STRATEGIES TO INCREASE STUDENT INTEREST IN STUDYING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PERIOD

YULISNA,Y.[1] – LAHMI, A.[1*] – HALIM, S.[1] – RITONGA, M.[1] – SAPUTRA, R.[1] – RASYID, A.[1] – MURSAL, M.[1]

[1] *Postgraduate Programme, Muhammadiyah University of West Sumatera, West Sumatera, Indonesia.*

*Corresponding author
e-mail: damhaimhal[at]yahoo.co.id

Abstract. This study aims to determine the strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers in increasing the interest of students in SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during the covid 19 pandemic, and the factors that affect student learning interests, and how the strategies used by Islamic religious teachers (PAI) at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur. The method that the researcher uses is the descriptive qualitative research method. While the data sources of this study were taken from Islamic Religious Education teachers, school principals, and students who were determined by the researchers. The results of the study showed that teachers carried out various strategies in increasing interest in learning Islamic Religious Education for students of SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during the covid 19 pandemic, namely using the WhatsApp application both in online assignments and in collecting assignments. In addition, the teacher gives praise, prizes for students who are fast and precise in spelling out the tasks given. Then provide punishment for students who do not collect assignments by memorizing short letters. The factors that influence the interest in learning Islamic Religious Education students of SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during the Covid-19 pandemic are internal and external.
Keywords: *strategy, interests, learning, Islamic religious education, Covid-19*

Introduction

A Netherlands educator stated that the education is a guidance given by an expert in particular field to someone who consider as learners and yet still in growing as an adult in order to become matured (Blair, 2008). Likewise, the purpose of Islamic religious education itself must be able to carry out the rights and obligations to Allah SWT by implementing and practicing their knowledge (Apriandi, 2021; Supriadi et al., 2021; Raudlotul and Mohd, 2013). As stated in Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning the National education system chapter 1 article 1 paragraph 11 that formal education is a structured level of education consisting of elementary, middle and high schools as well as universities. While the purpose of national education is to develop the people believe and are pious (Huwaida, 2013). This can only be done if all of the components, including students, teachers and curriculum itself are support each other in a system with the inclusion of Islamic religious education (or well-known as PAI). Thus, the greatest verse is stated in the Qur'an "Allah SWT created humans and jinn to serve Him". However in reality, there is a time where Islamic Religious Education are miss-pronounced as a scary subject due to it's nature that meets verses and is made a standard for grade promotion (Akmal and Ritonga, 2020). Therefore, the educator or teacher are required to be more creative and innovative in teaching conveying with certain teaching material using strategies (Wael et al., 2018; Kasmaienezhadfard et al., 2015) so that students are passionate or interested in learning Islamic Religious Education until the

maximum, especially during the Covid-19 period (Li et al., 2021; Gustiani, 2020; Sutarto et al., 2020).

Students of SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur, if they are seen to be hanging around the school during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the offline and online learning platform on the shift system, they consider these might bring more easier to the students especially in collecting assignments for marking and grading. However, it is somehow are uncommon to find students rarely entering and unplug as well as do not collect assignments; and minority of them are even cheating among their group members just because of sending through the application. Some even think that this pandemic period is also making it difficult for them because of the online learning system. This view is due to various factors, including economic limitations, ownership of an Android cellphone, and understanding of IT. While progress is growing rapidly like IT, mastery of IT is needed either through training, or workshops held in schools (Ritonga et al., 2016). Based on the description above, these can be seen where learning during the Covid-19 period was absolutely provide lots of problems, without exception for PAI learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur, and therefore this study was intended to identify and reveal the strategies used by teachers in increasing students' interest in studying religious education especially in Islamic courses during the time of covid-19.

Materials and Methods

SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur is the upper secondary education institutions under the guidance of the West Pasaman Regency Education Office. The school is selected as the main collection data for this research is due to the problems that exist especially in implementing learning process during the Covid-19 period related to the Islamic religious education (PAI). The method used in this study is descriptive-qualitative, and it was chosen due to appropriateness and suitability in answering the research objectives. The time period used in this research is approximately six (6) months; whereby the researchers are succeed in all series of obtaining the research information that ranging from data collection, data classification, data verification and data analysis until report write-up. The research was carried out by upholding the academic principles that apply in the Postgraduate Program of UM West Sumatra (TSM, 2019). The informant of this research is the head of SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur, and the appointment of this informant is seen to know a lot related to the strategies carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers in increasing student interest because the school principal sets policies related to learning during the Covid-19 period. In addition, PAI teachers are also include in the list of obtaining information as research informants, and this is because PAI teachers are implementers of learning during the covid-19 period. Other informants are students at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur who were selected by snowball sampling.

