



Understanding the Development of Interest in Calligraphy Among Children in the Islamic Arts Education

Alissa Sefira Farhani¹, Muhammad Fahmi Fauzi²,
Reviliani³, Zsazsa Ghania Iqlima⁴, Asep Rudi Nurjaman⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Indonesia

Email: alissasefiraf@upi.edu¹; fahmifauzi25@upi.edu²;
reviliani@upi.edu³; zsazsaghania@upi.edu⁴; aseprudinurjaman@upi.edu⁵

Abstract

This study explores fostering children's interest in calligraphy within an Islamic educational framework. By investigating factors influencing children's engagement with calligraphy and effective strategies for enhancing their appreciation for this art form, it aims to contribute to understanding and promoting calligraphy among young Muslims. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research delves into participants' experiences and perceptions through questionnaires and interviews. The study involved students and teachers at Asy-Syifa Madrasah in Bandung Regency, Indonesia. Calligraphy, defined as the art of writing or drawing combining Arabic letters with intricate designs, serves as a means of conveying Allah's revelation. Findings indicate children possess an inherent interest in calligraphy, but lack opportunities for in-depth learning within the school curriculum due to constraints such as limited time, resources, and distractions. Modernization, coupled with a lack of understanding of calligraphy's value and parental support, poses challenges to sustaining children's interest. To address this, structured learning programs, opportunities for exploration, and adequate resources are proposed. Such efforts aim to enable children to recognize calligraphy's artistic and religious significance, fostering a deeper appreciation for this traditional art form within an Islamic context.

Keywords: Calligraphy, Child's Interests, Student Development.

PRELIMINARY

Calligraphy, as the art of writing beautifully Arabic script, has deep roots in Islamic tradition. Over the centuries, this art has not only been a medium for conveying religious messages, but also a valued form of artistic expression. However, a decline in interest in calligraphy among children in an Islamic context could occur in this era (Kobayashi & Katsura, 2022). This phenomenon creates concern within the Islamic education community because calligraphy is not only an art form, but also a rich form of spiritual and cultural expression. This background raises deep questions about the causes and factors that influence it.

A study conducted by Muspawi (2018) highlighted the fact that there are still many students who have not mastered the ability to write Arabic calligraphy well and precisely, especially in the context of calligraphy art. It can be said that there are no students in elementary school who are able to do it well. However, after researchers conducted research and service at the school, several methods were applied, such as demonstrations, exercises, lectures, assignments, and practice, which had an impact on increasing students' knowledge and skills in writing Arabic calligraphy.

Furthermore, the factors causing the decline in interest in calligraphy have not been discussed. So, several factors can arise that need to be reviewed. Firstly, changes in modern lifestyles have played a big role in reducing children's interest in calligraphy. As technology advances and the popularity of social media, children tend to be more interested in digital entertainment than traditional activities such as learning calligraphy (Ching, *et.al.*, 2020). This waning interest is also reflected in educational curricula which may focus more on subjects deemed more relevant in the modern context.

Apart from that, a lack of understanding of the values and meaning contained in calligraphy can also be a factor causing a decline in interest. In Islamic arts education, calligraphy is not only seen as an artistic skill, but also as a form of worship and spiritual expression. However, with a lack of understanding and deep understanding of this, children may not feel the need or value to engage themselves in the practice of calligraphy. Second, the role of parents in supporting or inhibiting children's interest in calligraphy is very significant.

In many cases, parents may no longer prioritize teaching traditional arts such as calligraphy in their children's education. When parents do not provide support or encourage children's interest in the art of calligraphy, this can have a negative impact on children's motivation and desire to learn. Third, educational practices in society can also influence children's interest in calligraphy. If schools or educational institutions do not pay enough attention to teaching the art of calligraphy, then children may not have the opportunity to develop interest and skills in the field (Abudaya, 2023). Lack of integration of traditional arts such as calligraphy in formal education curricula can cause children to miss opportunities to appreciate and practice this valuable art.

By understanding the background to the decline in interest in calligraphy among children in an Islamic context, we can identify effective strategies to re-promote this art in the education and daily lives of Muslim children. To overcome this decline in interest, concrete steps need to be taken by educators and society. First of all, it is important to increase understanding of the value and meaning of calligraphy in the context of Islamic educational arts. This can be done through organizing workshops, seminars, or other educational activities that introduce children to the beauty and depth of calligraphy. Apart from that, support from family and school is also very important. Parents and educators need to provide recognition and encouragement to children to learn and develop calligraphy skills. Schools can also introduce curricula that emphasize the importance of traditional arts in Islamic education, including calligraphy.

