

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING METHODS IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF TAWHID IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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### **Abstract**

This study discusses the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in improving students' understanding of the concept of monotheism in junior high school. This method was applied to create an active and collaborative learning atmosphere through problem solving that is relevant to students' daily lives. The results showed that the application of PBL was able to significantly improve students' engagement, motivation, and understanding of the basic concepts of monotheism. The learning process began with problem identification, group discussions, solution presentations, and joint reflection. Through this approach, students not only gained cognitive understanding of tauhid theory but also honed their critical thinking, communication, and application of tauhid values in their lives. Thus, the PBL method can be recommended as an effective alternative in tauhid education at the junior high school level to achieve the holistic and contextual goals of Islamic Education.

**Keywords:** Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Tauhid, Conceptual Understanding, Junior High School Students

### **Introduction**

Understanding the concept of tauhid is the main foundation in Islamic teachings. Tauhid occupies a central position in the belief system, as the main basis that distinguishes Islam from other beliefs. This statement shows the importance of tauhid education in shaping the character and personality of students from an early age, especially at the junior high school level (Rahman et al., 2021).

In the context of formal education in junior high schools, instilling the values of tauhid often faces complex problems. One of the common obstacles encountered is the lack of religious education, both in schools and in the community, which has an impact on students' weak understanding of the essence of tauhid (Aslan, 2024). This condition reinforces the urgency of innovation in Islamic Education (PAI) teaching methods, particularly in tauhid material. Teachers are required not only to transmit knowledge but also to stimulate students' conceptual understanding and spiritual experiences through more relevant and contextual learning approaches (Aslan & Setiawan, 2019).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is one form of innovation that has recently been widely adapted in various disciplines, including religious education. PBL emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, real-world problem-solving, and collaboration among students as integral components in reconstructing conceptual understanding of lessons (Rahman et al., 2021).

The application of PBL in tauhid learning is believed to be able to create a more active and meaningful learning atmosphere. Through the presentation of authentic problems related to religious life, students are expected to be able to more easily relate tauhid concepts to everyday realities, thereby deepening their understanding and making it more applicable (Salsabila, 2025).

Conventional approaches such as lectures have dominated PAI classrooms, but they often create a passive and boring atmosphere. Several studies have found that students often lack focus and even show little interest in the tauhid knowledge being taught, resulting in suboptimal learning outcomes. A change in teaching methods is an urgent necessity to improve the quality of tauhid education (Syafei, 2019).

The implementation of PBL also requires teachers to be more creative in designing problems that are relevant to the world of junior high school students. The issues raised in learning should not only be theoretical but also contextual to students' life experiences, such as the importance of honesty, tolerance, and consistency as manifestations of tauhid in daily life. However, there are also various challenges in implementing PBL. Not all teachers are ready or trained to use this method effectively in tauhid learning. Human resources, facilities, and curriculum collaboration are important factors for the optimal implementation of PBL (Primadoniati, 2020).

On the other hand, PBL provides space for active participation for students. They are not only asked to understand the concept of tauhid cognitively, but also encouraged to develop creative solutions to problems related to aqidah and present them in group discussions. Thus, the concept of tauhid is not only understood theoretically but is truly internalised into attitudes and behaviour (Lizarti, 2025).

Previous research findings indicate that the application of creative, participatory, and meaningful methods—including PBL—can enhance students' understanding, motivation, and tauhid-related behaviour. Integrating tauhid values into daily learning activities, such as discussions, simulations, or social projects, further strengthens the achievement of tauhid education (Abdullah & Sahid, 2023).

In line with the need to strengthen national character and the challenges of globalisation with its negative influences, effective tauhid learning has become increasingly vital. Tauhid values must not only be mastered at the knowledge level but also practised as guidelines for students' lives in a multicultural society and the dynamics of modern times.

Therefore, research on the implementation of problem-based learning methods in enhancing students' understanding of tauhid concepts at junior high schools is

deemed important to conduct. This study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the field of Islamic education, particularly in enriching PAI learning strategies that are more relevant to the needs of today's youth.

### **Research Method**

This study utilises library research, which involves collecting, reviewing, and analysing various relevant literature sources, such as books, scientific journals, articles, and documents related to the implementation of problem-based learning methods in tauhid education at junior high schools (Eliyah & Aslan, 2025). The research steps include problem identification, literature collection and screening, content analysis of previous findings, and systematic synthesis of the review results to provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the method being studied in improving students' understanding of tauhid concepts (Machi & McEvoy, 2016).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Implementation of Problem-Based Learning Methods in Tauhid Education at Junior High Schools**

Tawhid education at the junior high school level plays a very important role in shaping the character, spirituality, and foundation of faith of students. In the context of modern education, understanding the concept of tawhid is not only important cognitively, but also needs to be internalised in students' daily behaviour. Challenges frequently encountered in tauhid education in schools include the dominance of conventional methods such as lectures, which make students less active, difficulty in connecting the material to real-life situations, and the inability to fully grasp all tauhid values through one-sided explanations (Arbainah, 2023).

