



Implementing Cooperative Learning in Islamic Religious Education: A Case Study of Student Learning Interest at SD Negeri 050683 Tanjung Selamat

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of cooperative learning in Islamic Religious Education and its relationship with students' learning interest at SD Negeri 050683 Tanjung Selamat. A qualitative single-case study used interviews with the principal, teacher, students, and parents, classroom observations, and document review. The findings reveal adaptive model selection, heterogeneous groups, shared tasks, individual accountability, promotive interaction, presentations, and multidimensional assessment. Students displayed stronger enjoyment, attention, participation, confidence, and responsibility. The case supports social interdependence theory and identifies ta'awun, ukhuwah, and deliberation as sociomoral resources for cooperation. Group processing, time management, and unequal participation remained constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a strategic position in elementary schooling because it is expected to develop religious knowledge while simultaneously shaping moral conduct, social responsibility, cooperation, and disciplined worship (Abrori et al., 2024; Awwaliyah & Fatimah, 2024). These goals require more than the transmission of information. Students need opportunities to ask questions, test explanations, negotiate meaning, and experience religious values in social interaction. In practice, however, elementary IRE can remain dominated by teacher explanation and individual recall (Ali, 2021). The preliminary observation at SD Negeri 050683 Tanjung Selamat indicated that only a limited number of students actively asked or answered questions during teacher-centered lessons. In contrast, others tended to wait for the teacher's explanation. Such a pattern restricted both cognitive participation and the experiential formation of Islamic social values in the observed classroom.

Cooperative learning offers a relevant pedagogical alternative because it places students in small, heterogeneous groups to pursue shared learning goals. Its defining elements are positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, interpersonal skills, and group processing (Gillies, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). These elements distinguish structured cooperation from ordinary group work. A classroom cannot be described as cooperative merely because students sit together or receive a group assignment. Cooperation becomes pedagogically meaningful when the task requires mutual contribution, each learner remains individually responsible, interaction supports understanding, social skills are explicitly practiced, and the group reflects on its functioning.

The model is particularly relevant to IRE because the learning process can connect academic cooperation with the Islamic ethics of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), *ukhuwah* (fraternity), and *shura* (deliberation) (Rizal & Rahman, 2025). The Qur'anic command to cooperate in righteousness and piety (Qur'an 5:2), the command to deliberate in affairs (Qur'an 3:159), and the affirmation of fraternity among believers (Qur'an 49:10) provide a normative orientation for respectful dialogue and inclusive peer assistance (Kemenag, 2019). These verses do not constitute a technical formulation of modern cooperative learning; rather, they provide ethical direction for the goals and conduct of collaboration. The technical structure remains grounded in contemporary pedagogical theory, whereas the Qur'anic principles shape the moral quality of interaction (Gillies, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Recent research has reported that cooperative learning can strengthen elementary students' motivation, engagement, affective outcomes, and achievement, although the magnitude of its contribution depends on implementation quality, task structure, teacher facilitation, and contextual conditions (Nguyen & Oanh, 2025; Salamah et al., 2024; Shobirin et al., 2025). In IRE, cooperative strategies have also been associated with greater participation, collaboration, learning outcomes, cooperative skills, and value internalization (Fijriah et al., 2024; Hidayati et al., 2024). Nevertheless, many studies examine cooperative learning as an intervention and emphasize final outcomes, while

giving limited attention to how teachers select models, form groups, manage dominant and passive members, connect Islamic values with group norms, and combine individual and group assessment in everyday classrooms.

This study addresses that gap through an implementation-oriented case analysis. Its contribution is fourfold. First, it examines the empirical visibility of the five core elements of cooperative learning, thereby distinguishing structured cooperation from nominal group work. Second, it interprets *ta'awun*, *ukhuwah*, and *deliberation* as interactional norms rather than ornamental religious references. Third, it identifies the contextual distinctiveness of a public elementary school in which the IRE teacher adapts cooperative models to the learning material, participates in the Islamic Education Teacher Working Group (KKG PAI), and combines individual and group assessment. Fourth, it develops theoretical implications by assessing how the case supports, extends, and qualifies social interdependence theory and social constructivism.

