ASHA PUBLISHING

JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ECONOMICS



Volume 2, Issue 2, 2025

E-ISSN: 3047-5507
Journal of Social Science and Economics (JOSSE)
https://journal.ashapublishing.co.id/index.php/josse/index

Descriptive Study of Learning Interest of Grade VIII Students of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tarakan City

Devi Ayu Safitri[1], Siti Rahmi[2], Zainal Abidin Muhja[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Borneo Tarakan, Indonesia
Correspondence Author E-mail: deviayus606@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the learning interests of grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tarakan City and the factors that affect them. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the main informants, namely grade VIII students, subject teachers, and homeroom teachers. Data sources were obtained from direct observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation of learning activities. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman interactive model, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results showed that students' learning interests were in the medium category, influenced by internal factors such as motivation, perception of the material, and curiosity; as well as external factors such as teachers' teaching methods, the role of parents, and learning environment conditions. Teachers who can create an interactive and fun learning atmosphere are proven to increase students' interest in learning. Family support is also a significant factor in encouraging students' active involvement in the learning process.

Keywords: Interests, Learning, Students

INTRODUCTION

Education essentially includes a synergistic relationship between students and educators, escorted by curriculum design, relevant teaching media, and a conducive environment. Educators are people who consciously and deliberately strive to create an environment and learning process that encourages students to develop their strengths, both in terms of religious, spiritual, knowledge, noble morals, intelligence, and skills that are relevant to society and the state (Law Number 20 of 2003 Concerning the National Education System, 2003). Learning is a stage that causes changes in individual knowledge, understanding, skills, values, and attitudes resulting from interaction with the environment (Chasanah et al., 2023). Therefore, the integration between the concepts of "education" and "learning" is not only about information transfer, but also about the process of personal transformation of students. This theoretical resonance is important for understanding the phenomenon of students' learning interests: intrinsic motivations that trigger active involvement in the educational process as well as character building.

Interest in learning is not just a random fondness for material; It is a feeling of deep attachment to learning activities that grows from the student's emotional and cognitive connection to his object (Salsabila & Puspitasari, 2020; Simbolon, 2014). As explained by Susanto (2016), Learning interests are closely related to aspects of personality, motivation, self-expression and self-concept, as well as external environmental factors including family and media influences. When interest is high, students are more likely to pay attention to the material, feel happy, strengthen learning capacity, form positive attitudes, and reduce boredom. Empirical research from various contexts in Indonesia has shown a significant correlation between interest in learning and academic achievement. For example, at SMP Negeri 22 Sinjai, it was found that learning interest and motivation together had a positive relationship with students' mathematics achievement; The higher the interest and motivation,

the better the students' academic achievement (Asri et al., 2021). Similarly, research in the era of "Freedom of Learning" Riadin & Estimurti (2022) shows that simultaneous interest and motivation have a strong impact on students' science learning outcomes. This reinforces the premise that interest is a crucial factor that cannot be ignored in designing effective learning.

Quantitative study conducted at Man 2 Semarang by Chasanah et al (2023) shows that students' learning interests partially and simultaneously have a significant influence on English learning outcomes. From the 33 sample students, linear regression analysis showed that the learning interest variable explained the variation in student achievement with substantial contributions ($p < 0.05$). This is consistent with the literature that places interest as an important mediator between learning inputs (media, strategy, environment) and outputs (academic achievement). In addition, research by Obot (2014) shows that in addition to learning interests, teachers' teaching methods also contribute to accounting learning outcomes. These two variables together explain about 24% variation in student learning outcomes, an indication that student interest alone is not enough without the right pedagogical approach, methods and teacher competence. Other learning interventions that utilise teaching media and interest-based learning strategies have also been shown to improve learning outcomes. For example, a study by Triarisanti & Purnawarman (2019) found that the use of high-quality learning media along with learning interests significantly improves student learning outcomes. Moreover, Zainar et al (2021) examine the relationship between learning strategies, learning interests, and learning outcomes. The results show that the three variables are positively interrelated, emphasising that interest is not an independent variable but part of a holistic learning ecosystem. Further, Hasanati & Purwaningsih (2021) examine the influence of learning interests and gender differences on students' understanding of the concepts of work and energy. The results showed that the interaction between learning interests and gender factors had a significant impact on high school students' understanding of physics concepts. In other words, the influence of interest can also differ according to the demographic profile of the student and the subject of the subject. This becomes relevant when considering the heterogeneity of students of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tarakan, where family backgrounds, gender, and digital activities such as online games can exacerbate the deficit of interest in learning.

