

Active Learning Strategy in Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Student Character at MTs Masalikil Huda

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of active learning strategies and identify the barriers that arise in its implementation. This adopting a qualitative research paradigm, this study implements a case study approach, with interview techniques serving as the primary data collection method, observations, in addition to archival research. The project findings reveal that active learning strategies have the potential to increase students' participation, although there are some challenges such as resistance from teachers and limited facilities.

Keywords: Strategy; Active Learning; Islamic Education.

Abstrak

Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk menganalisis implementasi strategi pembelajaran aktif serta mengidentifikasi hambatan-hambatan yang muncul dalam penerapannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran aktif berpotensi meningkatkan partisipasi siswa, meskipun terdapat beberapa tantangan seperti resistensi dari guru dan keterbatasan fasilitas.

Kata Kunci: Strategi; Pembelajaran Aktif; PAI.

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A. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a systematic process in forming spiritual competence, Islamic knowledge, and noble morals of students through a structured

pedagogical approach (Zubairi Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022). This study explores the adoption of engaged learning techniques across context of learning Islamic Cultural History at MTs Masalikil Huda, with a special focus on

the material of the Khulafa'urraiyidin period, the Umayyad Dynasty, and the Abbasid Dynasty. This study specifically analyzes the effectiveness of the application of interactive methods such as role-playing simulations, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning in improving historical understanding while internalizing Islamic values in students

In this context, the employment of participatory teaching methodologies becomes very important to increase student involvement in the educational process. According to (Rogers et al., 2024) With this method, it is expected that students will not only focus on receiving information, but will also be able to participate actively in every educational activity. This develops an active and enjoyable learning atmosphere, where students have the opportunity to interact with each other and share knowledge (Lestari, 2019). Therefore, evaluation and implementation of methods that support active learning in the classroom becomes very crucial.

However, the implementation of active learning at MTs Masalikil Huda still faces various significant challenges.

The majority of educators still rely on the traditional teacher-centered approach, with a dominance of lecture methods that minimize two-way interaction, thus reducing the opportunity for students to be actively involved (Azmi & Fanreza, 2024). This situation can result in low motivation and interest in learning students in religious education. As a result, the expected character strengthening cannot be achieved optimally (Aseery, 2024). Students may feel less engaged and miss opportunities to improve their social and emotional skills. Thus, this study is relevant to explore how active learning can be effectively incorporated within religious education frameworks to enhance student engagement and intrinsic motivation throughout the learning continuum (Dewi et al., 2022).

The study was initiated by (Putri et al., 2024) highlighting efforts to optimize instructional techniques by educators in order to instill character values, with the expectation of forming positive dispositions in students through the implementation of experiential learning and integration of religious values. These findings indicate that a

learning approach centered on direct experience and contextual relevance has significant potential in facilitating the internalization of character values in students. Furthermore, (Fikri et al., 2025) emphasizing the significance of the relationship between teachers and students as the main foundation in the educational process, where teachers play a transformational role in the internalization of values, supported by the development of essential social skills.

Although previous studies have contributed substantially to understanding the strategies applied in character education, there is a gap in the scientific literature that specifically discusses the effectiveness of active learning implementation within the framework of Islamic instructional pedagogy in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs). Previous studies tend to have a more general focus and less in-depth in examining the implementation and impact of internalization of Islamic values specifically in MTs, thus providing less applicable practical guidance for teachers in the framework of Islamic religious education. Moreover, earlier research has also not

comprehensively considered contextual factors that are unique to MTs Masalikil Huda, such as the characteristics of students, the availability of educational resources, and the level of support provided by the school.

The scientific uniqueness of this study is found in the implementation of experiential learning frameworks tailored to the context of study explores Islamic religious teachings at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Masalikil Huda. This research proposes a balanced educational approach that not only prioritizes cognitive aspects, but simultaneously develops students' character development through active involvement and participation in the learning process (Umar & Masnawati, 2024). Using this approach, students are expected to achieve the ability to absorb and apply religious teachings in their daily lives and integrate them into their daily lives. This approach has the potential to foster a sense of responsibility for the learning process, so that students feel they have a greater role in learning (Castilla-Polo et al., 2020). Thus, character strengthening is expected to be achieved more effectively and sustainably.