Accordingly, this study aims to explain how cooperative learning is planned and implemented in IRE, how its core elements are manifested in classroom interaction, how evaluation and follow-up are conducted, how students' learning interest is reflected in qualitative evidence, what institutional and classroom factors support or constrain implementation, and how the findings contribute to cooperative learning theory in an Islamic educational context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperative Learning and Social Interdependence

Social interdependence theory explains that the way goals are structured determines interaction patterns and learning outcomes. Positive interdependence exists when students perceive that they can reach their goals only when other members also succeed. Individual accountability ensures that collective responsibility does not obscure each student's learning. Promotive interaction occurs when learners encourage, explain, question, and support one another. Interpersonal skills involve listening, turn-taking, conflict management, leadership, and shared decision-making. Group processing enables members to evaluate what worked, what impeded participation, and what should be improved. These components are mutually reinforcing; the absence of one can weaken the entire cooperative structure (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Slavin (2014) argues that group goals and individual accountability are central to productive group work because they prevent free-riding and encourage all members to learn. Gillies (2016) further emphasizes the teacher's role in structuring tasks and discourse. Cooperative learning is therefore not a withdrawal of teacher guidance. It requires deliberate orchestration: the teacher designs interdependence, models productive questioning, monitors participation, and provides scaffolding without taking over the group's intellectual work. Recent evidence confirms that engagement improves when cooperative tasks have clear roles, meaningful interaction, and adequate teacher facilitation (Karmina et al., 2024; Nguyen & Oanh, 2025). In Islamic Religious Education scholarship, the same distinction is emphasized by Ali (2021), who

treats cooperative learning as a structured pedagogical process rather than simple task sharing.

Learning Interest in Elementary Islamic Religious Education

Learning interest is treated in this study as a multidimensional tendency expressed through enjoyment, sustained attention, active involvement, and willingness to continue learning. In qualitative research, these dimensions are inferred from consistent patterns across interviews, observations, and documents rather than from claims of statistically significant change (Chaerunisa, 2024). Relevant indicators include enthusiasm for the lesson, voluntary participation, willingness to ask or answer questions, persistence in completing tasks, confidence in presenting, and the tendency to discuss the material beyond the classroom (Jusnita & Yanuarti, 2024). Cooperative learning may foster interest by creating a sense of belonging, offering manageable opportunities for success, reducing fear of making mistakes, and giving students a meaningful role in the learning process. These indicators are consistent with studies of interest and motivation in Islamic Religious Education (Sulisriah et al., 2024; Syahnaz et al., 2023).

In IRE, interest cannot be separated from the broader educational objective of connecting knowledge with conduct. A student who becomes more willing to help peers, listen respectfully, or explain religious content may demonstrate both learning engagement and value enactment. This connection between active participation, character formation, and student-centered religious learning is also emphasized in contemporary IRE studies (Abrori et al., 2024; Awwaliyah & Fatimah, 2024). Yet engagement and value enactment should not be conflated. Attendance and obedience, for example, may indicate discipline but do not automatically demonstrate interest. Stronger evidence lies in voluntary effort, sustained attention, peer assistance, and the student's desire to participate in future learning activities. These indicators also connect learning interest with collaborative responsibility, an outcome emphasized in research on cooperation among students in Islamic Religious Education (Syah et al., 2024)

Islamic Ethical Foundations for Cooperation

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ

The phrase above, from Qur'an 5:2, instructs believers to cooperate in righteousness and piety and not in sin and aggression (Kemenag, 2019). In instructional terms, the verse gives cooperation an ethical purpose. Peer tutoring, shared responsibility, and mutual assistance are educationally legitimate when they develop understanding and character without eliminating individual effort. The principle of shura in Qur'an 3:159 is reflected when students listen to different views, justify answers, and reach decisions respectfully. Ukhuwah in Qur'an 49:10 supports inclusive heterogeneous groups in which stronger students assist without humiliating others and less confident students can seek support safely.