Contextualization of the research location shows the real condition of students who experience problems with learning interest. Initial observations at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kota Tarakan found that many students were more dominant in spending time playing online games with friends than studying academically. This is exacerbated by the lack of attention of busy working parents. Interviews with BK teachers corroborated that non-academic behavior and disinterest in lessons are the main obstacles in the daily learning process. This condition reflects how the influence of the digital environment and family can weaken interest in learning, thus requiring empirical research-based interventions. Based on this, this research is entitled "*Descriptive Study of Learning Interest of Grade VIII Students of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tarakan City*". The descriptive approach was chosen because it aims to describe the characteristics of the learning interests of grade VIII students in depth—including internal dimensions such as motivation, personality, and learning goals; as well as external factors such as digital media, social interaction patterns, the role of teachers, and family support. The researcher seeks to combine the findings of theory and previous research with empirical conditions in the field. Thus, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture of how learning interests arise, develop or are hampered in that context.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach (Sugiyono, 2018; Suprianto, 2024). The purpose of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the learning interests of

grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tarakan City by examining the behaviour, motivation, and internal and external factors that affect student involvement in the learning process. Data collection techniques were carried out through semi-structured interviews with students, BK teachers, and several parents, participatory observation in teaching and learning activities, and analysis of documents such as lesson plans and student assignment results; All data is validated through source triangulation to increase the credibility of the findings, (Malik, 2013) Informants were selected purposively, including students with varying levels of interest, teachers who understand student learning dynamics, and parents with low involvement in children's academic processes. Data analysis is carried out inducively using thematic analysis with open, axial, and selective coding stages, which group's themes into internal dimensions such as motivation and self-concept, as well as external ones such as digital media and family influence; The member check technique is used to improve the narrative validity of the findings, (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Sugiyono, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' interest in learning is an important aspect in the world of education because it is one of the determining factors for the success of the learning process. High interest will encourage students to be actively involved in learning activities, while low interest is often an obstacle to achieving optimal learning outcomes. Therefore, understanding the extent of students' learning interests and the factors that affect them is a strategic step in improving the quality of education. This study aims to describe the learning interests of grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tarakan City and examine the factors that affect them from the perspective of students, teachers, and learning environment. Using a qualitative approach, data is collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, which is then analysed to obtain a complete and in-depth picture of the student's state of learning interest. The results of the research are as follows:

Attention

The results of the interviews showed that students' attention in learning was greatly influenced by physical readiness and the conditions of the learning environment. Students with the initials AN stated that breakfast or eating before studying is essential to maintain focus, while NC emphasised the importance of a calm classroom atmosphere to concentrate. This indicates that attention is not something that arises automatically, but rather is the result of internal readiness and external influences. The BK teacher also added that some students find it difficult to concentrate at the beginning of the lesson because they are tired or distracted by noisy classroom situations. Theoretically, attention is the main gateway to the learning process. Sardiman (2011) emphasises that without attention, students will not be able to receive and process information effectively. Therefore, attention needs to be built and directed from the beginning of the learning process through the right strategies. One form of stimulus that is recommended is to create an interesting and conducive learning environment so that students feel comfortable and ready to learn. A practical approach to increasing students' attention can be done using techniques such as ice breaking, as mentioned by BK teachers. This strategy aims to relax students' minds while restoring their focus. These findings are reinforced by studies (Blair, 2002; Heller et al., 2012) which show that students' attention increases significantly when teachers pay attention to students' emotional and physical state before starting learning. Therefore, students' attention must be maintained on an ongoing basis as the foundation of an effective interest in learning.