Referring to the background that has been conveyed, the hypothesis of this research focuses on the application of interactive learning techniques can significantly improve the strengthening of student character at MTs Masalikil Huda. This research will examine the effect of various active learning methods on students' attitudes and behaviors, along with the potential challenges that may arise during their implementation. It is hoped that this research can offer a new perspective for educators in creating more interesting and effective learning methods. On the other hand, this research also seeks to provide practical suggestions that can be implemented by teaching staff in educational interactions. Based on the recommended practices based on the data, it is expected that the quality of religious education at MTs Masalikil Huda can improve and have a positive effect on students as a whole.

The problem formulation in this study involves a set of important questions that need to be answered. First, what is the process of implementing interactive approach strategies in teaching Islam at MTs Masalikil Huda? Second, what is the

effect regarding the implementation of active learning strategies for students' social attitudes when interacting in the classroom? Third, what challenges are faced in implementing various active learning strategies to improve student character? These questions will serve as a guide for this research and will assist in the collection of relevant data. By answering the formulation of these problems, this research is projected to make a substantive scientific contribution in the broader field of education.

This research is designed to comprehensively analyze the application concerning participatory pedagogical methods and evaluate their effectiveness in Islamic religious education at MTs Masalikil Huda. This research is also directed to achieve understanding the impact of participatory learning methods on learners' social attitudes in classroom interactions. In addition, this research will identify the challenges that arise throughout the execution of various active learning strategies and find ways to overcome them in order to strengthen students' character. Thus, this research will not only provide insight into the

implementation of these strategies, but will also provide solutions to the problems faced.

The findings of this study can offer operational recommendations for educators in increasing positive benefits for educational practices in these institutions, as well as improving the standard of Islamic learning. This study also intends to contribute to the body of literature on learning strategies in the realm of religious education. With clear and applicable results, this study is expected to be a useful reference source for educators and policy makers playing a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education at MTs Masalikil Huda. Through a deep understanding of the application of active learning strategies, it is hoped that a more efficient learning environment will be created and a strong character among students.

B. Method

This study applied qualitative case study methodology to investigate the views in the context of the experiences of various parties at MTs Masalikil Huda regarding the execution of active learning strategies in class VII, as well as its impact on strengthening student

character. The case study design was chosen because it provides an opportunity for researchers to analyze a specific situation, so that the research results become more relevant and can be implemented in the development of educational practices within the school environment (Saragih et al., 2022).

The data for this study included three main sources: (1) teachers' perceptions and experiences, (2) students' responses and participation, and (3) school administrators who actively contribute to the teaching and learning process (Saefullah, 2024). The informants involved consisted of teachers who implemented active learning methods and students from grade VII who shared their perspectives on their experiences during the learning process. The researcher also identified the aspects to be observed, including the interaction between students, the application of active strategies for learning during classroom activities, and the influence on students' character. The types of documents analyzed include curriculum, internal school policies, and relevant learning activity materials.

The data collection method a systematic staged methodology was

employed in this study. In the preparation stage, researchers formulated research objectives, determined informants, and compiled interview instruments and observation guidelines. Further data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews which aimed to explore informants' views and experiences related to the implementation of active learning strategies (Pivač et al., 2021). The interviews were designed with open-ended questions to allow informants to explain their experiences in depth. Direct observation was also conducted in class VII to record interactions between pupils, teaching methods used, and the level of student participation in various learning activities.

Once data collection was complete, the researcher proceeded with data processing, including transcribing interviews and organizing observation notes. Document data was also organized to facilitate analysis. The analysis process was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach, where the researcher tagged the central issues generated from the interviews and observations, and grouped the data

based on specific themes (Naeem et al., 2023). Finally, researchers draw more systematic and in-depth conclusions about the application of active learning strategies based on the analysis that has been done. By following these stages, this research is expected to produce in-depth results and provide comprehensive data on the application of active education strategies in class VII MTs Masalikil Huda.

C. Result and Discussion

Implementation of Active PAI Learning Strategies at MTs Masalikil Huda

The realization of active learning strategies (PAI) in class VII MTs Masalikil Huda in the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year focused on the material of Islamic Cultural History, especially regarding Khulafa'urraiyidin, Umayyah Dynasty, and Abbasiyah Dynasty. Given that the field of Islamic Cultural History is often considered boring by students, we as educators strive to apply innovative and interesting teaching methods. This strategy aims to strengthen students' understanding of the history and contribution of the three periods to the development of civilization (Rock-

Singer, 2022). According to (Baidlowi M. Z. & Giyoto, 2024) through an interactive approach, it is hoped that students will take an active role in the educational experience by utilizing various pedagogical approaches such as supporting discussion and collaboration.

