

AKIDAH AKHLAK TEACHERS' STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE STUDENTS' LEARNING BOREDOM

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Abstract

This study explores the causes of students' learning boredom in Akidah and Akhlak lessons and examines how teachers address it within a pesantren context. This qualitative descriptive case study was conducted at MA Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng. The study utilized two main types of data: (1) data concerning the factors that cause students' boredom in learning Akidah and Akhlak, and (2) data describing the strategies employed by Akidah and Akhlak teachers to overcome such boredom. These data were obtained through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving selected teachers and students. The analysis revealed five key sources of boredom: excessive workload, monotonous teaching routines, low learning motivation, limited classroom dynamics, and the absence of refreshing activities. In response, teachers applied a set of adaptive strategies such as brief icebreakers, segmented lectures, storytelling with prophetic models, rotating collaborative methods, and flexible classroom arrangements. These efforts effectively enhanced engagement by increasing students' perceived value and sense of control, aligning with the principles of Control-Value Theory. The study contributes to Islamic education research by demonstrating that simple pedagogical adjustments rather than additional resources can meaningfully reduce learning fatigue and sustain motivation in faith-based subjects.

Keywords

Learning Boredom, *Akidah & Akhlak*, Islamic Education, Control-Value Theory, Student Engagement.



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INTRODUCTION

Classroom that aims to cultivate *Akidah* (Creed) and *Akhlak* (ethics) promise deep moral formation (Muhsinin, 2013); (Zulfikar, 2022); (Noorzanah, 2019). However, teachers often face a mismatch in practice between this ideality and classroom reality marked by academic anxiety, monotony, and student boredom. Contemporary updates to the Control-Value Theory (CVT) explain boredom as emerging when students appraise low value in tasks and perceive too little or too much control in some conditions in lecture-heavy lessons (Pekrun, 2024). Moreover, this study adapted *the burnout theory*, which is described as a syndrome with physical, emotional, and mental fatigue (Freudenberger, 1974). In such climates, anxiety and boredom can co-occur: anxious learners who feel activities are either trivial or overwhelming may disengage even in Islamic value subjects like *Akidah* and *Akhlak* (Deliani, 2020); (Ali & Bahtera, 2024); (Kadir et al., 2022).

Akidah and *Akhlak* education hold a central position within the Islamic education system, as it aims to cultivate students' faith, moral integrity, and spiritual awareness in everyday life (Haqqul et al., 2019); (Cubukcu, 2014). In the pesantren context, this subject is not merely cognitive but serves as the foundation for shaping attitudes and behaviors aligned with Islamic values (Nugraheni & Firmansyah, 2021); (Alfath, 2020); (Aji, 2025). However, sustaining students' engagement in these lessons can be challenging, especially when abstract theological and ethical concepts are taught through monotonous routines or disconnected from real-life relevance (Indra et al., 2025); (H. Hasni Noor, 2017); (Ma'arif, 2011). Addressing this challenge requires learning designs that enhance perceived value and appropriately balance difficulty, allowing moral and theological content to resonate with students' lived experiences.

International evidence since 2020 reinforces boredom's academic cost. Multilevel and longitudinal studies link boredom with lower engagement and achievement, while showing that intrinsic motivation mediates boredom's effect on outcomes (Borgonovi et al., 2023); (Zeng et al., 2024). Person-centered work also distinguishes boredom profiles, highlighting that both under-challenge and over-challenge can fuel disengagement (Tempelaar & Niculescu, 2023). It is also related to *burnout* terms that can produce demotivation, frustration, self-rejection, and more negative feelings (Christiana, 2020). For faith-based lessons that rely on sustained attention and reflection, these findings imply that pedagogical variety and motivational scaffolds are not optional add-ons but core to safeguarding learning.

Recent Indonesian studies in Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) echo these concerns and propose concrete remedies. Qualitative and classroom-based reports show that interactive media, structured discussion, and various activities reduce boredom and raise participation in PAI lessons (Novianti et al., 2024); (Permana et al., 2024). Case studies also record instructional strategies that help restart routines when they stall, such as icebreakers and group projects (Yasin & Komariah, 2023). Together, these academic works establish teacher orchestration, which includes climate, pacing, and method variety as a key motivator in religious education (Abdullah Lawang et al., 2024).

Learning fatigue and emotional strain can be exacerbated by the *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) context's additional structural pressures, which include rigorous residential schedules and conflicting academic and religious obligations (Fitriyah et al., 2024); (Saguni, 2023). The need for low-cost classroom strategies within boarding constraints is highlighted by recent Indonesian studies among *Santri* (students in Pesantren), which report burnout/stress signals that correlate with boredom and decreased engagement (Indra et al., 2025).