Increasing accessibility to resources and facilities for learning calligraphy is also an important step. This could involve establishing art centers or collaborating with local art communities to provide affordable and accessible calligraphy courses for children. With these steps, it is hoped to restore children's interest in calligraphy and keep the legacy of this traditional art alive in Islamic arts education. From this background, there are several questions that must be studied, such as what are the main causes of the decline in interest in calligraphy among children in the Islamic context and what efforts can be made to increase children's interest in calligraphy in the Islamic context. Research into the problem of children's reduced interest in calligraphy is still rarely carried out. Therefore, this research aims to examine what factors influence it. After researching the causal factors, strategies to increase interest in calligraphy can be planned.

METHOD

This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand in depth the level of interest and factors that contribute to the decline in interest in calligraphy among children in the context of Islamic arts education. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions and subjective views of participants. According to Basrowi & Suwandi in Wakarmamu (2022), researchers have the ability to recognize the subject and feel the experiences the subject experiences in everyday life. In the context of qualitative research, the researcher is directly involved with the situation and natural setting of the phenomenon being studied. Each phenomenon is considered a unique entity, because it is influenced by different contexts (Nugrahani, 2014). The case study approach was carried out on the research targets, namely students and teachers of Madrasah Asy-Syifa. In this research, the data obtained came from student and teacher interviews, observations, journal articles, books, and sources related to students' current interest in calligraphy art.

This study used instruments, namely interviews with teachers and questionnaires given to the students of Madrasah Asy-Syifa. The questionnaire was designed using 5 indicators, each indicator has 2 statements. The five indicators include (1) students' experience of the art of calligraphy, (2) students' motivation in taking calligraphy lessons, (3) students' knowledge about calligraphy, (4) students' interest in taking calligraphy lessons, and (5) urgency of learning calligraphy according to students. The questionnaire was created using the Guttman scale with two assessment options, namely "YES" and "NO". The Guttman scale is a scale that has only two intervals, one of which is "yes-no". After the

questionnaires were filled in by the students, the data was then analyzed. The first stage in the analysis is to calculate the percentage of student responses using the following formula:

$$= \frac{\% \text{ Respons (x) Total score}}{\text{Maximum Total Score}} \times 100$$

Next, the results of the percentage of student responses in learning calligraphy are classified into the following criteria:

Table 1. Criteria for the Percentage of Santri Responses

Percentage (%)	Category
81,25 < x < 100	Very good
62,5 < x < 81,25	Good
43,75 < x < 62,5	Not enough

Source: (Asmah & Setyowati, 2022)

After the analysis is carried out, the next step is to describe the analysis results obtained. The final stage is to conclude the results of the analysis and description of the data that has been carried out.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, a student response questionnaire was given to 10 respondents. The respondents of this research were students of the Asy-Syifa madrasah. The results of distributing the questionnaire were analyzed based on five indicators, namely (1) students' experience of the art of calligraphy, (2) students' motivation in taking calligraphy lessons, (3) students' knowledge about calligraphy, (4) students' interest in taking calligraphy lessons, and (5) the urgency of learning calligraphy according to students. The five indicators were developed into statements distributed to Asy-Syifa madrasa students as follows.

1. I like drawing beautiful letters like calligraphy
2. I have studied the art of calligraphy at school
3. I find the art of calligraphy difficult
4. I know that calligraphy is the art of writing beautifully in Arabic script
5. I want to learn more about calligraphy
6. I have seen examples of calligraphy in mosques and books
7. I know that calligraphy has artistic and religious value
8. I am interested in trying to write calligraphy myself
9. I want to know more about the art of Islamic calligraphy
10. I think calligraphy is important in Islamic education

The results of the student questionnaire responses can be analyzed and presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Results of Questionnaire Analysis of Santri Responses to Learning Calligraphy

Indicator	Percentage (%)	Category
Students' experiences with the art of calligraphy	100%	Very Good
Motivation of students in taking calligraphy lessons	65%	Good
Students' knowledge of calligraphy	60%	Not Enough
Students' interest in learning calligraphy	75%	Good
The urgency of learning calligraphy according to students	95%	Very Good

Based on the table of results of the questionnaire analysis of students' responses to learning calligraphy art above, it can be seen that the first indicator obtained a percentage of 100% and the fifth indicator a percentage of 95% in the Good category. The second and fourth indicators obtained percentages of 65% and 75% respectively, these two indicators were in the Good category, while the third indicator obtained a percentage of 60% in the Poor category. These results show that the students have gained very good experience regarding calligraphy both at school and in the community. Santri already believe that learning calligraphy in Islamic religious studies is important because this can support motivation. Students also have good motivation and interest in calligraphy which can be improved. However, students still lack knowledge or understanding of the meaning of calligraphy.