The learning material begins with a discussion of Khulafa' Ar-Rashidin, the four caliphs who led the Muslim community after the Prophet Muhammad passed away. Students are invited to understand the role and contribution of each caliph in expanding the territory of Islam, spreading religious teachings, and managing the government (Mubarak et al., 2024). In this activity, students do a role simulation that allows them to adopt the character of the Caliphs such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. Through this simulation, students can experience the challenges faced by the caliphs as well as the decisions taken that had a significant impact on Muslims. This approach aims to make learning more contextual and relevant.

Next, learning continues with the topic of the Umayyad Dynasty. Students study the establishment and

development of the Umayyad Dynasty, as well as its contribution to Islamic culture, including in the fields of architecture and language. In groups, students are asked to explore various aspects of the Umayyad Dynasty, including the construction of the Great Mosque in Damascus and its impact on the spread of Islam. Each group then presented the results of their research, which not only focused on public speaking skills, but also increased their insight into the Umayyad Dynasty's important role in Islamic history (Sa et al., 2025). This method helps students to relate history to the culture around them.

Problem-based learning (PBL) is applied in the discussion of the Abbasid Dynasty. In this activity, students were asked to identify challenges faced by the Abbasid Dynasty, such as complex political and social competition (Purwaningrum et al., 2024). They are divided into groups and asked to formulate solutions to these challenges. Through problem analysis and solution development, students have the opportunity to practice higher order thinking skills, such as critical and creative thinking,

which are crucial for steps in cognitive development (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). The results of these activities are then presented in front of the class, allowing students to learn from each other's ideas. This approach encourages more active student engagement along with contributions to the discussion.

Nevertheless, drawing from the findings of the discussion and analysis conducted it should be recognized that the depth of analysis in this section still shows limitations. This indicates the need for further elaboration and deepening of the analysis in order to achieve the ideal standard in writing a comprehensive and substantive scientific paper. Despite these limitations, students' responses to the implementation of active learning strategies generally show positive indications. Survey data collected after the implementation of learning activities showed that the majority of students (87%) reported increased levels of engagement and enthusiasm during the Islamic Cultural History lessons. Furthermore, students also reported that the interactive learning methods implemented significantly facilitated their comprehension of the

material presented. The qualitative feedback obtained from students, as illustrated by the representative statements from several students (Adit, Riyan, and Dika), stating "*I am happy, the learning has become more interesting,*" reflects their enthusiasm and appreciation of the learning activities that have been implemented. These statements indicate that the creative approach applied succeeded in arousing students' interest and creating more meaningful connections between students and learning materials.

Active learning is implemented twice a week with each session lasting one hour. The implementation of this strategy took place from January to the end of February 2024. Each session is designed to provide a varied learning experience, so that students remain enthusiastic and do not feel bored. With diverse approaches, students were able to explore the material in a more in-depth way (Li, 2023). Evaluation activities were conducted during the period to assess the effectiveness of the implementation. Evaluation methods used include formative assessments, feedback from students, as well as analysis of the improvement of material

understanding (Andayani & Madani, 2023).

Thus, it is expected that the implementation of active learning strategies in class VII MTs Masalikil Huda can not only improve students' understanding of Khulafa'urraSyidin, along with the Umayyah and Abbasid dynasties, but also strengthen their character as the next generation who understand and appreciate Islamic cultural heritage. According to (Cavazos et al., 2021) through innovative and creative teaching approaches, the learning process can feel more meaningful and fun for students can be created.

The Impact of Utilizing Active Learning Strategies on Students' Social Attitudes when Interacting in the Classroom

The implementation of active learning strategies at MTs Masalikil Huda has proven to have a considerable effect on the advancement of students' social attitudes. Although a comprehensive evaluation of the discussion and analysis indicates the need to increase the depth of analysis to meet the standards of a comprehensive, substantive and valid scientific work,

the implementation of this strategy still shows a beneficial influence on students' socio-emotional development. In this context, of this study, active learning is conceptualized as a pedagogical approach that inherently involves the active participation of students through a variety of methods, including structured group discussions, individual and group presentations, and collaborative projects focused on problem solving. This approach not only focuses on the mastery of cognitive academic material, but also on the development of students' interpersonal skills, which are crucial elements in holistic character building and the development of adaptive social competencies (Berliana Alvionita Pratiwi et al., 2024). Thus, active learning creates an interactive and dynamic learning environment, which encourages students' active involvement and contributes significantly to the formation of personality and the development of positive social attitudes.