The integration of these values requires operationalization. Teachers need to translate broad values into observable group norms: each member explains a contribution, assistance is offered through prompts rather than answer-giving,

disagreement is expressed politely, and decisions are reached through reasoned deliberation. When values are formulated as interactional expectations, IRE moves from teaching religious concepts to organizing a social environment in which those concepts are practiced. This operational reading is consistent with Husin (2018), who situates cooperative strategy within an Islamic educational framework of mutual assistance and responsible interaction.

Contextual Framework

The analytical framework assumes that enabling conditions shape the fidelity of cooperative design; design fidelity then generates mediating experiences that influence students' interest and social-religious conduct. Evaluation and reflection provide feedback for subsequent planning. The framework does not presume a direct causal effect. Instead, it guides the qualitative examination of mechanisms and contextual conditions (Gillies, 2016; Nguyen & Oanh, 2025).

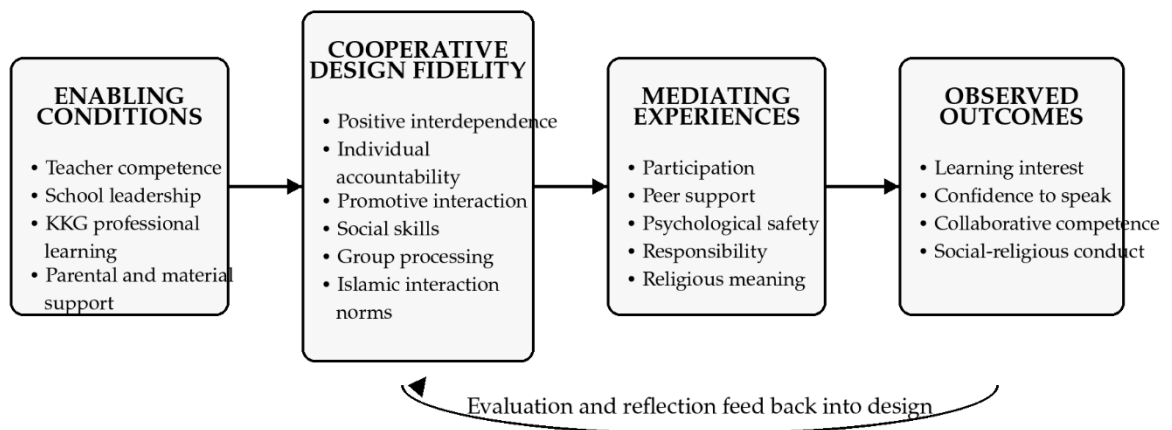


Figure 1. Contextual framework of cooperative learning implementation in Islamic Religious Education

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a single-case study design. The design was selected because the object was a bounded system: the implementation of cooperative learning in IRE at one public elementary school, involving a specific subject, institutional setting, group of participants, and fieldwork period. The research questions primarily asked how implementation occurred and how the phenomenon was shaped by its classroom and institutional context. A case study was therefore more appropriate than an experimental design because the purpose was to understand processes, meanings, pedagogical decisions, and contextual configurations rather than to estimate a statistical treatment effect (Fadli, 2021).

The case was SD Negeri 050683 Tanjung Selamat, Padang Tualang District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Participants were selected purposively because of their direct involvement in the phenomenon. They comprised the school principal, the IRE teacher, students in the observed classes, and parents who could describe learning responses outside school. The principal represented institutional policy and support; the teacher explained planning and

instructional decisions; students described their participation and learning experiences; and parents provided supplementary evidence regarding behavior and interest at home. Participant codes were P (principal), T (teacher), S (student), and PA (parent) (Fadli, 2021).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and document review. Interviews explored the teacher's understanding of cooperative learning, model selection, group formation, implementation steps, assessment, follow-up, perceived changes in interest, and implementation constraints. Observations focused on group size and composition, task distribution, peer interaction, participation balance, teacher facilitation, presentation, questioning, individual quizzes, and classroom management. Documents included lesson plans, learning materials, worksheets, assessment rubrics, activity records, student work, and photographic documentation. The three techniques were treated as mutually corrective: interviews explained reasons and experiences, observation showed practice, and documents indicated the consistency of planning and implementation (Fadli, 2021; Miles et al., 2020).