The results of the analysis in table (2) above, obtained from a questionnaire conducted and distributed to 10 students, show that the majority of respondents have an interest in the art of calligraphy. As many as 70% of respondents stated that they liked drawing beautiful letters like calligraphy, and all respondents had learned about the art of calligraphy at school. Although 60% find the art of calligraphy difficult, the majority (80%) want to learn more about it. Almost all respondents (90%) had seen examples of calligraphy in mosques or books, and almost all (90%) were also aware of the artistic and religious value of calligraphy. Interest in trying to write your own calligraphy and learning more about the art of Islamic calligraphy is quite high, with 70% and 90% of respondents expressing interest.

Furthermore, all respondents think that calligraphy is important in Islamic education. The results of this questionnaire show that there is a strong appreciation for the art of calligraphy among respondents. The high interest in learning and knowing more about calligraphy indicates that this art has great potential as a means of education and cultural preservation. Even though some respondents considered it difficult, this did not reduce their interest in learning calligraphy further. The fact that calligraphy is recognized not only for its artistic value but also its religious value, confirms the importance of this art in the context of Islamic education. In order to increase interest in calligraphy among children, there needs to be an approach that is interesting and relevant to everyday life. Teachers and parents can play an active role in introducing the art of calligraphy and inviting children to know and love the beauty in every letter and form of calligraphy. In this way, the art of calligraphy will continue to exist and become an important part of Islamic education.

Table 3. Results of interviews with Santri teachers

Questions	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
1. How do you see students' interest in the art of calligraphy in your class? Do you notice a lack of interest in the art of calligraphy in some children?	It could be said that students' interest in calligraphy is still lacking, because only a small number of students are enthusiastic about making calligraphy and even the results of their calligraphy are extraordinarily beautiful. However, most of the students' lack of interest is usually reflected in their calligraphy which looks haphazard.	Students' interest in calligraphy today is lacking due to a lack of understanding of calligraphy and the influence of increasingly sophisticated times. The students' lack of interest in calligraphy is due to the lack of independent efforts by the students even though they have been given knowledge about calligraphy.
2. What steps have you taken to increase students' interest in the art of calligraphy in your class?	The steps I took were to free up students to create their own work in calligraphic decoration and other types of calligraphy with the aim of making them feel free and arousing their interest in making calligraphy. Then appreciation in the form of round emoji expressions (smiling, sad, frowning, even those with	I am slowly imparting and sharing knowledge of the art of calligraphy in stages, for example from making Asmaul Husna calligraphy to various other types of calligraphy.

	loving eyes) are included to describe their calligraphy results, which can also increase the enthusiasm of the students to be more active and better in studying calligraphy.	
3. Do you see any particular factors that might be the cause of students' lack of interest in the art of calligraphy compared to freehand drawing?	One factor in the lack of interest in calligraphy may be that the calligraphy references that students generally find is that calligraphy looks monotonous so that when they try to make calligraphy it feels boring, even though if they are creative and innovative, calligraphy is a fun place to express their ideas.	Because they are not familiar with the science of calligraphy and every madrasah does not provide enough calligraphy knowledge.
4. How would you respond if you found students who were less interested in the art of calligraphy? Do you have any specific strategies to overcome these challenges?	My response will not be to force them to all be interested in calligraphy, but strategies such as appreciation and assessment in the form of emojis for what they have created are things that I apply to attract students' interest in calligraphy.	By slowly persuading the students to get used to learning it.

The research results we obtained from interviews with Koran teachers revealed that students' interest in calligraphy is still low. The teacher found that only a small number of students had high enthusiasm for making calligraphy, while the majority had little interest and their work seemed haphazard. As a solution, teachers give students the freedom to create their own calligraphic works and provide appreciation through emojis in assessments to increase their enthusiasm. Teachers also realize that monotonous and outdated calligraphy references can reduce students' interest. Meanwhile, other teachers observed that a lack of understanding and the influence of modern times contributed to students' lack of interest. The teacher teaches calligraphy gradually and persuades the students to get used to learning it. The teachers who were our respondents tried to increase students' interest and calligraphy skills through a motivating and educational approach.

