THEACHER STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCHING STUDENT LEARNING MOTIVATION IN EARLY GRADE MATHEMATICS AT SD ISLAM SABILILLAH CUKIR.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate and describe the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers to enhance students' learning motivation in mathematics within the lower-grade classes of SD Islam Sabilillah Cukir. The primary problem addressed in this research is the common perception among early-grade students that mathematics is a difficult and intimidating subject, which often leads to low engagement, anxiety, and a lack of interest in numerical concepts. To address this issue, a qualitative research methodology with a case study approach was utilized. Data were collected through structured observations, semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers, and extensive documentation of learning activities. The results of the research indicate that teachers implement a multifaceted strategy involving the use of concrete manipulative media, the integration of Islamic values into mathematical contexts, and a consistent reward-and-praise system to build students' confidence. Furthermore, the findings reveal that creating a joyful learning atmosphere through "ice-breaking" activities and game-based learning significantly reduces students' math anxiety and fosters a proactive learning attitude. These strategies not only improve students' focus during lessons but also build a strong foundational interest in mathematics. In conclusion, the teacher's role as a creative facilitator is crucial in transforming abstract mathematical concepts into relatable, enjoyable, and motivating experiences for lower-grade students at SD Islam Sabilillah Cukir.

Keywords: Teacher Strategies, Learning Motivation, Mathematics Education, Lower Primary School, SD Islam Sabilillah Cukir.

Catatan : Nomor HP tidak akan dicantumkan, namun sebagai fast respon apabila perbaikan dan keputusan penerimaan jurnal sudah ada.

A. Pendahuluan (12 pt dan Bold)

Education is the primary foundation for developing competent human resources who are ready to face the challenges of the global era. One important factor in education is student learning motivation, which plays a significant role in determining the success of the learning process (Rohayati, 2021). Mathematics, as a basic subject, plays a strategic role in developing students' logical and

analytical thinking skills (Setiarini, 2023).

However, many students in lower grades experience difficulties and lack motivation in learning mathematics, which impacts their low learning achievement (Fadliah, 2022).

This internal drive, known as learning motivation, plays a crucial role in determining the overall effectiveness of the learning process.Students with high levels of motivation typically demonstrate greater engagement, stronger enthusiasm, and the ability to achieve superior learning achievement compared to those with low motivation (Rohayati, 2022). Conversely, a lack of motivation in learning mathematics is often triggered by an unengaging teaching approach and a lack of teachers' application of appropriate strategies to manage classroom dynamics (Fahria, 2021).

Low learning motivation is often caused by unengaging learning methods and a lack of teachers' strategies to meet students' learning needs (Arifah, 2024). Therefore, teachers need to implement various effective learning strategies to increase student learning motivation, especially in mathematics lessons in early grades (Ninda, 2025). Learning motivation is one of the main factors determining success in the learning process. Students with high motivation usually demonstrate a more active and persistent attitude, and are able to achieve optimal learning outcomes (Sari, 2021). Therefore, teachers, as learning managers, need to design and implement effective learning strategies to increase student learning motivation, especially in mathematics lessons at the lower grade level. Appropriate learning strategies can create a fun learning environment while increasing students' confidence in understanding the subject matter (Wahyuni, 2024). Several recent studies have shown that implementing innovative and student-focused learning strategies can significantly increase learning motivation. For example, the use of cooperative learning methods, game-based learning, and contextual approaches has proven effective in increasing student interest and motivation in learning mathematics (Hidayat, 2023; Lestari, 2022).

According to observations during the AMSP activity at Sabilillah Islamic Elementary School on September 25, 2025, regarding Mathematics, this led

to a boring classroom atmosphere, especially in the early grades. When I conducted observations at the school, students in the class showed a lack of active participation in the learning process. However, it cannot be denied that a large number of students, especially those in In early grades, students face difficulties and lack enthusiasm in learning mathematics. This low learning motivation often negatively impacts students' academic achievement and reduces their interest in the subject. This is caused by several factors, including a lack of motivation to participate in the teaching and learning process and teachers' lack of creativity in selecting learning models. In addition to being required to create a comfortable and conducive classroom atmosphere, teachers must also be able to use engaging learning strategies that are appropriate to the material being presented. To prevent this problem from persisting, appropriate learning strategies are needed to increase student motivation in mathematics. Teachers consistently strive to design and implement various learning strategies to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in the mathematics learning process.

