directly start the method, students may not fully understand the content. Therefore, there should be an introduction before entering the method.*"

This statement was reinforced by Ridho, one of the fifth-grade students, who stated: "*Ustad Arif explained the material starting from the genealogy, personality, and struggles of Uthman bin Affan, then explained the moral message from the story before entering the Make-a-Match learning method.*"

Observational findings indicated that students showed enthusiasm and attentiveness during the teacher's explanation. The teacher connected the historical stories with everyday life situations, enabling students to understand the relevance of historical values in contemporary contexts.



Gambar 2. Teacher Explaining the Learning Materials

2. Core Activities

After the preliminary activities, the teacher implemented the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning strategy during the core instructional activities. According to Ustad Arif Cahyadi: "*This method is implemented at the end of each chapter or during the final meeting of the chapter. Usually, one chapter consists of three meetings. The first meeting explains the genealogy of Uthman bin Affan, the second explains his personality and leadership, and the third meeting reviews the material before implementing the Make-a-Match method as an evaluation activity*."

The implementation process involved several stages. First, the teacher distributed question and answer cards randomly to students sitting in different seating rows. Second, students were given time to think about the answers or questions contained on their cards. Third, students searched for their matching pairs within a specified time limit. Students who successfully found the correct matching cards received points and were asked to explain the content of their cards in front of the class.

Ustad Arif Cahyadi further explained: "*I prepare the cards and distribute them randomly. Then students look for their matching pairs, and those who find the correct pair more quickly receive points. Students who receive points are asked to explain the questions and answers on their cards in more detail. After that, I conclude the session, reshuffle the cards, and repeat the activity for the second round.*"

This explanation was supported by Adit, a fifth-grade student, who stated: "*During the first and second meetings, Ustad Arif explained the genealogy and personality of Uthman bin Affan. In the final meeting, he reviewed the material and distributed question and answer cards randomly. We searched for our matching cards, and those who found their pairs quickly received points and explained the material again.*"

Observations conducted during three classroom meetings revealed that students demonstrated active participation throughout the learning activities. Students moved actively around the classroom while searching for matching cards, discussed answers collaboratively, and enthusiastically explained their

findings. The classroom atmosphere became more interactive, communicative, and student-centered compared to traditional lecture-based instruction.



Gambar 3. Students Searching for Their Matching Card Pairs

The implementation findings indicate that the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method successfully encouraged students' cognitive engagement through collaborative interaction, active participation, questioning behavior, and peer discussion activities.

3. Closing Activities

At the end of the learning session, the teacher conducted closing activities aimed at reinforcing students' understanding and evaluating their learning experiences. Ustad Arif Cahyadi explained: "*After implementing the Make-a-Match method, I ask students again about the material they have learned and ask their opinions about the learning method. Then I assign students to summarize the important points related to the exemplary story of Uthman bin Affan before ending the lesson with prayer and greetings.*"

Based on observations, the teacher conducted reflective question-and-answer sessions to evaluate students' understanding of the learning materials. Students actively responded to the teacher's questions and shared their opinions regarding the learning activities. The teacher also assigned students to create written summaries of the important concepts discussed during the lesson.

Adit, one of the students, stated: "*Usually Ustad Arif asks us again about the material and the method that has been implemented, then gives us a summary assignment before praying together and ending the lesson.*"

Observational findings showed that students were able to answer questions confidently and appeared more motivated to participate during classroom discussions. The closing activities therefore functioned not only as evaluation sessions but also as reinforcement activities to strengthen students' cognitive understanding of Islamic Cultural History materials.

Overall, the implementation process demonstrated that the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method created an interactive learning environment characterized by active participation, collaborative discussion, communication, and increased cognitive engagement among elementary students during Islamic Cultural History learning.

Evaluation of Make-a-Match Cooperative Learning in Islamic Cultural History Learning

The evaluation stage was conducted to assess students' cognitive achievement and learning participation after the implementation of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method. The evaluation process focused on students' understanding, classroom activeness, and participation during learning activities.

According to Ustad Arif Cahyadi: "*For evaluation, I use cognitive assessment that can be seen from students' knowledge and activeness. Knowledge can be seen from students' daily test scores, while activeness can be observed during question-and-answer activities*."

