

Learning Interest and Writing Skills Among Madrasah Tsanawiyah Students: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

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Abstract: This study was motivated by the low level of Arabic writing skills (*maharah kitabah*) among students, characterised by errors in letter formation and word linking, as well as low participation in writing activities. The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between students' interest in learning and their Arabic writing skills, and to identify the strength of the relationship between these two variables. The study employed a quantitative approach of a correlational nature. The study population consisted of 40 Year 8 students at MTs An-Nur Hangtuh Kampar, Riau, with a sample of 39 students. Data were collected via a learning interest questionnaire and a writing skills test, then analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation test with the aid of SPSS. The results of the study indicate that students' learning interest falls into the 'good' category (mean = 77.21), whilst writing skills fall into the 'low' category (mean = 55.26). The correlation test yielded a value of $r = 0.065$ with a significance level of 0.695 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no significant relationship. These findings suggest that writing skills are influenced not only by learning interest but also by other factors such as vocabulary mastery, language rules, practice intensity, and teaching methods.

Keywords: Arabic Language; Correlation; Interest in learning; Writing Skills

Abstrak: Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya kemampuan menulis bahasa Arab (*maharah kitabah*) siswa, yang ditandai dengan kesalahan dalam penulisan huruf, penyambungan kata, serta rendahnya partisipasi dalam kegiatan menulis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara minat belajar siswa dengan maharah kitabah serta mengidentifikasi tingkat keeratan hubungan antara kedua variabel tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan jenis korelasional. Populasi penelitian berjumlah 40 siswa kelas VIII MTs An-Nur Hangtuh Kampar Riau, dengan sampel 39 siswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket minat belajar dan tes keterampilan menulis, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji korelasi Pearson dengan bantuan SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa minat belajar siswa berada pada kategori baik (mean = 77,21), sedangkan maharah kitabah berada pada kategori rendah (mean = 55,26). Uji korelasi menunjukkan nilai $r = 0,065$ dengan signifikansi 0,695 ($p > 0,05$), yang berarti tidak terdapat hubungan yang signifikan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa maharah kitabah tidak hanya dipengaruhi oleh minat belajar, tetapi juga oleh faktor lain seperti penguasaan kosakata, kaidah bahasa, intensitas latihan, dan metode pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Arab, Korelasi, *Maharah Kitabah*, Minat Belajar

INTRODUCTION

One of the key skills in learning Arabic is writing, also known as *maharah kitabah*, as it relates to the technical ability to form letters and words, as well as mastery of vocabulary, sentence structure and correct linguistic rules [1], [2], [3], [4]. On the other hand, due to the



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complexity of the Arabic writing system [5], which demands precision in letter forms, letter connections, and consistent spelling, maharah kitabah is often the most difficult aspect for students to master compared to other language skills [6]. In this context, students' writing ability serves as an indicator of their language proficiency, as well as their cognitive and psychomotor skills in learning Arabic [7]. Therefore, mastery of writing skills is of paramount importance, particularly in madrasah education, where accuracy and neatness in writing are essential.

Students' success in writing Arabic is determined not only by the teaching methods used, but also by factors within themselves, one of which is their interest in learning [8], [9]. Interest in learning is an affective tendency that encourages students to participate actively in learning [10], [11]. According to Bloom's affective domain theory, interest in learning influences students' readiness, attention, and engagement in receiving and processing information [12]. Ultimately, this affects cognitive and psychomotor learning outcomes. Students with low interest in learning tend to lack focus, become easily bored, and are less engaged in the learning process. Conversely, students with high interest in learning tend to be more diligent, patient, and consistent in their practice [13]. Therefore, interest in learning appears to be closely linked to success in mastering Arabic writing skills, which require a high degree of practice and precision.

In addition to internal factors, interest in learning is also influenced by various external factors, such as family background [14], teaching methods [15], learning experiences [16], teacher-student interaction, classroom atmosphere [17] and the surrounding environment [18]. Monotonous, teacher-centred learning has the potential to reduce pupils' interest [19], particularly in writing activities that require perseverance and high concentration. Conversely, varied, participatory, and contextual learning can increase student engagement in writing exercises [20]. Thus, interest in learning functions not only as a supporting factor but also as a key determinant in shaping the intensity and quality of student engagement in learning. The higher a student's interest in learning, the greater their chances of achieving optimal mastery of writing skills [21].

