
The Role of Teachers in Increasing Students' Interest in Aqidah Akhlak Learning at Al-Firdaus Senior High School, Sukoharjo

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Abstract

Objective: To analyze the role of teachers in increasing students' interest in learning Aqidah Akhlak lessons, as well as to identify learning methods, supporting factors, and obstacles faced at Al-Firdaus Sukoharjo School. **Theoretical framework:** this research is based on theories of learning motivation and Islamic pedagogy that emphasize the importance of the relationship between teachers and students in increasing interest in learning. **Literature review:** Not presented in the abstract, but should include theories about learning interests, learning strategies in Islamic religious education, and the role of teachers in shaping student motivation. **Method:** Descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews (with principals, teachers, and students), and documentation. **Results:** The results of the study show that Aqidah Akhlak teachers at Al-Firdaus Sukoharjo play an active role in fostering students' interest in learning by providing greetings and motivations that are relevant to daily life and imitating the Prophet Muhammad SAW before the learning process begins. **Implications:** There is a need to develop more varied and interesting learning methods in Aqidah Akhlak lessons to overcome the lack of interest in learning in some students. The results of this research can also be a reference in the formulation of school policies that support the role of teachers more effectively. **Novelty:** This study provides a contextual and practical overview of the approach of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in increasing students' interest in learning in private Islamic schools (Al-Firdaus Sukoharjo), which has rarely been explored specifically in previous studies.

Keywords: teacher's role, students' interest, learning motivation, aqidah akhlak, al-firdaus senior high school.

INTRODUCTION

Education is essential for nurturing human potential, encouraging innovation, and promoting societal progress, which ultimately leads to economic growth and improved quality of life for all [1]. Education is already evolving into a more democratic landscape, encompassing a variety of objectives and teaching methods. This shift demands a range of professional skills to ensure effective management, which promotes an inclusive environment that meets the diverse needs and aspirations of all learners [2].

Education shapes individuals by cultivating qualities that are aligned with social and cultural values, which ultimately fosters a whole personality and contributes positively to

society. In its development, Education serves as an important framework, which provides essential guidance for adults to encourage their personal growth and development [3].

In the Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning national education, it is stated that education is: A deliberate initiative to create a vibrant learning atmosphere that not only enhances students' intellectual abilities but also fosters their spiritual resilience and self-discipline, empowering them to develop academically and personally in a holistic educational experience [4]. Collaboration between educators, students, parents, and educational institutions is essential to foster a thriving learning environment. By working together, they can create a supportive framework that enhances the educational experience and ultimately results in better outcomes for all stakeholders involved [5].

Education is a fundamental process that significantly enhances human potential, empowering individuals to effectively fulfill their roles in society. Education plays an important role in fostering physical, mental, emotional, and moral growth, shaping attitudes and behaviors that are in tune with the wider society. As a dynamic social process, education utilizes controlled environmental influences, especially from schools, which serve as the primary environment for learning and personal development. Through a structured curriculum and interactive experiences, education not only imparts knowledge but also instills values and critical thinking skills. This holistic approach fosters broad-minded individuals who are better equipped to make positive contributions to their society, ultimately promoting societal progress and innovation. Allah SWT has said in the Qur'an Surah An-Nahl Verse 125: Meaning: "(O Prophet Muhammad SAW) Call (all people) to the path (shown) of the Lord your Sustainer with wisdom (with wise words according to their level of intelligence) and good teaching and help them in the best (way). Verily, the Lord your Sustainer, He is the One who knows best (who goes astray from His path and He is the One who knows best those who are guided) [6].

Education is intrinsically linked to human nature, reflecting our role as members of society and culture. In Indonesia, this relationship is formalized through the National Education System, established under Law No. 20 of 1989. This framework emphasizes the importance of education in fostering individuals who contribute to nation-building. Education fosters a holistic approach, integrating academic knowledge with cultural values, which ultimately aims to cultivate broad-minded citizens who can thrive in a diverse and dynamic society [7].