The unit of analysis was the implementation episode rather than the individual participant. An episode included the sequence from establishing objectives, forming groups, assigning tasks, facilitating interaction, assessing process and outcomes, and conducting follow-up. This unit prevented the analysis from becoming a disconnected collection of opinions. Procedural regularity was distinguished from cooperative quality. A lesson could follow the apparent sequence of group work but still be weakly cooperative if interaction was dominated by one student, individual learning was not checked, or the group never reviewed its functioning (Gillies, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Data analysis followed the interactive procedures of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2020). Codes were developed for planning, the five cooperative elements, teacher roles, Islamic values, learning interest, assessment, follow-up, supporting and inhibiting factors, contextual distinctiveness, and theoretical implications. Evidence was displayed in triangulation matrices comparing participant statements with observations and documents. A conclusion was treated as stronger when supported by at least two sources or techniques. Divergent evidence was retained and interpreted rather than removed.

Trustworthiness was addressed through source, technique, and time triangulation, member checking of interview meanings, field notes, and an audit trail. Credibility was supported by cross-source confirmation; transferability by contextual description; dependability by documenting collection and analysis procedures; and confirmability by separating evidence, interpretation, and inference (Nowell et al., 2017; Stahl & King, 2020). All interview excerpts were translated from Indonesian into English with minimal linguistic editing and without altering substantive meaning. The study did not claim statistical generalization or causal significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented by integrating interviews, classroom observations, and document review. The analysis first establishes the case context, then describes planning and implementation, examines the visibility of the five cooperative elements, and reports evaluation, learning interest indicators, and ecosystem factors. Table 1 summarizes the convergence of the three forms of evidence (Miles et al., 2020; Nowell et al., 2017).

Table 1. Triangulation Matrix of the Principal Findings

Theme	Interview evidence	Observation evidence	Document evidence	Analytical meaning
Planning	The teacher described curriculum analysis, model selection, heterogeneous groups, media, and assessment.	Lessons began with objectives, groups of four to five students, and task distribution.	Lesson plans, worksheets, media, and rubrics documented planning.	Planning contained the basic cooperative structure, although pedagogical reasons for model choice require explicit documentation.
Implementation	The teacher acted as facilitator; students divided tasks, discussed, combined answers, and presented.	Peer interaction, teacher guidance, questioning, quizzes, and group recognition were visible.	Activity records and photographs supported the occurrence of group learning.	Shared goals, promotive interaction, and participation were evident; group processing was less developed.
Learning interest	Students reported greater enjoyment, courage, and diligence; the principal and parents supported this perception.	Students attended to tasks, contributed to discussion, and prepared to present.	Activity sheets, reflection records, and student work provided supplementary evidence.	A positive tendency appeared in enjoyment, attention, participation, and continued interest without statistical claims.
Islamic values	The teacher emphasized ta'awun, ukhuwah, and deliberation; students reported greater willingness to help peers.	Peer assistance, respectful listening, and group decision-making were observed.	Attitudinal objectives and process rubrics could record these behaviors.	Islamic values functioned as interactional norms and sociomoral resources.

Theme	Interview evidence	Observation evidence	Document evidence	Analytical meaning
Support and constraints	Support came from the principal, KKG, parents, and teacher competence; constraints involved time, facilities, dominance, and passivity.	The teacher frequently monitored, motivated, and redistributed participation.	Training records, facilities, and evaluation notes reflected the implementation ecosystem.	Success resulted from the interaction of design, teacher competence, classroom culture, and institutional support.

Case Context and Institutional Support

The principal positioned IRE as central to early moral and character formation. Support for cooperative learning formed part of a broader policy encouraging varied methods and teacher professional development. This support created institutional legitimacy for active learning and reduced the pressure to maintain a silent, lecture-dominated classroom (Abrori et al., 2024; Awwaliyah & Fatimah, 2024).

