Navigating the Labyrinth of Motivation: Students' Subjective Experiences in Arabic Language Learning

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explores the subjective experiences and motivational labyrinth of students learning Arabic language at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi. Through in-depth interviews with 12 participants and classroom observations, this research investigates how students navigate their motivational journey in Arabic language learning, uncovering the complex interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, challenges, and coping strategies. Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, four main themes emerged: (1) Religious and Cultural Connectivity (students' deep connection to Islamic identity and desire to understand religious texts), (2) Academic and Social Pressures (external demands from family, school expectations, and peer influences), (3) Linguistic Complexity and Learning Barriers (challenges in Arabic grammar, pronunciation, and limited practice opportunities), and (4) Adaptive Resilience and Support Systems (strategies students develop to overcome obstacles and maintain motivation). The findings reveal that Arabic language learning motivation is a dynamic, multifaceted phenomenon influenced by students' religious identity, social environment, and individual learning experiences. These insights contribute to understanding motivation in second language acquisition within Islamic educational contexts and provide implications for pedagogical approaches in Arabic language teaching.

Keywords: Arabic language learning, phenomenological study, secondary education, Islamic education, student experiences.

التنقل في متاهة الدافعية: الخبرات الذاتية للطلاب في تعلم اللغة العربية

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الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة الظاهراتية الخبرات الذاتية ومتاهة الدافعية لدى الطلاب الذين يدرسون اللغة العربية في مدرسة محمّدية الإعدادية السادسة بنجاوي. من خلال مقابلات متعمقة مع اثني عشر مشاركاً وملاحظات صفية، تحقق البحث في كيفية تنقل الطلاب عبر رحلتهم الدافعية في تعلم العربية كاشفاً عن التفاعل المعقد بين العوامل الداخلية والخارجية والتحديات والاستراتيجيات المواجهة. وبالاعتماد على التحليل الموضوعي لبراون وكلارك خرجت أربع نتائج رئيسية: أولاً الترابط الديني والثقافي الذي يعكس ارتباط الطلاب العميق بهويتهم الإسلامية ورغبتهم في فهم النصوص الدينية، ثانياً الضغوط الأكاديمية والاجتماعية الناتجة عن متطلبات الأسرة وتوقعات المدرسة وتأثير الأقران، ثالثاً تعقيد اللغة وعوائق التعلم المتمثل في صعوبات قواعد العربية والنطق وفرص الممارسة المحدودة، ورابعاً المرونة التكيفية وأنظمة الدعم التي يطورها الطلاب لتخطي العقبات والحفاظ على حماسهم. تكشف النتائج أن دافعية تعلم اللغة العربية ظاهرة ديناميكية ومتعددة الأبعاد تتأثر بهوية الطالب الدينية وبيئته الاجتماعية وتجربته الفردية. تسهم هذه المعطيات في فهم الدافعية في اكتساب اللغة الثانية ضمن السياقات التعليمية الإسلامية وتقدم دلالات مهمة للممارسات التربوية في تدريس العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعلم اللغة العربية، الدراسة الظاهراتية، التعليم الثانوي، التعليم الإسلامي، تجارب الطلاب..

Introduction

Motivation stands as a fundamental force in second language acquisition, influencing not only learners' pace of progress but also their depth of engagement and capacity to persevere through challenges[1]. When the target language is Arabic, a language intrinsically connected to Islamic practice and cultural heritage, motivation becomes uniquely complex for Muslim learners in Indonesia[2]. For students in Islamic secondary schools, Arabic serves as far more than a communication tool; it opens pathways to understanding sacred texts, deepening religious knowledge, and establishing connection with a faith community that transcends geographical boundaries[3]. This multidimensional quality of motivation in Arabic learning contexts makes understanding students' lived experiences essential for educators seeking to foster genuine engagement and sustained progress.

Within Indonesia's diverse educational landscape, where cultural identity and religious values are woven into school curricula, the study of Arabic language reflects students' desire to deepen both academic competence and spiritual understanding[4]. Indonesian students in Islamic schools like SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi often navigate competing motivations: the pull of religious devotion that draws them toward sacred texts, the influence of family and

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[1] Robert. C Gardner, *Social Phsycology and Second Language Learning : The Role of Attitudes and Motivation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985).