Culture and education are closely intertwined, serving as important channels for the preservation and transmission of societal norms, values, and beliefs from generation to generation [8]. Education not only imparts knowledge but also shapes identity, fostering a collective understanding of shared human experiences and creations. These dynamic interactions enrich the lives of individuals and communities, ensuring that cultural heritage survives and thrives in a rapidly changing world [9]. Culture and education are closely intertwined, serving as important channels for the preservation and transmission of societal norms, values, and beliefs from generation to generation [10]. Education not only provides knowledge but also shapes identity, fostering a collective understanding of shared human experiences and creations. This dynamic interaction enriches the lives of individuals and communities, ensuring that cultural heritage survives and thrives in a rapidly changing world [11].

In a broad sense, education is a fundamental human right that should be universally accessible, transcending individual backgrounds, family circumstances, and community contexts [12]. Education should be a continuous journey, encompassing different forms and levels of learning throughout one's life. By developing an inclusive educational landscape, we empower individuals to reach their full potential, which not only enriches their personal lives but also strengthens the fabric of society as a whole [13]. In the narrow sense of education, Planned learning activities in educational

institutions incorporate structured materials, well-defined schedules, comprehensive monitoring systems, and thorough evaluations, all designed to increase student engagement and ensure effective learning outcomes, thereby encouraging a productive and enriching educational environment [14].

Education by Jalaluddin and Abdullah is a deliberate journey facilitated by dedicated educators, designed not only to improve students' academic abilities but also to nurture their physical and spiritual development. This holistic approach aims to unlock the potential of each student, fostering intelligence, self-discipline, practical skills, and ethical values. In the Islamic context, education becomes a transformative experience that cultivates insightful individuals, aligning knowledge with moral integrity to prepare them for meaningful contributions to society. Education has also been described by Allah SWT in the Qur'an. As Allah said in QS. Al Mujaadalah verse 11 [15]: Meaning: "O you who believe, when it is said to you, "Make room in your assemblies," make room, and Allah will make room for you; and when it is said, "Stand up, then stand up, and Allah will raise those who believe among you and those who are given knowledge a few degrees; and Allah is aware of what you do." (QS.Al-Mujaadalah 58:11).

In Surah Al-Mujaadila verse 11, Allah underscores the importance of elevating the status of the believers and those with knowledge. This highlights the profound value of seeking wisdom and the importance of lifelong learning. By acquiring knowledge, individuals not only elevate themselves but also make a positive contribution to society and the world at large [16].

Education serves as the cornerstone of a nation's progress, shaping not only the mindset of individuals but also the fabric of society. By prioritizing educational initiatives, we nurture a generation equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for innovation and growth. This nurturing of intelligence and critical thinking encourages active participation in community affairs, which spurs social progress. Therefore, robust educational activities are indispensable for enriching community life and facilitating holistic human development, ultimately leading to a more enlightened and prosperous society for all its members.

Education is a basic human endeavor that seeks to illuminate the path to both tangible and intangible goals. Its main challenge lies in determining the most appropriate direction to encourage individual growth and societal progress [17]. By carefully navigating these choices, education empowers individuals to realize their potential and make meaningful contributions to the world, shaping a brighter future for all.

Law No. 2 of 1989 provides the foundation for Indonesia's National Education system, articulating its fundamental objectives. The law aims to educate the nation while fostering people of faith and virtue. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of equipping learners with essential knowledge and skills, as well as improving their overall health. Through these objectives, the law aspires to nurture a generation that is intellectually and morally prepared to make a positive contribution to society [18].

Teachers play an important role in shaping the intelligence and character of the next generation, which will ultimately direct the progress of a nation [19]. They are not just educators; they serve as mentors and role models, guiding students through their academic and personal journeys. To fulfill this important position, teachers must possess essential qualities such as responsibility, authority, and independence. Their ability to inspire and motivate the younger generation can spark a passion for learning, cultivating critical thinkers and compassionate leaders who will drive society forward [20].

