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Enhancing Students' Learning Interest in Islamic Religious Education and Character Building Through the Drill Method in Grade VIII at SMP Islam Terpadu Al Ikhlas Pinrang

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the effort to apply the drill method to enhance the learning interest of Grade VIII students in the subject of Islamic Religious Education and Character at SMP Islam Terpadu Al Ikhlas Pinrang. The research problems formulated in this study are: (1) How is the process of increasing students' learning interest in Islamic Religious Education and Character through the drill method in Grade VIII at SMP Islam Terpadu Al Ikhlas Pinrang,(2) What are the results of increasing students' learning interest in Islamic Religious Education and Character through the drill method in Grade VIII at SMP Islam Terpadu Al Ikhlas Pinrang. The objectives of this study are to analyze the process and the outcomes of increasing students' learning interest through the drill method in Islamic Religious Education and Character for Grade VIII students at SMP Islam Terpadu Al Ikhlas Pinrang. To achieve these objectives, the study employed a qualitative approach with Classroom Action Research (CAR) methodology, implemented in three phases: pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation, using an assessment instrument for learning interest consisting of eight indicators. The collected data were analyzed descriptively and quantitatively based on observations in each cycle. The results show that the gradual application of the drill method successfully increased students' learning interest—from the "low interest" category in the pre-cycle (43.27%), to "interested" in cycle I (71.75%), and finally to "highly interested" in cycle II (88.15%). These findings indicate that the drill method is an effective and adaptive instructional strategy for fostering students' learning interest. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the drill method into Islamic Religious Education and

Character instruction, which aims not only to enhance learning interest but also to support the development of students' character. The context of implementation in an integrated Islamic junior high school, along with the alignment of the instructional approach to the psychological and pedagogical characteristics of junior high school students, further strengthens the innovative contribution of this study.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and deliberate effort to develop students' physical and spiritual potential so that they are able to live independently and fulfill their life responsibilities. The educational process is not merely limited to the transfer of knowledge, but also encompasses character formation, skill development, and the empowerment of individuals to face various life challenges. From the Islamic perspective, education holds a highly significant position, as emphasized in the Qur'an, which underlines the importance of deepening religious knowledge as a provision to guide the community.

Education within schools, in essence, is a learning process in which teachers play a central role. Teachers are not only knowledge transmitters but also serve as mentors and facilitators of the learning process. The Indonesian National Education System Law further states that the purpose of education is to develop learners to become individuals who are faithful, pious, noble in character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, responsible, and democratic citizens.

In the learning process, the teaching method employed by teachers greatly influences students' learning interest. One relevant approach is the drill method, which involves repetitive practice aimed at strengthening habits, skills, accuracy, and comprehension. The principle of repetition in this method is in line with the Qur'anic teaching, as reflected in Surah Al-Qiyamah verses 16–19, which emphasize gradual processes of memorization and understanding.

However, the application of the drill method must take students' learning interest into account. High learning interest leads to greater enthusiasm, whereas a lack of interest can cause boredom and disengagement. Observations at SMP Islam Terpadu Al Ikhlas Pinrang indicate that students' learning interest in Islamic Religious Education and Character (PAI BP) remains low. Contributing factors include monotonous learning materials, unclear delivery by teachers, lengthy instructional sessions, and students' reluctance to ask questions.

This condition highlights that low learning interest is not solely caused by teaching methods, but also by the quality of content delivery, lack of variation in learning activities, and insufficient classroom atmosphere to encourage active participation. Therefore, innovative teaching methods and engaging approaches are required to foster students' motivation, confidence, and willingness to actively interact during the learning process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study falls within the category of Classroom Action Research (CAR), which was conducted in collaboration between the researcher and the Islamic Religious Education and Character (PAI BP) teacher at SMP Islam Terpadu Al Ikhlas. The research was grounded in the problems encountered during the day-to-day learning process. Classroom Action Research is commonly defined as a systematic inquiry carried out by teachers within their own classrooms, encompassing the cyclical stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, with the principal objective of directly and continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning.

As emphasized by Wina Sanjaya, Classroom Action Research constitutes a strategic approach that enables teachers to enhance the quality of their roles and responsibilities, particularly in managing the learning process. Through CAR, teachers are provided with an opportunity for sustained professional development by engaging in critical self-reflection on the shortcomings of previously implemented instructional practices. Such reflective practice serves as a foundation for designing instructional improvements, implementing them in accordance with the planned program, and subsequently reassessing the outcomes through further cycles of reflection and refinement.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques refer to the process of simplifying research data into forms that are more easily read and interpreted. In this process, statistical methods are frequently employed. One of the primary functions of statistics is to reduce large sets of research data into simpler and more comprehensible information. The data obtained from this study, whether through observation or other methods, were processed using descriptive analysis with the objective of illustrating the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education and Character (PAI BP) learning through the drill method. The quantitative data collected were presented in the form of averages and numerical representations, which were subsequently analyzed. Data collection for each student involved assigning numerical scores to specific indicators of learning interest. The assessment referred to predetermined scoring criteria outlined in the rubric, with the scoring system determined by observing students' conditions and performance within the classroom context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This classroom action research was conducted with the primary objective of enhancing students' learning interest in Islamic Religious Education and Character (PAI BP) through the implementation of the drill method. The study was carried out in three phases, namely the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II, each of which consisted of four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection.

