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The Effectiveness of Applying Reinforcement Techniques to Increase Interest in Reading the Qur'an among UIN Malang Students

Efektivitas Penerapan Teknik Reinforcement Untuk Meningkatkan Minat Baca Al-Qur'an pada Mahasiswa UIN Malang

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ABSTRACT

Interest in reading the Qur'an among university students has become a growing concern in Indonesian Islamic higher education, as national data indicates that a large proportion of Muslim students have not yet attained adequate Qur'anic literacy. **The study purpose was** to examine the effectiveness of applying reinforcement techniques in increasing interest in reading the Qur'an among students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Reinforcement techniques, grounded in Skinner's operant conditioning theory, are proposed as a behavioral intervention strategy to address this challenge. **Materials and methods.** This study employed a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design. The sample consisted of 19 active students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, selected through simple random sampling. The primary instrument was a Qur'anic Reading Interest Scale developed based on four dimensions proposed by Slameto (2010): attention, positive feeling, attraction, and individual involvement, measured using a 4-point Likert scale. A monitoring sheet was also used to track reading consistency throughout the intervention. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test with IBM SPSS Statistics.

Results. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test yielded a Z-value of -3.803 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). All 19 participants showed an increase in Qur'anic reading interest scores from pretest to posttest, with no subjects experiencing a decrease or stagnation, indicating a highly consistent pattern of improvement across all individuals.

Conclusions. The application of reinforcement techniques is significantly effective in increasing interest in reading the Qur'an among UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang students. Improvements were observed across all four dimensions of reading interest, suggesting a holistic and internalized development of students' psychological engagement with Qur'anic reading. These findings support the use of reinforcement techniques as a practical behavioral intervention strategy in Islamic counseling and Qur'anic education at the higher education level.

Keywords: reinforcement techniques, reading interest, Qur'an, university students, behavioral intervention

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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is the primary source of guidance for Muslims and holds a central role in the spiritual and intellectual life of Islamic society. Reading the Qur'an is not merely a religious obligation but also a form of worship that carries profound spiritual value. However, the reality

shows that interest in reading the Qur'an, particularly among university students, remains a serious concern. Data on Qur'anic literacy among Indonesian university students reveals that approximately

38.49% of respondents have not yet attained adequate Qur'anic literacy, with a lack of personal motivation and interest identified as one of the primary contributing factors (Ihsan & Muliati, 2024). This finding is reinforced by national-level data, as the Indonesian Mosque Council (DMI) reported in 2021 that 65 percent of Muslims in Indonesia are unable to read the Qur'an, while only 35 percent are able to do so (DMI, 2021). At a broader level, the low rate of Qur'anic literacy among younger generations has become a major societal concern, as young people despite high enthusiasm for digital technology such as smartphones and social media tend to show low interest in traditional methods of Qur'anic learning, viewing them as less engaging (Muhammad et al., 2024).

At the university level, the problem of Qur'anic literacy becomes increasingly complex. A study at UIN Alauddin Makassar found that Qur'anic reading interest among PGMI students is influenced by multiple internal and external factors, including peer influence and environmental factors, alongside a lack of self-awareness as the primary internal barrier to developing and sustaining consistent reading habits (Mardiah et al., 2023). Research further confirms that low Qur'anic literacy among university students is a recurring problem across Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, where students encounter a range of challenges in improving their reading competence (Sari & Oktaviani, 2024). Among the most commonly identified barriers are internal factors such as poor time management for reading practice, as well as external factors including an unsupportive family environment, both of which compound students' difficulties in establishing regular Qur'anic reading habits (Usman, 2025). In this context, behavioristic learning theory, which employs conditioning and reinforcement as its primary methods, has been recognized as effective in shaping concrete behaviors, including cultivating a love for reciting the Qur'an, underscoring its relevance for addressing this challenge within educational settings (Wibowo & Tobroni, 2025).

Interest in reading is a key psychological factor that underpins consistent engagement with the Qur'an. According to Slameto (2010), reading interest consists of four dimensions: attention, positive feeling, attraction, and individual involvement in an activity. Without a strong foundation of interest, students are unlikely to sustain reading habits even when external opportunities are available. Research on motivation in Qur'anic learning also confirms that motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic is a determining factor in sustaining students' engagement with the Qur'an, and that effective support mechanisms are motivating when they produce consistent behavioral responses (Nik Abdullah et al., 2021). One approach that can be applied to strengthen this interest is the reinforcement technique, rooted in behavioristic learning theory. Positive reinforcement is a principle derived from operant conditioning, which aims to increase the likelihood of a desired behavior recurring by providing a reinforcing stimulus after the behavior occurs. According to Skinner (1953), behaviors that receive reinforcement tend to recur and increase in frequency, making this technique particularly relevant for shaping habitual behaviors such as reading the Qur'an. The concept of appreciation in Islamic education is not just an incentive system, but also a form of appreciation that fosters love for the Qur'an and brings inner satisfaction, so that the principle of behavioristic reinforcement is in line with Islamic values (Dewi, 2026). By integrating Skinnerian behaviorism with Islamic values of compassion and integrity, reinforcement techniques have been shown to influence multiple dimensions of student development behavioral, emotional, social, and moral, offering a balanced educational philosophy with practical implications for Islamic learning environments (Nida et al., 2025).