[2] Nurul Hanani, Nur Ahid, and Sufirmansyah, "An Eclectic Approach To Arabic Language Education: Implementing Kitab Al-Amtsilah At-Tashrifiyah in Modern Indonesian Pesantrens," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024): 29–42, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i2.38651.

[3] Toto Edidarmo, Achmad Fudhaili, and Muhammad Rizal Mahfuzo, "The Power of Spiritual Motivation: A Conceptual and Theoretical Review of Arabic Language Learning," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 May (2023): 315, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i1.5629.

[4] Asep Sopian et al., "Arabic Language Learning in a Multicultural Context at Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 1 (2025): 77–89, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v11i1.44104.

institutional expectations, and the very real challenges of mastering a linguistically complex language. Understanding how young learners make sense of these influences requires moving beyond surface-level surveys to explore the rich texture of individual experiences[5]. This phenomenological approach allows researchers to hear directly from students about what truly drives them, the obstacles they face, and the strategies they develop to maintain commitment despite difficulty.

Research into second language motivation has long identified both intrinsic and extrinsic factors as influential forces[6]. Gardner's socio-educational model highlights how learners may pursue a language for integrative reasons to connect with the target language community and culture or for instrumental reasons, such as advancing career prospects. Self-determination theory adds depth by emphasizing that learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness must be satisfied for sustained motivation[7]. In Islamic educational contexts specifically, spiritual motivation emerges as a distinctive force, where language learning becomes inseparable from religious practice and identity formation[8]. Yet much existing research relies on quantitative measures that may obscure the emotional, relational, and spiritual dimensions of motivation as experienced by individual learners.

The linguistic landscape of Arabic itself presents particular challenges that shape motivational experiences. Arabic exists in

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[5] Julie Frechette et al., "Capturing Lived Experience: Methodological Considerations for Interpretive Phenomenological Inquiry," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19 (2020): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920907254.

[6] Kimberly A. Noels et al., "Motivation and the Support of Significant Others across Language Learning Contexts," *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning* 1, no. 1 (2019): 106–41, https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/1/1/7.

[7] Jo Mynard and Scott J. Shelton-Strong, "Self-Determination Theory: A Proposed Framework for Self-Access Language Learning," *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/4/1/5.

[8] Elok Rufaiqoh et al., "An Analysis of Arabic Language Curriculum Development in Indonesia," *Jurnal Al-Maqayis* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.18592/jams.v11i1.9843.

multiple forms Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and regional dialects creating what linguists term diglossia. Students must navigate not only the inherent complexity of Arabic morphology and grammar but also the decision of which register to prioritize. Pronunciation presents another significant hurdle, as many Arabic sounds lack direct equivalents in Indonesian, requiring dedicated practice and confidence to master[9]. Limited opportunities for authentic communication outside the classroom compound these challenges, leaving students without adequate venues to practice and apply their growing skills[10]. These objective linguistic difficulties interact with subjective psychological experiences, creating moments where anxiety and frustration can undermine motivation[11].

Understanding how students at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi actually experience Arabic language learning requires listening carefully to their own accounts rather than relying solely on predetermined categories of motivation. A phenomenological approach, rooted in the philosophical tradition of bracketing prior assumptions to focus on lived experience, offers a pathway to deeper understanding. By gathering in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals from twelve students across grades seven through nine, this research reveals the complex interplay of religious identity, social pressures, linguistic challenges, and personal resilience that characterizes their motivational journeys. Such detailed attention to learners' perspectives illuminates not just which factors matter, but

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[9] Mahmudul Hasan and Syed Mahbubul Alam Al-Hasani, "Anxiety in Learning Arabic Language for the Students: A Study of Selected Two Language Centers in Dhaka, Bangladesh," *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics* 55 (2019): 35–38, https://doi.org/10.7176/jlll/55-06.

