

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING STUDENTS' INTEREST IN ISLAMIC CULTURAL HISTORY AT MAN 2 PONOROGO

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Abstract

Islamic Cultural History (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam) plays an essential role in internalizing Islamic values and shaping students' character, yet its learning process is often perceived as less engaging because of extensive materials, complex historical narratives, lecture-dominated instruction, and an emphasis on memorization. This study aims to examine the strategies employed by Islamic Cultural History teachers to enhance students' learning interest at State Islamic Senior High School 2 Ponorogo, focusing on instructional planning and management, the impact of the strategies, and supporting and inhibiting factors. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with a single-case study design, the research collected data through in-depth interviews with three teachers, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and students from different class programs, complemented by participatory observation and documentation; the data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that instruction integrates Problem-Based Learning with the Semester Credit System, the Independent Curriculum, and the Love-Based Curriculum. Discussions, presentations, learning technologies, differentiated instruction, and affective approaches increase students' cognitive and affective learning interest, although their effectiveness varies across class programs. The implementation is supported by technological facilities and madrasah policies, while limited learning resources, diverse student characteristics, the exclusion of the subject from the Academic Competency Test, and differing perceptions of instructional time remain significant challenges. These findings highlight the practical importance of adaptive, technology-supported, and affective instructional strategies for strengthening students' engagement in Islamic Cultural History learning.

Keywords : Teacher Strategies; Islamic Cultural History; Learning Interest; Madrasah Aliyah; Instructional Strategies

Abstrak

Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam (SKI) memiliki peran penting dalam menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai Islam dan membentuk karakter murid, tetapi pembelajarannya masih sering dipandang kurang menarik karena cakupan materi yang luas, kompleksitas peristiwa sejarah, dominasi metode ceramah, dan orientasi pada hafalan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis strategi guru SKI dalam meningkatkan minat belajar murid di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Ponorogo dengan menelaah perencanaan dan pengelolaan pembelajaran, dampak strategi yang diterapkan, serta faktor pendukung dan penghambatnya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus tunggal. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan tiga guru SKI, Wakil Kepala Madrasah bidang Kurikulum, dan murid dari berbagai program kelas, serta diperkuat melalui observasi partisipatif dan dokumentasi; analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran SKI mengintegrasikan Problem-Based Learning dengan Sistem Kredit Semester, Kurikulum Merdeka, dan Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta. Diskusi, presentasi, teknologi pembelajaran, pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, dan pendekatan afektif meningkatkan minat belajar pada aspek kognitif dan afektif, meskipun efektivitasnya berbeda antaprogram kelas. Pelaksanaannya didukung fasilitas teknologi dan kebijakan madrasah, sedangkan keterbatasan sumber belajar, karakteristik murid, tidak masuknya SKI dalam Tes Kompetensi Akademik, serta perbedaan persepsi mengenai alokasi waktu menjadi kendala utama. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya strategi pembelajaran yang adaptif, berbasis teknologi, dan berorientasi afektif untuk memperkuat keterlibatan murid dalam pembelajaran SKI.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Guru; Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam; Minat Belajar; Madrasah Aliyah; Strategi Pembelajaran

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Cultural History (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/SKI) is an important component of Islamic education in madrasahs because it connects historical knowledge with the development of students' religious character, identity, and moral awareness. Through the study of Islamic civilization, historical figures, and significant events, students are expected not merely to remember historical facts but also to derive moral lessons and apply Islamic values in contemporary life. However, SKI learning remains challenging because its extensive content, chronological narratives, and emphasis on memorization can make learning less engaging. Conventional teacher centered instruction may further reduce students' attention, motivation, and active participation, indicating that effective SKI learning requires strategies capable of transforming historical information into meaningful and engaging learning experiences (Daulay, 2022; Ariyanti & Anggerawati, 2024).

Recent studies confirm that learning engagement remains a significant concern in SKI classrooms. Fitri et al. (2023) identified boredom among students at MAN 1 Agam, particularly through reduced motivation, weak concentration, fatigue, and inattentiveness associated with monotonous learning methods. Similarly, Siddik and Mahariah (2023) found that variations in learning methods and digital-based media could address sources of learning saturation and create more flexible and engaging learning experiences. These findings demonstrate that the problem is not simply students' lack of interest but also the instructional environment created by teachers. Consequently, improving students' interest requires teachers to move beyond repetitive delivery toward pedagogical strategies that accommodate students' learning characteristics, classroom dynamics, and the increasing role of technology in education (Fitri et al., 2023; Siddik & Mahariah, 2023).