In obtaining data from all the informants as mentioned previously, the researchers applied observation, interviews, and documentation studies. In observation, it is involve with questioning and observing all activities carried out by the informant; while the interview used is more towards open-answered interview and this technique is intended to provide flexibility to informants to convey accurate information from their teaching experienced. At the same time, the document study is intended to find the data contained in the document related to the strategy of increasing student interest. This technique is can also be considered as comprehensive literature review. The research

data were analyzed using interactive techniques, namely analyzing all data from data collection, data reduction, data classification to analysis and providing the outcome through conclusions of the report write-up. Implementation data analysis method as mentioned before is intended to make it easier for researchers to check the accuracy of all data collected during the research.

Results and Discussion

The strategy of Islamic religious education teachers in increasing interest in learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during Covid-19

Along with technological advances and the development of the times, both in the education and the industrial world, a teacher is the driving force in achieving educational goals that must be adapted to the needs of students and the community. Likewise in the teaching and learning process, an exemplary teacher in various ways, starting from his personality, to the results to be achieved in the material being taught, a teacher must be a motivator for students. At this time, Indonesia was hit by Covid-19 which had an impact on the world of education. However, the government does not give up on overcoming this problem, either in the world of education or industry. Such as issuing orders so that the teaching and learning process in every school is carried out online. As in SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur, West Pasaman Regency, this school carries out learning in a combination between online and offline, namely by setting a shift offline schedule. In such conditions, the teacher must motivate students to be passionate or interested in learning. At present, online learning by using various applications, even though it does not take place optimally, yet it must still be carried out for the existence of education during the Covid-19 period.

Of course, the policies issued cannot be ensure that everything will run smoothly as it planned, especially involve with schools located in rural area with lacking of facilities in the form of integrated technology to support the online learning process (Mursal et al., 2021; Sartika et al., 2021). The lack of adequate costs and facilities between man-power such as teachers and students leading the online learning process not as effective as expected. This is in line with what is stated in various findings that learning during the Covid-19 period are no doubt in faced with various problems (Alfarimba et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021; Sholikhati et al., 2021; Zalat et al., 2021). Related to Islamic religious education, the expected outcome should not be limited to cognitive abilities, but the realization of students' spiritual improvement is also should be put into consideration. This is because religious or spiritual values are connecting in strengthening the mentality of students. In short notes, religious education is the foundation for students. Likewise, a student's spirituality both in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor during the Covid-19 pandemic will be easily infected and also lack effort and prayer.

Based on the interview from the teachers on Islamic religious education at SMA Negeri 1 Sugai Aur, the most effective strategy used by teachers to increase students' interest in learning Islamic religious education is by giving a present in the form of pens to students who are fast and precise in their actions in collect assignments, give words of praise, and applause for students who answer questions even though it is not accurate. Apart of provide additional plus points to the students, they are also required to take punishment in the form of memorizing short surahs in case they could not complete the assignments. These are also considering as one of the various methods and

applications used in the learning process. It is important to reinforce by the statements of students who confirmed to receive a gift from the Islamic Religious Education teacher when they can completed the given assignment on time. While talking about strategies, there are three related to learning process, namely; (1) learning organization; (2) delivery of Islamic religious education in learning; and (3) learning management (Wahyuni and Bhattacharya, 2021). Since strategy can be the same as tactics, the most important are a person's implement the way will be achieve the set goal or objective (Tosi et al., 1991).

The description stated are more strengthened by the statement from teachers, students and school principals in providing information to the researchers that the strategy of;

"To enhance the student's interest in learning Islamic Religious Education at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have done various ways. Among of them are using the WA application which is recommended by the government, such as dividing the students into several groups and/or having a study classes, as well as uploading and saving assignments in Google drive. The main purpose to send the assignments into Google drive are for easily access by the students either when online or offline. However, I see some weaknesses, where majority of the students do not have their own computer, and the use of medias will be underutilized and this become the teachers concerned.