The teacher further explained: "*At the beginning of the academic year, most students' scores were below the minimum mastery criterion (KKM), but after implementing the Make-a-Match learning method, students' scores improved and met the KKM standard*."

This statement indicates that the evaluation process emphasized not only written assessment results but also students' active involvement during cooperative learning activities. Cognitive engagement was observed through students' participation in discussions, responsiveness during classroom interaction, and willingness to collaborate with peers.

Adit, one of the students, stated: "*In assessment, Ustad Arif pays more attention to our activeness than test scores because test scores can sometimes come from cheating, but active participation comes from ourselves. Therefore, we compete to become active students and get better scores. Our scores were low at first, but after using the Make-a-Match method, our scores improved*."

Observational findings supported the interview results. During the learning process, students actively expressed opinions, answered questions enthusiastically, and carefully completed learning tasks. Students appeared more confident and communicative during classroom interaction activities. These findings indicate that the *Make-a-Match* method contributed positively to students' cognitive participation and classroom engagement.

Tabel 1. SKI Daily Test Scores of Class V A

No	Student Name	Before	After
1	Aditia Tri Sulastiono	54	72
2	Adzikia Aprilia Rahma	56	74
3	Alfan Wahyudi	62	76
4	Ananda Bagas Aditya	60	75
5	Athaya Khaira Azzahra	68	77
6	Aulia Izatunnisa Andriani	47	74
7	Cahya Dhanisa Putri	65	76
8	Dayra Oktavina Putri	43	70
9	Dila Eka Oktavia	48	73
10	Fany Aprilia De Putri	64	77
11	M. Zidan Kafa Zamzamy	57	75
12	Maulana Machrus Shegara	87	92
13	Maulana Zainal Abidin	72	80
14	Mentari Nada Izzatunnisa	68	77

15	Moch. Zhaqi Aditya Pratama	70	81
16	Mochammad Kesya Pratama	78	85
17	Moh Yusril Dwino Ayusnan	65	78
18	Muhammad Zainul Alan	83	90
19	Muhammad Zainur Ridho	80	87
20	Nadirra Azzahra	76	83
21	Naila Salsabila Barokah	65	76
22	Neni Ayumi Shoumi	67	78
23	Niti Mazidah Ilma	53	75
24	Rico Al Faro Tri Wicaksono	68	76
25	Subhanal Hadi Akromaddin	70	78
26	Tri Satya Pandu Wicaksana Putra Rahmadi	56	75

Based on the table above, students' learning outcomes showed significant improvement after the implementation of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning strategy. Most students who initially scored below the minimum mastery criterion achieved scores above the required standard after participating in the cooperative learning activities. In addition, observational findings indicated that students became more active, communicative, critical, and confident during classroom interaction.

Discussion

Planning of Make-a-Match Cooperative Learning in Islamic Cultural History Learning

The findings of this study demonstrate that the planning stage of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning implementation played a significant role in creating meaningful and cognitively engaging learning experiences for elementary students in Islamic Cultural History (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/SKI*) learning. The planning process involved three major aspects: formulating instructional objectives, selecting learning materials, and preparing instructional media. These findings indicate that effective instructional planning is not merely administrative preparation but also a pedagogical strategy to facilitate active learning participation and meaningful classroom interaction.

The formulation of instructional objectives in this study focused on improving students' cognitive understanding, classroom activeness, communication skills, and collaborative participation during SKI learning. These findings align with cooperative learning theory, which emphasizes that instructional objectives should not only target academic achievement but also social interaction and collaborative problem-solving skills (Slavin, 2015). The teacher intentionally designed learning objectives that encouraged students to become more actively involved in the learning process rather than passively receiving information through lecture-based instruction. This finding supports the argument of Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) that cognitive engagement emerges when students are psychologically and behaviorally involved in classroom learning activities.

The planning process also reflects the implementation of student-centered learning principles. By designing learning activities that encourage

interaction, discussion, and collaboration, the teacher shifted the learning orientation from teacher-centered instruction to active student participation. This finding strengthens previous research conducted by Juhji (2017), which stated that the *Make-a-Match* method effectively creates enjoyable and interactive learning environments because students are actively engaged in matching concepts and solving learning tasks collaboratively. Similarly, Febriana (2011) found that cooperative learning activities significantly increase students' enthusiasm and participation in elementary school classrooms.