Research on innovative SKI instruction further suggests that variation in methods and learning media can positively influence students' interest. Wada'ah and Tohet (2024), for example, demonstrated that mnemonic learning combined with audiovisual media created more dynamic and interactive SKI learning and increased students' enthusiasm. Khair and Hidayati (2024) similarly emphasized the importance of creative teaching modules integrating visual media and interactive technology to make SKI more attractive and relevant. More recent quantitative evidence strengthens this argument: Ajie et al. (2026) found a significant effect of audiovisual media on students' interest in SKI learning. Although these studies establish the value of innovative methods and media, they tend to emphasize particular instructional interventions rather than examining how teachers strategically combine planning, classroom management, instructional methods, media, and student oriented approaches within a specific madrasah context (Khair & Hidayati, 2024; Wada'ah & Tohet, 2024; Ajie et al., 2026).

Another strand of research focuses more directly on teachers' strategic roles in cultivating students' interest. Suryaningsih et al. (2025) found that personal approaches,

effective classroom management, varied teaching methods, evaluation, and constructive responses to students contributed to increased interest in SKI learning at MTs Al-Azhar. This perspective is important because students' learning interest cannot be understood solely through the effectiveness of particular media or methods; it is also shaped by how teachers diagnose classroom needs and adapt instruction accordingly. Nevertheless, previous studies have predominantly examined individual schools with different curricular structures and institutional characteristics. Limited attention has been given to how SKI teachers develop and implement strategies in madrasahs operating under the Merdeka Curriculum and Semester Credit System (SKS), where instructional flexibility and student learning demands may differ substantially (Suryaningsih et al., 2025; Haryati et al., 2025).

The present study addresses this gap by examining SKI teachers' strategies for increasing students' learning interest at MAN 2 Ponorogo, a madrasah implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and SKS. Rather than isolating one teaching method or learning medium, this study positions teacher strategy as an integrated process involving instructional planning, classroom management, methodological variation, learning media, student engagement, and responses to supporting and inhibiting conditions. This context provides an opportunity to understand how established strategies for overcoming boredom and increasing interest are adapted within a more flexible and academically demanding madrasah environment. The study therefore contributes contextual evidence to the growing discussion on innovative SKI instruction by connecting pedagogical strategy with institutional and curricular conditions (Khair & Hidayati, 2024; Suryaningsih et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the implementation of SKI teachers' strategies in planning and managing learning to increase students' learning interest at MAN 2 Ponorogo, analyze how these strategies contribute to students' increased interest during the learning process, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting their implementation. By focusing on the interaction between teacher strategy, student interest, and the institutional context of the Merdeka Curriculum and SKS, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how SKI learning can be made engaging, meaningful, and responsive to students' educational needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive single-case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of SKI teachers' strategies for increasing students' learning interest within their natural educational context. The qualitative case-study design was appropriate because the study focused on interpreting instructional practices, classroom interactions, and contextual factors rather than measuring variables statistically (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2023). The study was

conducted at MAN 2 Ponorogo during the research period, with the research setting selected because the institution implements the Merdeka Curriculum and Semester Credit System (SKS). Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement and relevant knowledge of SKI learning, comprising SKI teachers, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, and students representing different class programs.

Data were collected through partial-participant observation, semi structured in depth interviews, and document analysis. Observation focused on teachers' instructional strategies, classroom management, use of learning methods and media, and students' learning engagement. Interviews obtained information from SKI teachers, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, and selected students concerning instructional practices, students' learning interest, and supporting or inhibiting factors. Documentary data included teaching modules, lesson planning documents, and relevant records of learning activities. The combination of observation, interviews, and documentation enabled data triangulation and provided complementary evidence concerning the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Rukin, 2021).