“Islamic Religious Education is very important because it is related to forming students’ character and morals from an early age. The school strongly supports innovative learning methods, including cooperative learning, and encourages teachers to use varied methods and participate in training so that learning becomes more effective” (P).

The teacher reported first learning the model through the IRE Teacher Working Group at district and regency levels, with guidance from the IRE supervisor and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This professional learning pathway is a contextual strength of the case because model knowledge did not arise solely from individual experimentation. It influenced how the teacher analyzed materials, selected models, formed groups, and designed assessment (Gillies, 2016; Karmina et al., 2024).

“I became familiar with cooperative learning through the KKG PAI training delivered by the Islamic education supervisor. The district and regency KKG PAI activities organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs were very useful” (T).

Planning and Adaptive Model Selection

Planning included curriculum and objective analysis, selection of a cooperative model, sequencing of activities, preparation of contextual media, group composition, and assessment design. The teacher formed heterogeneous groups of four to five students by considering academic ability, learning style, gender, and social background. This size enabled face-to-face interaction while remaining manageable for teacher monitoring (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Karmina et al., 2024).

“I analyze the curriculum and determine the objectives, material, and character outcomes; select the cooperative learning type; design the learning steps and assessment; and prepare attractive media” (T).

"The strategy is to mix students with different ability levels, learning styles, gender, and social backgrounds so that they can help each other. Each group usually consists of four to five students" (T).

Model selection was adapted to the characteristics of the IRE content rather than standardized across all topics. The teacher used Make a Match for angels and their duties and considered cooperative formats suitable for the pillars of faith, pillars of Islam, prophets, and prayer. This adaptation reflects pedagogical reasoning: matching models are appropriate for paired concepts, Jigsaw can organize divisible content, Think-Pair-Share can protect individual thinking before discussion, and STAD can connect teamwork with individual quizzes. The strength of the planning was flexibility; the area requiring further development was the explicit documentation of why each model matched a particular objective (Ali, 2021; Tambak, 2017).

"I adjust the type to the material being taught. For the topic of angels and their duties, for example, I use Make a Match. Many topics can be used, such as the pillars of faith, the pillars of Islam, the names of prophets, and prayer, because the method makes children active" (T).

Classroom Implementation and the Visibility of Cooperative Elements

The lesson sequence consisted of an introduction, core cooperative activity, evaluation, and closure. The teacher opened with greetings, motivation, objectives, warm interaction, an icebreaker, and a connection between the topic and everyday life. The core stage involved presenting initial information, forming groups, distributing tasks, monitoring discussion, facilitating presentations and questions, and concluding with individual quizzes and recognition. This sequence showed that cooperative learning was organized as an instructional system rather than a single discussion activity (Ali, 2021; Slavin, 2014).

"The introductory stage includes greeting, motivation, and learning objectives. In the core stage, I present information, form groups, and organize presentations. In evaluation and closure, I give a quiz, appreciate the discussion groups, and conclude" (T).

Positive interdependence appeared through shared products and task division. Students described dividing the work, searching for answers, and combining the parts into a collective response. Interdependence was strongest when each contribution was necessary, and all members understood the final product. Individual accountability was represented by written or oral quizzes, observation of contribution, peer assessment, and role responsibility. Nevertheless, the presence of less serious members indicated that accountability was designed more consistently than it was enacted (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Slavin, 2014).

"We usually divide the tasks first. Each person looks for the answer, and then we collect and arrange the answers together" (S).

"I combine individual accountability and group performance. Assessment covers cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects through written or oral tests, observation of group performance, and peer assessment" (T).

Promotive interaction was visible when students explained ideas, asked questions, helped peers, organized responses, and prepared presentations. Students associated group learning with easier comprehension and reduced boredom. The teacher moved among groups, posed guiding questions, motivated passive students, and attempted to keep talk focused on the task. The classroom was therefore not silent, but much of the noise represented productive interaction rather than disorder (Nguyen & Oanh, 2025).