Several factors causing a decline in interest in calligraphy among children in Islamic education were identified in our research. These factors include changes to a more modern lifestyle, lack of understanding of the value and meaning of calligraphy, and lack of support from parents and educational institutions. This research emphasizes the importance of increasing understanding of calligraphy through educational activities such as workshops and seminars, as well as getting greater support from families and schools to integrate calligraphy into the Islamic education curriculum.

Our discussion in this research also suggests the use of technology in teaching calligraphy to make it more interesting for children who are familiar with digital media. In addition, it is proposed to hold calligraphy competitions and collaborative projects that can build community and improve children's skills. By implementing these strategies, it is hoped that interest and skills in calligraphy among children can be restored, so that this art remains an important part of Islamic cultural heritage and education. The main topics of the literature study are important to discuss to support this research.

Understanding Calligraphy

Calligraphy is defined as an art in the aspect of writing or drawing that combines various Arabic letters with beautiful designs. The Arabic letters used by calligraphers are based on verses contained in the Al-Qur'an, hadith, and Asmaul Husna which are closely related to the names of Allah SWT (Fazirra &

Fahrurrozi, 2023). Lestari, *et.al.* (2021) explains that calligraphy has the meaning of a science that integrates single letters, their location, and methods of combining them into organized sentences by focusing on aspects of beauty.

Basically, calligraphy is created in order to develop the creativity of each individual by involving Arabic letters which are sacred for Muslims. A calligrapher is faced with conditions that require special skills, this is because some Arabic letters have high complexity. Based on this, sufficient skill is needed so that the calligraphic message shown can be interpreted carefully by connoisseurs of the art of calligraphy. Making calligraphy can be started by first making pencil strokes on the paper based on Arabic letters, then using a variety of colored pencils, both markers and crayons. The aesthetics of calligraphy can be added by involving various complementary ornaments in the form of creative objects. The process of making calligraphy is considered to require optimal skills, so programmed training is needed. Generally, learning about calligraphy can be found in religious education units, more precisely in the scope of Islamic Religion subjects. In these circumstances, calligraphy is said to be a solution to learning content that contains elements of da'wah packaged creatively and aesthetically.

Understanding of the field of calligraphy has been going on since the pre-Islamic period through competitions based on the use of Arabic letters. However, calligraphy competition events are still ongoing today. Based on this, making calligraphy not only emphasizes aesthetics, but can further be said to be useful as a propagation of preaching. Without realizing it, the beauty contained in this calligraphy is able to make every individual understand and inspire the holy verses better. This is in line with the opinion of Aprilia, *et.al.* (2022) that the art of calligraphy containing elements of beauty has the benefit of making Muslims aware of the holy verses that they need to practice and as a reminder of the power of Allah SWT.

Islamic Views on Art

Art is an internal activity involving aesthetic experiences expressed in extraordinary forms, capable of triggering feelings of awe and deep emotions. Greatness is a manifestation of personal creativity that has matured and developed (McQuillan & Lucey, 2016). Feelings of awe are emotional reactions that arise due to strong stimulation from something extraordinary, while deep emotions are feelings that initially arise from sympathy and then turn into deep attraction, finally reaching a deeper emotional level. Art is divided into several types, including musical arts, namely the arts related to musical instruments and musical rhythms by enriching the instruments, dance arts which create rhythmic body movements, rhythmic arts with movement and speech, and fine arts involving the creation of forms and structures that can be enjoyed. through the use of the five senses, or through inner experience and ethical values, using elements such as line, plane, color, texture, volume and light contrast.

In the perspective of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, art is considered something that is not prohibited. There are many hadiths that describe the Prophet's interests, confessions and tendencies in enjoying art. As mentioned in the hadith, Aisyah ra said that two slave girls were singing songs while playing drums. I saw the Messenger of Allah lying down, but he turned his face away. At that time, Abu Bakr came in and got angry with me, he said, "Is there a devil's flute in the Prophet's place?" Hearing this, the Messenger of Allah said, "Let them be, O Abu Bakr." When Abu Bakr was no longer paying attention, I ordered the two slaves out. That time was a holiday where the Sudanese people were dancing using their musical instruments and weapons of war (HR. Bukhari). From this hadith, it can be understood that Rasulullah SAW did not directly prohibit artistic and musical expression, as long as the songs sung are in accordance with good values and do not lead to sinful acts. This hadith is also the basis for scholars who allow art and music (Syarafah, *et.al.*, 2022).