Based on the background described above, the research question of this study is:What strategies are implemented by teachers to increase students' learning motivation in mathematics subjects in the early grades of Sabilillah Cukir Islamic Elementary School?. According to the formulation of the problem, the objectives are as follows: To describe the strategies used by teachers to increase students' learning motivation in mathematics lessons in the early grades of Sabilillah Cukir Islamic Elementary School. Research Benefits

After examining the title, the researcher hopes to provide the following benefits:

1. Theoretical Benefits

a) This research is expected to yield results that can facilitate the implementation of teacher strategies to increase student learning motivation in mathematics lessons in the early grades of Sabilillah Cukir Islamic Elementary School.

b) This research is expected to broaden knowledge, particularly in the world of education, and especially in teacher strategies to increase student learning motivation in mathematics lessons in the early grades of

Sabilillah Cukir Islamic Elementary School.

2. Practical Benefits

a) For the author, it provides experience and broadens knowledge and insight in conducting research.

b) For students, by familiarizing themselves with the teaching strategies provided, students will be more motivated to increase their enthusiasm for learning, especially in mathematics.

c) For other researchers, it can serve as a reference for further research on teacher strategies to increase student learning motivation in mathematics lessons in the early grades of Sabilillah Cukir Islamic Elementary School.

d) For teachers, this research can be used as a basis for selecting appropriate classroom learning strategies for the mathematics teaching and learning process.

B. Metode Penelitian (Huruf 12 dan Ditebalkan)

This study adopted a qualitative approach to examine the strategies teachers employ to increase student motivation in elementary school mathematics. This approach was chosen because it provides an opportunity to deeply understand the personal experiences of teachers and students, as well as the social environment within the classroom, which are not easily measured with quantitative methods (Sari & Putri, 2021). The primary paradigm underlying this research is constructivism, where knowledge is formed through interactions between individuals and their surroundings, making it appropriate for investigating how teachers actively build student motivation (Wahyuni & Sari, 2020).

More specifically, this study employed a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach is a qualitative research method designed to explore personal experiences and the meaning of a person's life related to a particular phenomenon or event. This method attempts to uncover the deepest layers of the subject's awareness of natural phenomena, usually through intensive interviews, without being influenced by the researcher's personal biases or assumptions (Rahman, 2023). This approach facilitates data collection through observation, intensive interviews, and document review, thus revealing the diversity of teacher strategies in elementary school settings. This

approach was chosen because of the need to understand the complexity of learning motivation, influenced by social, emotional, and pedagogical factors, which are generally context-specific and cannot be generalized through large-scale surveys.

In its application, this qualitative approach employs analytical principles such as data triangulation to ensure the validity of the results and thematic analysis to identify patterns in teacher strategies (Puspitasari & Nugroho, 2023). This aligns with previous research showing that a qualitative approach is useful for examining mathematics learning motivation, particularly at the elementary level, because it allows for the exploration of stories and direct experiences (Rahman & Sari, 2024).

This research design was designed as a qualitative case study, allowing for in-depth exploration of one or more specific cases in an elementary school setting. This design was chosen because of its ability to integrate multiple data sources in a real-life context, providing a holistic picture of teacher strategies in lower grades (grades 1-3).

This design ensured ethical research practices, including participant confidentiality and researcher reflection on potential bias, ensuring reliable and relevant results in the context of primary education.

This study employed a qualitative approach to in-depth investigate the strategies teachers use to motivate students in learning mathematics in the lower grades. Therefore, the selection of data collection techniques focused on methods that could capture the essence of experiences, perspectives, and the dynamics of interactions in the field, resulting in more layered and contextualized findings. The methods used included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. These three methods supported each other through triangulation, contributing to increased resolution and breadth of analysis. The data collection process took place over two to three months at Sabilillah Cukir Islamic Elementary School, with an emphasis on ethical principles such as participant consent and protecting respondent privacy.

1. Interviews

Interviews were used as the primary method to uncover perspectives and firsthand accounts from respondents, including teachers

and students, regarding teaching strategies and their influence on learning enthusiasm. This approach allowed for a fluid approach to formulating questions, allowing researchers to explore responses in greater detail without being completely bound by fixed guidelines, while still addressing the main research issues.