However, the empirical situation at MTs An-Nur Hangtuh Perhentian Raja reveals a gap between expectations and the reality of learning. The results of observations and interviews indicate that many pupils still make mistakes in letter formation, letter linking, and the accuracy of their handwriting. Furthermore, students' interest in learning Arabic is relatively low, as evidenced by a lack of enthusiasm, passive participation, and a tendency to become bored quickly during the learning process. Efforts that have been made, such as the application of the imla' method and structured exercises, have not yet shown a significant improvement. This situation indicates that the problems encountered are not only related to methodological aspects but also touch upon students' affective factors, particularly their interest in learning, which has not been optimally accommodated in the learning process.

A number of previous studies have shown that efforts to improve Arabic writing skills have generally focused on the use of teaching methods and media. Research by Fauzan, Dariyadi, and Fauzi (2025) indicates that the Student-Centred Learning (SCL) approach is effective in improving writing skills [22]. Meanwhile, Sa'idah and Mi'rotin (2021) as well as Soleha, Bukhori, and Huda (2025) found that the relay writing method and the Word Square medium were capable of improving students' learning outcomes and motivation [23], [24]. Other studies also confirm the effectiveness of the calligraphy method and the ARCS model in improving writing skills and learning motivation [25], [26]. Nevertheless, the majority of these studies focus on experimental approaches to improving learning outcomes and have not yet thoroughly examined the role of students' internal factors, particularly learning interest, in relation to writing skills. In fact, Arabic writing skills possess characteristics that demand

not only cognitive aspects but also motor precision and consistent practice; consequently, affective factors such as learning interest are presumed to play a significant role. Therefore, correlational studies linking learning interest with Arabic writing skills remain relatively limited, particularly within the context of madrasah education in the Kampar region.

In light of this gap, this study aims to analyse the relationship between students' interest in learning and their Arabic writing skills (*maharah kitabah*) among Year 8 pupils at MTs An-Nur Hangtuah in Kampar, Riau, as well as to identify the strength of the relationship between these two variables. This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design to obtain an empirical understanding of the relationship between students' interest in learning and their Arabic writing skills.

In theory, this study is expected to enrich research into Arabic language education, particularly regarding the role of affective aspects in the mastery of writing skills. This study also contributes to the development of correlational research in Arabic language learning, which has hitherto focused more on the effectiveness of teaching methods and media than on students' internal factors. In practical terms, the results of this study are expected to serve as a basis for teachers and educational institutions in designing learning strategies that are not only oriented towards increasing interest in learning but also take into account other factors that have a more dominant influence on students' writing skills, such as vocabulary mastery, grammar, the intensity of practice, and the learning environment. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors related to students' writing skills at the madrasah level.

METHODS

A. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach using a correlational research design to analyse the relationship between students' interest in learning and their Arabic writing skills (*maharah kitabah*). The quantitative approach was chosen because the data collected consists of numerical values and is analysed using statistical techniques to test hypotheses objectively [27]. Meanwhile, a correlational design was used to determine the degree of relationship between variables without manipulating the variables under study [28], [29]. The choice of this design was based on the research objective, namely to identify the relationship between the affective aspect of learning interest and students' Arabic writing skills. The research was conducted at MTs An-Nur Hangtuah Kampar Riau during the 2025/2026 academic year over a period of four months, from February to June 2026, covering the preparation stage, data collection, data processing, and the compilation of the research report.

B. Participants

The population in this study comprised all 40 Year 8 pupils at MTs An-Nur Hangtuah in Kampar, Riau, divided into two classes: Year 8A and Year 8B. All pupils shared relatively homogeneous characteristics in terms of their Arabic language learning. The sampling technique employed was saturation sampling, whereby the entire population was included as the research sample [30]. However, during data collection, one student was unable to participate in the questionnaire distribution and writing skills test due to illness; consequently, the actual sample size analysed in this study was 39 students. The entire population was used as the sample to ensure the study could provide a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between learning interest and students' writing skills.

C. Instruments

The research instruments used in this study consisted of questionnaires, tests and documentation.