The selection of learning materials concerning the exemplary story of Uthman bin Affan as a companion and caliph also contributed significantly to students' cognitive engagement. The teacher selected historical materials that contained moral values, leadership examples, and contextual lessons relevant to students' daily lives. According to Buna'i (2019), instructional materials in Islamic education should be adjusted to students' developmental levels and should contain factual and conceptual values capable of encouraging reflective thinking. In this study, the teacher not only delivered historical narratives but also connected the materials with students' social realities and moral experiences. Such contextualization encouraged students to understand historical concepts meaningfully rather than merely memorizing names and events.

These findings also support constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that students construct knowledge actively through interaction, experience, and contextual understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). During the planning process, the teacher designed learning activities that allowed students to interact with peers, discuss historical concepts, and collaboratively solve learning tasks. Therefore, the planning stage became an essential foundation for creating meaningful cognitive engagement during the learning process.

The preparation of *Make-a-Match* instructional media further demonstrates the importance of instructional innovation in elementary Islamic education. The teacher carefully prepared question-and-answer cards to facilitate collaborative interaction and active participation during classroom learning. According to Ibrahim, instructional methods should stimulate students' interest, motivation, creativity, and independent learning skills. The preparation of interactive media in this study successfully transformed abstract historical content into engaging cooperative learning activities. These findings are consistent with Prince (2004), who argued that active learning strategies increase students' attention, comprehension, and cognitive participation more effectively than conventional lecture-based instruction.

In addition, the findings of this study support previous research conducted by Fauzi (2023), which emphasized the importance of instructional innovation in Islamic Cultural History learning to overcome students' boredom and passivity. Similarly, Fauzi and Sabila (2022) explained that interactive instructional strategies encourage greater student participation, classroom communication, and collaborative learning engagement in Islamic education

contexts. Therefore, the planning stage of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning implementation can be interpreted as a strategic effort to create interactive, student-centered, and cognitively engaging learning environments in Islamic Cultural History classrooms.

Implementation of Make-a-Match Cooperative Learning in Islamic Cultural History Learning

The implementation findings indicate that the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method successfully created an interactive and collaborative classroom atmosphere that encouraged students' cognitive engagement during SKI learning. The instructional process was conducted through three stages: preliminary activities, core activities, and closing activities. Each stage contributed significantly to strengthening students' participation, understanding, and collaborative learning experiences.

During the preliminary activities, the teacher prepared students psychologically and cognitively by conducting greetings, prayers, motivational interaction, and brief reviews of the learning materials. This stage functioned as cognitive activation that helped students recall previous knowledge before participating in cooperative learning activities. According to Supriatna and Wahyupurnomo, opening instructional activities are essential for creating students' readiness and focusing attention on learning objectives. In this study, the teacher's strategy of connecting historical stories with students' daily experiences made the learning process more contextual and meaningful. This finding supports the argument of Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) that meaningful learning occurs when new information is connected with students' prior experiences and existing knowledge structures.

The core activities of the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method represented the most significant aspect of students' cognitive engagement. Students were actively involved in searching for matching question-and-answer cards, discussing concepts collaboratively, explaining historical materials, and participating in classroom interaction. These findings indicate that cooperative learning activities encourage active cognitive processing through peer interaction and collaborative problem-solving. According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2014), cooperative learning environments improve academic achievement and social interaction because students become actively responsible for their own learning and group participation.

The findings further reveal that the *Make-a-Match* method transformed the classroom atmosphere from passive learning into active and student-centered interaction. Students moved around the classroom, communicated with peers, discussed answers, and responded enthusiastically during instructional activities. This condition reflects strong behavioral and cognitive engagement during learning. Fredricks et al. (2004) emphasized that engaged students demonstrate persistence, concentration, participation, and willingness to invest effort during academic activities. The implementation of cooperative learning in this study successfully encouraged these dimensions of engagement through interactive learning experiences.

