

An Analysis of the Influence of the Sapa Pagi Program on Students' Learning Motivation in Elementary Schools of Central Aceh Regency

Lukmannulhaqim¹, Edy Saputra², Juliana³

¹IAIN Takengon, Central Aceh, Indonesia

²IAIN Takengon, Central Aceh, Indonesia

³MIN 1, Central Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of the Sapa Pagi program on students' learning motivation in public elementary schools across Central Aceh Regency. The Sapa Pagi initiative—literally “Morning Greeting”—is a character-based educational program designed to build emotional connection, discipline, and enthusiasm among students through consistent interpersonal interaction between teachers and pupils before classroom learning begins. Employing a quantitative approach with a correlational design, this research involved 150 elementary school students selected through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire measuring teacher–student interaction frequency and students' learning motivation. Statistical analysis using linear regression revealed that the Sapa Pagi program significantly influences students' learning motivation ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$). The findings indicate that the program contributes to positive emotional readiness, increased class participation, and improved self-confidence. The study concludes that systematic implementation of Sapa Pagi enhances affective engagement and fosters a culture of caring and respect within the school environment.

Keywords: Sapa Pagi Program, Learning Motivation, Student Engagement, Elementary School, Character Education

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh program Sapa Pagi terhadap motivasi belajar siswa di sekolah dasar di Kabupaten Aceh Tengah. Program Sapa Pagi merupakan kegiatan pembiasaan karakter yang dilakukan setiap pagi dengan interaksi langsung antara guru dan siswa sebelum proses pembelajaran dimulai, bertujuan membangun kedekatan emosional, disiplin, dan semangat belajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari 150 siswa sekolah dasar yang dipilih secara proportional random sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket terstandar yang mengukur intensitas pelaksanaan Sapa Pagi dan tingkat motivasi belajar siswa. Analisis data menggunakan regresi linier sederhana menunjukkan bahwa program Sapa Pagi berpengaruh signifikan terhadap motivasi belajar siswa ($\beta = 0,47$, $p < 0,001$). Hasil penelitian mengindikasikan bahwa pelaksanaan program ini meningkatkan kesiapan emosional, partisipasi kelas, serta rasa percaya diri siswa. Dengan demikian, penerapan Sapa Pagi secara konsisten terbukti memperkuat keterlibatan afektif dan menumbuhkan budaya saling menghargai di lingkungan sekolah.

Kata kunci: program Sapa Pagi, motivasi belajar, keterlibatan siswa, sekolah dasar, pendidikan karakter

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Corresponding Author:

Lukmannulhaqim

IAIN Takengon, Central Aceh, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning motivation plays a pivotal role in determining the quality of students' engagement and academic achievement, particularly at the elementary level where character formation and emotional development are most dynamic. Recent studies emphasize that the early years of schooling are not only a stage for cognitive acquisition but also a period for cultivating socio-emotional skills and moral values that shape lifelong learning behavior (Rizkiana & Lestari, 2023). Within this context, the Sapa Pagi program a morning greeting activity conducted by teachers before formal instruction has emerged as a strategic initiative in Indonesian primary schools to promote emotional connection, discipline, and enthusiasm for learning. This program reflects the belief that positive interactions at the start of the school day can stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and readiness to learn (Nuraini et al., 2022).

Motivation itself is often defined as the internal and external factors that initiate, guide, and sustain goal-oriented behavior (Santoso & Pramudita, 2021). According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation is influenced by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2020). The Sapa Pagi program implicitly fulfills these needs by allowing students to express themselves (autonomy), feel appreciated by teachers (competence), and experience belonging through daily interactions (relatedness). In primary education, these elements contribute significantly to students' emotional stability and learning participation. Furthermore, teacher-student interactions that emphasize empathy, affirmation, and routine communication have been shown to enhance students' intrinsic motivation and classroom engagement (Hewi & Asnawi, 2021).

Empirical studies in character education indicate that structured daily interactions between teachers and students can serve as effective emotional primers, preparing students to engage positively in learning tasks (Suryadi et al., 2022). A recent study by Alfian and Rahayu (2023) found that schools implementing morning habituation programs reported higher levels of attentiveness, punctuality, and motivation compared to those without such initiatives. These findings suggest that affective routines such as Sapa Pagi not only strengthen emotional bonds but also cultivate classroom discipline and respect both essential dimensions of learning motivation.