1. Learning Interest Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to measure students' level of interest in learning Arabic. This instrument was designed using a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire was designed based on several indicators of learning interest, namely:

- a. enjoyment of learning
- b. attention and focus
- c. active participation in learning
- d. internal motivation
- e. consistency in completing tasks
- f. and independent initiative in learning Arabic

Examples of statements in the questionnaire include students' enthusiasm during Arabic lessons, their diligence in completing writing tasks, and their attention to the teacher's explanations. This research instrument possesses adequate psychometric properties. For the learning interest questionnaire, content validity was first assessed through expert judgement by lecturers in Arabic language education and Arabic language teachers to ensure that the items were consistent with indicators of students' learning interest. Subsequently, an empirical validity test was conducted on students using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation, with the criteria of calculated \bar{r} table r and a significance level of 0.05 [31]. The test results indicated that, out of 30 items, 24 were deemed valid and suitable for use in the study. In addition to validity, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, yielding a value of 0.662. This value indicates that the instrument possesses a sufficiently good level of internal consistency and is suitable for use in the study. Consequently, the research instrument was deemed to have met the aspects of validity and reliability as a data collection tool [32].

2. Written Arabic Skills Test

This test is used to assess students' Arabic writing skills (*maharah kitabah*). The test involves writing letters, words and simple sentences in Arabic based on material the students have previously studied. The test is assessed based on several aspects, namely:

- a. accuracy of letter formation
- b. accuracy of letter connection
- c. accuracy of word formation
- d. sentence structure
- e. and neatness of handwriting

The test was marked directly by the Arabic teacher together with the researcher using assessment guidelines previously drawn up based on the criteria for assessing Arabic writing skills and validated by an expert validator [33]. The test scores were then classified into the categories of very good, good, fair, and poor. And the results fell into the 'good' category.

3. Documentation

Documentation was used as supporting data for the research, comprising student data, test results, learning records, and other school documents relevant to the study [34].

D. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was carried out in stages and systematically. The first stage involved coordinating with the school and Arabic teachers regarding the schedule and implementation of the research. In the second stage, the researcher distributed the learning interest questionnaire directly to pupils in the classroom. Before the questionnaire was completed, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and how to complete the instrument so that pupils could provide answers that reflected their actual circumstances. In the third stage, the writing skills test was conducted in class under the supervision of the

Arabic language teacher and the researcher. Students were asked to complete the writing task individually within the allotted time. The test results were then assessed using pre-established assessment guidelines. In the final stage, the researcher collected documentary data to supplement and support the research findings.

E. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted after obtaining permission from the school. Student participation was subject to parental or guardian consent in accordance with school regulations. All respondent data was kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Participants' identities were not disclosed in the research report, and student participation was voluntary.

F. Data Analysis Techniques

The research data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0. The data analysis was carried out in several stages, namely descriptive statistics, tests of analytical assumptions, and hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the data, such as the mean, minimum value, maximum value, standard deviation, and the distribution of data categories [35].

Prior to hypothesis testing, the prerequisites for analysis were first tested. The normality test used the Shapiro-Wilk test because the sample size was less than 50 respondents [36]. In addition, a linearity test was conducted to determine whether the relationship between variables was linear [37]. The relationship between learning interest and writing skills was tested using the Pearson Product Moment correlation test [38]. Hypothesis testing was carried out at a significance level of 0.05, with the stipulation that if the significance value was ≤ 0.05 , there was a significant relationship between the variables, whereas if the significance value was > 0.05 , there was no significant relationship [39].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 39 Year 8 pupils at MTs An-Nur Hangtuh in Kampar, Riau, out of a total of 40 pupils, with one pupil unable to take part in the data collection due to illness. The data analysed included the pupils' interest in learning and their writing skills.

1. Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics research variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interest in Learning (X)	39	58	90	77.21	7.431
Writing Skills (Y)	39	35	80	55.26	10.818
Valid N (listwise)	39				

Based on Table 1, the average learning interest of students, at 77.21, indicates that, in general, students have a relatively high level of learning interest. The relatively small standard deviation (7.431) suggests that students' levels of learning interest tend to be homogeneous. Conversely, the average score for Arabic writing skills of 55.26 indicates that students' Arabic writing ability falls into the moderate-to-low category. The larger standard deviation (10.818) indicates a fairly high variation in ability among students. This suggests that whilst learning interest is relatively consistent, writing ability is not yet consistent.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Learning Interests

Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
> 80	High	18	46.15%
70-79	Medium	14	35.90%

70	Low	7	17.95%
Total		39	100%

The majority of students fell into the high category (46.15%), indicating that their interest in learning Arabic is relatively strong. When examined in terms of indicators, students' interest in learning tends to be strong in the areas of internal motivation and engagement, though there are still weaknesses in the areas of attention and consistency in learning. These findings are in line with the views of Muliani and Arusman [18], who state that interest in learning plays a role in increasing student engagement in the learning process. However, these results also show that a high level of interest does not necessarily lead to optimal learning outcomes.