The implementation findings are also consistent with social constructivist theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which highlights the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. During the *Make-a-Match* activities, students constructed understanding collaboratively through peer discussion and shared problem-solving experiences. Learning therefore became a socially mediated process rather than an individual memorization activity. This collaborative interaction enabled students to exchange ideas, clarify concepts, and strengthen understanding collectively.

Moreover, the use of reward systems and point-based activities during the implementation process increased students' motivation and participation. Students became more enthusiastic because they competed positively to find matching cards and explain the material correctly. This finding aligns with gamification theory, which suggests that learning activities incorporating game-like elements improve motivation, participation, and engagement (Deterding et al., 2011). The enjoyable classroom atmosphere created through cooperative learning activities also reduced students' boredom during Islamic history learning.

The implementation findings support previous studies conducted by Chordiati and Bahari, which reported that *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning significantly improves classroom participation and learning outcomes. Similarly, Sari (2020) found that cooperative learning methods create enjoyable instructional environments capable of increasing students' learning enthusiasm and collaborative interaction. In the context of Islamic education, these findings reinforce Fauzi's (2023) argument that innovative learning strategies are essential for transforming SKI learning into meaningful and interactive educational experiences.

The closing activities also played an important role in reinforcing students' understanding and cognitive reflection. Through question-and-answer sessions and summary assignments, students were encouraged to recall, organize, and reconstruct historical knowledge gained during classroom activities. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), reflective activities such as summarizing and explaining concepts strengthen higher-order cognitive processes including understanding, analysis, and evaluation. Therefore, the closing activities in this study functioned not merely as lesson termination but as cognitive reinforcement strategies that strengthened students' understanding of Islamic historical materials.

Evaluation of Make-a-Match Cooperative Learning in Islamic Cultural History Learning

The evaluation findings demonstrate that the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method positively influenced students' cognitive achievement and classroom activeness in Islamic Cultural History learning. Evaluation activities focused not only on written test scores but also on students' participation, responsiveness, communication skills, and collaborative engagement during classroom interaction. These findings indicate that the

assessment process emphasized authentic evaluation of students' cognitive and behavioral participation.

The increase in students' daily test scores after implementing the *Make-a-Match* method indicates that cooperative learning activities contributed positively to students' conceptual understanding. Most students who initially scored below the minimum mastery criterion (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/KKM*) achieved scores above the required standard after participating in cooperative learning activities. This finding confirms that cooperative learning methods effectively improve students' academic performance through active participation and collaborative interaction.

The improvement in students' cognitive achievement can be explained through active learning theory, which argues that students learn more effectively when they actively process information rather than passively receive instruction (Prince, 2004). During the *Make-a-Match* activities, students continuously engaged in questioning, discussing, matching concepts, and explaining answers to peers. Such activities encouraged deeper cognitive processing and conceptual understanding. These findings support Greene's (2015) argument that cognitive engagement emerges when students invest mental effort and actively participate in learning tasks.

In addition to improving academic achievement, the evaluation findings also demonstrate improvements in students' communication skills, self-confidence, and classroom participation. Students appeared more confident when expressing opinions and answering questions during classroom interaction. This condition indicates that cooperative learning activities fostered both cognitive and social development simultaneously. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), cooperative learning enhances interpersonal communication and collaborative responsibility because students depend on each other to achieve shared learning goals.

The findings also reveal that the teacher prioritized students' activeness and participation during evaluation rather than relying solely on written assessments. This approach reflects authentic assessment principles emphasizing holistic evaluation of students' learning processes and participation. According to Primasari, Marini, and Sumantri (2021), authentic assessment in elementary education should evaluate not only cognitive achievement but also students' participation, collaboration, and learning behavior during instructional activities.

Furthermore, the evaluation findings support Bloom's taxonomy concerning cognitive learning domains involving knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation processes (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Through the *Make-a-Match* activities, students not only memorized historical information but also analyzed concepts, matched relationships, communicated understanding, and evaluated answers collaboratively. Therefore, cognitive engagement in this study extended beyond rote memorization toward higher-order thinking processes.