Field observations and interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during the Covid-19 pandemic proved that students' interest in learning was minimal. The low interest of students is also inseparable from several factors, namely: (1) not all students have computer or gadget; (2) unreachable online signal coverage; (3) insufficient quota; (4) lack of IT knowledge in students; (5) not all devices support the application used; (6) financial factors; and (7) low interest in completing the assignments remotely by students.

As stated by one of the respondent, especially for Class XI, students are less interested in studying Islamic Religious Education because the teaching and learning process is in online, whereas Islamic Religious Education Lessons need detail and in-depth explanation compare to other lessons. This reality cannot be denied considering that the Covid-19 condition does not support the implementation of PAI material learning in the form of practice. This is reinforced by the views of Islamic Religious Education teachers who voice out their opinion that "when teaching both offline and during and assigning assignments, the teacher gives students the right to send assignments via online platform such as 'WhatsApp Application', 'Google Classroom', etc.; whereas during face-to-face, the assignment is carried out during the lesson learning is in progress. In overall, the most important thing is that the student could do the assigned task completely.

The result from data analysis that described above, it can be emphasized that the teacher's strategy in increasing interest in learning Islamic Religious Education during the COVID-19 period is in the form of giving rewards as well as punishments. Rewards are given to students who follow all the learning processes from the beginning until complete the task. Meanwhile, punishment is only implement when students who do not comply and follow all learning activities properly. These way of learning process have been carried out by majority of educators, either both during the Covid-19 period or

Yulisna et al.: Strategies to increase student interest in studying
Islamic religious education during the Covid-19 period.

- 73 -

outside of Covid-19, and the impact can be seen through the positive changes in students (Sidin, 2021; Hegbusi, 2013; Ching, 2012). This data proves that reward and punishment are still relevant and appropriate strategy to implement to increase student interest.

Factors affecting students' interest in studying Islamic Religious Education during the Covid-19 period

Based on the description above, there are various strategies where teachers could implement in enhancing the interest in learning Islamic Religious Education during the Covid-19 period. This innovation made by the teacher is intended to achieve the learning objectives of Islamic Religious Education during the Covid-19 period. However, learning is still experiencing difficulties; even some students have not made a change in attitude in participating for the learning process. Therefore, a teacher must investigate, recognize and spotted the causes or problems leading to the non-participating of students in learning progress. In this case, three (3) factors must be considered, namely: (1) intrinsic and extrinsic approach; (2) the learning approach include psychological or spiritual and physical conditions of students; and (3) environmental approach which become essential factors to determine the success of learning process used by the teacher. Likewise, external factors led to the nervous brain, lack of control from parents especially in misused of cellphones (either Android OS, Mac OS, etc.) and too long of playing time will have an impact to the students. Due to unstable health conditions, this will result the student to sleep during teacher explain the material or information during the class is going on (Baafi, 2020; Che Ahmad and Amirul, 2017).

Based on interviews with students, majority of the students feel not interested in learning Islamic Religious Education because of extrinsic factors, which includes problems with parents and close friends that caused the students to become lack concentration in following the course learning during lectures. In addition, students are not interested in learning Islamic Religious Education is because sometimes the students will sleep too late at night, so during the class in Islamic education at school, they will be sluggish because feel sleepy. Such conditions will cause the students to leave the classroom during the learning process, as well as the parents are unaware and not supervise their children at home.

Increasing interest in learning Islamic Religious Education students of SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during the Covid-19 pandemic

Considering about increasing student interest in learning the course during the Covid-19 pandemic, based on the findings and the results of interview with Islamic Religious Education teachers, whereby:

"*Majority students do not understand and know on the use of computer or phone gadget, and therefore, most of the teachers are still remains the traditional way of assignment collection when face-to-face meetings are held*".

Based on previous research, learning process will encountered several obstacles and absolutely require supporters in the implementation process. In this case, the researcher found that geographical factor of students living become the inhibition of the learning

process due to the poor constrained internet network. Secondly, the economic factor of the community which is still dominated by the lower middle class become major concern to the learning process, and also add-on of the students understanding related to IT makes learning a little bit disturbed. Among these factors that had been spotted, it become advantages to the teachers where they could minimal the factors in ensuring the process of learning could be continue smoothly.

