

Efforts of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving Student Activity and Discipline at MA Asy-Syifa, Abason Village

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers to improve student engagement and discipline at MA Asy Syifa in Abason Village, Totikum District. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. The subjects of this study include two Islamic Religious Education teachers and two 11th-grade students. Data collection was conducted through interviews. The findings of this study reveal that teachers' efforts to increase student engagement are carried out through discussion, dialogue, and providing motivation to students. Additionally, student discipline is improved through the implementation of clear classroom rules and the imposition of sanctions on students who violate them. Thus, interactive learning strategies and the consistent application of discipline can enhance student engagement and discipline in the learning process

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of individuals, both intellectually and in terms of character. Within the scope of national education, character development is an integral part of the educational vision as defined by the Indonesian education system. Education is not solely aimed at mastering knowledge but also serves to foster students' attitudes, discipline, and sense of responsibility. Therefore, the learning process in schools is required to integrate the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects in a balanced manner.

Within the Indonesian education system, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) holds a vital position as it serves as a means for internalizing religious values while simultaneously shaping students' character. PAI instruction is not only oriented toward the theoretical delivery of religious teachings but is also aimed at shaping students' religious and social behavior in daily life. This requires PAI teachers to go beyond merely delivering content; they must also act as educators capable of guiding, directing, and fostering an active and disciplined learning culture within the classroom.

One indicator of successful learning is the level of student engagement in the learning process. Learning engagement reflects students' physical and mental involvement in learning activities, such as asking questions, answering, discussing, and expressing opinions. Research shows that the teaching strategies employed by teachers have a significant impact on student learning engagement. (Zhang et al., 2024), in a study published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, found that teachers' instructional strategies directly contribute to increased student learning engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. This indicates that the quality of instructional strategies is a key determinant of student engagement in the classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

On the other hand, student discipline is also a crucial aspect in supporting optimal learning. Discipline is not only related to adherence to school policies but also reflects students' responsibility toward the learning process, such as arriving on time, participating in lessons in an orderly manner, and completing assignments according to guidelines. Research published in the *Tambusai Education Journal* indicates that the teaching strategies employed by Islamic Education teachers influence the development of students' disciplinary behavior through habit formation, modeling, and consistent classroom management (JPTAM, 2023). Therefore, a teacher's strategy serves not only to enhance students' understanding of the material but also to foster discipline in students.

Furthermore, a study (Ismail & Zamroni, 2023) in the *Journal of Islamic Education* confirms that Islamic Education teachers' strategies for instilling religious values and discipline are implemented through role modeling, value reinforcement, and the integration of religious teachings into learning activities. These findings indicate that well-planned and contextual learning strategies can strengthen students' character while simultaneously improving the quality of the learning process.

However, in practice, various challenges are still encountered in the field, including low student participation in class discussions and a lack of discipline in following lessons. These conditions indicate that appropriate and contextual strategies from Islamic Education teachers are needed to encourage active engagement while fostering a culture of learning discipline. Therefore, this study was conducted at MA Asy Syifa Abason in Totikum Subdistrict to describe and analyze PAI teachers' strategies in enhancing student engagement and discipline. This study is expected to provide empirical contributions toward the development of more effective PAI teaching practices that are oriented toward character development and increased student participation in the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The following study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because the study aims to explore in detail the strategies used by Islamic Education teachers to enhance student engagement and discipline. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding meaning, experiences, and social phenomena within a natural, unmanipulated context (Yulia et al., 2024). Through this approach, researchers can comprehensively explore the teaching practices employed by teachers as well as students' responses to these strategies. This type of research is descriptive because it focuses on presenting and depicting phenomena as they are in the field without testing hypotheses or comparing variables. Qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a systematic representation of the facts and characteristics of the research subjects in a factual and accurate manner (Rohmah & Anwar, 2023).

The research was conducted at MA Asy Syifa Abason in Totikum District from February to March 2026, coinciding with the Field Experience Practice (PPL) program. The research subjects included two Islamic Education teachers as primary informants and two 11th-grade students as supporting informants. The selection of informants was carried out using the purposive sampling method, namely the selection of subjects based on inclusion criteria appropriate to the research objectives, such as involvement in the learning process and the level of student activity and discipline (Rahman, 2025).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth face-to-face interviews. Interviews were conducted with two Islamic Education teachers to gather information regarding the learning strategies they employed, the reasons for using these strategies, and how they were implemented to enhance student engagement and discipline. Subsequently, interviews were also conducted with two 11th-grade students to obtain their perspectives on their learning experiences and the impact of the teachers' strategies on their learning behaviors. The interview model used was semi-structured, meaning the researcher prepared a set of questions as a guide but still allowed the informants ample space to provide broad and reflective answers. Semi-structured interviews are considered effective in qualitative research because they facilitate the elicitation of more detailed information and offer flexibility in aligning with the field context (Putri & Murhayati, 2025).