The findings of this study strengthen previous research conducted by Tohir (2023), which demonstrated that cooperative learning methods improve students' learning outcomes and classroom participation. Likewise, Nuraini (2021) found that the *Make-a-Match* method significantly increased students' learning activeness because students became more involved physically, mentally, and socially during classroom interaction. In Islamic education contexts, these findings confirm that interactive and cooperative instructional strategies can transform SKI learning into more meaningful, participatory, and cognitively engaging educational experiences.

Overall, the discussion findings indicate that the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning successfully improved elementary students' cognitive engagement through collaborative interaction, active participation, contextual learning experiences, and reflective classroom activities. The study therefore contributes theoretically to the discourse of cooperative learning and cognitively engaging pedagogy in Islamic education, while practically offering alternative instructional strategies for improving the quality of Islamic Cultural History learning in elementary madrasahs.

This study offers a significant novelty in the field of Islamic education, particularly in Islamic Cultural History (*SKI*) learning at the elementary madrasah level. Previous studies on the *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method have predominantly focused on improving students' learning outcomes, classroom activeness, or motivation in general subjects such as science, social studies, and civic education. In contrast, this research specifically examines how the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning enhances elementary students' cognitive engagement within the context of Islamic Cultural History learning. The novelty of this study also lies in its emphasis on cognitive engagement dimensions, including students' active participation, collaborative interaction, responsiveness, questioning behavior, and conceptual understanding during SKI learning activities. Furthermore, this study contextualizes cooperative learning within Islamic historical materials concerning the exemplary leadership and character of Uthman bin Affan, thereby integrating collaborative pedagogy with value-oriented Islamic education.

The contribution of this study can be viewed from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse on cooperative learning and student cognitive engagement in Islamic education by demonstrating that interactive and collaborative instructional strategies can transform historically perceived monotonous learning environments into meaningful, student-centered, and cognitively engaging educational experiences. This study also strengthens constructivist and social learning theories by showing that cognitive understanding develops more effectively through collaborative interaction and contextual learning activities. Practically, the findings provide an alternative instructional model for teachers and Islamic educational institutions seeking to improve the quality of SKI learning in elementary madrasahs. The *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning method can serve as an innovative pedagogical strategy to foster active

participation, communication skills, critical thinking, and students' learning achievement in Islamic education classrooms.

Conclusion

This study found that the implementation of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning in Islamic Cultural History (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/ SKI*) learning significantly improved elementary students' cognitive engagement beyond initial expectations. The findings demonstrated that the method not only enhanced students' academic achievement but also increased their active participation, collaborative interaction, communication skills, critical thinking, and responsiveness during classroom learning activities. Students who previously tended to be passive and less interested in SKI learning became more enthusiastic, interactive, and cognitively involved throughout the instructional process. These findings challenge the long-standing assumption that Islamic Cultural History learning is inherently monotonous, memorization-oriented, and less attractive for elementary students. Instead, this study shows that innovative cooperative learning strategies can transform SKI classrooms into meaningful, student-centered, and cognitively engaging learning environments.

From a scientific perspective, this study strengthens previous findings regarding the effectiveness of cooperative learning in improving students' participation and learning achievement while simultaneously extending the discussion toward the dimension of cognitive engagement in Islamic education contexts. The findings confirm that interactive learning strategies such as *Make-a-Match* can foster deeper conceptual understanding through collaborative interaction and contextual learning experiences. In addition, this research contributes a new perspective by integrating cooperative learning pedagogy with Islamic historical learning materials, particularly the exemplary story of Uthman bin Affan as a companion and caliph. Therefore, this study enriches scholarly discussions concerning student-centered pedagogy, cognitive engagement, and instructional innovation within elementary Islamic education.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted within a specific educational setting involving a relatively small number of participants in one elementary madrasah, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Second, this study focused only on one learning topic in Islamic Cultural History instruction, namely the exemplary story of Uthman bin Affan, which may not fully represent the implementation of cooperative learning across different Islamic education materials. Therefore, further studies involving larger participant samples, diverse educational institutions, and various instructional topics are necessary to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding the effectiveness of *Make-a-Match* cooperative learning in Islamic education. Future research is also recommended to explore the long-term impact of cooperative learning on students' critical thinking, collaborative

competence, and character development through quantitative, mixed-method, or comparative research approaches.

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