Interest

Students' interest in lessons arises from a combination of perception of the ease of the material and the teacher's delivery style. AN students revealed that they were only interested in subjects that were considered "exciting and easy to understand". Meanwhile, NC is more engaged when teachers teach in a fun and interactive style. BK teachers confirmed that students who understand the material well and are taught interestingly will be more interested in learning. According to Slameto (2010), Interest is largely determined by how students view the content of the lesson and how it is presented. When the material is considered too difficult or the teacher teaches in a monotonous way, students' interest will decrease drastically. Therefore, a learning approach that is communicative, visual, and touches on the real-life context of students is important to foster interest. Students will be more engaged if teachers create a dynamic learning environment that is responsive to students' needs (Chen et al., 2023). Interest is not only about the topic, but how the topic is conveyed (Chen et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024). Therefore, teachers need to be creative and adaptive in choosing learning methods and media so that students' interest is maintained and developed over time.

Feeling Happy or Like

A sense of pleasure in lessons is a form of positive affection that strengthens students' intrinsic motivation in learning. In an interview, AN stated that she liked Indonesian lessons because they were considered fun and light, while NC chose science because of the teacher's easy-to-understand way of delivery. BK teachers also noted that students who like a lesson tend to be more consistent and enthusiastic in following it. Positive emotions such as feelings of pleasure are directly correlated with self-regulation in learning. In the theory of Self-Determination by Deci & Ryan (2000), it is mentioned that the feeling of pleasure strengthens the internal drive of students to learn without coercion. This shows that creating a fun learning atmosphere is not just about entertainment but is an important psychological strategy to foster student motivation and participation. Feeling happy significantly increases the duration of students' attention, tenacity, and academic performance (De la Fuente et al., 2021). Teachers who can build emotional connections and create positive learning experiences will help students feel comfortable exploring the lesson (De la Fuente et al., 2021; Vargas et al., 2022). Therefore, the feeling of happiness is an important indicator in assessing students' learning interests.

Student Engagement

The involvement of students in the learning process can be seen from their active participation, both in the form of asking questions, answering, and working together in groups. AN and NC show a tendency to ask questions when they do not understand the material, indicating the presence of curiosity and an internal drive to understand better. BK teachers also said that students who have an interest in certain subjects tend to be more actively participating. According to the theory, Vygotsky & Cole (1978), Involvement in social processes such as discussion or collaboration is part of the internalisation of knowledge. Through these interactions, students not only absorb information but also construct deeper meaning and understanding. Therefore, learning activities that involve dialogue and collaboration are essential to increase student engagement cognitively. Research Yang et al (2023). In the Educational Psychology Review, it asserts that high interest in learning correlates with increased verbal and nonverbal activity of students during learning. This includes asking questions, taking active notes, and engaging in group tasks. Thus, engagement is a tangible manifestation of an interest in learning, which needs to be supported through participatory and contextual learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study on grade VIII students of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tarakan City show that students' learning interests are generally in the medium category, with variations in individual tendencies influenced by various internal and external factors. Some students show enthusiasm in following lessons, actively discussing, and completing assignments on time, but others are still passive, lack attention when the teacher explains, and lack consistency in learning. This interest in learning is formed from intrinsic motivational impulses, such as curiosity, expectations of achievement, and positive perceptions of subjects, as well as external factors such as the teacher's teaching style, the learning media used, family support, and the social environment. Teachers have a central role in shaping learning interests through creative learning methods, providing feedback, and creating a comfortable learning environment. On the other hand, parents also influence learning interest through parenting, involvement in children's learning activities at home, and providing moral motivation. A supportive learning environment, such as positive friends and adequate learning facilities, also creates a conducive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. These findings reinforce the theory that interest in learning is the result of the interaction between an individual's psychological state and a continuous external stimulus. Therefore, increasing students' interest in learning requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach between teachers, parents, and the school. Some strategies that can be applied include the use of technology and interactive media, the preparation of student-centred learning activities, and the provision of counselling guidance for less motivated students. This approach not only fosters an interest in learning but also builds an independent, resilient, and adaptive learning character to academic challenges. In conclusion, students' interest in learning does not only depend on individual desires but is greatly influenced by the quality of social interaction and the educational system that surrounds it. Therefore, it needs the commitment of all education stakeholders to create a learning system that is inclusive, supportive, and oriented towards the development of students' potential. The results of this research are expected to be a reference in designing learning strategies and educational policies that are more responsive to the needs and characteristics of students so that the learning process becomes more meaningful, effective, and sustainable.