At SMA Al Firdaus, the researchers were intrigued by the institution's distinctive cultural and spiritual practices that enrich the educational environment. Each day begins with the recitation of Asma'ul Khusna, followed by tahlil and Yaasin recitation, which fosters a sense of community and spiritual awareness among the students. This harmonious blend of academics and spirituality is complemented by a strong discipline system, where a duty schedule helps maintain order and responsibility. In addition, the school emphasizes unity and collective reflection through congregational dhuhur prayers, creating a supportive atmosphere that nurtures personal growth and academic excellence.

The effectiveness of this innovative approach. By incorporating narratives into lessons, educators capture students' imaginations, thus establishing a closer connection with the material. This engaging method not only stimulates interest but also encourages critical thinking and collaboration among peers. In addition, the prime location of Al Firdaus High School allows easy access to various cultural resources, thus enriching the storytelling experience. This blend of creativity and contextualized learning fosters a dynamic educational environment where students feel inspired and empowered to explore their ideas and aspirations.

Teachers occupy an honorable position in society, entrusted with the great responsibility of imparting knowledge and fostering well-rounded individuals by the principles of Pancasila. Their diverse roles go beyond mere instruction; they are mentors who inspire curiosity, facilitators who encourage collaborative learning, and organizers who create enriching educational environments. By shaping critical thinkers and responsible citizens, teachers play an important role in growing a generation that embodies the values of unity, justice, and respect for diversity [21]. Student motivation plays an important role in determining the success of education. When students are motivated, they are more likely to invest their time and energy in learning, showing greater persistence in overcoming challenges. This drive fosters higher focus during learning activities, allowing them to grasp concepts more effectively and ultimately leading to improved academic performance across a range of subjects. Motivation truly drives the journey to success, It is crucial to highlight the importance of critical thinking and creativity in the school learning environment [22].

Given the important role of motivation in the learning process, it is imperative to focus on the dynamics of student motivation. Furthermore, educators should have a deep understanding of students' intrinsic motivation to learn [23]. It is crucial for teachers to actively engage with students who exhibit low levels of motivation, providing the necessary support and encouragement to promote their academic growth. By doing so, teachers can inspire students to enhance their learning experience and achieve commendable academic results [24].

Motivation is an important dynamic factor in the learning process. Often, students who exhibit low achievement do so not because of a lack of ability, but rather a lack of motivation to engage fully in the learning experience. Consequently, educators are tasked with the imperative to foster students' enthusiasm for learning through innovative approaches. This can be achieved by clearly articulating the objectives to be achieved, stimulating student interest, fostering a positive learning environment, providing appropriate recognition for individual achievement, providing constructive feedback on student work, and facilitating competition and collaboration among students and between students and teachers [25].

Teachers play an important role and carry a great responsibility to shape the character of the nation's next generation. Through the guidance of educators, the youth can develop their values and ethical framework, so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the welfare of future citizens in this country [26].

A concerning trend in Islamic society in Indonesia today is the decline of moral values in the context of rapid modernization. Along with the rapid advancement of technology, civilization, and culture, there is a tendency to adopt Western influences that often contradict the prevailing norms in Indonesia [27]. This shift has resulted in the erosion of the ethical standards of the current generation. As the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) emphasized, it is important to remain vigilant in maintaining our values amidst these changes:

Many factors have led to the erosion of moral values among today's youth. Foremost is the reduced emphasis on teaching respect and courtesy towards elders. It has become common to witness students showing disrespect to their teachers, children openly defying their parents' requests, and, alarmingly, instances of extreme violence, such as children taking action against their parents over possessions like cell phones. In addition, the proliferation of advanced technology has led many young people to prioritize time spent on their devices over fulfilling their responsibilities as conscientious individuals.