Likewise with art expressions that have existed from the past until now, which we see in various forms and calligraphy motifs. This visual art can be found in writing sacred verses in various writing styles (such as Nashk khat, Ri'ah, Tsuluts, and so on). Thus, when exhibited to the public, it can create a diversity of artistic inspiration and imagination, which in turn increases the spiritual value of worshipping Allah SWT and also a sense of compassion for others (Rafles, 2017).

Factors that Influence Children's Declining Interest in Calligraphy

1. Limited Calligraphy Learning

Learning about the art of calligraphy in several educational units can be said to be minimal and is often not the center of attention. Rahmi & Ansari (2021) stated that learning calligraphy which is said to be limited can reduce children's interest because it makes them rush and work not optimally. Basically, a teacher as an educator has a greater focus on integrating general and Islamic knowledge for each student. This condition increasingly causes backwardness in teaching the art of calligraphy. Therefore, students will only absorb general knowledge rather than increasing their skills in making calligraphy. As we know, calligraphy can basically be a means of da'wah when conveying the word of Allah SWT, so every teacher needs to pay attention to this condition. Commitment to the importance of providing programmed calligraphy learning will be a relevant solution to reawaken children's interest in learning calligraphy.

2. Influence of Social Media

The existence of social media that is used excessively can cause addiction and busyness for every child. Based on this, children are said to prefer to use their own devices to have fun without training themselves to make calligraphy. Therefore, thanks to the influence of social media, a child will only spend their time protractedly. The development of social media needs to be addressed by every group, especially parents who act as limits for their children in using these tools. Based on this, it is necessary to divert a child's social media activities to something useful such as pursuing calligraphy to hone their skills and creative abilities.

3. Lack of parental support for calligraphy

The lack of parental support regarding calligraphy also influences children's interest in studying this art field. A child will not have full enthusiasm and a sense of pride when making calligraphy, so it can lead to an attitude of doubt. Basically, parents direct their children to study only general knowledge disciplines, thus giving their children boundaries. This condition means that parents think that calligraphy is only an art that does not have a high urgency. Parents also think that this art of calligraphy will only burden their children and will not produce anything big. Without realizing it, this lack of support will reduce a child's interest in calligraphy, so that they will only harbor their interest and potential without ever actually trying it.

Efforts to Increase Children's Interest in Calligraphy

1. Presenting Programmed Calligraphy Learning

Programmed calligraphy learning is a routine training step and uses careful methods to direct children to explore to produce beautiful calligraphic works (Hasanah, *et.al.*, 2023). The intended calligraphy learning should be carried out with appropriate time integration and have goals that must be achieved. Learning begins with making calligraphy based on the level of complexity. This assumes that learning calligraphy for children needs to be carried out by presenting images that are basic in scope and easy to apply. Furthermore, when children have mastered calligraphy with a basic scope, they need to be directed towards calligraphy with a higher level of complexity. In practice, teachers need to make efforts to explore and develop children's creativity. Apart from that, teachers also need to provide guidance with an appropriate approach to create comfort in learning calligraphy for a child.

2. Give children the opportunity to explore their calligraphy

Calligraphy based on the holy verses of the Koran, Hadith and Asmaul Husna needs to be accompanied by creativity to produce amazing work. Educators here have the task of getting to know each child's potential and the child's character in making calligraphy. Therefore, teachers should give every child the opportunity to explore how to draw calligraphy accompanied by maximum guidance. The opportunities given to children will give them a sense of confidence and pride in their own abilities and potential. The results of research by Andini (2021), providing extracurricular calligraphy services to students can increase students' interest in the art of calligraphy.

3. Provide adequate calligraphy facilities

Calligraphy facilities are closely related to all the equipment/equipment for making calligraphy art, which can be in the form of paper, pencils, erasers and coloring tools. This aspect needs to be provided optimally in order to produce calligraphy that has high value. Apart from that, a child will feel enthusiastic about drawing calligraphy because all the equipment needed is completely available. This can also influence the implementation stage of making calligraphy, because it can create a sense of confidence based on a child's drawing potential.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, a conclusion can be drawn that students still have a positive interest in the art of calligraphy despite finding it difficult in the art of calligraphy, with a desire to learn further and even try their own practice. However, there is still room and need to increase understanding regarding the artistic and religious value of the art of calligraphy among students. Therefore, efforts are needed to implement more programmed calligraphy learning, provide opportunities for children to explore calligraphy, and provide media calligraphy facilities. This can minimize the decline in interest in calligraphy which can arise due to limited calligraphy learning, the influence of social media, and lack of support from parents.

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