"I am happy because learning becomes more exciting and less boring when there are friends to discuss with. It is easier because we can discuss, and the group is quite cohesive because members help when someone has difficulty" (S).

Social skills were manifested in turn-taking, listening, expressing opinions, helping, leading, recording, and presenting. Repeated exposure to discussion and presentation created a safer pathway for less confident students to speak. Group processing, however, was the least developed element. The teacher reported reflecting on implementation, but the evidence did not show that each group routinely evaluated its own participation, obstacles, and improvement plan (Gillies, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

"I often give my opinion during discussion, and my friends listen. I used to be shy and afraid of being wrong, but after frequent group discussions I became accustomed to presenting in front of the class" (S).

Table 2. Empirical Visibility of the Five Cooperative Learning Elements

Core element	Empirical indicator	Evidence source	Analytical assessment
Positive interdependence	Shared goal and product; divided tasks; answers combined into a collective response.	Teacher and student interviews; observation; worksheets.	Clearly visible, but all members must understand the final product.
Individual accountability	Written/oral quizzes, contribution assessment, peer assessment, and assigned roles.	Teacher interview; assessment instruments.	Planned, but unequal seriousness shows inconsistent enactment.
Promotive interaction	Explaining, questioning, helping, combining ideas, presenting, and responding.	Student interviews; observation; activity records.	Strongly visible and linked to perceived ease of understanding.
Social skills	Listening, speaking, deliberating, helping, leading, recording, and presenting.	Teacher and student interviews; observation.	Developing, but roles should rotate to equalize opportunities.

Core element	Empirical indicator	Evidence source	Analytical assessment
Group processing	Teacher reflection and plans for subsequent improvement.	Teacher interview; evaluation notes.	Weakest element; routine student-led group reflection was not documented.

Evaluation, Follow-up, and Indicators of Learning Interest

Evaluation combined process and outcome evidence. The teacher mentioned activity and behavior observation sheets, a learning-interest questionnaire, reflection journals, discussion and presentation rubrics, written or oral tests, and peer assessment. In this qualitative study, questionnaire data were treated as supporting documents rather than a basis for statistical significance. Follow-up included reteaching, peer tutoring, or specific tasks for students who had not attained the objective, while enrichment extended the learning of students who had achieved it (Fadli, 2021; Slavin, 2014).

“Remedial support is provided through reteaching, peer tutoring, or specific assignments, while enrichment is intended to deepen understanding” (T).

Four qualitative indicators suggested a positive tendency in learning interest. First, students described greater enjoyment because group learning felt more engaging and less monotonous. Second, attention was sustained by the need to understand the task and contribute to the group. Third, active involvement appeared in task division, discussion, opinion-giving, assistance, and presentation. Fourth, continued interest was reflected in greater enthusiasm for IRE, increased diligence in completing work, and a desire for lessons that combined games and group learning (Chaerunisa, 2024; Syahnaz et al., 2023).

“I am more enthusiastic now, and I like following Islamic education lessons more than before. I am also more diligent because in a group task I would feel bad if I did not help my friends” (S).

The principal and parents corroborated the change in students’ engagement. Parents reported that children more frequently discussed IRE at home, appeared more enthusiastic, became more confident in speaking, and showed greater politeness. These statements were treated as supplementary perceptions rather than proof of a single causal effect, because behavior outside school is influenced by family and other experiences. The convergence nevertheless suggests that cooperative experiences may have extended beyond immediate task completion (Nowell et al., 2017; Stahl & King, 2020).

“Students’ interest has begun to improve, especially after the teacher used more active learning methods” (P).

“The child now studies more often and talks about Islamic education lessons. There is a change: the child is more enthusiastic, less reluctant to study, and more confident in speaking” (PA).