Although existing problems are yet to be solves, teachers can still provide Islamic education with good information through existing media. If the learning materials are presented in an attractive manner with appropriate methods, it can stimulate the enthusiasm of students to learn so that learning objectives can be achieved effectively because students are active in the classroom. Students with strong motivation is due to origin from the intrinsic motivation, and this is because students is a very strong sense of curiosity about new things, the highly spirit of desire to try and the independent attitude of students. Furthermore, the researcher also interviewed two (2) students of class XI 3 from Social Sciences stream, in order to determine the validity of the information and the level of certainty of the data obtained from informants, namely Elna Harefa and Arif Rahman. Elna Harefa stated that "She is happy with the teaching method used by Islamic Religious Education teachers; plus with the teacher's teaching method applied attractive leading us to a high motivation to study Islam".

In addition, the presentation of students also felt that their interest in learning was lacking during the Covid-19 pandemic was due to a lack of time and facing hart time to understanding on the material that are being studied. So, when there are assignments and exams, they could feel nervous and stress because most of their knowledge learns is hardly to is 'sticking' or memories inside of their heads. The onsite observation and interview-statement from one of the students, plus with the explanation from one of the Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Aur during the current covid-19 pandemic regarding on students' interest in learning is lack or probably low interest is due to several factors as described above. Thus, it is clear that problems related to learning process will remain unsolved with the same experiencing for other students (*Table 1*). Although there are excellent students achieved good grade in PAI learning, but these will not reflect in archiving the outcome as a whole of the class if majority students are having 'trouble' during online learning process. Nevertheless, there is also an increase in the grades. The result data in *Table 1* proves that through the strategies used by the teacher, the PAI learning outcomes achieved by students do not decrease drastically even though the learning process is carried out in difficult times.

Table 1. *Learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education class XI 1 Social Sciences.*

No.	Name	Knowledge	Skills	Presence
1	Amelia Kartika	70	75	3
2	Arif Rahman	80	80	0
3	Beni Saputra	40	30	10
4	Dian Waneskusuma	80	78	0
5	Dimas Tegar Ramadhan	70	75	1
6	Dimas tegar Nduru	60	70	3
7	Elna Harefa	85	80	0
8	Fuziah Nurhasanah	80	78	0
9	JuiddaLayya Fitri	88	85	0
10	Lika Nurusita	80	80	2
11	Mulanang Lanang	10	60	10

| 12 | M. Andika lbs | 65 | 65 | 4 |

Conclusion

In conclusion, the description and analysis explained in results and discussion section of the research, it proved that learning process during difficult circumstances such as Covid-19 pandemic that 'hid' the country, these situation still can be overcome by making innovations such as changes in strategy. With the implementation of right strategy, the low interest of students can be increased. Likewise, appopriate strategies are suitable for students especially in poor grade can help to minimize their feared which might be happen (e.g. fail the course, or late send assignment, or evan get punishment), which indirectly drasticcally decrease in learning outcomes during the Covid-19 period. This will not happen because teachers use learning strategies to continue teaching in an appopriate methods which is suitable for students.

Acknowledgement

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there are no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research.

REFERENCES

[1]   Akmal, R., Ritonga, M. (2020): Learning of Islamic Religious Education in Covid-19 Period: Analysis of Problems and Solutions for Parents. – Jurnal Tarbawi 5(2): 177-188.

[2]   Alfarimba, R., Ardianti, S.D., Khamdun, K. (2021): The Impact of Online Learning on the Learning Motivation of Primary School Students. – Progres Pendidikan 2(2): 94-99.

[3]   Apriandi, B. (2021): The Influence of Teacher Awareness and Achievement of Learning Islamic Religious Education on the Morality of Learners. – Ruhama : Islamic Education Journal 4(1): 1-16.

[4]   Baafi, R.K.A. (2020): School Physical Environment and Student Academic Performance. – Advances in Physical Education 10(02): 121-137.

[5]   Blair, R. (2008): Democracy, art and education. – The Educational Forum 16(4): 431-435.