Figure 1. Student Activities at Al-Firdaus Senior High School, Sukoharjo

Children often prefer listening to music over answering the call to prayer and prefer playing social media over reading the Qur'an. Therefore, ten children need to obtain an education that aims to improve their moral values, such as aqidah and morals education. Based on the explanation above, the researcher took the initiative to examine the problem by conducting a study entitled “The Role of Teachers in Increasing Student Interest in Akidah Akhlak Class XI Subjects at Al Firdaus Sukoharjo High School”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Teachers in Schools

A teacher is an educator — an adult responsible for providing guidance or assistance to students in their physical and spiritual development to help them reach maturity, become independent, and fulfill their roles as Allah’s creatures, stewards (Khalifah) on earth, social beings, and individuals capable of standing on their own [28]. According to Government Regulation, a teacher holds a functional position, meaning a role that signifies the duties, responsibilities, authority, and rights of a civil servant within an organization, based on specific expertise or skills, and performed independently [29].

According to Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, a teacher is a professional educator whose primary roles are to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students in early childhood education (formal education pathways), elementary education, and secondary education levels [30].

Interest in Learning

Sardiman A.M. argues that interest is a condition that occurs when a person perceives characteristics or meanings in a situation that are related to their desires or needs. Meanwhile, according to I.L. Parasibu and Simanjuntak [31], interest is defined as a motive that causes an individual to actively engage with something that attracts them. Interest in learning consists of two aspects: the cognitive aspect, which is based on the concepts developed by the students about the fields related to their interests, and the affective aspect, where the concepts supporting the cognitive aspect of interest are expressed in attitudes toward activities that arise from that interest [32].

Aqidah and Akhlak

The term *aqidah* in Arabic (written as *akidah* in Indonesian) etymologically means a bond or tie, so called because it binds and serves as the anchor for everything. In technical terms, *aqidah* refers to faith or belief [33]. Meanwhile, *akhlak* comes from the word *akhlaq*, the plural form of *khuluq*, which etymologically means character, behaviour, conduct, or disposition. *Akhlak* holds a very important position in Islam [34]. *Akhlak* is often equated with terms such as character, morals, etiquette, and ethics [35].

Definition of the Aqidah Akhlak Subject

The *Aqidah Akhlak* subject is a branch of Islamic Religious Education. According to Zakiyah Daradjat, Islamic Religious Education is an effort to nurture and guide students so they can fully understand the teachings of Islam, internalize its goals, and ultimately practice and adopt Islam as a way of life [36].

METHODOLOGY

In this study, researchers used qualitative research methodology with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of phenomena or events as experienced by the subject, including aspects of behavior, perception, and action. This approach is carried out through detailed narrative representations, contextualized in a particular environment, and relies on naturalistic methods of inquiry [37]. In this context, the study focuses on obtaining information and describing the role of the teacher in increasing students' interest in learning in *Aqidah Akhlak* class XI at Al Firdaus Sukoharjo High School. In addition, researchers also involved informants who were other parties who understood and were involved in the learning process, namely the Islamic Religious Education Section and grade XI students at MYP-HS Al-Firdaus Sukoharjo.



Figure 2. Research Location of Al-Firdaus Sukoharjo High School

To obtain the required data, researchers used techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation [38]. To maintain data validity, researchers use triangulation techniques. According to Sugiyono, data validity testing in qualitative research includes four aspects, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In analyzing data, researchers refer to the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, as explained by Sugiyono.

The first stage is data reduction, which is the process of summarizing, selecting the main things, and looking for certain themes and patterns to facilitate understanding of the data obtained [39]. The second stage is data presentation, which is carried out after the data is reduced. Presentation of data in qualitative research is generally in the form of concise but informative narrative text, making it easier for readers to understand the content of the data. The third stage is conclusion drawing. This conclusion drawing is done to answer the formulation of research problems. Conclusions in qualitative research are temporary and can change if new evidence is found in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the research using interview, observation, and documentation techniques regarding "The Role of Teachers in Increasing Students' Interest in Learning Akidah Akhlak for Grade XI at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo," the findings obtained from the interviews are as follows:

The Role of Teachers at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo in Increasing Students' Interest in Learning Akidah Akhlak for Grade XI

According to Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S. Thl, M.Pd, a PAI (Islamic Religious Education) teacher at SMA Al-Firdaus, before beginning the Akidah Akhlak lessons, he stated, "I cultivate an inspiring environment that fosters enthusiasm among my students toward the subject matter I deliver" (Interview with Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S. Thl, M.Pd, January 23, 2025).