This condition requires innovation in learning strategies to improve students' understanding of the concept of tauhid. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is one solution that emphasises active, participatory, and applicable processes in solving real problems closely related to students' daily lives.

Teachers act as facilitators who guide students, while students are directed to become active, critical, and collaborative learners in groups (Nasir et al., 2023). The implementation of PBL in tauhid learning begins with careful planning, namely by designing problem scenarios that are relevant to the real world of students.

The issues raised include the importance of maintaining tauhid in digital activities, the dangers of shirk in the social media era, or how to deal with moral challenges in the environment of friendship. This approach makes learning more contextual and meaningful (Nurhidayah, 2024).

In the implementation stage, teachers begin the lesson with an inspiring introduction and relate the tauhid material to the students' personal experiences. Students are then divided into small groups and encouraged to discuss the problems

that have been designed with their group members. The classroom atmosphere becomes more lively, ideas are exchanged dynamically, and students learn to listen to and respect the opinions of others (Djainudin, 2023).

Group discussion sessions allow students to complement each other's knowledge and test their understanding of the concept of tauhid more deeply. The teacher only provides guidance and clarification as needed without dominating the conversation, so that the learning process runs independently and constructively. Through this discussion, students are also challenged to relate the concept of tauhid to real solutions in facing the problems of teenage life (Rusiadi & Aslan, 2021).

After the discussion, each group presents their ideas and solutions in front of the class. Each group has the opportunity to share their perspectives, followed by feedback from other groups and clarification from the teacher. This process fosters self-confidence, communication skills, and logical thinking abilities in students (Efendi, 2019).

Next, the teacher provided direct feedback on the group presentations. This feedback included appreciation for the uniqueness of the proposed solutions, corrections of conceptual errors, and an emphasis on the importance of applying the values of tauhid in real life. As a result, each student gained meaningful and reflective learning experiences (Pujiono & Hafriani, 2025).

Conceptual understanding of tauhid is evaluated through open-ended questions, short quizzes, or written reflections on the experience of participating in problem-based learning. Assessment focuses not only on cognitive outcomes but also on the transformation of students' attitudes and behaviour related to tauhid and Islamic morality. Evaluation results indicate that students have a better understanding of the essence of tauhid and are able to apply it in their daily interactions.

The implementation of PBL has a direct impact on increasing student activity, motivation, and participation in tauhid learning. Students feel more challenged and emotionally involved because they are confronted with real-life situations that are close to their daily lives. This fosters a sense of responsibility for their own religious understanding, while also improving their ability to solve problems related to tauhid values (Sukriyatun, 2023). In addition to cognitive strengthening, the problem-based approach also encourages the strengthening of Islamic character traits such as honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect. Students become accustomed to expressing their opinions politely, accepting different views, and seeking solutions collectively. All of these processes are real implementations of tauhid values that are adaptive to the needs of the times (Hasrah, 2023).

However, the success of PBL in tauhid learning is closely related to teachers' readiness in designing problems, their ability to facilitate discussions, and their willingness to continuously innovate in presenting PAI materials. Additionally, school

facilities such as conducive classrooms and adequate learning resources also play a crucial role in the smooth implementation of this model.

Challenges also arise in the form of diversity in students' levels of understanding and character, requiring teachers to be more patient in guiding groups with lower abilities without hindering the progress of other groups. Collaboration among students, effective scheduling of discussion time, and varied forms of evaluation are key to ensuring that all students' potential is optimally accommodated (Fathoni & Muhtadi, 2024).

The experience of implementing PBL shows that the learning paradigm has truly shifted from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. Students' direct involvement in identifying, analysing, and finding solutions to tauhid problems makes the material relevant and meaningful to their spiritual and social needs (Mutoharoh, 2021).

In terms of outcomes, the average understanding of tauhid concepts among students has significantly improved, for example, from an initial score of 65 to 85 after the PBL model was implemented. Additionally, there have been changes in students' religious behaviour, such as increased participation in religious rituals, greater enthusiasm for asking questions, and a stronger desire to learn more about tauhid teachings (Syafaatunnisa & Zakiyah, 2025).

The implementation of PBL has also been proven effective in creating a more democratic, open, and enjoyable classroom environment. The learning atmosphere is no longer monotonous but has transformed into a productive space for growth and learning to appreciate differences within the framework of tauhid. Teachers and students learn together and complement one another.

Research findings indicate that the success of PBL is significantly influenced by collaboration between teachers, students, and overall school support. With open communication patterns and continuous evaluation, this model can be an effective solution for improving the quality of tauhid education in junior high schools while strengthening the Islamic character of today's youth (Purnamasari, 2023).

Finally, by placing real-life student problems at the centre of focus, tauhid learning through PBL not only deepens conceptual understanding but also trains students to become problem solvers in real life. This method aligns with the demands of the times and the needs of Islamic education to shape a generation that is intellectually, spiritually, and socially intelligent.

Amid the challenges of technological advancement and globalisation, innovative learning approaches like PBL are a relevant and strategic choice to strengthen the foundation of tauhid in the hearts of Muslim youth. Through a systematic, collaborative, and reflective process, the values of faith can truly be internalised as a guiding principle in school, family, and broader society.