Supporting Factors and Constraints

Supporting factors included teacher pedagogical competence, principal support, KKG PAI professional learning, a generally conducive classroom environment, positive peer interaction, parental support, and accessible learning media. These factors formed an implementation ecosystem. Teacher competence alone would be insufficient without time, facilities, and institutional legitimacy; school support alone would not generate high-quality cooperation without appropriate task design and facilitation (Nguyen & Oanh, 2025).

The principal constraints were the longer time required, difficulty composing heterogeneous groups, unequal ability, dominant and passive students, uneven motivation, and limited facilities. These constraints define the boundary conditions of the model. They also explain why the teacher needed to monitor groups continuously and why group processing should be strengthened. A student confirmed that work could become slow when some members were not serious (Talkhan et al., 2025).

"The main constraints are lengthy time management, difficulty forming heterogeneous groups, and the inactivity of some students, including dominant and passive members. The teacher also faces challenges in motivating students and dealing with limited classroom facilities" (T).

"Sometimes it is difficult when a member is not serious, so the task takes longer to finish" (S).

Implementation Fidelity: Beyond Nominal Group Work

The case demonstrates that cooperative learning was substantively visible in four core elements and partially visible in the fifth. Shared products and task division supported positive interdependence; quizzes and contribution assessment represented individual accountability; peer explanation and assistance showed promotive interaction; and repeated discussion developed social skills. Group processing remained limited because reflection was primarily teacher-led. This finding is analytically important: it supports the claim that the school implemented more than nominal group work, while avoiding the overstatement that all cooperative elements were fully institutionalized (Gillies, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

The findings support Johnson and Johnson's (2009) social interdependence theory and Slavin's (2014) emphasis on group goals paired with individual accountability. The student's reluctance to disappoint peers if they failed to contribute illustrates how individual effort acquired a social dimension. At the same time, the persistence of passive and dominant members qualifies the theory by showing that formal structures do not guarantee balanced interaction. Roles, random selection of presenters, individual preparation time, and evidence of contribution are required to translate designed interdependence into enacted interdependence.

The teacher's facilitative role also confirms Gillies's (2016) argument that effective cooperation depends on structured discourse and timely scaffolding. Cooperative learning did not reduce the importance of the teacher; it changed the nature of teacher expertise. The teacher had to interpret classroom noise, identify

participation inequalities, ask guiding questions, and avoid solving the group's task. These demands explain why professional learning through KKG PAI constituted a meaningful enabling condition (Karmina et al., 2024; Nguyen & Oanh, 2025).

Mechanisms Connecting Cooperation and Learning Interest

The qualitative evidence suggests a mechanism rather than a direct, universal effect. Group structure created opportunities to participate; manageable participation produced experiences of success; peer support reduced fear of error; psychological safety increased willingness to speak; recognition and responsibility sustained effort; and religious meaning gave cooperation moral significance. Through this chain, enjoyment, attention, involvement, and continued interest became more visible. This interpretation is consistent with recent research linking cooperative design with engagement and motivation (Salamah et al., 2024).

The analysis also identified negative mechanisms. When work was distributed unfairly, dominant students gained excessive control and passive students lost opportunities to learn. When time allocation was unrealistic, reflection was omitted. When recognition focused only on the highest score, cooperation could shift toward intergroup competition. These findings correspond with meta-analytic evidence that cooperative learning outcomes vary according to implementation quality and context (Shobirin et al., 2025; Talkhan et al., 2025). Therefore, the most defensible conclusion is not that cooperative learning automatically increases interest, but that well-structured cooperation can create the social and psychological conditions through which interest is more likely to develop.

Islamic Values as Sociomoral Resources

The case extends conventional cooperative learning theory by showing that Islamic values can function as sociomoral resources within group structures. Ta'awun gave peer assistance a moral purpose; ukhuwah supported inclusion and care; and deliberation provided an ethical framework for disagreement. The student's report of becoming more willing to help peers indicates that the values were not confined to lesson content. They shaped how students interpreted responsibility toward one another (Husin, 2018; Kemenag, 2019; Rizal & Rahman, 2025).