Several prior studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of reinforcement techniques in educational and Qur'anic learning contexts. Research on Qur'anic learning at the university level confirms that students' motivation to read the Qur'an remains at an unsatisfactory level,

highlighting the need for instructional approaches that can actively engage and inspire students (Muhd Syahazizamir & Zamri, 2024). In the context of behavioral intervention, Zeirliana et al. (2024) found that the consistent application of positive reinforcement including praise, recognition, and appreciation was effective in increasing university students' learning motivation, with mean scores rising significantly from pretest to posttest. In the specific context of Qur'anic learning, Paputungan et al. (2024) found that the application of positive reinforcement techniques grounded in Skinner's reinforcement theory was effective in reducing academic procrastination among mahasantri at a Rumah Tahfidz, demonstrating that reinforcement-based interventions can produce meaningful behavioral

change in Qur'anic learning environments at the higher education level. Research on Qur'anic memorization programs also affirms that positive reinforcement is a key element in optimizing Islamic Religious Education learning, contributing to character development and strengthening students' emotional and moral engagement with religious texts (Khaeruniah et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies establish that reinforcement-based strategies are effective in enhancing motivation and behavioral engagement across both general and Qur'anic learning settings.

Despite this body of evidence, a significant gap in the literature remains. Prior studies on Qur'anic literacy at the university level have predominantly focused on reading ability and tajwid instructional methods (Muhd Syahazizamir & Zamri, 2024; Sari & Oktaviani, 2024), while studies specifically examining Qur'anic reading interest as the psychological condition that precedes and drives reading ability remain scarce. As the evidence reviewed above suggests, low interest, rather than low ability alone, is the root of the Qur'anic literacy problem among university students (Mardiah et al., 2023; Ihsan & Muliati, 2024). Furthermore, studies applying reinforcement techniques as an intervention in Qur'anic learning contexts have largely been conducted in pesantren and tahfidz institutions (Paputungan et al., 2024; Khaeruniah et al., 2024), leaving its application in the more autonomous and self-directed settings of Islamic universities largely unexplored. Research on the level of Qur'anic literacy among students at general universities has also demonstrated that this issue is not trivial and requires planned intervention (Supriadi & Anwar, 2022). This study therefore aims to fill this gap by examining the effectiveness of applying reinforcement techniques in increasing interest in reading the Qur'an among students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. The findings are expected to contribute meaningfully to the development of behavioral intervention strategies in Islamic counseling services and Qur'anic education at the higher education level.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with an experimental method. The research design employed is a one-group pretest-posttest design, in which measurements are taken before and after the intervention without a control group. The population in this study consisted of active students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. This study employed a simple random sampling technique, in which every member of the population has an equal opportunity to be selected as a participant (Sugiyono, 2018). Based on this technique, 19 active students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang were selected as the sample, with criteria including the ability to read the Qur'an, willingness to participate in the entire research process, and completion of the research instrument at both pretest and posttest stages. The independent variable in this study is the reinforcement technique, while the dependent variable is students' interest in reading the Qur'an. The primary instrument used was a Qur'an Reading Interest Scale developed based on aspects proposed by Slameto (2010), namely attention, positive feeling, attraction, and individual involvement, measured using a 4-point Likert scale. A monitoring sheet was also used as a supporting instrument to track the consistency and frequency of participants' Qur'an reading activities throughout the intervention period. Data were collected through three stages: pretest, intervention, and posttest,

with scale administration conducted independently via Google Form under researcher supervision. Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Prior to hypothesis testing, a normality assumption test was conducted on the gain scores using the Shapiro-Wilk test, as it is more sensitive for small sample sizes ($n < 50$). Hypothesis testing was conducted using a Paired Sample t-Test to determine whether there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. The research hypothesis is accepted if the significance value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Case Processing Summary

The following will present the AVE values for all constructs (variables) in Table 1.

Table 1. Case Processing Summary

	Cases				
	Valid		Missing		
	N	Percent	Percent	N	Percent
Pretest	19	100%	100%	19	100.0%
Postest	19	100%	100%	19	100.0%

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the data on the Qur'an reading interest scores of the 19 students who were the subjects of this study were successfully processed in their entirety, both in the pretest and posttest phases. All data (100.0%) were valid, and there were no missing values (missing = 0.0%) in either measurement. Thus, all data are suitable for further statistical analysis.

