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The Role of Teachers to Enhance Students' Learning Motivation: Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of teachers in enhancing students' learning motivation, the challenges they face, and the solutions implemented to overcome these challenges. The research was motivated by observations of fluctuating learning motivation among students at a Islamic senior high school in Surakarta, Indonesia, influenced by environmental factors, peer dynamics, and individual character traits. These fluctuations manifest in low enthusiasm for learning, reluctance to participate in class activities, and delays in completing and submitting assignments. Recognizing the need for improvement in students' motivation, this descriptive qualitative research adopts a phenomenological design to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue. The findings reveal that teachers play a crucial role in enhancing students' motivation through the adoption of appropriate learning methods, leveraging technological tools, and designing supplementary programs. However, teachers encounter significant challenges, including diverse student characteristics, limited school resources, and high budget requirements. To address these challenges, teachers employ strategies such as offering personalized assistance and supervision, optimizing available learning facilities, and creating an initial budget plan for activities. This study underscores the importance of innovative and adaptive approaches by teachers to foster a more motivated learning environment.

Keywords: *improving students' motivation, teachers' role, environmental factors*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping competent human resources capable of thriving in the era of globalization, where competition for quality human capital is increasingly intense. Education not only fosters the development of individuals but also enables them to realize their full potential through structured teaching and learning processes. Among the key factors determining the success of the teaching and learning process is learning motivation. As stated by Endres et al. (2024), motivation is the driving force that encourages individuals to engage in learning activities, ensuring their continuity and focus from start to finish.

In recent times, there has been a noticeable decline in students' motivation to learn. This is evident in behaviors such as dismissive attitudes toward learning, lack of attention during lessons, failure to complete assignments, and even truancy. Ávalos-Ramos et al. (2024) highlights similar indicators, emphasizing that laziness in completing tasks and a lack of engagement in learning are symptoms of reduced motivation. However, learning is a crucial process for students, as it fosters personal growth and transformation. Almansour and Almoayad (2024) define learning as a series of mental and physical activities that lead to

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behavioral changes, resulting from personal experiences and interactions with the environment. Learning not only develops cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills but also lays the foundation for acquiring new knowledge and insights (Zulaiha & Priyana, 2020).

The success of educational institutions whether operated by the government or the private sector relies on several essential elements, including educators (teachers), students, administrative staff, infrastructure, principals, teaching materials, learning tools, and media (Anwar et al., 2024; Haddade et al., 2024). Teachers, in particular, play a critical role in creating an effective learning environment. They are expected to adapt to diverse learning conditions and student needs while fostering enthusiasm and motivation for learning. Despite the increasing role of technology in education, the irreplaceable psychological and emotional support provided by teachers remains vital. As Huangal-Scheineder et al., (2024) asserts, addressing obstacles faced by students is a core responsibility of teachers, who must actively nurture students' enthusiasm and drive for learning.

Motivation in students is often fueled by their aspirations, desires, and hopes, which serve as the internal drivers of their learning activities. However, external encouragement from teachers is equally essential. As Liu & Li (2023) notes, teachers play a critical role in guiding students to channel their motivation and pursue their goals with determination. Learning motivation serves as a key determinant of success, influencing students' enthusiasm and persistence in achieving academic objectives. Fabillar et al. (2025) further emphasize the teacher's role as a motivator, where effective guidance from a teacher can inspire students to engage more actively in learning.

Given the importance of motivation in the learning process, this study aims to explore the role of teachers in increasing students' learning motivation, identify the constraints faced by teachers in this effort, and evaluate the solutions employed to address these challenges at a Islamic senior high school (Triana & Nugroho, 2021). These insights underscore the need to further investigate how teachers can effectively support and enhance students' learning motivation. Hence, this research aims to explore the role of teachers in enhancing student motivation at the school.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher employed a phenomenology method. The research was conducted by collecting comprehensive and real-world data to gather information regarding the role of teachers in enhancing students' learning motivation (Cresswell, 2012). The study focused on three main aspects: the role of teachers, the challenges they face, and the solutions they implement in addressing students' learning motivation. A phenomenological design was adopted, which seeks to explore phenomena as they occur directly. The study took place at a high school in Boyolali, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Informants included the principal, homeroom teachers, and students. The research was carried out in August 2023. Data collection techniques involved interviews, observations, and documentation. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of methods, data sources, and theories was applied. Data analysis followed the framework proposed by Miles et al. (2021), which consists of three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This methodological approach enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth insights into the phenomena studied.