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative analysis framework consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data were coded and categorized according to recurring patterns related to teacher strategies, students' learning interest, and contextual factors, followed by thematic interpretation across data sources. Data credibility was established through source and technique triangulation, persistent observation, member checking, and cross-verification between interview findings, observed classroom practices, and relevant documents. These procedures strengthened the consistency and trustworthiness of interpretations and reduced the possibility of conclusions being based on a single source of evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Rukin, 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Integrated Instructional Planning through Problem-Based and Participatory Learning

The findings demonstrate that SKI instruction at MAN 2 Ponorogo is organized through a relatively stable instructional architecture in which Problem-Based Learning (PBL), independent literacy, teacher explanation, presentation, and discussion are integrated across Grades X–XII. The continuity of PBL despite annual changes in teaching personnel indicates that the model has developed beyond an individual teacher preference and has become embedded in the madrasah's instructional culture. This finding is significant because the strategy is not implemented as a single method but as an organized learning structure that distributes cognitive responsibility between teachers and students. The integration of the Semester Credit System (SKS), Merdeka Curriculum, and Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (KBC) further provides teachers with flexibility to adapt

learning modules, classroom organization, and learning pace to students' needs. This interpretation is consistent with recent research showing that the Merdeka Curriculum requires instructional flexibility and stronger attention to students' diverse learning needs (Nahdhiah & Suciptanigsih, 2024). PBL research in the Merdeka Curriculum likewise indicates that placing students in more active problem-solving positions can strengthen their construction of knowledge rather than merely receiving information (Hermawindiana et al., 2024). However, the present findings extend this literature by showing that PBL becomes more meaningful when institutionalized through coordinated planning and combined with literacy, presentation, and discussion rather than treated as an isolated instructional technique. The distinctive contribution of this study therefore lies in identifying institutionalized instructional consistency and curricular integration as mechanisms through which a participatory SKI strategy can be sustained across different teachers and student programs.

The adaptation of instructional planning to the International Class Program (ICP) further reveals that consistency does not mean uniformity. Although the core SKI competencies and materials remain comparable, the shorter instructional allocation requires teachers to prioritize essential content and reorganize its distribution across grade levels. This finding illustrates a tension between curriculum coverage and meaningful learning: an instructional model can be pedagogically participatory but still require substantial modification when time becomes constrained. Recent literature on differentiated learning similarly emphasizes that successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum depends on teachers' capacity to adapt instruction to differences in learner characteristics and contextual constraints (Lutfu et al., 2024; Nahdhiah & Suciptanigsih, 2024). The MAN 2 Ponorogo case therefore suggests that instructional adaptation should be understood not merely as differentiation of learning materials, but also as differentiation of instructional time, content priority, and learning intensity. This expands previous SKI research, which has largely focused on overcoming boredom through variation in methods and media (Fitri et al., 2023; Siddik & Mahariah, 2023), by demonstrating that the organizational dimension of teaching is equally important in maintaining student interest when institutional conditions differ across programs.

Active, Digital, and Multimodal Learning as a Mechanism for Sustaining Interest

A second major finding is the strong relationship between active participation, digital media, and students' responses to SKI learning. Classroom interaction is dominated by discussion and presentation, with approximately 80% of learning activities devoted to discussion and 20% to teacher explanation. Teachers also provide students with opportunities to formulate answers before receiving clarification or confirmation from the teacher. This arrangement shifts the learning process from information transmission toward active meaning-making, which is particularly relevant to SKI because historical content can easily become associated with memorization when

delivered predominantly through lectures. The finding corresponds with Fitri et al. (2023), who identified monotonous instruction and lecture-oriented learning as important contributors to boredom in SKI, and with Siddik and Mahariah (2023), who found that variation in methods and digital media can reduce learning saturation. It also supports Handayani et al. (2024), whose study demonstrated the potential of mind mapping to increase students' motivation in SKI. However, the MAN 2 Ponorogo findings provide a broader interpretation: student interest appears to be sustained not by one particular method but by the interaction between participation, cognitive responsibility, and instructional variation. The contribution of the present study is therefore to conceptualize active SKI learning as a strategic combination of discussion, presentation, questioning, and teacher facilitation rather than as the mere replacement of lectures with another single method.