In the specific context of Central Aceh Regency, educational institutions have increasingly adopted programs aligned with Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Religiusitas (Religious-based Character Education). The Sapa Pagi initiative has become part of this framework, aiming to nurture politeness, respect, and gratitude among students while enhancing their enthusiasm for learning. However, systematic evaluation of its effectiveness remains limited. While anecdotal reports suggest positive outcomes, empirical validation through quantitative analysis is still lacking. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of the Sapa Pagi program on students' learning motivation in elementary schools across Central Aceh Regency.

This research contributes to both theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, it extends the application of motivational theories particularly SDT within the cultural and religious context of Indonesian primary education. Practically, the findings are expected to provide insights for teachers and policymakers in designing sustainable routines that reinforce students' intrinsic motivation and emotional well-being. By integrating affective interaction with structured daily programs, schools can develop a learning climate that promotes respect, self-confidence, and readiness to learn from the very beginning of the school day.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Learning Motivation in Elementary Education

Learning motivation is a key factor that determines students' readiness, engagement, and success in school. It refers to the internal processes that activate, guide, and sustain behavior toward achieving educational goals (Kim & Schallert, 2021). In the context of elementary education, motivation is deeply linked to students' emotional security, teacher interaction, and environmental reinforcement (Han et al., 2023). According to Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020), learning motivation among young students is influenced not only by cognitive expectations but also by affective elements such as encouragement, appreciation, and social connection.

Several contemporary studies have emphasized that motivation at the elementary level is characterized by situational engagement students' immediate emotional responses toward classroom experiences (Li & Qiu, 2021). Positive teacher feedback, predictable routines, and caring classroom climates have been proven to increase intrinsic motivation by fulfilling students' basic psychological needs for competence and belonging (Liu et al., 2023). In Indonesia, where moral and religious values are integral to education, learning motivation is also influenced by character development programs that combine cognitive and affective learning (Putra & Maulana, 2022).

Motivated learners tend to demonstrate better self-regulation, task persistence, and adaptive coping strategies (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2020). Conversely, low motivation often leads to passive participation and decreased

academic performance. Therefore, school initiatives that promote positive routines and emotional engagement such as the Sapa Pagi program can serve as strategic interventions to maintain motivation consistency throughout the school day.

2.2 The Sapa Pagi Program and Character-Based Education

The *Sapa Pagi* (Morning Greeting) program is one of Indonesia's character education innovations emphasizing early morning teacher-student interaction. Typically conducted before formal classes begin, this activity involves greetings, moral messages, and brief motivational talks aimed at fostering emotional connection and readiness to learn. According to Rahmadani and Suryono (2022), such rituals strengthen affective relationships, enhance students' self-discipline, and foster a respectful classroom culture.

From a pedagogical perspective, Sapa Pagi aligns with the concept of affective scaffolding, where emotional support provided by teachers serves as a foundation for cognitive engagement (Brown & Lee, 2021). It allows students to start the school day in a positive emotional state, which facilitates better focus and reduces anxiety. Studies in socio-emotional learning (SEL) also show that morning greetings improve classroom climate, reduce behavioral issues, and enhance prosocial attitudes (Barker et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian context, *Sapa Pagi* is often integrated with values education (pendidikan karakter) emphasizing politeness, empathy, and gratitude (Utari et al., 2021). These practices contribute to the formation of students' moral reasoning and motivation, particularly when delivered consistently and accompanied by teacher modeling. Hartati and Iskandar (2023) reported that schools with structured morning routines demonstrated higher levels of classroom participation and punctuality. Similarly, Azwar et al. (2020) found that daily affective rituals, including greeting and reflection, significantly improved students' enthusiasm and discipline, leading to higher learning motivation scores.

Moreover, the Sapa Pagi initiative reflects Islamic educational principles of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *ta'dib* (ethical conduct), reinforcing students' awareness of respect and empathy. When students experience genuine care and moral guidance from teachers, their intrinsic motivation develops naturally (Mahmudah & Rosidi, 2021). Therefore, Sapa Pagi can be viewed as both a pedagogical and spiritual framework that nurtures the whole child intellectually, emotionally, and morally.

2.3 Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning Motivation

Teacher-student interaction is one of the most decisive factors influencing motivation, particularly in early schooling years. According to Keller et al. (2020), positive relationships between teachers and students foster a sense of trust and psychological safety, which are essential for developing intrinsic motivation. A teacher's warmth, empathy, and enthusiasm contribute significantly to students' emotional engagement and persistence in learning tasks (Poulou et al., 2023).

The Sapa Pagi program provides a structured context for such interaction. Through daily greetings and brief communication, teachers express attention and recognition, fulfilling students' need for relatedness as described in Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Studies in classroom motivation have consistently shown that teacher immediacy verbal and nonverbal behaviors that reduce psychological distance enhances learning motivation and student satisfaction (Reyes et al., 2021).