The interview process began with an interview guide containing open-ended questions, such as "What approaches do you often use to increase student enthusiasm in mathematics lessons?" for teachers, and "What might make you feel happy in math class?" for students. Interviews were conducted in person in a conducive school setting, lasting 20-30 minutes each, and audio-recorded after obtaining permission from the respondents. The plan involved six interview sessions, with the participation of three lower-grade teachers and three students purposively selected according to their varying motivational levels. Interview transcripts were then processed to identify key patterns, such as supporting elements of strategies or students' emotional reactions. This selection method was based on its advantage in revealing subjective dimensions that are difficult to see through observation alone, such as teachers' views on barriers to student motivation.

2. Participant Observation

Participant observation was used to directly observe the dynamics of mathematics learning in the classroom, allowing researchers to record interactions between teachers and students and signs of learning motivation in authentic settings. This method allowed researchers to be passively present in the classroom, without disrupting the natural flow, to observe the implementation of strategies such as educational games or group discussions and their effects on students.

The observations covered three mathematics class sessions in grades 1-3, with field notes taken that included lectures, student expressions (such as enthusiasm or reluctance), and teacher responses to challenges. Researchers used an observation guide based on motivational indicators, such as the level of student engagement or the number of questions asked. Each session lasted 45-60 minutes, and data was recorded either immediately or shortly afterward to preserve accuracy. Observations

focused on one class at a time to reduce the possibility of bias, with a total duration of approximately 5 hours.

This method was prioritized because mathematics learning in lower grades often involves real-life activities that are easier to describe than narrative alone. Participant observation provides concrete evidence regarding the success of teacher strategies, such as the role of aids in strengthening student participation, which enriches the interview data through visual and behavioral perspectives.

Hasil Penelitian dan Pembahasan (Huruf 12 dan Ditebalkan)

1. Interview For Primary 1 Teacher

Research Results In this section, the researcher presents data obtained through in-depth interviews with the informant, Mrs. Ira, a first-grade teacher at Sabilillah Cukir Islamic Elementary School. The focus of the research was teacher strategies for increasing student learning motivation in mathematics in lower grades.

A. Teacher Strategies for Increasing Learning Motivation Based on the interview results, the primary strategies employed by first-grade teachers were the use of concrete media and playful approaches. Given that first-grade students are still in the concrete operational stage, teachers tend to avoid boring lecture methods. This is as expressed by Mrs. Ira:

"First-grade students are still young and really need more tangible objects. So I sometimes use concrete media, for example, using popsicle sticks, buttons, pictures, and so on." (Interview, March 26, 2026). In addition to using media, teachers also implement games and simple reward systems to maintain student enthusiasm and prevent boredom with the math material: "We have to be smart, teachers, and use games... So, there are several games for grade 1 to keep them from getting bored. After they learn, we can play guessing games. Sometimes I give prizes/appreciation to those who can answer, so they're even more happy and enthusiastic." (Interview, March 26, 2026).

B.Strategy Selection and Implementation In selecting appropriate strategies, teachers consider the diverse individual characteristics of students. Teachers conduct apperception at the beginning of the lesson to stimulate students' mental readiness. Mrs. Ira explained:

"For example, when choosing a strategy, we look at each child's characteristics... Before I start the lesson, I do apperception first, play guessing games... to increase the students' enthusiasm." (Interview, March 26, 2026).

2. Interview For Primary 2 Teacher

Based on an interview conducted by researchers with Ms. Wanda, a second-grade teacher at Sabilillah Jukir Islamic Elementary School on March 26, 2026, the following data was obtained regarding teacher strategies for increasing lower-grade students' motivation to learn mathematics: 1. Teacher's Main Strategy for Increasing Learning Motivation The teacher stated that there is no single, absolute strategy, but rather a combination of various methods tailored to the material. The teacher uses the lecture method to explain concepts, discussions to encourage active participation, and play-based methods.

"Actually, there is no main strategy used because all strategies can be adapted to the situation and the material... the important thing is that the strategy focuses on the students. So, when the focus is on the students, God willing, the students will also be able to follow the lesson well." (Interview, March 26, 2026).

2. Strategy Implementation Based on Conditions and Facilities Ms. Wanda implements strategies by considering three main aspects: material characteristics, learning time (teaching hours), and the availability of resources such as Interactive Flat Panels (IFP). Material Adjustment: For abstract material such as plane figures, teachers use visual aids (PowerPoint).Teaching Hours Adjustment:

"If it's in the morning... you can use relaxed learning, it doesn't have to be energy-draining. For example, lectures and discussions... If it's in the afternoon, well, during the day, energy levels are low... you can intersperse it with games, quizzes, or take students outside of class." (Interview, March 26, 2026).