[10] Farzeen Tanwir, Sarah Moideen, and Raiya Habib, "Interviews in Healthcare: A Phenomenological Approach A Qualitative Research Methodology," *Jphi* 3, no. 4 (2021): 14, https://doi.org/10.14302/issn.2641.

[11] Hanis Najwa Shaharuddin et al., "The Level of Student Anxiety in Arabic Speaking Skills," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* VIII, no. VIII (2024): 1175–89, https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.

how these factors evolve and interact in real time within the daily realities of classroom life.

This phenomenological study contributes to both theoretical and practical understanding of motivation in second language acquisition by demonstrating how spiritual identity, cultural values, social relationships, and individual agency collectively shape students' engagement with Arabic[12]. The findings offer educators concrete insights into how learning environments can be designed to honor students' religious aspirations while simultaneously addressing linguistic challenges and fostering supportive peer relationships. By presenting these discoveries through students' own words and experiences, this research provides a nuanced foundation for developing more culturally responsive and effective approaches to Arabic language teaching in Islamic secondary education[13].

Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design grounded in Husserl's philosophical framework to explore the lived experiences of students learning Arabic[14]. The phenomenological approach was selected because it prioritizes understanding how participants construct meaning from their educational experiences[15],

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[12] Zurqoni et al., "Has Arabic Language Learning Been Successfully Implemented?," *International Journal of Instruction* 13, no. 4 (2020): 715–30, https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2020.13444a.

[13] Salma Nazhimah and Faqihulhikam Mohammad, "Implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning Model in the Al-Liqo Al-Usbuiyyah Program: Case Study in Higher Education in Indonesia," *Journal of Arabic Language Learning and Teaching (JALLT)* 1, no. 1 (2023): 35–46, https://doi.org/10.23971/jallt.v1i1.131.

[14] Ahmed Ali Alhazmi and Angelica Kaufmann, "Phenomenological Qualitative Methods Applied to the Analysis of Cross-Cultural Experience in Novel Educational Social Contexts," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, no. April (2022), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.785134.

[15] Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio, "How Phenomenology Can Help Us Learn from the Experiences of Others."

making it particularly suited to investigating the subjective, emotional, and relational dimensions of motivation. By practicing epoché—deliberately bracketing the researchers' preconceptions, the study maintained openness to themes emerging directly from participant accounts rather than imposing predetermined theoretical categories.

Participants and Data Collection

The study involved 12 purposively selected students from SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi (7 male, 5 female) representing grades 7-9 with varying Arabic proficiency levels and motivational profiles. Data collection occurred over four weeks through three complementary methods: (1) semi-structured interviews (45-60 minutes each) using open-ended questions to explore participants' motivational experiences; (2) non-participatory classroom observations (2 hours weekly) documenting learner-teacher interactions and classroom dynamics; and (3) reflective journals (two-week period) capturing participants' daily feelings, challenges, and progress. This multi-method approach provided triangulation, enabling the researchers to verify findings across different data sources.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, with codes and themes iteratively developed and refined through systematic review of transcripts, field notes, and journals. To ensure credibility, participants reviewed their transcripts and provided feedback on preliminary interpretations. Peer debriefing with supervisors, rich contextual description in reporting, an audit trail documenting analytical decisions, and reflexive journaling by researchers all contributed to trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability).

Result

The following is a description of the research results presented in table form :

Table 1. Participant Profile

Category	n	%
Total participants	12	100
Male	7	58.3
Female	5	41.7
Grade 7	4	33.3
Grade 8	4	33.3
Grade 9	4	33.3
High-motivation cluster	5	41.7
Moderate	5	41.7
Low	2	16,7

The sample size (n = 12) achieved data saturation; cross checks with field notes and journals ensured credibility