The use of Quizizz, Google Forms, NotebookLM, Canva, video materials, projectors, IFPs, and large-screen televisions further strengthens the multimodal character of instruction. Students' preference for video over exclusively verbal explanations suggests that visual and interactive representations make historical information more accessible to learners accustomed to digital environments. This finding is strongly consistent with recent SKI studies. Wada'ah and Tohet (2024) found that mnemonic strategies combined with audiovisual media could transform boredom into greater enthusiasm, while Sugiyarti and Rohimah (2025) reported that Smart TV-supported SKI learning enhanced students' engagement, understanding, and discussion skills. Ajie et al. (2026) likewise reported the effectiveness of audiovisual media in increasing SKI learning interest. Rangkuti et al. (2025) and Silmi et al. (2025) similarly emphasize interactive learning as a means of strengthening students' interest. Importantly, the present study does not simply replicate these findings. Unlike studies concentrating on one digital medium, MAN 2 Ponorogo demonstrates a multimodal ecosystem in which several technologies are embedded within discussion, presentation, assessment, and independent learning. Thus, technology functions most effectively not as a substitute for pedagogy but as an extension of an already participatory instructional strategy. This distinction constitutes an important contribution to the discussion of digital SKI learning.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal a limitation that complicates the assumption that active learning automatically produces comprehensive understanding. Group presentations encourage confidence, speaking ability, concentration, and participation, but students tend to master only the subsection assigned to their group. Consequently, increased behavioral engagement does not necessarily guarantee equal cognitive mastery of the entire learning material. This finding is important because much recent research emphasizes engagement as a positive outcome of interactive learning, whereas the MAN 2 Ponorogo case shows that engagement and comprehensive understanding are related but not identical outcomes. Research on student engagement emphasizes the importance

of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions rather than treating participation alone as sufficient evidence of learning effectiveness (Yuliarti et al., 2024). The present study therefore contributes a critical qualification: participatory learning must be accompanied by mechanisms for cross-group synthesis, teacher clarification, and individual accountability if increased interest is to translate into broader conceptual understanding. The finding identifies an important area for refinement in the implementation of discussion- and presentation based SKI instruction.

Differentiated and Affective Teacher Responsiveness across Student Programs

The third theme concerns the teacher's responsiveness to differences among students and academic programs. The findings show that students do not demonstrate identical levels or forms of interest in SKI. Students in academic and official-service-oriented programs tend to associate SKI with memorization, whereas students in accelerated programs demonstrate stronger reflective engagement. Rather than treating these differences as evidence of fixed student ability, the teacher responds through personal and affective strategies, including brief tolerance for rest, random selection of less-active students for presentations, and individualized encouragement. Such practices demonstrate that increasing learning interest involves more than changing instructional media it also requires teachers to interpret students' emotional and motivational states and adjust interaction accordingly. This finding is compatible with recent research on differentiated learning, which emphasizes that student diversity in readiness, interest, and learning characteristics requires teachers to adapt instructional practices rather than apply a uniform model to all learners (Lutfa et al., 2024; Wibowo & Darmawan, 2024).

This finding also develops the argument of Suryaningsih et al. (2025), who identified individual approaches, classroom management, and varied instructional methods as important strategies for increasing students' interest in SKI. The similarity lies in recognizing the teacher as the central mediator of student engagement the difference is that the MAN 2 Ponorogo case demonstrates how teacher responsiveness is shaped by program specific academic cultures. Students' perceptions of SKI are influenced not only by teaching methods but also by the academic priorities associated with their programs. The teacher consequently operates simultaneously as an instructional designer and an affective regulator of classroom participation. This is particularly relevant because research on SKI boredom has repeatedly identified fatigue, weak motivation, monotonous methods, and insufficient teacher attention as interconnected causes of disengagement (Fitri et al., 2023; Ramadhan et al., 2024). The contribution of this study is therefore the identification of context sensitive affective responsiveness as a bridge between differentiated instruction and students' learning interest. In this context, differentiation is not limited to different learning materials or tasks it also includes differences in teacher student interaction, pacing, encouragement, and emotional support.

An important exception to the generally positive findings is that student

engagement remains vulnerable to external academic and non-academic demands. Some students experience fatigue because of extracurricular activities, while the balance between literacy, presentation, and discussion is not always optimal. This condition indicates that learning interest is not produced exclusively inside the classroom. Rather, it emerges from the interaction between instructional design, student readiness, time allocation, and the broader school activity structure. Ramadhan et al. (2024) similarly found that ineffective scheduling and limited teacher student interaction can contribute to boredom in SKI, while Fitri et al. (2023) identified physical fatigue and monotonous learning as factors associated with learning saturation. The MAN 2 Ponorogo findings extend these studies by showing that even highly participatory and technology-supported instruction can encounter motivational limits when students enter the classroom with depleted physical or cognitive resources. The implication is that effective SKI strategy should include temporal and emotional management, not merely methodological innovation.