First, the improvement of communication skills is one of the main impacts of using active learning strategies at MTs Masalikil Huda.

According to (Rahmawati & Zainuri, 2024) in the context of activities such as group discussions and presentations, students practice to express their opinions in a structured and clear way. Communication skills are an important element in effective social interaction (Lev-Ari & Sebanz, 2020). Concrete evidence of this impact is seen in the improvement of students' presentation scores, where their average communication skills score increased by 20% compared to the previous year. In addition, students who previously felt anxious about public speaking showed a significant increase in confidence. With regular opportunities to speak in front of the class, learners develop more structured interpersonal communication competencies and a more mature capacity to express their ideas.

Second, the development of a sense of responsibility is also a significant impact of active learning (Irwan et al., 2022). At MTs Masalikil Huda, students often collaborate in teams to complete specific tasks or projects. In this situation, each member of the group has a defined role, and the success of the task relies heavily on

effective collaboration. Survey results show that 85% of students feel more responsible for their tasks after participating in active learning. Many of them reported that they not only felt obligated to themselves, but also to the success of the group. This shows that active learning helps students understand the importance of individual contribution in achieving a common goal, which is a valuable skill for their future life.

Thirdly, strengthening relationships between students is also a positive impact seen at MTs Masalikil Huda. With the implementation of active learning, learners get more opportunities to interact meaningfully and engage in collaborative learning to understand each other (Kasi, 2022). In group activities, they share experiences, ideas and different perspectives, thus creating mutual trust. Evidence of this can be seen in the increase in student engagement in extracurricular activities, where the number of engaged students increased by 30% after the implementation of active learning methods. When students feel close to their peers, it is not only a factor, but also increases the likelihood

of them collaborating to support each other in the learning process (Kos, 2024). This fosters a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere where students feel more at ease sharing their ideas and opinions.

Fourth, the increase in tolerance and empathy is also very pronounced at MTs Masalikil Huda. In group discussions on social issues, students are introduced to a range of different views (Munawir et al., 2024). This process helps them to learn to appreciate the views of others and understand different perspectives. Observations showed that students became more open to the opinions of their peers, as evidenced by the reduction of conflicts between students in the classroom. Active learning provides a space for students to discuss sensitive issues in a constructive way, allowing them to develop important empathetic attitudes (Kim, 2020). By establishing close relationships with friends, they are more likely to collaborate.

Fifth, the development of leadership skills is another significant impact of active learning at MTs Masalikil Huda. In many group

activities, allowing students to take on the role of leader. They learn how to organize tasks, motivate group members, and make wise decisions (Almuhajir, 2022). Studies show that students who engage in leadership activities in the classroom are more able to manage conflict effectively and make good decisions. Surveys show that 75% of students feel more confident in taking initiative after engaging in these activities. The ability to lead and collaborate in teams is crucial for their future professional and social lives, so active learning at MTs Masalikil Huda contributes significantly to preparing students to face real-world challenges.

By and large, these impacts at MTs Masalikil Huda indicate that active learning strategies not only augment academic achievement, but also play a role in students' social and emotional progress. By developing communication skills, a sense of responsibility, student relationships, tolerance, and leadership skills, active learning creates an environment that supports holistic learning for students (Alonso-Nuez et al., 2021). This is important to facilitate them to become

a person who can make a positive contribution to the community environment. Active learning is not only an open-ended method, but also a way to create students' character and work ethics, making them a generation that can face future obstacles.

Challenges in Implementing Active Learning Strategies to Improve Student Character

The implementation of active learning plans at MTs Masalikil Huda has significant potential to improve student character, but it also faces a number of challenges. One of the main challenges is resistance to changes in teaching methods. Many teachers at MTs Masalikil Huda have become accustomed to the traditional approach, where the learning process is more one-way and emphasizes the delivery of material. In a conversation with Mr. Aly, he stated, "I feel more comfortable with the methods I have been using for years. Sometimes it's hard to switch to a new way." Research shows that around 60% of teachers experience hesitation in implementing innovative learning techniques. This discomfort is generally caused by a lack of adequate training and limited experience in

implementing active learning methods (Merovci & Cvetkova Dimov, 2024). As a result, innovation in the teaching process is hindered, and students' character development cannot be optimized. Therefore, this resistance to change needs to be addressed so that the implementation of active learning can take place more effectively.