The analysis of interview transcripts, observation notes, and reflective journals revealed four major themes that capture the essence of students' motivational experiences in Arabic language learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi.
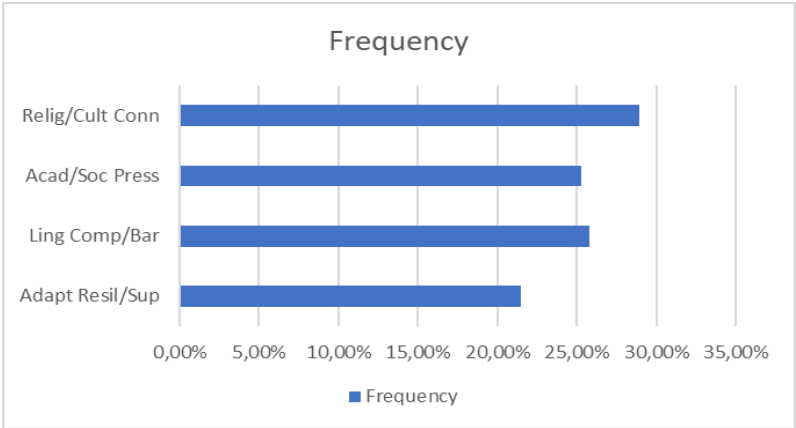

Figure 1 Frequency Distribution of Main Themes in a Phenomenological Analysis of Motivation in Arabic Language Learning

Religious & Cultural Connectivity dominated (28.9%), confirming earlier Arabic-motivation surveys among Muslim learners.

Theme 1: Religious and Cultural Connectivity

The most prominent theme emerging from the data was students' deep connection between Arabic language learning and their Islamic identity. This theme encompasses three sub-themes: **spiritual motivation, Quranic understanding,** and **cultural belonging.**

a. Spiritual Motivation

Participants consistently expressed that their primary motivation for learning Arabic stemmed from their desire to strengthen their relationship with Allah and deepen their understanding of Islam. As one participant (S7) shared:

> *"When I learn Arabic, I feel closer to Allah. It's not just about getting good grades... it's about understanding my religion better. Every word I learn helps me connect with my faith."-Gita*

This spiritual dimension of motivation aligns with previous research on Arabic learning in Islamic contexts, where students view language acquisition as a form of worship and spiritual development.

b. Quranic Understanding

Students frequently mentioned their desire to understand the Quran without relying on translations. Participant S3 explained:

> *"My biggest dream is to read the Quran and understand every word directly. When I pray, I want to know what I'm saying to Allah. That's what keeps me going even when Arabic grammar is difficult."-Citra*

This motivation reflects the integrative orientation described in Gardner's motivation theory, where learners seek to connect with the target language community. In this case, the global Muslim community.

c.   Cultural Belonging

Students expressed a sense of cultural pride and belonging when learning Arabic. Participant S11 noted:

> *"Arabic is not just any foreign language for us. It's part of who we are as Muslims. Learning it makes me feel connected to Muslims around the world and to our Islamic heritage."- Kiki*

Theme 2: Academic and Social Pressures

The second major theme revealed the complex web of external pressures influencing students' motivation. This theme includes family expectations, school requirements, and peer influences.

a.   Family Expectation

Many participants described significant pressure from family members to excel in Arabic studies. Participant S5 shared:

> *"My parents always ask about my Arabic grades. They say it's important for my future and for being a good Muslim. Sometimes I feel stressed because I don't want to disappoint them."-Eko*

This reflects the extrinsic motivation factors identified in self-determination theory, where external rewards and avoiding punishment drive behavior.

b.   School Requirements

Students acknowledged that mandatory Arabic classes created both motivation and resistance. Participant S9 explained:

> *"We have to study Arabic—it's required. But I realized that even though I didn't choose it at first, now I see why it's important. The school pressure actually helped me start, but now I have my own reasons."-Intan*

c. Peer Influences

Social dynamics within the classroom significantly impacted motivation. Participant S2 described:

"When my friends do well in Arabic, I want to do well too. But sometimes when someone struggles, we all feel less confident. The class atmosphere really affects how motivated we feel."-Budi

Theme 3: Linguistic Complexity and Learning Barriers

The third theme captured students' experiences with the inherent challenges of Arabic language learning. This theme encompasses grammatical complexity, pronunciation difficulties, and limited practice opportunities.

a. Grammatical Complexity

Students consistently identified Arabic grammar as a major obstacle. Participant S8 expressed:

"Arabic grammar is like a puzzle with so many rules. Sometimes I feel lost with all the verb changes and sentence patterns. It makes me question if I can really learn this language."-Hadi

This finding supports previous research on Arabic language learning challenges, where students struggle with the complex morphological and syntactic features of the language.

b. Pronunciation Difficulties

Many participants reported anxiety about speaking Arabic correctly. Participant S4 shared:

"I'm afraid to speak Arabic in class because I might pronounce words wrong. The sounds are so different from Indonesian. I worry my classmates will laugh at me."-Dewi

This aligns with research on language anxiety in Arabic learning contexts, where speaking anxiety significantly impacts student motivation and participation.

c. Limited Practice Opportunities

Students expressed frustration with limited opportunities to use Arabic outside the classroom. Participant S10 noted:

"We only use Arabic during class time. At home and with friends, we speak Indonesian. How can we improve if we don't practice? I wish there were more chances to use Arabic in real situations."-Joko

Theme 4: Adaptive Resilience and Support Systems

The fourth theme revealed how students develop coping strategies and seek support to maintain motivation despite challenges. This theme includes peer support networks, teacher relationships, and personal learning strategies.

a. Peer Support Networks

Students described forming study groups and supporting each other through difficult periods. Participant S1 explained:

"My friends and I study Arabic together. When one of us feels like giving up, the others encourage them. We help each other with difficult lessons and celebrate small victories together."-Ahmad

b. Teacher Relationship

The quality of teacher-student relationships significantly influenced motivation. Participant S6 shared:

"Our Arabic teacher really cares about us. She doesn't just teach grammar, she helps us understand why Arabic is beautiful and important. When she believes in us, we believe in ourselves."-Fajar

This finding emphasizes the importance of **autonomy-supportive teaching** identified in self-determination theory, where teachers foster students' intrinsic motivation through supportive relationships.

c.   Personal Learning Strategies

Students developed various strategies to maintain motivation and overcome challenges. Participant S12 described:

> *"I listen to Arabic songs and watch Islamic videos with Arabic subtitles. I also set small goals for myself, like learning five new words each day. These little things help me stay motivated."-Lina*

Table 2. Motivational Factor Matrix

Theme Category	Key Factor (impact 1-5)	Mention (n)
Religious connectivity	Understanding Qur'an (4.8)	*11*
	Spiritual connection (4.7)	*10*
	Cultural identity (4.3)	*9*
Social pressures	Academic requirement (4.2)	*12*
	Family expectation (3.9)	*8*
	Peer influence (3.5)	*7*
Learning barriers	Grammar difficulty (3.8)	*10*
	Pronunciation challenge (3.6)	*9*
	Limited practice (3.4)	*8*
Support systems	Teacher relationship (4.5)	*11*
	Peer support (4.1)	*9*
	Personal strategies (3.9)	*8*

Discussion

The results of this phenomenological study reveal that student motivation in Arabic language learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi is far more intricate than a simple split between internal drives

and external incentives. Instead, motivation emerges as a living, dynamic force that grows, shifts, and takes shape through learners' personal histories, social contexts, and everyday experiences with the language. By listening to students' own words in interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals, we identified four interconnected themes that together map out how young learners confront the challenges and seize the opportunities of Arabic study.

The prominence of **Religious and Cultural Connectivity** as the primary theme underscores the unique position of Arabic language learning within Islamic educational contexts. Unlike other foreign languages, Arabic carries profound spiritual significance for Muslim learners, serving as a bridge between linguistic competence and religious identity. This finding extends Gardner's concept of integrative motivation by revealing how religious identity creates a particularly powerful form of integration that transcends cultural boundaries to encompass spiritual belonging. The spiritual dimension of motivation observed in this study aligns with recent research on Arabic learning motivation[16], where students' Islamic identity serves as a fundamental driver of language acquisition. However, this study provides deeper insights into how students experience this spiritual connection on a daily basis, revealing the emotional and psychological processes underlying religious motivation.