Data analysis was conducted in stages, including data reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data obtained through interviews were filtered and focused in line with the research problem statement. Subsequently, the data were presented in a descriptive narrative format to illustrate patterns in teachers' strategies and their relationship to student engagement and discipline. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns of findings that emerged from the analysis. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation, which involves comparing data obtained from educators and students to enhance the credibility and objectivity of the research findings (Yulia et al., 2024).

RESULTS

Strategies Used by Islamic Education Teachers to Increase Student Engagement

Based on the transcript of an interview with an Islamic education teacher at MA Asy Syifa in Abason Village, Totikum Subdistrict, it was found that the teacher employs several strategies to increase student engagement in the learning process. These strategies include thorough lesson preparation, motivating students, using engaging teaching methods, and creating a conducive classroom atmosphere. The first PAI teacher explained that one of the key steps in increasing student engagement is the teacher's preparation before entering the classroom. According to him, teachers need to have a clear lesson plan so that the learning process can proceed in a focused manner. The interview results are as follows:

"Before entering the classroom, teachers must be prepared; at a minimum, they should have a lesson plan as a guide. If teachers do not have a lesson plan, the learning process in the classroom may lack direction, and students will become less active." (w/teacher1/12/2/26/wk/13:30)

In addition, the teacher also emphasized the importance of motivating students before beginning the lesson. Motivation is considered the first step in fostering students' readiness to learn, thereby increasing their engagement in learning activities. In addition to instructional strategies, an emotional approach toward students is also one of the methods employed by the teacher, particularly for students with specific family backgrounds or circumstances. According to him, an emotional approach is crucial for fostering harmonious relationships between educators and students, resulting in students feeling valued and more motivated to actively participate in learning.

Meanwhile, the second PAI teacher noted that student engagement can be enhanced through engaging lessons and a conducive classroom environment. In his view, when lessons are designed to be engaging and enjoyable, students are more inclined to participate in learning activities.

"When classroom learning is engaging, students will naturally become more active in following the lessons. Additionally, the classroom atmosphere must be conducive so that students feel comfortable while learning." (w/guru2/12/2/26/wk/15.00)

In addition, the second PAI teacher also implemented a peer tutoring strategy, which involves grouping students based on their learning abilities so that students with stronger skills can help their peers who are struggling. This

strategy is believed to increase student participation in the learning process because they can help one another and interact within their study groups. The interview results are as follows:

"Friends who understand the material better can help those who do not through peer tutoring. In this way, students who were previously less active can participate more in learning." (w/guru2/12/2/26/wk/15.05)

Based on the interview transcript above, it can be identified that the strategies implemented by PAI educators to increase student engagement include thorough lesson preparation, providing motivation, using engaging teaching methods, creating a conducive classroom atmosphere, and implementing peer tutoring.

Student Responses and Participation in Response to Teachers' Instructional Strategies

Based on transcripts of interviews conducted with two 11th-grade students, it was found that the instructional strategies employed by Islamic Education teachers influence student participation in classroom learning activities. Student 1 stated that the enforcement of classroom rules makes students more disciplined in following the lessons. According to him, students comply with the rules set by the teacher to avoid punishment and to keep up with the lesson material. Additionally, the student noted that the teacher facilitates students in asking questions during the learning process. This allows students to feel they have the space to express what they do not yet understand regarding the material being explained.

Furthermore, Student 1 noted that the teaching methods used by the teacher can motivate students to be more proactive in their learning. The teacher does not merely explain the material but also forms discussion groups so that students can collectively discuss issues related to Islamic Religious Education. According to the student, these discussion activities make learning more engaging and help boost students' enthusiasm for learning. However, students also suggested that when presenting learning materials, teachers should avoid monotonous methods and not focus solely on textbook content. They recommended that teachers provide more contextual examples related to social life so that students can grasp the material more quickly.