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RESULTS

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation conducted at a senior high school in Boyolali, it was found that students' learning motivation fluctuates due to several factors. According to Ari Rosmawati, the principal, "Children's motivation to learn has so far experienced up and down dynamics, this is due to the impact of COVID-19. So in the last two years after COVID, many children have not been able to move on from online learning. When carrying out offline learning, they tend to be unprepared and lazy." Similarly, Emi Wulandari, a class teacher, noted, "Children at the school tend to have different learning enthusiasm and motivation. This is due to the character of each child and the influence of peers." These statements were echoed by students Fikri Ristrian Nugraha and Annisa Mar'tus Sholihah, who shared, "Our enthusiasm and motivation to learn here is sometimes high and sometimes low, this is caused by environmental and peer factors."

The Role of Teachers in Increasing Students' Learning Motivation

Teachers at the school employ various strategies to enhance students' motivation, starting with choosing the right learning method. Principal Ari Rosmawati emphasized, "I encourage teachers to not only focus on classroom learning but also explore outdoor activities, such as biology classes involving hands-on activities like fish dissection. In addition, during my teaching, I often share motivational words or stories to inspire students." This approach aligns with the practices of class teacher Emi Wulandari, who stated, "While teaching, I often share motivational words to boost students' enthusiasm and sometimes show funny videos to keep them engaged and prevent boredom."

The use of technology is another crucial strategy. As Rosmawati explained, "Our students are facilitated with laptops and Wi-Fi networks to access the internet. Some classrooms are equipped with multimedia TVs and LCD projectors for interactive learning." These technological resources aim to create a modern and engaging learning environment. Furthermore, the school has implemented additional programs to stimulate motivation. Rosmawati elaborated, "We offer programs such as extracurricular activities, Tahfidz Class, Science Class, Smart Outing Class, Tahfidz Camp, Wali Kelas G, and One Day One Motivation, all designed to encourage students to learn actively."

Challenges Faced by Teachers

Despite these efforts, teachers face several challenges. One significant obstacle is the differing characters of students. As Rosmawati noted, "There are students with a high level of laziness. For example, during breaks, some go back to their dormitories to sleep and often skip the next classes." Similarly, Wulandari remarked, "The varied nature of students poses a challenge in fostering motivation. Some respond better to verbal encouragement, while others require direct actions or programs."

Another challenge is the limited school facilities. Rosmawati shared, "At the beginning of the school, we had very few facilities to support the learning process. While there have been some improvements, the resources still do not fully meet our needs, which affects students' learning motivation." Additionally, budget constraints present another hurdle. According to Rosmawati, "Many programs to enhance learning motivation require significant funding, which poses difficulties in implementation."

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Solutions Implemented by Teachers

To address these challenges, the school employs several solutions. One approach is special assistance and supervision. Rosmawati stated, "To counteract the laziness of students who often skip classes, I ensure there is a teacher supervising during breaks or when classes are empty." Wulandari added, "Teachers conduct social analyses and individual approaches to understand each student's character. This helps us provide tailored guidance and support to motivate them effectively."

The school also focuses on maximizing available learning facilities. Despite the resource limitations, teachers strive to create a comfortable and engaging learning environment. Furthermore, the school has introduced activity budget planning to sustain programs. As Rosmawati explained, "We socialize the annual activity budget plan to parents and seek collaborative solutions. For special budgets, such as competition participation, the school provides financial assistance to ensure students remain motivated and maximize their potential."

DISCUSSION

The Role of Teachers in Increasing Students' Learning Motivation

Teachers at the school play a central role in fostering students' learning motivation by employing appropriate learning methods. Teaching is not limited to classroom instruction but requires innovative strategies that cater to diverse student needs. As highlighted in the interviews, teachers utilize outdoor learning, motivation-oriented teaching, and a touch of humor to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Outdoor learning, as noted by Ivan Riyadi and Diah Novita Sari (2023), enriches the educational experience by taking students beyond the confines of the classroom, offering hands-on activities in natural or practical settings. Motivation-oriented teaching, rooted in Maslow's (1981) theory of needs, focuses on stimulating students' potential, fostering creativity, and encouraging active participation. Additionally, incorporating humor into lessons, as described by Abdulkabir (2023), creates a lively atmosphere that fosters curiosity and creativity, making learning enjoyable for students.

The integration of technology in teaching is another key strategy employed by teachers. Advanced tools, such as multimedia TVs, LCD projectors, and internet access, have transformed traditional classrooms into interactive learning spaces. Nugroho et al. (2022) and Makruf et al. (2022) emphasized that technology-based learning media is essential in the digital age, allowing educators to deliver lessons more effectively and capture students' attention. By leveraging technology, teachers at the school ensure that their teaching methods remain relevant and engaging, which helps to boost students' motivation.