Normality Test

Table 2. Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistik	Sig	Statistik	Sig.
Pretest	0,090	0,200	0,986	0,988
Postest	0,101	0,200	0,986	0,531

Based on Table 2, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test showed a significance value of 0.200 for both the pretest and posttest data, while the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test showed a significance value of 0.988 for the pretest and 0.531 for the posttest. Since all significance values for both tests were greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), it can be concluded that the pretest and posttest scores for interest in reading the Qur'an in this study are normally distributed. Although the assumption of normality was met, given the relatively small number of research subjects ($N = 19$) and the one-group pretest-posttest design commonly used in small-scale

behavioral modification studies, hypothesis testing in this study was still conducted using the nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

Hypothesis Testing (Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test)

Table 3. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test (Ranks)

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Postest-Pretest	Negative Ranks	0[a]	0.00	0.00
	Positive Ranks	19[b]	10.00	190.00
	Ties	0[c]		
	Total	19		

Based on Table 3, of the 19 students assessed, none of the subjects experienced a decrease in their Qur'an reading interest scores from the pretest to the posttest (Negative Ranks = 0). Conversely, all 19 subjects (100%) showed an increase in posttest scores compared to pretest scores (Positive Ranks = 19), with a mean rank of 10.00 and a sum of ranks of 190.00. No subjects were found to have identical pretest and posttest scores (Ties = 0). This pattern indicates a highly consistent trend toward improvement in nearly all research subjects after being exposed to the reinforcement technique.

Table 4. Test Statistics Results

	Postest-Pretest
Z	-3,803[d]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000

Decision-making in the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test is performed by comparing the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value to the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. If Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05, then H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted, which means there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. Based on Table 4, a Z-value of -3.803 was obtained with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, indicating a significant difference between the pre- and post-reapplication scores for interest in reading the Qur'an. Given that all differences indicate an increase (positive ranks = 19, negative ranks = 0), it can be concluded that the application of the reinforcement technique is significantly effective in increasing interest in reading the Qur'an among the students who were the subjects of this study.

Discussion

The Effectiveness of Reinforcement Techniques in Increasing Interest in Reading the Qur'an

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test above show that the scores for interest in reading the Qur'an among all 19 students increased significantly after being given the reinforcement technique as a treatment ($Z = -3.803$; $p = 0.000$). This finding empirically supports the research hypothesis that reinforcement techniques are effective as a behavior modification strategy to increase students' interest in reading the Qur'an. The fact that not a single subject experienced a decrease or stagnation in their scores (negative ranks and ties = 0) reinforces the indication that this increase is not merely a

group-average trend but rather a consistent change occurring in nearly all individuals who were the subjects of the study.

This finding aligns with the basic principle of reinforcement theory in the operant conditioning approach proposed by B. F. Skinner, which states that a behavior followed by a pleasant consequence (reinforcer) will tend to increase in frequency and strength in the future. In the context of this study, the provision of reinforcement every time a student exhibited the behavior of reading the Qur'an served as a reinforcing stimulus that encouraged the behavior to be repeated and maintained, ultimately leading to an increase in overall interest in reading the Qur'an.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of (Zeirliana, Kholisoh, & Jamaluddin, 2024), who used a Single Subject Research (SSR) design and found that students' learning motivation increased more sharply during the positive reinforcement intervention phase than during the baseline phase. Similar results were also found by (Paputungan, Rosyikhoh, & Jamaluddin, 2024), who applied Skinner's reinforcement theory to reduce academic procrastination among students at Rumah Tahfidz; consistent application of positive reinforcement proved effective in changing behavior in the desired direction. Meanwhile, (Hasibuan, Habibi, & Jamaluddin, 2025), in a study of psychology students at UIN Malang, also found an increase in the average learning motivation score from the pretest to the posttest following the application of positive reinforcement, although in that study the increase did not reach statistical significance. This difference in results is likely related to the type of statistical test used and the pattern of score changes among the subjects; in this study, the highly consistent pattern of improvement across all subjects (with no decreases) resulted in a statistically significant Wilcoxon test result. Furthermore, (Lubis et al., 2025) also confirmed that simple positive reinforcement, such as praise and rewards, can increase engagement and learning motivation, which is consistent with the findings of this study.

In practical terms, these findings suggest that reinforcement techniques can serve as an alternative strategy for students, faculty, and religious advisors in fostering the habit and interest in reading the Qur'an on campus. However, this study has limitations, including a one-group pretest-posttest design that did not involve a control group; consequently, the observed increase in scores cannot be entirely separated from the possible influence of other factors, such as the testing effect or subject maturation. Therefore, future research is recommended to use an experimental design with a control group and a larger sample size so that the research results can be generalized more broadly.