Meanwhile, Student 2 noted that the Islamic Religious Education teacher's teaching methods were quite effective and easy for students to understand. According to them, the teacher is able to explain the material by providing examples related to daily life, so students can understand how the material applies in society. Students also stated that the learning strategies used by the teacher, such as dialogue and discussion, help students stay more focused during learning activities. Furthermore, the rules enforced by the teacher in class are considered quite strict, as there are consequences for students who violate them. In his view, the enforcement of these rules makes students more disciplined in participating in Islamic Religious Education classes. Furthermore, the student noted that discussion methods and opinion-sharing activities are factors that make students more active in the learning process. He also stated that the willingness to be active in class stems from students' desire for self-development

and to deepen their understanding of the material being studied. Based on the results of these interviews, it can be concluded that the teaching strategies implemented by teachers—such as discussions, dialogues, and providing students with opportunities to ask questions—are effective in encouraging students to be more active and engaged in the Islamic Religious Education learning process.

Implementation of Discipline in Islamic Religious Education

Based on the transcripts of interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers and 11th-grade students, it is evident that discipline in the learning process is enforced through the establishment of clear classroom rules and the imposition of consequences for students who violate these rules. These rules are mutually agreed upon by teachers and students, ensuring that students understand the consequences they will face if they violate the established policies. Islamic Education teachers explained that discipline is not enforced directly by imposing sanctions on students; instead, an approach is first taken to help students understand the circumstances they face. This approach is primarily directed at students with specific family backgrounds or personal circumstances that affect their discipline at school. Additionally, teachers emphasized that the imposition of sanctions must be based on mutual agreement so that students perceive the applied rules as fair.

This was further supported by interviews with the students. Student 1 stated that students comply with the rules enforced in class to avoid punishment and to keep up with the lesson material. Additionally, the student also noted that the rules enforced by the teacher are fair because they apply to all students without exception. Meanwhile, Student 2 noted that the rules implemented by the PAI teacher in the classroom are quite strict, as penalties are imposed if students are late or fail to participate in lessons. According to them, the enforcement of these rules helps students become more disciplined in following lessons. Based on the findings of these interviews, it can be concluded that the implementation of discipline in the PAI learning process is carried out through the establishment of clear classroom rules, engagement with students, and the imposition of mutually agreed-upon consequences. The application of these rules is deemed effective in encouraging students to be more disciplined in participating in learning activities.

DISCUSSION

Strategies Used by Islamic Education Teachers to Increase Student Engagement

Research findings indicate that teachers' preparation prior to conducting lessons is a key factor in increasing student engagement. Teachers with well-structured lesson plans find it easier to manage the classroom and guide learning activities systematically. Thorough planning helps teachers select methods, media, and strategies that align with students' needs, thereby optimizing the learning process. These findings align with research indicating that well-planned instructional strategies can encourage student participation in learning activities because teachers can organize these activities in a more focused and varied manner. Active learning strategies allow students to engage directly through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and group work, thereby increasing

their participation in the learning process (Lidawati & Gayo, 2025). In addition, motivating students plays a crucial role in enhancing their engagement in learning. Motivation can encourage students to participate more actively in learning activities and strengthen their interest in learning. Students with strong learning motivation tend to ask questions more frequently, share their opinions, and participate in learning activities with greater enthusiasm. Research indicates that learning strategies designed to stimulate student motivation increase students' confidence to participate in classroom learning activities.

Another strategy identified in the following research is the implementation of engaging learning processes and the creation of a harmonious learning ecosystem. A conducive and interactive learning environment can help students feel more confident about participating in learning. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering a joyful learning atmosphere through the use of varied methods and learning activities that actively involve students. Research shows that active and collaborative learning processes can enhance interaction among students and encourage them to be more interactive in expressing their opinions during the learning process (Prince, 2004).

In addition, the use of peer tutoring strategies can also enhance student participation in the learning process. Through peer tutoring, students can help one another understand the material, thereby fostering more active learning interactions in the classroom. Interactions among students within learning groups can help students grasp the material more easily because they can discuss and exchange ideas directly with their peers. Research indicates that cooperative learning strategies, including group discussions and peer tutoring, can enhance student engagement in the learning process because students are directly involved in learning activities (Slavin et al., 2001). Thus, the strategies implemented by the Islamic Education teacher at MA Asy Syifa Abason indicate that student engagement is not solely influenced by the learning methods applied but also by the educator's preparedness in planning instruction, providing motivation to students, and fostering a conducive and interactive classroom atmosphere.

Student Response and Participation in Response to Teachers' Instructional Strategies

Research findings indicate that the instructional strategies employed by Islamic Education teachers influence student participation in the learning process. Based on interviews with the two students, it was found that giving students the opportunity to ask questions and using discussion-based methods made students more engaged in the learning process. The opportunities provided by teachers for interaction during the learning process make students feel directly involved in the learning process.