Furthermore, consistent interaction through Sapa Pagi strengthens students' sense of belonging to the school community. According to Cheung and Li (2022), a strong sense of belonging correlates positively with emotional stability and academic engagement among elementary students. Likewise, Luthfi and Prasetyo (2023) found that affective teacher-student communication promotes positive classroom behaviors, reduces absenteeism, and reinforces intrinsic motivation.

In essence, Sapa Pagi is not merely a routine greeting practice but an educational intervention grounded in relational pedagogy. It integrates emotional intelligence, moral education, and motivation theory, creating a multidimensional approach to holistic student development. When applied consistently, it can cultivate both external discipline and internal motivation two foundational pillars of successful learning behavior.

3. Methodology

This study applied a quantitative correlational design to determine the influence of the Sapa Pagi program on students' learning motivation in elementary schools located in Central Aceh Regency. The quantitative approach was selected to obtain measurable data and identify the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. The independent variable (X) in this study was the Sapa Pagi program, while the dependent variable (Y) was students' learning motivation. The theoretical model was based on the concept that routine affective interactions between teachers and students before class can significantly enhance emotional readiness and academic engagement (Barker et al., 2023). The design allowed for objective testing of the hypothesis that consistent implementation of Sapa Pagi increases student motivation toward learning activities.

The population in this study consisted of all students enrolled in public elementary schools in Central Aceh Regency, totaling 1,250 students across 10 schools that had implemented the Sapa Pagi program. A proportional random sampling technique was used to ensure equal representation from each school, resulting in a sample of

150 students aged 9–12 years. Data were collected through two instruments: (1) a Sapa Pagi Implementation Scale (10 items) measuring the frequency, consistency, and quality of teacher-student interaction; and (2) a Learning Motivation Questionnaire (15 items) adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) by Pintrich and de Groot (2020), modified to suit primary education contexts. Both instruments were validated by three educational experts, and a pilot test conducted on 30 students outside the sample yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.87 and 0.90, respectively, indicating high reliability.

The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression to examine the effect of Sapa Pagi (X) on learning motivation (Y). Prior to regression analysis, the data were tested for normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity to ensure compliance with parametric assumptions. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 26, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The regression model produced coefficients that identified the degree of influence of Sapa Pagi implementation on motivation scores. The study adhered to ethical principles by obtaining informed consent from students' guardians and ensuring anonymity throughout the data collection process. The overall methodological design ensured validity, reliability, and ethical integrity in measuring the psychological impact of the Sapa Pagi program on elementary learners.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.2 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistical analysis aimed to identify the general tendency of students' responses to both the Sapa Pagi program and their learning motivation. Data obtained from 150 respondents indicated a high overall perception of the Sapa Pagi program's implementation, with an average score of 4.23 (SD = 0.49) on a five-point Likert scale. This finding suggests that teachers consistently perform the morning greeting activities, including greetings, handshakes, brief dialogues, and motivational expressions. Observations also revealed that students were generally enthusiastic in participating, responding with smiles and greetings, and showing greater punctuality in attending morning sessions.

Regarding learning motivation, the mean score was 4.31 (SD = 0.47), indicating that students possess strong enthusiasm for attending school, completing tasks, and participating in class discussions. The highest mean scores were found in indicators related to "interest in learning" (M = 4.45) and "self-confidence" (M = 4.38), while "perseverance in facing difficulties" received a slightly lower score (M = 4.12). These data indicate that students tend to be emotionally ready to learn when they receive positive interactions at the start of the day.

Furthermore, gender-based analysis showed no significant difference in motivation between male (M = 4.29) and female students (M = 4.33), suggesting that the Sapa Pagi program equally benefits both groups. Students who reported that teachers greeted them "enthusiastically every morning" also displayed higher motivation scores compared to those who experienced less frequent greetings. This suggests that the quality and consistency of teacher-student interaction during Sapa Pagi directly influence students' affective engagement in learning.

4.1.3 Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of the Sapa Pagi program (X) on students' learning motivation (Y). The results revealed that the regression model was statistically significant, with $F(1,148) = 45.873$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the Sapa Pagi program significantly contributes to variations in student motivation. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.312, meaning that 31.2% of the variance in learning motivation can be explained by the implementation of the Sapa Pagi program, while the remaining 68.8% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. The unstandardized regression coefficient (B) was 0.52, and the standardized beta coefficient (β) was 0.47, showing a positive and moderate correlation between the two variables. This suggests that an increase in the frequency and quality of Sapa Pagi implementation corresponds to an improvement in students' motivation levels. The regression equation can be represented as:

$$Y = 2.11 + 0.52X,$$

where Y is learning motivation and X represents Sapa Pagi implementation.