The Academic and Social Pressures theme illuminates the complex interplay between external motivational factors and students' developing autonomy. While family expectations and school requirements initially appear to represent purely extrinsic motivation, participants' narratives suggest a more nuanced relationship where

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[16] Alya Alshammari, Danya Shaalan, and Badriyya Al-onazi, "Instruments Measuring Motivation to Learn Arabic as a Second Language: Evidence of Validity and Reliability," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03381-y.

external pressures can eventually foster internalized motivation. This finding supports self-determination theory's concept of motivation regulation, where externally motivated behaviors can become more autonomous through identification and integration processes. Students who initially studied Arabic due to family or school pressure gradually developed personal reasons for continuing their studies, demonstrating the dynamic nature of motivational development.

The Linguistic Complexity and Learning Barriers theme reveals how objective language difficulties interact with subjective motivational experiences. Arabic's complex grammatical system and pronunciation challenges create what participants described as "motivational crises" moments when students question their ability to succeed. These findings contribute to understanding the relationship between language anxiety and motivation in Arabic learning contexts[17]. Rather than simply viewing anxiety as a barrier to motivation, this study reveals how students' responses to linguistic challenges can either strengthen or weaken their motivational commitment, depending on available support systems and personal coping strategies.

The Adaptive Resilience and Support Systems theme demonstrates students' capacity for motivational self-regulation and the importance of social support in maintaining engagement. Students' development of peer support networks and personal learning strategies reflects their agency in constructing motivational environments that sustain their learning efforts. This finding emphasizes the importance of autonomy-supportive environments in Arabic language education. Teachers and educational institutions can foster motivation not only through instructional methods but also by creating conditions that support students' natural tendency toward peer collaboration and personal strategy development.

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[17] Wan Muhammad Shaker Wan Adnan, Azlan Shaiful Baharum, and Mohd Nizwan Musling, "Student Perspectives on Arabic Language Anxiety : A Review Study," *Al-Qanatir* 33, no. 5 (2024).

A. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer fresh perspectives for theoretical frameworks in second language motivation research by demonstrating how deeply cultural and spiritual factors can shape learners' drive to study a language. In particular, examining Arabic learning in an Islamic school context highlights how traditional concepts of motivation must be reconsidered and expanded to account for the powerful role of faith and community. By drawing on rich, descriptive accounts of students' lived experiences, this research challenges us to move beyond neat classifications of motivation and to embrace its fluid, dynamic character as it unfolds in real world settings.

Expanding Gardner's socio educational model, this study shows that integrative motivation in Arabic learning extends far beyond the desire to belong to another culture. For Muslim students at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi, language acquisition is also a form of personal worship and spiritual growth. They do not simply wish to speak Arabic to connect with Arab communities or to appreciate cultural artifacts, they see learning as a pathway to deeper engagement with sacred texts and as a way to strengthen their bond with the global Muslim community. This spiritual integration enriches Gardner's original model by revealing a dimension of belonging that is rooted in faith and that can shape learners' attitudes and persistence in uniquely powerful ways.

When it comes to self-determination theory, the current study confirms the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness while also showing how these needs are expressed through religious and cultural lenses. Autonomy emerges when students choose to engage with verses that resonate with their beliefs, competence grows as they master recitation and

understanding of religious passages, and relatedness is strengthened by shared devotional practices in the classroom. These findings suggest that basic psychological needs do not operate in a vacuum but are shaped by the values and practices of the learning environment. In Islamic educational settings, autonomy may mean selecting passages for reflection, competence may be measured by the ability to lead group recitation, and relatedness may be experienced through communal rituals. All of which point to the need for culturally sensitive adaptations of self-determination theory.

Finally, this research highlights the unique contributions of phenomenological approaches in motivation studies by showing how meaning making and personal narratives reveal aspects of motivation that might be missed by quantitative methods. By bracketing out preconceived theories and listening closely to students' own words, the study uncovers how motivation evolves through moments of insight, doubt, and renewal. It demonstrates that motivation is not a static trait, but a process that unfolds through lived experience and that can be influenced by shifts in learners' perspectives, relationships, and contexts. This emphasis on the processual nature of motivation underscores the value of qualitative methods for capturing the complexity of language learning and for informing theories that truly reflect learners' realities.