REFERENCES

Asri, S. A., Tayeb, T., Mardiah, M., Kamal, S. I. M., & Suaidah, I. (2021). Pengaruh Minat Belajar Dan Motivasi Belajar Terhadap Prestasi Belajar Matematika Siswa Kelas Viii Smp Negeri 22 Sinjai. *Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, *4*(01), 210–222.

Blair, C. (2002). School readiness: Integrating cognition and emotion in a neurobiological conceptualization of children's functioning at school entry. *American Psychologist*, *57*(2), 111.

Chasanah, N. N., Sukmaningrum, R., & Wahyuni, E. (2023). The Influence Of Learning Interest On Students Learning Outcomes In Subject. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Pendidikan Indonesia*, *2*(3), 338–343.

Chen, T.-I., Chung, H.-C., & Lin, S.-K. (2023). The effect of applying language picture books in reciprocal teaching on students' language learning motivations. *SAGE Open*, *13*(4), 21582440231218856.

De la Fuente, J., Sander, P., Garzón-Umerenkova, A., Vera-Martínez, M. M., Fadda, S., & Gaetha, M. L. (2021). Self-regulation and regulatory teaching as determinants of academic behavioral confidence and procrastination in undergraduate students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 602904.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The" what" and" why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*(4), 227–268.

Hasanati, A., & Purwaningsih, E. (2021). Influence of interest in learning and how to learn on understanding concepts: work and energy cases. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Indonesia*, *9*(2), 305–316.

Heller, S. S., Rice, J., Boothe, A., Sidell, M., Vaughn, K., Keyes, A., & Nagle, G. (2012). Social-emotional development, school readiness, teacher–child interactions, and classroom environment. *Early Education & Development*, *23*(6), 919–944.

Law Number 20 of 2003 Concerning the National Education System

Malik, R. S. (2013). Qualitative research methodology in education. *Jurnal EduBio Tropika*, *1*(2).

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (2014). Miles and Huberman. In *Qualitative Data Analysis: An expanded sourcebook*.

Obot, I. M. (2014). Influence of teacher s competence in subject matter on students interest in the learning of social studies education in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, *2*(3), 137.

Riadin, A., & Estimurti, E. S. (2022). Pengaruh motivasi belajar dan minat belajar terhadap hasil belajar ipa peserta didik pada era merdeka belajar. *Jurnal Holistika*, *6*(2), 108.

Salsabila, A., & Puspitasari, P. (2020). Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi prestasi belajar siswa Sekolah Dasar. *Pandawa*, *2*(2), 278–288.

Sardiman. (2011). Interaksi dan motivasi belajar mengajar. *Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada*.

Simbolon, N. (2014). Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi minat belajar peserta didik. *Elementary School Journal*, *1*(02), 14–19.

Slameto, B. (2010). Faktor-faktor yang Mempengaruhinya (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 1995). *Cet II*.

Sugiyono. (2018). Sugiyono Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif*.

Suprianto. (2024). *Memahami Esensi Penelitian Kualitatif : Pendekatan, Proses, dan Praktik Terbaik*. ASHA Publishing http://ashapublishing.co.id/.

Susanto, A. (2016). *Teori belajar dan pembelajaran di sekolah dasar*. Kencana.

Triarisanti, R., & Purnawarman, P. (2019). The Influence Of Interest And Motivation On College Students'language And Art Appreciation Learning Outcomes. *International Journal of Education*, *11*(2), 130–135.

Vargas, D. G. T., Forero, L. A. P., & Camero, D. M. F. (2022). *Preconceptions, Attitudes and Expectations behind the Motivation of First-semester Undergraduates for Enrolling in the Chemistry programme in a Colombian University*.

Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.

Wu, S.-H., Jong, M. S.-Y., & Tsai, C.-C. (2024). Effects of teacher-developed spherical video-based virtual reality types on student learning engagement: A hierarchical linear modeling approach. *Education and Information Technologies*, 1–30.

Yang, D., Chen, P., Wang, K., Li, Z., Zhang, C., & Huang, R. (2023). Parental involvement and student engagement: a review of the literature. *Sustainability*, *15*(7), 5859.

Zainar, Z., Fitria, H., & Eddy, S. (2021). The relationship between learning strategies and learning interest against student learning outcomes at state elemetary. *JPGI (Jurnal Penelitian Guru Indonesia)*, *6*(1), 195–199.