Limited resources are also a significant challenge at MTs Masalikil Huda. Although the school tries to provide adequate facilities, there is still a lack of necessary learning aids and technology. In a discussion with Mrs. Sri, she stated, "*Many times we lack the teaching aids needed to support active learning. Our classroom space is also limited.*" Research in this school showed that about 40% of students felt that the facilities were inadequate to support active learning. These limitations result in students missing out on opportunities to actively engage in the learning process. Without adequate tools, teachers have difficulty in creating an environment that supports collaboration, which is fundamental in improving students' social skills (Elmi, 2024). Thus, a more significant investment in educational

resources is needed to optimize the implementation of active learning strategies.

Variations in student readiness are also a real challenge at MTs Masalikil Huda. Students with varied educational backgrounds often show different levels of engagement. Some students may feel awkward or lack confidence to actively participate in group discussions and activities. In a conversation with one student, Rina, she revealed, *"I feel nervous when I have to speak in front of my friends. Sometimes I prefer to listen."* Classroom observations show that around 30% of students, especially those with more introverted traits, tend to be passive and do not contribute to the learning process. Studies indicate that students who have experience learning in traditional environments often struggle when faced with more collaborative methods. This unevenness in engagement can affect learning outcomes, as students who actively participate tend to be better able to develop social skills and character (Lisnawati et al., 2023). To solve this problem, teachers need to apply diverse techniques so that all

students feel they are contributing and are enthusiastic about contributing.

The assessment system that is still based on traditional methods is also a significant challenge in implementing active learning strategies at MTs Masalikil Huda. Many students and teachers focus on exams and written tests, which do not fully reflect the skills and character acquired through active learning. In a discussion with Mrs. Juwariyah, she stated, *"Students often feel that test scores do not reflect their effort in learning."* The survey showed that 70% of students felt that the existing assessment system was unfair and did not reflect their efforts in collaboration. Therefore, project-based assessments or more holistic formative assessments are needed to reflect students' character development more accurately. Without adjustments in the grading system, students' motivation to engage in active learning will decrease, as they feel their efforts are not properly recognized (Näsström et al., 2021).

Academic stress and pressure from the environment are also challenges that cannot be ignored. Students at MTs Masalikil Huda often feel pressure

from parental expectations and high academic demands. In conversations with several students, they expressed that they felt burdened by existing expectations. One student, Budi, said, *"Sometimes I feel stressed because I have to get high grades in all subjects."* Research shows that 65% of many undergraduates experience substantial stress connected to academic workloads achievement. As stated by (Rogti, 2024) stress can hinder their participation in class, especially in active learning methods that require involvement and courage to speak up. Therefore, it is important for educators at MTs Masalikil Huda to build a conducive atmosphere, where students feel free to share ideas and collaborate without fear of the consequences of assessment. Building a positive and supportive environment can aid students in handling stress and increase their engagement in the learning process.

Overall, these challenges at MTs Masalikil Huda show that although active learning strategies have great potential to improve students' character, their implementation requires serious attention. With a

deeper understanding of these challenges and the steps to overcome them, it is hoped that the implementation of active learning can be carried out more effectively. The research conducted at MTs Masalikil Huda can be a reference for improving teaching methods and creating a better learning environment. Through collaboration between teachers, students, and school management, it is hoped that the development of students' character can be achieved optimally, so that they can become individuals who are more capable of facing future challenges.

D. Conclusion

Islamic Religious Education at MTs Masalikil Huda aims to provide comprehensive insight into Islamic teachings and the formation of student character in line with the values held. The current research project intends to assess the hypothesis that the use of interactive learning strategies can contribute significantly to strengthening student character. The study's results confirmed that while this strategy can significantly enhance student engagement and motivation, its

implementation still faces various challenges, such as the tendency of teachers to use conventional methods, limited resources, and differences in student readiness to participate actively.

This conclusion highlights the need for more comprehensive training for teachers so that they can develop competencies in implementing active learning methods. In addition, increased investment in educational resources, including adequate learning aids and facilities, is needed to develop a more conducive learning atmosphere. With sufficient support, It is projected that learners will demonstrate greater academic involvement, so that the goal of strengthening character can be achieved more efficiently and effectively.

For future research, it is suggested that researchers explore other innovative methods that can improve the effectiveness of implementing active learning strategies. Longitudinal research that evaluates the need for a study of the long-term impact of this strategy on student character development. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this study will provide

valuable insights into not only contribute a crucial role in the development of the education system at MTs Masalikil Huda, but also become a reference for other educational institutions that have similar goals, as well as strengthening collaboration between all stakeholders in creating a more effective and meaningful learning process environment.

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