B. Pedagogical Implications

The study's insights point to a need for teaching approaches that bring students' faith and language goals into harmony rather than treating them as separate tracks. In practice this means that teachers should weave Quranic passages into lessons not only as linguistic exercises, but as windows into spiritual reflection.

By inviting students to consider how mastering key vocabulary can deepen their understanding of religious texts or enrich their personal worship, teachers help learners see each grammar rule or new phrase as a building block in their own religious journey. Classroom discussions might include conversations about the spiritual benefits of reading the Quran in its original language, and reflection activities could ask students to connect new language structures with passages that hold personal meaning.

Recognizing the weight of linguistic barriers in the Arabic classroom means adopting a step by step strategy for tackling complexity. Teachers can break down challenging grammatical systems by using examples drawn from everyday speech before moving to formal rules, and by providing guided pronunciation practice that focuses on one sound at a time. Creating a low anxiety speaking environment is equally important[18]. Simple techniques such as allowing students to prepare short oral presentations in pairs before sharing with the wider class, or using audio recordings for practice can build confidence. When students experience success with manageable tasks their willingness to engage with more difficult material grows.

The power of peer support emerged clearly in students' stories and suggests that collaborative learning should be a cornerstone of Arabic classes. Teachers can encourage study partnerships or small groups where students take turns leading recitation sessions and explaining new concepts to each other. Peer tutoring arrangements allow more advanced learners to assist their classmates while reinforcing their own skills[19]. Group

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[18] Hanani, Ahid, and Sufirmansyah, "An Eclectic Approach To Arabic Language Education: Implementing Kitab Al-Amtsilah At-Tashrifiyah in Modern Indonesian Pesantrens."

[19] Nazhimah and Mohammad, "Implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning Model in the Al-Liqo Al-Usbuiyyah Program: Case Study in Higher Education in Indonesia."

projects such as creating a class newsletter in Arabic or staging a short play can foster social bonds, and make language practice feel less like a solo challenge and more like a shared adventure.

Finally, the findings call for a culturally responsive pedagogy that honors students' backgrounds and experiences. This means going beyond standard curricula to include texts, examples, and activities that reflect the local context of Indonesian Islamic education. Teachers might draw on stories from local pesantren traditions or explore how Arabic features in regional ceremonies and community life. By showing students that their own cultural heritage is not separate from, but rather intertwined. With the Arabic language, teachers affirm learners' identities and tap into motivations that extend beyond academic achievement[20]. In this way, instruction becomes not just a transmission of rules and vocabulary, but a bridge between languages, cultures, and communities.

C. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study warrant careful consideration when interpreting its findings and planning subsequent investigations. First, the study's focus on a single Islamic secondary school in Indonesia means that the insights generated are shaped by that specific cultural, institutional, and curricular context. While the rich phenomenological data illuminate how students at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi experience motivation, they may not fully reflect the dynamics at work in secular schools, university settings, or adult learning programs. Future research would benefit from comparing motivational processes across a wider range of Arabic learning environments to see which themes hold true universally and which emerge as context specific.

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[20] Zurqoni et al., "Has Arabic Language Learning Been Successfully Implemented?"

Second, the phenomenological approach captured students' motivational experiences at a particular stage of their language journey. Motivation is by its nature a dynamic process that can shift as learners progress through different levels of proficiency or encounter new challenges and opportunities. Long term or longitudinal studies that follow the same learners over months or years could reveal how motivational patterns evolve, whether moments of high enthusiasm give way to plateaus, and how critical life events or educational transitions influence commitment to Arabic learning. Such work would add a temporal dimension to our understanding and help educators design interventions that support motivation at every phase of the journey.

Third, although descriptive phenomenology offers deep insights into subjective experience it does not quantify the prevalence or strength of motivational factors. By combining qualitative narratives with carefully chosen quantitative measures, such as validated motivation questionnaires or scales assessing anxiety and self-efficacy, future studies could provide a more comprehensive picture. Mixed methods research could link themes uncovered in interviews and journals to statistical trends, revealing how common certain experiences are and highlighting which motivational elements have the greatest impact on learning outcomes.