This extension must be framed carefully. Islamic values did not replace positive interdependence, accountability, or group processing. Nor did the presence of religious language guarantee cooperation. Values became pedagogically consequential only when translated into task rules, role expectations, teacher feedback, and assessment indicators. The theoretical contribution is therefore an interactional proposition: in IRE, cooperative structures can be strengthened when culturally and religiously meaningful norms support the motivation to cooperate, provided that those norms are operationalized and the technical conditions of cooperative learning remain intact (Husin, 2018; Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

This finding supports prior studies that position cooperative learning as a medium for social and religious development in IRE (Sandy et al., 2024; Zaman,

2020). It also offers a critical correction to normative approaches that merely attach Qur'anic verses to a modern learning model. The verses in this study were treated as ethical orientations, while the empirical analysis remained grounded in observable interaction and contemporary educational theory.

Contextual Distinctiveness and Theoretical Implications

Five contextual strengths characterize the case. First, adaptive model selection connected cooperative formats with the nature of the IRE material. Second, value-integrated cooperation converted *ta'awun*, *ukhuwah*, and deliberation into norms for helping and discussion. Third, professional support through KKG PAI strengthened teacher competence. Fourth, combined individual-group assessment protected accountability. Fifth, follow-up linked cooperative activity with remedial support, peer tutoring, and enrichment. Because the study did not compare multiple schools, these characteristics should be described as contextual distinctiveness rather than universal superiority (Karmina et al., 2024; Sandy et al., 2024).

The theoretical implications are simultaneously supportive, expansive, and critical. The findings support social interdependence theory because shared goals and individual accountability were associated with productive interaction. They support social constructivism because students perceived peer explanation and discussion as facilitating comprehension. They extend both perspectives by identifying religiously meaningful norms as sociomoral mediators. Finally, they criticize the assumption that grouping alone produces cooperation or interest. Fidelity depends on the alignment of task design, participation structure, assessment, teacher facilitation, reflection, and institutional support (Gillies, 2016; Slavin, 2014).

Practically, IRE teachers should prepare worksheets that specify a shared product, individual roles, discussion ethics, and a brief group reflection. Roles should rotate, and presenters may be selected randomly so that every member must understand the collective answer. Principals should evaluate not only the administrative completeness of lesson plans but also the quality of interaction, inclusion, and accountability. KKG PAI can function as a professional learning community in which teachers examine classroom evidence, redesign tasks, and discuss culturally responsive forms of cooperation (Gillies, 2016; Karmina et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cooperative learning in IRE at SD Negeri 050683 Tanjung Selamat was implemented as a structured process encompassing curriculum analysis, adaptive model selection, heterogeneous groups of four to five students, shared tasks, teacher facilitation, presentations, individual assessment, and follow-up. Positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, and social skills were empirically visible, whereas group processing remained the least developed component. Triangulated evidence indicated a positive tendency in students' enjoyment, attention, participation, confidence, responsibility, and willingness to help peers. These findings should not be interpreted as a statistically proven causal effect, but as a contextually grounded mechanism through which structured cooperation supported learning interest.

The case supports social interdependence theory and social constructivism while extending them through the sociomoral role of ta'awun, ukhuwah, and deliberation. It also qualifies overly simple claims by showing that group formation does not automatically create cooperation. Teachers are recommended to strengthen student-led group reflection, rotate explicit roles, protect individual accountability, limit tasks to realistic time frames, and assess both academic products and interaction quality. School leaders should sustain professional development, provide flexible learning resources, and use supervision to examine the quality of participation rather than merely the presence of group work.

FURTHER STUDY

The study was limited to a single school and did not employ a comparative or longitudinal design. The number of interview accounts in each participant category was also limited, and the available data did not permit analysis by student subgroup or repeated measurement over time. Future research should compare public and private elementary schools, examine different cooperative models across IRE topics, and trace the stability of learning interest and social-religious behavior longitudinally. Mixed-method studies could combine interaction analysis, validated interest scales, learning outcomes, and qualitative interviews. Further research should also test whether explicit student-led group processing improves participation equity and whether Islamic interaction norms function differently across age groups and institutional cultures.

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