Teachers also enhance learning motivation by designing additional programs tailored to students' needs. Programs such as extracurricular activities, science and Tahfidz classes, and motivational events provide students with opportunities to explore their interests and talents. These initiatives align with the self-determination theory by Deci & Ryan (2000), which posits that intrinsic motivation flourishes when individuals feel autonomous, competent, and connected to their activities. The implementation of diverse programs allows students to experience a sense of achievement and belonging, further fueling their desire to learn.

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Challenges Faced by Teachers in Motivating Students

One significant challenge teachers face is addressing the diverse characters of students. Each student possesses unique traits, making it essential for teachers to understand their individual needs and emotional states. Kelsen and Liang (2019) found that students who feel emotionally disengaged in the classroom are less motivated to learn. Teachers must invest time in building relationships with students to identify and address underlying issues that hinder their motivation.

Another challenge is the limitation of school facilities. Despite efforts to improve infrastructure, the resources available at the school remain insufficient to meet the demands of modern teaching. Research by Tahmasbipour and Taheri (2011) highlights the strong influence of facilities on students' extrinsic and instrumental motivation. Inadequate resources, such as limited laboratory equipment or outdated teaching tools, hinder the ability of teachers to deliver effective lessons, consequently affecting students' enthusiasm for learning.

Budget constraints further complicate efforts to enhance motivation. Many programs and initiatives require significant financial investment, yet the available budget often falls short of these needs. Fauzi (2019) argue that fostering a positive and growth-oriented mindset in students often requires well-funded training programs and innovative teaching strategies. Without sufficient financial resources, the implementation of these initiatives becomes a significant hurdle.

Solutions Implemented by Teachers

To overcome these challenges, teachers at the school adopt several solutions. Providing special assistance and supervision to students is a crucial strategy. Teachers act as mentors and second parents, offering guidance and support tailored to individual needs. Purnomo et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of empathetic relationships between teachers and students, which serve as a foundation for building motivation. By creating a supportive environment, teachers help students overcome personal challenges and foster a desire to learn.

Maximizing available learning facilities is another approach employed by teachers. Even with limited resources, they strive to make the most of what is available to create an engaging learning experience. Fauzi (2019) stressed the importance of adequate facilities in enhancing students' enthusiasm for learning, as well-equipped classrooms and materials contribute to a more interactive and enjoyable learning process.

Additionally, teachers at the school have implemented the practice of creating an activity budget plan to support their programs. A structured budget plan ensures the sustainability of initiatives aimed at boosting motivation. Sukino et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of fostering a growth mindset through structured activities that promote progress and development. By aligning financial planning with educational goals, teachers provide students with clear guidance and opportunities to excel, creating an environment where learning becomes a fulfilling experience.

The role of teachers at the school extends beyond delivering lessons; they actively foster learning motivation through innovative methods, technology integration, and well-designed programs. Despite challenges such as diverse student characters, limited facilities, and budget constraints, teachers demonstrate resilience and creativity in addressing these issues. Through personalized support, resource optimization, and strategic planning, they create an environment where students feel encouraged and motivated to learn. This approach

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not only enhances academic outcomes but also nurtures the holistic development of students, preparing them to thrive in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

CONCLUSION

Teachers at a senior high school play a pivotal role in enhancing students' learning motivation by employing a range of innovative strategies, including tailored learning methods, technology integration, and the implementation of additional programs. These efforts address the varying needs and preferences of students, creating an engaging and supportive learning environment. Despite the significant challenges posed by diverse student characteristics, limited school facilities, and budget constraints, the dedication and adaptability of teachers have contributed to fostering students' enthusiasm for learning. By leveraging available resources and developing comprehensive activity plans, teachers have successfully encouraged a growth mindset and intrinsic motivation among students, ensuring a sustainable and fulfilling educational experience.

To further strengthen the impact of teachers' efforts, schools should prioritize investment in improving infrastructure and learning resources. Adequate facilities not only enhance the quality of education but also serve as a critical motivator for students. In addition, providing targeted professional development programs for teachers can help them refine their skills and adopt new approaches to address students' evolving needs. Collaboration with parents and the community should also be encouraged to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Financial support from both government and private stakeholders can be sought to address budgetary constraints and implement innovative programs that drive student motivation. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of specific motivational strategies on students' academic performance and personal development. Comparative studies across different educational institutions and regions could provide a broader understanding of effective practices and contextual challenges. Additionally, incorporating students' perspectives on motivational strategies can offer valuable insights into designing more student-centered approaches. Research on the integration of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and gamification, in fostering learning motivation could also pave the way for innovative teaching practices in the digital age.

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