[6]   Che Ahmad, C.N., Amirul, N.J. (2017): The effect of the physical learning environment on students' health, enjoyment and learning. – Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Dan Matematik Malaysia 7(1): 47-55.

[7]   Ching, G.S. (2012): Looking into the issues of rewards and punishment in students. – International Journal of Research Studies in Psychology 1(2): 29-38.

[8]   Engzell, P., Frey, A., Verhagen, M.D. (2021): Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. – Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America 118(17): 1-7.

[9]   Gustiani, S. (2020): Students' Motivation in Online Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic Era: A Case Study. – Holistics Journal 12(2): 23-40.

[10] Hegbusi, M.L. (2013): An Analysis of the Role of Rewards and Punishment in Motivating School Learning. – Computing, Information Systems & Development Informatics 4(1): 35-38.

[11] Huwaida, S.M. (2013): Tujuan Pendidikan Nasional dan Konsep Operasionalisasi Nilai-Nilai Agama. – Teratai Publisher 40p.

[12] Kasmaienezhadfard, S., Talebloo, B., Roustae, R., Pourrajab, M. (2015): Students' Learning Through Teaching Creativity: Teachers' Perception. – Journal of Educational, Health and Community Psychology 4(1): 1-13.

[13] Li, Y., Zhang, X., Dai, D.Y., Hu, W. (2021): Curriculum Innovation in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Thinking-Based Instruction Theory and Its Application. – Frontiers in Psychology 12: 1-18.

[14] Mursal, M., Ritonga, M., Sartika, F., Lahmi, A., Nurdianto, T., Alam, L. (2021): The contribution of Amil Zakat, Infaq and Shadaqah Muhammadiyah (LAZISMU) institutions in handling the impact of Covid-19. – Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment 7p.

[15] Pokhrel, S., Chhetri, R. (2021): A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning. – Higher Education for the Future 8(1): 133-141.

[16] Raudlotul, F.Y., Mohd, S.J. (2013): Islamic Education: The Philosophy, Aim, and Main Features. – International Journal of Education and Research 1(10): 1-18.

[17] Ritonga, M., Nazir, A., Wahyuni, S. (2016): Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi. – Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab dan Kebahasaaraban 3(1): 1-12.

[18] Sartika, F., Ritonga, M., Lahmi, A., Rasyid, A., Febriani, S.R. (2021): Online Learning in the Low Internet Area, Planning, Strategies and Problems Faced by Students During the Covid-19 Period. – In Artificial Intelligence for COVID-19, Springer, Cham 8p.

[19] Sholikhati, N.I., Prayogo, M.M., Santoso, J. (2021): The Effect of Distance Learning on Learning Outcomes of Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Schools in the New Normal. – IJDS: Indonesian Journal of Disability Studies 8(1): 145-154.

[20] Sidin, S.A. (2021): The Application of Reward and Punishment in Teaching Adolescents. – Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Language and Arts (ICLA 2020), 539(Icla 2020) 5p.

[21] Supriadi, U., Romli, U., Islamy, M.R.F., Parhan, M., Budiyanti, N. (2021): The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Preventing Radicalism at Madrasa Aliyah. – Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam 4(1): 74-90.

[22] Sutarto, S., Sari, D.P., Fathurrochman, I. (2020): Teacher strategies in online learning to increase students' interest in learning during COVID-19 pandemic. – Jurnal Konseling dan Pendidikan 8(3): 129-137.

[23] Tosi, H.L., Locke, E.A., Latham, G.P. (1991): A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance. – The Academy of Management Review 16(2): 480-483.

[24] Trisakti School of Management (TSM)(2019): Pedoman Akademik & Kemahasiswaan Tahun Akademik 2019/2020. – TSM 232p.

[25] Wael, A., Asnur, M.N.A., Ibrahim, I. (2018): Exploring Students Learning Strategies in Speaking Performance. – International Journal of Language Education 2(2): 65-71.

[26] Wahyuni, S., Bhattacharya, S. (2021): Strategy of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Increasing Student Learning Motivation. – Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education 2(2): 229-249.

[27] Zalat, M.M., Hamed, M.S., Bolbol, S.A. (2021): The experiences, challenges, and acceptance of e-learning as a tool for teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic among university medical staff. – PLoS ONE 16(3): 1-12.