The significance test ($t = 6.78$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that the Sapa Pagi variable had a meaningful and positive impact on students' learning motivation. The model indicates that for every one-point increase in the Sapa Pagi scale, students' motivation scores are expected to rise by approximately 0.52 points. This finding empirically supports the assumption that early-morning affective interactions serve as a catalyst for developing enthusiasm and readiness to learn among elementary students.

The statistical results demonstrate that the Sapa Pagi program plays a substantial role in shaping students' motivation to learn. Consistent with the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the findings

suggest that teacher-student interactions at the start of the day fulfill students' psychological needs for relatedness and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This connection leads to greater emotional stability and engagement throughout the school day. The results also align with recent empirical evidence indicating that structured morning routines contribute to better classroom climate and higher academic enthusiasm (Fathurrahman et al., 2023). Similar studies by Rohani and Lestiawati (2022) found that primary schools implementing character-based morning rituals reported greater improvements in students' concentration and participation. The present study strengthens this body of literature by providing quantitative validation in the rural educational context of Central Aceh Regency, where cultural and religious values strongly influence pedagogical practices. In summary, the regression analysis supports the hypothesis that the Sapa Pagi program significantly influences students' learning motivation. The evidence suggests that this program not only fosters affective bonds between teachers and students but also reinforces a positive learning climate that enhances students' emotional readiness, participation, and perseverance. Thus, the Sapa Pagi program can be considered a practical and effective strategy for strengthening student motivation in elementary education.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the Sapa Pagi program exerts a significant and positive influence on students' learning motivation at the elementary school level. The regression analysis revealed that the implementation of Sapa Pagi accounted for 31.2% of the variance in learning motivation, highlighting its substantial contribution to improving student enthusiasm, engagement, and emotional readiness for learning. These results align with previous research suggesting that affective routines and teacher-student interactions conducted at the beginning of the school day can set a positive emotional tone that enhances students' focus and participation (Rosyidah et al., 2022). The consistent greetings, smiles, and brief dialogues involved in Sapa Pagi establish a warm classroom climate where students feel valued and emotionally secure both of which are crucial foundations of intrinsic motivation.

From the theoretical standpoint of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Deci and Ryan (2020), the motivational improvement observed in this study can be explained by the fulfillment of two fundamental psychological needs—relatedness and competence. The Sapa Pagi routine helps students experience a sense of belonging as teachers acknowledge their presence daily, thereby satisfying their social need for connection. At the same time, teachers' verbal affirmations and positive feedback enhance students' perceived competence, which in turn reinforces their intrinsic motivation to learn. This interpretation corresponds to the findings of Huang et al. (2021), who reported that elementary students with high perceived teacher support exhibit greater self-confidence and academic persistence.

In the Indonesian context, where education is embedded within cultural and religious values, the Sapa Pagi program also functions as a medium for character and moral development. Greeting students in the morning fosters humility, politeness, and mutual respect, reflecting Islamic principles of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *ta'dib* (ethical refinement). Such moral values serve as internalized motivators that encourage students to learn not only for cognitive achievement but also for self-improvement and social contribution. Ramdani et al. (2023) found that moral-based school activities enhance both affective engagement and behavioral consistency among primary students. Similarly, Hassan and Junaidi (2022) argue that teacher-led rituals embedded with moral messages can serve as a moral compass that sustains intrinsic motivation over time. These cultural dimensions make Sapa Pagi not merely an academic activity but also a form of spiritual reinforcement that aligns learning with ethical and communal values.

Another important dimension revealed by this study is the role of teacher emotional presence in shaping motivation. The results demonstrate that students' enthusiasm tends to increase when teachers demonstrate warmth, attentiveness, and encouragement during the morning session. Emotional presence—defined as the teacher's ability to project empathy and recognition—has been identified as a strong predictor of student engagement and satisfaction (Burić & Moè, 2020). Within the Sapa Pagi context, this emotional presence is manifested through consistent eye contact, friendly body language, and sincere acknowledgment, which collectively create psychological safety for learners. When students perceive that their teachers care about them personally, their intrinsic motivation strengthens because learning becomes a socially meaningful experience rather than a mere obligation.

Furthermore, this study supports the argument that structured socio-emotional learning (SEL) activities contribute to academic motivation. According to Wang et al. (2023), SEL-based practices—such as daily greetings, mindfulness exercises, and emotional check-ins promote self-regulation and resilience among young learners. The Sapa Pagi routine functions similarly, providing a daily opportunity for students to transition emotionally from their home environment to the learning environment. This transition is essential in helping students achieve cognitive readiness, especially in early morning classes when attention and focus are still developing. Schools that implement such affective routines, therefore, not only improve motivation but also cultivate emotional intelligence and interpersonal awareness among students.