My motivation stems from the relevance of faith and morality in everyday life, illustrated through the exemplary behavior demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). As a revered role model for Muslims, the Prophet's actions serve as a foundation for connecting the principles of faith and ethical conduct with the motivational teachings I deliver in class [40].

According to Muhammad Zaki Putranto, a Grade XI student, teachers of Aqidah and Akhlak inspire students by linking their lessons to the exemplary behavior shown by the Prophet. This approach not only reinforces the importance of ethical conduct but also encourages students to embody these virtues in their daily lives (Interview with Muhammad Zaki Putranto, January 23, 2025).

Meanwhile, Anysa Nayla Nafsya, a Grade XI student, stated that her Aqidah teacher always inspired her classmates to maintain cleanliness, which encouraged them to emulate the character of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). (Interview with Anysa Nayla Nafsya, January 23, 2025)

Likewise, as expressed by Muhammad Isa Anis, a Grade XI student, educators responsible for teaching faith, belief, and ethics consistently inspire students by connecting these concepts with daily life experiences. Moreover, teachers also provide examples of commendable behavior drawn from the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). (Interview with Muhammad Isa Anis, January 23, 2025)

Learning Methods Used to Increase the Interest of Grade XI Students at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo

As explained by Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher, the teaching strategies he frequently employs include the lecture method and question-and-answer sessions. He emphasized that these methods are effective in fostering student engagement and enthusiasm, thus encouraging active participation in exploring matters of faith and ethics. In the context of the teaching and learning process, students need to engage attentively with the content I present on faith and morality. After the lecture, I use a question-and-answer format to encourage students' active participation in exploring these topics. Additionally, I strive to motivate them, fostering greater enthusiasm for learning about faith and ethics. (Interview with Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, February 5, 2025)

Meanwhile, Abdurrahman Gaza Setyawa, a Grade XI student, noted that the Aqidah Akhlak teacher primarily uses the lecture method, with the question-and-answer format usually employed only after the lesson material has been delivered. Similarly, Riffdah Kamila observed that the Aqidah Akhlak teacher relies solely on lectures, in which students passively absorb the information presented. Interactive Q&A segments are only activated after the lecture concludes. (Interview with Abdurrahman Gaza Setyawa, February 5, 2025)

On the other hand, Rizky Syahputra, a Grade XI student, expressed a preference for the lecture method because it provides real-life context to the material being explained. (Interview with Farel Rizky Syahputra, February 5, 2025)

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Enhancing the Learning Interest of Grade XI Students at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo

According to Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, the Islamic Religious Education teacher, one of the significant supporting factors in the educational process is the presence of the Holy Qur'an. Additionally, the habit of studying before the Dhuha prayer can broaden students' understanding beyond the classroom learning hours. However, a prominent obstacle is the students' lack of perseverance in studying. In my assessment of the Aqidah and Akhlak subjects, I observed that some students complete the exercises in the student worksheets (LKS), but the majority do not. This indicates a considerable challenge in students' commitment to the subject, as the same issue occurs across various subjects, reflecting a general lack of diligence in studying outside the classroom. (Interview with Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, February 5, 2025)

According to Farel Rizky Syahputra, a Grade XI student, a facilitating element in gaining moral understanding lies in the exclusive reliance on textual materials within the curriculum, while the obstacle is the rare use of multimedia resources during lessons. (Interview with Farel Rizky Syahputra, February 5, 2025)