Student participation in learning is also influenced by the learning approaches implemented by educators. The discussion and dialogue methods employed by educators allow students to exchange opinions and express their deeper understanding of the material presented. Such interactive teaching strategies can enhance student engagement in learning because students do not merely function as listeners but also as active participants in learning activities.

The following research findings align with studies indicating that learning that involves interaction between educators and students can increase student engagement in the learning process. Dialogic and collaborative teaching methods help students develop critical thinking skills and the confidence to express their opinions during the learning process (Anwar et al., 2024).

Additionally, the implementation of clear rules in the classroom also influences students' level of discipline in participating in learning. Based on interview results, students stated that they comply with the rules set by teachers because there are consequences or sanctions if those rules are violated. Consistent enforcement of rules can help foster a more orderly learning environment, thereby allowing the learning process to proceed optimally. This aligns with research indicating that the enforcement of discipline in the classroom is a crucial aspect of creating a positive learning atmosphere. A teacher's firmness in enforcing rules and the imposition of consequences for violations can help cultivate students' disciplined attitudes toward participating in learning activities (Lestari & Handika, 2025).

In addition to discussion methods and the enforcement of classroom rules, the use of contextual examples in presenting material is also considered effective in enhancing students' understanding of the subject matter. Students stated that explanations of the material linked to their daily lives helped them grasp the concepts taught in Islamic Education classes more quickly. This demonstrates that contextual learning can help students connect the subject matter to the realities of social life. Other studies also indicate that a contextual learning approach can increase student engagement in the learning process because students can grasp the connection between the subject matter and their daily lives. Contextual learning allows students to learn more meaningfully as they can see the relevance of the material to their life experiences (Fauzi, 2025). Therefore, the findings of this study demonstrate that learning strategies involving active interaction between teachers and students, the implementation of clear classroom rules, and the use of contextual learning examples can enhance student participation in the PAI learning process.

The Application of Discipline in Islamic Education

Research findings indicate that the application of discipline in the classroom plays a crucial role in creating an orderly and conducive learning environment. The implementation of clear classroom rules, along with consequences for rule violations, can help foster students' disciplined behavior during learning activities. Consistently enforced discipline encourages students to follow rules and take responsibility for their obligations as students.

These findings align with research stating that the application of discipline in learning is one of the key factors in creating an effective learning environment. Teachers who are able to consistently enforce classroom rules can help improve order and student engagement in the learning process (Lestari & Handika, 2025).

Furthermore, the approach teachers take toward students before imposing disciplinary measures demonstrates that discipline is not merely punitive but also serves as a form of guidance for students. A persuasive approach can help teachers understand students' circumstances and provide guidance tailored to

their needs. This indicates that discipline in education aims not only to control student behavior but also to shape students' character to be more responsible. Other studies also show that the application of discipline accompanied by good communication between teachers and students can help foster more positive relationships in the learning process. A good relationship between teachers and students can increase students' trust in their teachers, making them more willing to comply with the rules established in the classroom (Anwar et al., 2024). Thus, the application of discipline in Islamic Religious Education not only serves to maintain order in the classroom but also plays a role in fostering students' sense of responsibility and discipline in participating in learning activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of research conducted on the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers to improve student engagement and discipline at MA Asy Syifa Abason in Totikum District, it can be concluded that teachers play a crucial role in fostering an active and disciplined learning process through various teaching strategies implemented in the classroom.

First, the strategies used by teachers to increase student engagement involve thorough lesson preparation, motivating students, employing engaging teaching methods such as discussions and dialogues, and fostering a conducive classroom atmosphere. These strategies encourage students to become more involved in learning activities and increase their participation in the learning process. Second, students' responses to the learning strategies implemented by teachers indicate that interactive learning methods—such as discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and providing opportunities for students to express their opinions—can increase student engagement in learning. Additionally, the use of contextual examples when presenting material helps students understand the subject matter and enhances their interest in learning.

Third, discipline in the classroom is enforced through the establishment of clear classroom rules and the imposition of consequences for students who violate those rules. The consistent enforcement of rules and the teacher's approach to students help create an orderly and conducive learning environment, thereby encouraging students to be more disciplined in participating in learning activities.

Thus, it can be concluded that the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers to improve student engagement and discipline are not only through the use of varied learning strategies but also through the implementation of clear classroom rules and a positive approach toward students, thereby creating an active, orderly, and effective learning process.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic of Efforts of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving Student Activity and Discipline at MA Asy-Syifa, Abason Village in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

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