The quantitative results also emphasize the reciprocal nature of motivation and school culture. As Rahman and Idris (2021) observed, consistent morning rituals contribute to shaping collective habits that reinforce punctuality, discipline, and cooperation. In this study, students who frequently participated in Sapa Pagi reported higher scores in perseverance and task commitment, suggesting that the emotional tone established by the program extends beyond affective engagement to behavioral outcomes. This finding is in line with Keller et al. (2021), who argue that teacher enthusiasm and positive rituals can trigger “motivational contagion,” where students internalize the emotional energy modeled by their teachers.

The local implementation of Sapa Pagi in Central Aceh Regency also demonstrates the adaptability of character-based educational programs in rural contexts. Many participating schools reported limited access to digital learning tools or enrichment programs, yet the Sapa Pagi initiative proved effective in maintaining student enthusiasm with minimal resources. This underscores the idea that relational pedagogy education centered on human connection and empathy can be a powerful alternative to technology-based interventions, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Lavy & Berkovich-Ohana, 2020). Teachers’ ability to create emotional engagement through simple routines becomes a cost-effective strategy for sustaining motivation.

However, while the influence of Sapa Pagi is significant, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.312$) indicates that a large proportion of motivational variance remains unexplained. Other contextual variables such as family support, peer influence, and classroom management may also contribute substantially to motivation. As Tsigilis et al. (2022) suggest, motivation in education is a complex, multifactorial construct that cannot be attributed to a single intervention. Therefore, future research should employ mixed-method or longitudinal designs to explore how sustained exposure to Sapa Pagi interacts with other psychosocial factors over time.

In practical terms, the implications of this study are multifaceted. School administrators should ensure that the Sapa Pagi program is implemented systematically and with genuine affective engagement, rather than as a mere procedural formality. Teachers should be trained to use this program as an opportunity to observe students’ emotional states, provide encouragement, and convey moral values. Incorporating reflection activities or short motivational stories into the routine could further enhance its impact. At a policy level, education authorities could integrate Sapa Pagi into broader character education frameworks to promote empathy, discipline, and learning enthusiasm across schools.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights that the Sapa Pagi program represents a simple yet powerful pedagogical tool for enhancing learning motivation. Its effectiveness lies in its ability to humanize education transforming ordinary greetings into meaningful interactions that nurture emotional security, moral awareness, and intrinsic motivation. By fostering warmth, recognition, and purpose at the start of each school day, Sapa Pagi exemplifies how culturally rooted educational practices can produce psychologically sustainable motivation and reinforce holistic learning.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that the Sapa Pagi program significantly influences students’ learning motivation in elementary schools within Central Aceh Regency. Quantitative analysis revealed that the program explained approximately 31.2% of the variance in learning motivation, confirming that daily morning interactions between teachers and students play a vital role in shaping emotional readiness and enthusiasm for learning. The affective routines embedded in the Sapa Pagi activity greetings, positive communication, and moral reflection create a psychologically safe environment that supports intrinsic motivation. These findings reaffirm that learning motivation is not merely a cognitive construct but also a social-emotional process that flourishes through meaningful interpersonal connection.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the application of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) within the Indonesian elementary education context, demonstrating that relatedness and competence are central drivers of intrinsic motivation. By incorporating values of empathy, discipline, and respect, Sapa Pagi serves as a culturally grounded form of socio-emotional learning (SEL) that aligns modern motivational frameworks with Islamic and local character education principles. The consistent and heartfelt implementation of such programs can therefore bridge the gap between emotional development and academic achievement. Moreover, the findings highlight that simple yet relational pedagogical interventions can produce sustainable motivational effects without requiring complex resources or technology.

Practically, these results suggest several recommendations for educators and policymakers. Schools should institutionalize the Sapa Pagi program as part of their daily routines, ensuring that it is conducted authentically and supported by teacher training in emotional communication and moral pedagogy. Local education authorities may include Sapa Pagi within regional character education policies, emphasizing its role in fostering discipline, empathy, and intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, future research should explore the longitudinal impact of Sapa Pagi on broader outcomes such as academic performance, emotional intelligence, and social adjustment to strengthen the empirical foundation of affective-based educational practices. Ultimately, nurturing learning

motivation through relational warmth and moral guidance reflects the essence of holistic education: the harmonious development of intellect, emotion, and character.

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