According to Muhammad Isa Anis, a Grade XI student, a supporting factor in learning Aqidah Akhlak is that the teacher often uses songs when students begin to feel sleepy, whereas the inhibiting factor is the infrequent use of media tools in teaching. (Interview with Muhammad Isa Anis, January 23, 2025)

Adriana Rizky Maulana Perkasa, a Grade XI student, stated that one key factor in understanding faith and ethics is the availability of literature relevant to the topic being studied. Conversely, he considered the infrequent use of technological resources, such as laptops and projectors, a significant hindrance to his learning experience. (Interview with Adriana Rizky Maulana Perkasa, January 23, 2025)

As stated by Rany Maharani Triwati, S.P., the principal, the supporting factors for programs at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo include strong parental support and government policies that are conducive to education. On the other hand, a significant challenge lies in the need to re-inspire educators to enhance their teaching spirit. (Interview with Rany Maharani Triwati, S.P., January 23, 2025)

Table 1. The Role of Teachers in Increasing Interest in Learning Aqidah Akhlak (Grade XI, SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo)

Category	Informant	Findings
Teacher's Role in Increasing Interest	Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd (PAI Teacher)	Creates an inspiring environment, and emphasizes the relevance of faith in daily life using examples from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
	Muhammad Zaki Putranto (Student)	Teachers link lessons with Prophet's exemplary behavior, encouraging moral emulation.
	Anysa Nayla Nafsya (Student)	The teacher promotes cleanliness inspired by the Prophet's teachings.
Learning Methods Used	Muhammad Isa Anis (Student)	Teachers relate faith and morals to daily experiences and provide examples from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
	Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd	Primarily uses lecture and Q&A methods to encourage active participation.
	Abdurrahman Gaza Setyawa (Student)	The lecture is dominant; Q&A is conducted post-lecture.
	Riffdah Kamila (Student)	Notes reliance on the passive lecture method with limited interaction.
Supporting Factors	Rizky Syahputra (Student)	Prefers lecture due to its real-life contextual examples.
	Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd	Presence of the Qur'an, habit of learning before Dhuha prayer.
	Muhammad Isa Anis (Student)	Use of songs to maintain attention.
	Adriana Rizky Maulana Perkasa (Student)	Availability of literature relevant to the subject.
	Rany Maharani Triwati, S.P. (Principal)	Strong parental support and favorable government policies.
Inhibiting Factors	Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd	Lack of student perseverance, and low completion of assignments.
	Rizky Syahputra (Student)	Limited use of multimedia in teaching.
	Muhammad Isa Anis (Student)	Infrequent use of media tools during instruction.
	Adriana Rizky Maulana Perkasa (Student)	Rare use of technology (laptops, projectors).
	Rany Maharani Triwati, S.P. (Principal)	Need to re-inspire educators to teach with enthusiasm.
Institutional Initiatives & Curriculum	Rany Maharani Triwati, S.P. (Principal)	Conducts supervision, invites national speakers, and aligns with the 2013 Curriculum to promote dynamic, student-centred learning.
Student Motivation	Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd	Motivates students by using the Prophet's life as a reference point for moral and ethical instruction.
	Farel Rizky Syahputra (Student)	Inspired by the teacher's moral guidance and connection to Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) example.

Overall Finding	Researcher's Analysis	Teachers' motivational strategies are effective, yet challenges remain in sustaining student engagement and enhancing interaction. The school environment supports curriculum goals, but further innovation in methods and media use is needed.
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Discussion of Research Findings

Based on the description and presentation of data as outlined by the author with the existing reality, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of the data obtained from the research findings. The analysis is tailored to align with the objectives of the thesis discussion, as described below:

The Role of High School Teachers in Enhancing Learning Motivation Among 11th Grade Students at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo

The objective of this study is to examine the role of high school educators, particularly in motivating 11th-grade students at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo. The focus of this study is to explain the rights, responsibilities, and specific duties of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in increasing students' learning motivation. Through a series of observations conducted by the researcher regarding the role of Aqidah Akhlak educators at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo, three key informants were selected: Mr. Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, who teaches Aqidah Akhlak; Mrs. Rany Maharani Triwati, S.P., the principal of SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo; and students who served as respondents in this study.