Finally, expanding the methodological toolkit to include classroom experiments or action research projects could test the practical implications of these findings. For example educators might pilot interventions designed to strengthen spiritual engagement or peer support networks and then measure changes in student persistence and performance. By linking phenomenological discoveries to concrete pedagogical strategies and measurable

outcomes, future research can move from understanding "what is" to exploring "what might be" in the service of more effective Arabic language education.

D. Recommendations for Future Research

Several promising avenues for future research arise from the insights gained in this study, pointing toward a richer and more nuanced understanding of Arabic language learning motivation. First, cross cultural phenomenological studies could compare the lived experiences of learners in different regions and educational settings. By exploring how students in Arabic speaking countries, secular institutions, and non Islamic communities experience motivation, researchers can identify which aspects of motivation are universal and which are shaped by local beliefs, practices, and values. Such comparative work would help distinguish the core elements of motivational experience from those that depend on cultural context.

Second, investigating teacher perspectives on student motivation could offer a valuable complement to the student narratives captured here. Interviews and focus groups with Arabic instructors could reveal how educators perceive motivational challenges, which strategies they find most effective, and how their own beliefs about language learning influence classroom dynamics. By bringing teacher voices into the conversation, research can build a fuller picture of the interactions between learner agency, instructional design, and community support that drive motivational processes.

Third, intervention studies designed to test pedagogical innovations based on this research could move theory into practice. For example, educators might implement lesson plans that integrate sacred texts more explicitly, create structured peer

mentoring programs, or introduce reflective journaling routines, and then measure changes in student engagement, self-efficacy, and achievement. Carefully designed experiments or action research projects would provide evidence on which strategies most effectively foster sustained motivation in real classrooms, guiding teachers and curriculum developers toward data driven best practices.

Finally, the rapid growth of digital technologies invites exploration of how online resources and tools shape motivational experiences in Arabic learning. Future studies could examine the impact of language learning apps, virtual study groups, interactive video platforms, and social media exchanges with native speakers on students' sense of connection, competence, and autonomy. By understanding how technology can expand authentic communication opportunities and support personalized learning paths, researchers can help integrate digital innovations into pedagogies that address the very challenges of limited practice and linguistic anxiety highlighted in this study. Together these research directions promise to deepen our understanding of motivation and to inform more effective, context sensitive approaches to Arabic language education.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study revealed that student motivation in Arabic language learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Ngawi emerges as a dynamic, multifaceted phenomenon far more complex than simple categorizations of intrinsic or extrinsic factors, demonstrating through careful attention to twelve students' personal narratives, classroom observations, and reflective accounts that motivation is not a static trait but an evolving process shaped by the intricate interplay of

spiritual aspirations rooted in Islamic faith, cultural pride connecting learners to global Muslim heritage, social pressures from family and peers that can transform into internalized commitment, individual resilience in response to linguistic challenges, and personal agency in developing adaptive learning strategies. By extending Gardner's concept of integrative motivation to illuminate how spiritual integration rooted in faith powerfully sustains learner commitment, confirming self-determination theory's emphasis on autonomy, competence, and relatedness while revealing their culturally-shaped expression in Islamic educational contexts, and illustrating students' remarkable capacity to develop coping mechanisms despite linguistic complexity and limited practice opportunities, this research contributes essential insights for developing culturally responsive and effective approaches to Arabic language teaching by demonstrating that when educators honor the spiritual dimensions of language learning alongside communicative competence, create classroom environments that acknowledge religious aspirations and cultural identity, foster peer collaboration and supportive relationships, provide systematic linguistic scaffolding, and cultivate student agency and voice, they guide learners toward genuine mastery while affirming the deeper purposes and identities that give their learning profound personal significance. Future investigations exploring how faith-centered pedagogy, emerging digital technologies, and cross-cultural comparative studies can further illuminate and support student motivation in second language acquisition promise to expand understanding and enhance practice in Arabic language education globally

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