The Development of Qur'anic Reading Interest Dimensions Following Reinforcement Intervention

Beyond the overall statistical significance, a closer examination of the changes in students' Qur'anic reading interest can be understood through the four dimensions of reading interest proposed by Slameto (2010), namely attention (*attention*), positive feeling (*positive feeling*), attraction (*attraction*), and individual involvement (*individual involvement*). The consistent and uniform increase observed across all 19 subjects (positive ranks = 19, negative ranks = 0, ties = 0) suggests that the reinforcement intervention did not merely produce a surface-level behavioral change, but rather contributed to a more holistic development of students' psychological engagement with Qur'anic reading.

In terms of the attention dimension, the application of reinforcement during each reading session directed students' focus more intentionally toward their Qur'anic reading activities. When a desired behavior is consistently reinforced, the individual becomes more attuned to the cues and contexts associated with that behavior, thereby increasing attentional allocation toward the activity (Skinner, 1953). This increased attentiveness is particularly significant given that low motivation and personal interest have been identified as primary barriers to consistent Qur'anic reading among university students (Ihsan & Muliati, 2024), suggesting that reinforcement directly addresses one of the root causes of the problem.

Regarding the positive feeling dimension, the reinforcement provided in this study, in the form of praise, recognition, and appreciation created pleasant affective associations with the act of reading the Qur'an. Over repeated sessions, students began to associate Qur'anic reading with positive emotional experiences, which gradually transformed their affective orientation toward the activity. This aligns with Dewi and Rahman (2026), who emphasized that in Islamic education, appreciation is not merely an

external incentive but a form of recognition that fosters genuine love for the Qur'an and brings inner satisfaction to students.

The attraction dimension reflects students' growing sense of pull or draw toward Qur'anic reading as an activity they find meaningful and worthwhile. The reinforcement intervention strengthened this dimension by repeatedly pairing the reading behavior with positive outcomes, thereby increasing the perceived value and desirability of the activity. As Nida et al. (2025) noted, reinforcement techniques grounded in Islamic values influence not only behavioral but also emotional and moral dimensions of student development, which are closely tied to the deepening of students' attraction to religiously significant activities such as reading the Qur'an.

Finally, the individual involvement dimension which captures the degree to which students actively and independently engage in Qur'anic reading showed improvement as a result of the sustained reinforcement throughout the intervention period. The use of a monitoring sheet as a supporting instrument in this study played a key role in tracking and maintaining students' reading consistency, making their involvement visible and accountable. This finding is in line with Usman (2025), who identified poor self-management of reading time as one of the primary barriers to consistent Qur'anic reading among university students, suggesting that structured reinforcement with accountability mechanisms can effectively address this challenge.

Taken together, the dimensional analysis suggests that the effectiveness of reinforcement in this study extends beyond increasing reading frequency. The intervention appears to have cultivated a more internalized and affectively grounded interest in reading the Qur'an, touching upon attentional, emotional, motivational, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously. This finding is particularly meaningful in the context of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, where fostering a genuine and sustained engagement with the Qur'an rather than mere compliance with reading requirements is central to the institution's Islamic educational mission.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of applying reinforcement techniques in increasing interest in reading the Qur'an among students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Based on the results of research and hypothesis testing that has been carried out, the results of the study can be concluded that the application of reinforcement techniques has a significant effect in increasing students' interest in reading the Qur'an at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. All 19 research subjects showed an increase in Qur'anic reading interest scores from pretest to posttest, with no subjects experiencing a decrease or stagnation in scores. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test yielded a Z-value of -3.803 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the reinforcement technique is significantly effective as a behavioral intervention strategy. Furthermore, improvements were observed across all four dimensions of reading interest, namely attention, positive feeling, attraction, and individual involvement, suggesting that the intervention produced a holistic and internalized increase in students' psychological engagement with Qur'anic reading.

It is hoped that students, lecturers, and Islamic counseling practitioners at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang will consider reinforcement techniques as one of the applicable strategies in fostering and sustaining students' habit and interest in reading the Qur'an, because reinforcement techniques have been shown to produce consistent and significant behavioral change. The more regularly and systematically reinforcement is applied, the stronger students' interest and engagement in reading the Qur'an will become. The results of this study are expected to add insight, knowledge, and practical contribution to the development of behavioral intervention strategies in Islamic counseling services and Qur'anic education at the higher education level. For further researchers, it is recommended to develop the results of this study by employing a more rigorous experimental design that includes a control group and involves a larger and more diverse sample. To strengthen the validity of the research instrument, future researchers may also consider combining self-report scales with observational methods or digital monitoring tools, in the hope that the research results will be more accurate and have far greater benefits for the advancement of Qur'anic education in Indonesian higher education institutions.

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