Based on the researcher's observations, the initiatives taken by the Aqidah Akhlak teacher to enhance student engagement in learning are commendable. This is evidenced by the teacher's skill in motivating students during lessons, marked by a patient demeanour and clear delivery of instructional material. However, there remain shortcomings in the teacher's ability to alleviate boredom during the learning process and to foster individual involvement.

When the researcher interviewed the school principal about student learning development, the principal responded as follows:

"This institution enforces supervision focused on improving student learning outcomes. We invite national-level speakers to gain insights into pedagogical strategies (learning process), curriculum frameworks, and lesson plans. Educators are encouraged to adopt teaching approaches that go beyond mere knowledge transmission; they are expected to foster environments where students actively and innovatively engage in their learning." (Interview with Rany Maharani Triwati, S.P, January 23, 2025)

Findings from this interview indicate that SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo is largely aligned with the 2013 Curriculum, which aims to enhance student engagement in the learning process. The principal shows great interest in directly observing whether the teaching methods used are consistent with the principles of the 2013 Curriculum. This approach reflects a commitment to creating a more dynamic educational environment, where the emphasis is not merely on the transfer of knowledge by teachers but rather on cultivating active and innovative participation by students. Such involvement is essential for the effective implementation of the 2013 Curriculum at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo, by government regulations.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted interviews focused on student motivation in the learning process. Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, described his motivational approach through the following statement:

“My motivational approach refers to the complexities of everyday life, depicting exemplary behavior through the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). As the ultimate role model for Muslims, the life of the Prophet serves as an essential reference point, allowing me to integrate discussions of faith and ethics with motivational insights I convey in class.” (Interview with Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, February 5, 2025)

The researcher also interviewed students about their learning motivation. An 11th-grade student at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo shared their perspective on how teachers motivate them, stating:

“Faith and ethics educators often inspire students, ensuring that their motivation aligns with the lessons on faith and morals. Additionally, they exemplify the virtuous behavior of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to effectively convey these principles.” (Interview with Farel Rizky Syahputra, February 5, 2025)

“Religious educators inspire students to maintain cleanliness and encourage them to emulate the exemplary behavior of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).” (Interview with Farel Rizky Syahputra, February 5, 2025)

The data presented above indicates that SMA Al Firdaus has the potential to evolve into a leading educational institution capable of nurturing students to become insightful individuals who can achieve their academic goals. This potential is further reinforced by insights gathered from interviews with Aqidah Akhlak subject teachers, revealing effective strategies for enhancing student motivation in this subject. Therefore, it can be concluded that the initiatives undertaken by the teacher to increase student motivation in Aqidah Akhlak classes have proven to be highly beneficial. The enthusiasm demonstrated by students during these lessons serves as strong evidence of the effectiveness of these motivational strategies, even though some students occasionally show a lack of engagement.

Learning Methods Used to Increase the Learning Interest of Grade XI Students at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo

The objective of this study is to examine the role of educators at the senior high school level, particularly regarding the pedagogical approaches used in teaching *aqidah akhlak* to eleventh-grade students at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo. This study aims to assess the extent to which *aqidah akhlak* instructors employ these methodologies, with the ultimate goal of increasing students' engagement and interest in the subject matter.

Referring to an interview conducted by the researcher with the *aqidah akhlak* teacher regarding pedagogical approaches, the teacher responded as follows:

“He frequently uses lecture and question-and-answer techniques, as this approach fosters enthusiasm and active involvement among students in exploring matters of faith and morality.” (Interview with Akhmad Yasin Hadi P.S., Thl, M.Pd, February 5, 2025)

Findings from this interview show that the implementation of these two methods significantly increases student engagement in *aqidah akhlak* lessons. Furthermore, students displayed high enthusiasm and interest in participating in the class as a result of this approach.