3. Interview For Primary 3 Teacher

Based on interviews with elementary school teachers at Sabunillah Jogir Islamic Elementary School, several key points were identified regarding teacher strategies for increasing student motivation in mathematics. 1 Teachers' Main Strategies for Increasing Motivation* Teachers employ psychological and practical

approaches to build students' initial interest. The first strategy is to instill a positive mindset that mathematics is not a scary subject. This aligns with the informant's statement:

"The first is to motivate students about the importance of learning mathematics and to provide an understanding that mathematics is fun." In addition, teachers use games and simplify the material to maintain student confidence. If students do not yet understand a concept explained on the board, the teacher immediately switches to a more interactive approach. The informant explained: *"If they still don't understand, we use a game approach to make it easier for students to understand the problem or material we are explaining."* 2 Strategy Selection and Implementation Strategy selection is based on the need to engage students and overcome boredom in the classroom. Role-playing is a key technique for maintaining a dynamic classroom atmosphere. As one teacher explained: "We implement game strategies, learning strategies, and role-playing strategies to keep students from getting bored in class.

2.Participant Observation

Observation Focus: Teacher Strategies to Increase Student Learning Motivation

1. Opening and Initial Conditions

Learning activities began with a positive atmosphere. The teacher did not immediately dive into the main material, but instead conducted an apperception relevant to the students' daily lives. This successfully captured the class' attention from the first minute. The teacher conveyed the learning objectives in simple and challenging language, illustrating that mathematics is not just calculation, but a tool for solving real-life problems.

2. Implementation of Motivational Strategies

During the core process, several specific strategies were observed that the teacher implemented to maintain the rhythm of student motivation:

Contextual Presentation of Material: The teacher used visual media and concrete props. Instead of simply writing formulas on the board, the teacher presented problems in the form of stories or physical simulations, so that students felt the material was useful to them.

Providing Reinforcement: The teacher consistently provided verbal appreciation such as, "You did the

right thing, try going a little further," or "Good idea!" This created a psychologically safe learning environment, where students were not afraid of making mistakes.Variety of Learning Methods: Learning is not one-way. The teacher divided students into small groups to complete challenges (games). This element of healthy competition and collaboration was seen to increase the engagement of students who had previously appeared passive.

3. Student Interaction and Response

An active two-way dialogue occurred. When students encountered difficulties (misconceptions), the teacher did not immediately provide answers but instead asked scaffolding questions that guided students to discover the concepts on their own. This approach gradually increased students' confidence in their mathematical abilities.

4. Closing and Reflection

At the end of the session, the teacher invited students to reflect on their experiences during the learning process. The teacher gave small "rewards" in the form of extra points or special praise to the most cooperative group. The lesson concluded with a motivational message that the process and effort were far more valuable than a perfect end result.

E. Kesimpulan

Based on the research findings and interviews conducted with teachers from the first, second, and third grades at Sabilillah Islamic Elementary School, it can be concluded that the strategies used to increase student motivation in mathematics in the lower grades are characterized by flexibility, student-centeredness, and psychological engagement.

The key strategies identified across all three levels include:

The Transition from Concrete to Abstract: Teachers prioritize the use of concrete media (such as popsicle sticks and buttons) and visual aids (PowerPoint/IFP) to align with the students' concrete operational stage of development.

Play-Based Learning and Gamification: Across all grades, games, guessing activities, and role-playing are essential tools used to prevent boredom, especially during low-energy periods (afternoon hours).

Psychological and Motivational Building: Strategies are not limited to academic delivery; they include instilling a positive mindset (making

math "not scary"), using rewards/appreciation, and conducting apperception to ensure mental readiness.Adaptive Implementation: Strategy selection is highly dependent on:Student Characteristics: Tailoring methods to the unique needs of the children.Environmental Factors: Adjusting the intensity of the lesson based on teaching hours and available school facilities.

Material Difficulty: Switching to more interactive or simplified approaches when students struggle with board-based explanations.

For Teachers: It is recommended to continue diversifying interactive media and maintaining the "fun math" mindset to sustain long-term student engagement.

For the School: Providing consistent access to modern facilities, such as Interactive Flat Panels (IFP), can further support teachers in delivering abstract mathematical concepts more effectively.

For Future Researchers: Further study could explore the long-term impact of these specific "play-based" strategies on the standardized test scores of lower-grade students.

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