During the **pre-cycle phase**, preliminary observations were undertaken to examine students' initial learning interest prior to the intervention. The findings revealed that students' learning interest was relatively low, with an average score of 17.31 out of a maximum score of 40, equivalent to 43.27%, which fell into the category of low interest. The weakest indicators were enthusiasm in responding to questions, attentiveness during lessons, and accuracy in answering. Students appeared passive, demonstrated low levels of concentration, and showed limited comprehension of the material. These conditions indicated the necessity of pedagogical improvement through the application of a more appropriate strategy, namely the drill method.

In **Cycle I**, the drill method was introduced into the instructional process. Observational data indicated a substantial improvement, with the average score increasing to 28.78 out of 40 (71.95%), placing students in the "interested" category. The improvement of 39.85% from the pre-cycle demonstrated the positive impact of the drill method on learning interest. Students became more enthusiastic, more responsive, and increasingly active in classroom discussions. Nonetheless, several challenges persisted,

including the presence of passive students, unstable levels of motivation throughout the lesson, and the need for the teacher to distribute attention more evenly among learners. These reflections were subsequently utilized as the basis for refining the intervention in Cycle II.

In **Cycle II**, instructional practices were adjusted in accordance with the reflections from Cycle I. The drill method remained the core strategy; however, the approach was made more interactive and designed to engage students more comprehensively. The results of observation indicated further enhancement, with the average score rising to 35.26 out of 40 (88.15%), categorizing students as highly interested. The improvement of 18.35% from Cycle I confirmed that the refined strategy produced more optimal outcomes. Students demonstrated greater confidence, actively expressed their opinions, posed and answered questions, and engaged more fully in classroom activities. With the achievement of the established success indicators in Cycle II, the research was concluded as the objectives had been successfully attained.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this classroom action research (CAR), which was conducted in three stages—pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II—and with reference to the research questions formulated, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, the process of enhancing students' learning interest was carried out gradually through the three stages. During the pre-cycle, the learning process had not yet employed the drill method, and students' learning interest remained relatively low. Upon entering Cycle I, the drill method was introduced, resulting in a significant improvement, although not all students had yet achieved the established minimum competency criteria (KKM). In Cycle II, the drill method was refined based on reflections from the preceding cycle, and the results demonstrated a substantial increase in students' learning interest, reaching the "highly interested" category. This progression indicates that the step-by-step application of the drill method can effectively foster students' learning interest.

Second, the research results demonstrate a notable improvement in students' learning interest across the three stages. In the pre-cycle, the average score of learning interest was 17.31 (43.27%), which falls into the category of low interest. Following the implementation of the drill method in Cycle I, the average score increased to 28.78 (71.75%), indicating moderate interest. Subsequently, in Cycle II, the average score further increased to 35.26 (88.15%), which is categorized as high interest. The overall increase from the pre-cycle to Cycle II amounted to 44.88%. Beyond numerical improvement, this progress was also reflected in observable behavioral changes, including students' increased activeness, confidence, focus, and enthusiasm in participating in the learning process.

These findings substantiate that the systematic application and refinement of the drill method can serve as an effective instructional strategy to enhance students' learning interest in Islamic Religious Education and Character (PAIBP).

SUGGESTIONS

For teachers, it is essential to adopt more creative and varied instructional methods that are aligned with the characteristics and learning needs of students. The drill method may serve as an effective alternative to foster students' learning interest, particularly in Islamic Religious Education and Character (PAIBP). Moreover, teachers should continuously engage in reflection and evaluation of their instructional practices in order to create a more active, enjoyable, and student-centered learning environment.

For students, the results of this study highlight the importance of maintaining readiness, active participation, and meaningful engagement throughout the learning process. A higher level of learning interest will facilitate a deeper understanding of the

subject matter. Therefore, students are encouraged to develop consistent habits of asking questions, providing answers, and diligently completing assigned tasks and exercises.

For schools, institutional support plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning process. Schools should provide adequate facilities and infrastructure to support innovative instructional practices. In addition, schools are expected to create opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development programs, such as training and workshops, in order to strengthen their competencies in designing and implementing innovative and effective learning strategies.

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