The researcher then conducted interviews with students about the methods commonly used in studying *aqidah akhlak*. The students responded as follows:

“The aqidah akhlak teachers often rely on lectures, which can unintentionally cause students to lose focus on the subject matter.” (Interview with Muhammad Isa Anis, January 23, 2025)

*“Teachers' reliance solely on lectures has reduced student engagement and the depth of understanding in *aqidah akhlak* lessons, thereby limiting students' ability to connect with the material and apply it meaningfully in their lives.” (Interview with Farel Rizky Syahputra, February 5, 2025)*

Based on these data, the researcher concludes that a considerable number of students show decreased interest in studying *aqidah akhlak* when only the lecture method is used. This decline in interest suggests that relying solely on lectures is insufficient to maintain students' enthusiasm for the subject.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Increasing the Learning Interest of Grade XI Students at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo

The success of *aqidah akhlak* educators in fostering students' enthusiasm for learning is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors. However, these factors should not become obstacles or diminish our determination to improve the quality of education.

In the context of efforts made by *aqidah akhlak* teachers to increase student engagement in learning, data collected in the field reveals several contributing factors. These include the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, strong support from the school principal, the organization of Islamic studies sessions, the practice of *duha* prayer after the study sessions, government support for the educational framework at SMA Al Firdaus Sukoharjo, as well as the active participation of students and encouragement from parents and the surrounding community. Collectively, these factors support the initiatives of *aqidah akhlak* educators in fostering greater interest in learning among students.

Meanwhile, a significant barrier to educators' efforts to increase student engagement lies in the low level of creativity demonstrated by some *aqidah akhlak* teachers. As a result, students' enthusiasm for the subject remains limited. However, this challenge provides an opportunity for the school to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its teaching strategies. Identifying shortcomings in stimulating student interest can serve as a foundation for improvements and future initiatives aimed at creating a more dynamic learning environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research conducted on the role of teachers in enhancing the learning interest of Grade XI students at Al Firdaus High School in Sukoharjo, it can be concluded that the teacher's role remains a fundamental factor in shaping students' enthusiasm and motivation toward learning. The moral *aqidah* teacher has shown effectiveness in applying personal motivation strategies by relating learning materials to students' daily lives and using the exemplary character of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This approach has had a noticeable positive impact on students, especially in fostering a sense of relevance and meaning in their studies. However, despite these efforts, the fact that some students still show a lack of active participation suggests that motivation alone is not sufficient to guarantee increased interest in learning across the board. Furthermore, the research highlights that the learning methods employed—particularly the lecture and question-and-answer approaches—have contributed to student engagement. These methods have enabled students to participate more actively during lessons. Nevertheless, feedback from students indicates that the lecture method, when used as the primary mode of instruction, is not always effective. This points to a clear need for more diverse and interactive teaching strategies that accommodate different learning styles and preferences. Employing varied methods such as group discussions, project-based learning, or multimedia presentations may be more effective in capturing students'

attention and maintaining their interest over time. In addition to teaching strategies and teacher roles, external factors also play a significant role in influencing students' interest in learning. Support from the school principal, the availability of sufficient facilities and infrastructure, and the encouragement from parents and the surrounding environment serve as strong supporting elements. These factors contribute positively to the overall educational climate and help reinforce the value of learning in students' minds. On the other hand, there are also inhibiting factors that require attention. These include the suboptimal quality of teaching and the students' general lack of enthusiasm or motivation, which may stem from both internal and external influences. In conclusion, while teachers at Al Firdaus High School have made commendable efforts, improving students' interest in learning demands a more comprehensive approach. It involves enhancing pedagogical methods, increasing teacher quality, and ensuring a supportive learning environment both at school and at home.

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Author Contribution

All authors contribute equally to the publication of this paper, all authors read and agree to this paper, and all authors declare no conflict of interest.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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