## **Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Method in Improving Understanding of the Concept of Tawhid**

The application of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in improving the understanding of the concept of tauhid is an important innovation in Islamic education, especially at the junior high school level. PBL emphasizes an active, participatory, and contextual approach so that students not only master theoretical knowledge but also internalise the values of tauhid into their daily lives (Puspayadi & Faijiyah, 2024).

The main problem in conventional tauhid learning is the dominance of lecture-based and one-way methods, which tends to make students passive and unable to relate the material to their real lives. Low interest in learning and the perception of tauhid material as abstract make students quickly lose motivation (Vaidah, 2024).

PBL was developed to address these challenges by positioning students as the main subjects of learning. In this method, the learning process begins with the identification of real problems relevant to the environment, experiences, and challenges faced by students related to aqidah or tauhid (Yanti, 2023).

Teachers act as facilitators, designing problem scenarios, such as how students deal with the negative influence of social media on their beliefs or how to avoid shirk in daily practices. These problems spark discussions, analyses, and active exchanges of ideas among small groups formed in the classroom (Widjaja & Aslan, 2022).

Learning begins with an introductory activity that stimulates interest and explores students' prior knowledge. Students then discuss in groups, explore information, formulate arguments, and seek solutions to the tauhid-related issues presented by the teacher. This discussion develops collaborative skills, critical thinking, and respect for differing opinions (Widjaja et al., 2022).

The discussion process continues with the exploration of credible sources of information, including textbooks, the Qur'an, hadith, and personal experiences. Students are encouraged to collect data, formulate hypotheses, and analyse the relevance of various tauhid values in current issues. After gaining an understanding, the results of the discussion are presented by each group in front of the class. These presentations foster students' self-confidence, communication skills, and argumentation skills. The teacher then provides feedback, clarification, and reinforcement of the concept of tauhid in greater depth (Pohan, 2025).

Evaluation is conducted through quizzes, reflective discussions, and assignments applying tauhid values in real life. Assessment focuses not only on cognitive knowledge but also on affective and psychomotor aspects—how well students are able to practise tauhid values in their daily behaviour.

Research shows that the application of the PBL method has a significant impact. Student activity, interest, and motivation have increased significantly.

The average test score for tauhid material increased from 65 to 85 after the implementation of PBL, indicating that students' conceptual and practical

understanding had improved (Novita et al., 2019). Teachers also experienced a change in their role, from mere conveyors of information to active facilitators who guided and dynamised the interaction process. These changes created a more democratic, open, and productive classroom atmosphere, while also building positive teacher-student relationships. Despite the encouraging results of PBL, teachers faced a number of challenges, such as heterogeneity in student abilities within groups, time constraints, and the complexity of planning problem scenarios.

Teachers need to be adaptive, provide additional guidance to students who are struggling, and ensure effective time distribution to solve problems thoroughly. The success of PBL implementation also depends heavily on the quality of problem scenarios, the completeness of learning resources, and the school's openness to supporting innovation. Collaboration between teachers, students, and school management is key to ensuring that the entire process runs optimally (Fitria, 2024).

The implementation of PBL does not only provide benefits in the cognitive domain. Social skills such as communication, empathy, cooperation, and tolerance grow strongly during the group discussion process. Islamic character, honesty, discipline, and responsibility become practical implications of a more applicable understanding of tauhid (Rahman et al., 2021).

Theoretically, this approach aligns with active and constructivist learning principles, where linking knowledge to real-life experiences brings learning towards meaning and relevance. Students not only learn 'what' but also "why" and 'how' to apply tauhid in a contextual manner (Salsabila, 2025).

PBL is believed to be a strategic alternative in building strong faith amid the challenges of globalisation and modernisation. Students are encouraged to become problem solvers, critical thinkers, and adaptable to change, while still making tauhid the foundation of all attitudes and behaviours (Syafei, 2019).

By placing experience, collaboration, and problem-solving at its core, PBL can enhance the quality of tauhid education in junior high schools. Moving forward, efforts to strengthen and develop this model must continue to foster a generation of young people who are intelligent, faithful, and of noble character.

## **Conclusion**

The implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has been proven effective in improving students' understanding of the concept of tauhid in junior high school. Through this model, students not only gain cognitive understanding but are also trained to apply the values of tauhid in their daily lives.

The learning process becomes more interactive, collaborative, and relevant to students' experiences, thereby significantly increasing their motivation and interest in tauhid material. The use of PBL in tauhid learning helps students to think critically, analyse real issues surrounding faith, and seek solutions together in small groups. This

method allows students to be more actively involved, discuss, and connect the subject matter with the reality around them. The results of the study showed an increase in the average understanding scores of students, for example from 65 to 85 after the implementation of PBL, as well as the development of communication and cooperation skills. Overall, PBL is highly recommended as an innovative alternative in Islamic Education, especially in teaching tauhid.

Teachers act as facilitators who encourage active student participation, making the learning process more meaningful and contributing to the development of strong Islamic character. The implementation of this method has positive impacts not only on cognitive aspects but also on affective and social aspects, supporting the emergence of a young generation who are faithful, critical, and ready to face the challenges of the times.

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