Table 3. Distribution of the Maharah Kitabah Categories

Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
70	High	6	15.38%
55–69	Medium	13	33.33%
55	Low	20	51.28%
Total		39	100%

The majority of students (51.28%) fell into the low category, indicating that their writing skills still need to be improved. This low level of proficiency was evident in the areas of letter formation, word composition and sentence construction. These results are consistent with the views of Gulamovna and Dragomir and Niculescu [41], [42], who state that writing is a complex skill requiring intensive practice and mastery of linguistic aspects. Consequently, the students' low proficiency may be attributed to a lack of writing practice, limited vocabulary, and an insufficient grasp of grammatical rules.

Table 4. Normality Test Results (Shapiro-Wilk)

Variabel	Statistic	df	Sig.
Interest in Learning (X)	0.978	39	0.622
Writing Skills (Y)	0.935	39	0.156

The results of the normality test indicate that both variables have p-values greater than 0.05. This means that the data are normally distributed and meet the criteria for parametric analysis. Consequently, Pearson's correlation analysis can be used.

Table 5. Results of the Pearson Correlation Test

Variables	X	Y
Pearson Correlation	1	0.065
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.695
N	39	39

A correlation coefficient of 0.065 indicates a very weak relationship between interest in learning and writing ability. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.695 ($p > 0.05$) indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant. Although the direction of the relationship is positive, the very low strength of the relationship suggests that an increase in interest in learning is not directly followed by an increase in writing ability.

Table 6. Linearity Test Results

Components	Sig.
Linearity	0.685

A significance value of Deviation from Linearity ≤ 0.05 indicates that the relationship between the two variables is linear, thus meeting the criteria for correlation analysis.

2. Discussion

The research findings indicate that students' interest in learning falls into the high category, yet their writing skills remain low. This suggests a gap between the affective aspect and language skills. Theoretically, interest in learning is an internal factor that can enhance students' engagement in the learning process [43], [44]. However, the results of this study indicate that learning interest does not have a significant relationship with writing skills. This suggests that, in the context of Arabic writing skills, interest is not a dominant factor. This finding aligns with Yandi et al. [45], who state that learning outcomes are influenced by various factors, both internal and external. In this regard, writing skills are more influenced by linguistic factors such as vocabulary mastery (*mufradat*), understanding of grammatical rules (*qawa'id*), and the intensity of writing practice [46], [47].

Furthermore, external factors such as teaching methods, the teacher's role, and the learning environment also play a part [2], [48]. A lack of writing practice and limited variety in teaching methods are factors contributing to students' low proficiency. Thus, the results of this study confirm that improving writing skills requires more than simply increasing students' interest in learning; it must be supported by intensive practice, reinforcement of linguistic aspects, and more effective learning strategies.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

1. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion regarding the relationship between students' interest in learning and their writing skills in Year 8 at MTs Islam An-Nur Hangtuah, Kampar, Riau, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, there is no significant relationship between students' learning interest and their writing skills. This is evidenced by the results of the hypothesis test, which showed a significance value of $0.695 > 0.05$; consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected and the null hypothesis (H_0) accepted. This finding is also reinforced by the results of the Pearson correlation test, which showed a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.065 with a significance value of $0.695 > 0.05$, indicating that the relationship between the two variables is not statistically significant.

Secondly, the strength of the relationship between students' interest in learning and their writing skills falls into the very low (weak) category. This is indicated by a Beta coefficient of 0.065, which is consistent with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.065; it can therefore be concluded that the strength of the relationship between the two variables has almost no significant influence.

Thirdly, pupils' writing skills are influenced not only by their interest in learning but also by various other, more complex factors. Internal factors include pupils' linguistic abilities such as vocabulary mastery (*mufradat*), understanding of language rules (*qawa'id*), sentence-construction skills, the intensity of writing practice, and focus during learning. Meanwhile, external factors include the teaching methods used by teachers, the learning environment at school and at home, the role of teachers, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, and parental support, including the habit of practising writing at home. These two sets of factors collectively contribute to determining the level of students' Arabic writing ability.

2. Implication

For researchers, these findings indicate that learning interest alone is insufficient to explain variations in Arabic writing skills among students. Future research is recommended to examine other variables that may influence Arabic writing skills, such as vocabulary mastery, competence in Arabic grammar, learning motivation, teaching methods, the intensity of writing practice, and the use of instructional media. Further studies involving larger samples and different educational contexts are also encouraged to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting students' Arabic writing proficiency.

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