Technological Readiness, Resource Constraints, and the Institutional Conditions of Learning

The fourth theme highlights the institutional conditions that enable or constrain the implementation of teacher strategies. MAN 2 Ponorogo possesses relatively strong technological infrastructure, including projectors, LCD facilities, Interactive Flat Panels, large screen televisions, internet access, and digital learning resources. These facilities allow teachers to translate historical content into audiovisual and interactive formats and therefore support the participatory strategy identified in the previous themes. This finding is consistent with Sugiyarti and Rohimah (2025), whose research at MAN 2 Karanganyar demonstrated the potential of Smart TV as a medium for strengthening engagement, understanding, and discussion in SKI. It also corresponds with Ajie et al. (2026), who found positive effects of audiovisual media on SKI learning interest. However, the present case differs from contexts in which digital innovation is constrained by inadequate infrastructure. The findings therefore suggest that technology-supported pedagogy is not solely a question of teacher creativity; its sustainability depends on institutional investment and access to functional learning infrastructure. The specific contribution of this study is to demonstrate how institutional technological readiness can transform digital media from an occasional teaching aid into a routine component of SKI pedagogy.

At the same time, technological readiness does not eliminate structural limitations. The limited availability of library references requires teachers to search independently for learning materials, while students who are more introverted require sustained personal support. The relatively low perceived urgency of SKI, partly associated with its exclusion from the Academic Competency Test (TKA), also affects students' willingness to bring or study SKI materials independently. These conditions reveal a paradox: the madrasah possesses advanced instructional technology, yet students' academic orientation toward

SKI may remain weaker because the subject is perceived as less consequential in formal assessment. This finding complements Munawwir et al. (2025), who identified low student interest in SKI as a problem requiring attention to the position and attractiveness of the subject, while Siddik and Mahariah (2023) emphasized the role of accessible and varied learning resources in reducing boredom. The present study extends these findings by showing that resource availability and subject status operate at different levels: digital facilities can improve the learning experience, but they cannot by themselves change students' perceptions of the academic value of SKI.

Finally, the differing perceptions between the SKI teacher and the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs regarding the adequacy of instructional time reveal that curriculum policy and classroom reality do not always produce identical interpretations. From the administrative perspective, the allocated time may be considered adequate within the curriculum structure, whereas from the teacher's perspective, the breadth of SKI content and the demands of participatory learning create pressure for additional instructional time. This discrepancy becomes particularly visible in the ICP, where limited instructional hours must accommodate substantial content. Recent studies on differentiated implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum similarly identify teacher expertise, resource sufficiency, and institutional readiness as important conditions affecting implementation (Nahdhiah & Suciptanigsih, 2024). Thus, the central issue is not simply whether instructional time is objectively sufficient, but whether the available time is compatible with the pedagogical model being pursued. The present study contributes to SKI research by demonstrating that the success of participatory and technology-enhanced learning depends on alignment among curriculum expectations, instructional time, student workload, and institutional resources. This alignment represents a critical condition for sustaining students' interest beyond isolated classroom innovations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that SKI teachers at MAN 2 Ponorogo foster students' learning interest through an integrated instructional strategy combining Problem-Based Learning, the Semester Credit System, the Merdeka Curriculum, and the Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta, supported by differentiated, discussion based, technology enhanced, and affective learning practices adapted to the characteristics of different student programs. The study contributes theoretically by demonstrating that students' interest in SKI is shaped not by a single instructional method or medium but by the integration of pedagogical strategies, contextual adaptation, teacher responsiveness, and institutional support. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of aligning participatory learning, digital resources, instructional time, and students' academic and emotional conditions to sustain engagement in SKI learning. This study is limited to a single

institutional context therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to all madrasahs without considering their different curricular and organizational conditions. Future research should compare SKI learning strategies across madrasahs with different curriculum systems and student characteristics to examine how contextual factors shape the effectiveness of strategies for fostering students' learning interest.

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