Preliminary observations and interviews at MA Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng revealed a noticeable decline in students' learning enthusiasm and motivation, particularly during *Akidah and Akhlak* lessons. Many students displayed signs of learning fatigue, such as inattentiveness, reduced participation, and a sense of mental exhaustion after prolonged study sessions. Interviews with teachers indicated that this decline was not due to lack of ability, but rather to the monotonous rhythm of daily learning within the pesantren schedule, which begins early in the morning and extends into the evening. The heavy academic and religious workload leaves limited time for cognitive rest, causing students to feel overwhelmed and disengaged from the moral and theological content that requires reflection and attentiveness.

Further analysis of teacher and student testimonies suggested several underlying factors behind this demotivation. Structurally, the pesantren's tightly packed schedule, uniform teaching formats, and exam-oriented assessments contribute to students' reduced learning vitality. Instructionally, repetitive lecturing methods and limited integration of interactive media or contextual examples make *Akidah and Akhlak* lessons feel abstract and disconnected from students' daily experiences. Psychologically, adolescents at this stage seek variety, relevance, and recognition in learning; when these needs are unmet, boredom becomes a natural response. Documentation of classroom routines supported these findings, showing that extended teacher-centered sessions often failed to sustain attention, especially among lower-grade students.

In response, the school management has implemented several initiatives to counter learning fatigue, such as restructuring class timetables, organizing extracurricular activities, and introducing thematic learning sessions. However, these efforts have not fully addressed the unique affective dimensions of boredom that arise in moral and theological subjects. Within this context, *Akidah* and *Akhlak* teachers hold a pivotal role, as they are directly responsible for shaping students' moral awareness and spiritual engagement. Their position requires not only cognitive instruction but also affective nurturing—cultivating interest, reflection, and inner motivation through creative pedagogical design. Thus, the problem of learning boredom in *Akidah and Akhlak* is not merely a pedagogical issue but a challenge of integrating faith-based values with modern educational psychology within the *pesantren* environment.

Theoretically, CVT provides a clear lens through which to view why *Akidah and Akhlak* classrooms degenerate into boredom (low value/miscalibrated control) and how to address this (raise value through relevance; calibrate control via clear goals, scaffolds, and autonomy support). Current syntheses highlight how design can alter boredom through dialogic tasks, value-rich prompts, and feedback that explains progress (Pekrun, 2024); (Tempelaar & Niculescu, 2023). The main practical challenge this study tackles is converting these insights into moves that are appropriate for *pesantren*-based *Akidah & Akhlak* instruction.

Previous studies in Indonesian Islamic education (PAI) have identified a range of pedagogical strategies to alleviate students' boredom—such as the integration of interactive media, contextual learning approaches, and varied instructional methods—and have mapped the key factors contributing to disengagement in PAI classrooms, including monotonous delivery, excessive rote learning, and limited teacher–student interaction (Novianti et al., 2024); (Permana et al., 2024); (Yasin & Komariah, 2023); (Fitriyah et al., 2024); (Saguni, 2023).

However, there is limited qualitative work that: a) focuses specifically on *Akidah* and *Akhlak* in the boarding-school context; b) unpacks teacher reasoning and enactment as an integrated strategy package including various methods, classroom climates, and motivational feedback; c) explicitly interprets practice through CVT. Instrument/description-oriented studies are growing, but mechanism-level accounts in *Akidah* and *Akhlak* in *Pesantren* settings remain scarce. This study is designed to fill the gap.

This study reconceptualizes boredom mitigation in Akidah and Akhlak learning as an integrated design challenge that aligns classroom climate, feedback practices, and instructional variation. By linking character formation ideals with the psychological realities of modern learners, it advances the application of Control-Value Theory within a faith-based context. The study contributes theoretically by extending boredom research to Islamic education, and practically by offering adaptable strategies for teachers to sustain engagement within the pedagogical and institutional limitations of pesantren schools.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to explore two objectives: identifying the causes of students' learning boredom in *Akidah and Akhlak* lessons and examining teachers' strategies to mitigate it. The research was conducted at MA Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, a pesantren characterized by intensive religious routines and structured schedules influencing students' affect and engagement. Participants were purposively selected for their relevance to the research focus and included a headmaster, two *Akidah and Akhlak* teachers, and seven students, ensuring triangulated perspectives from leadership, instruction, and learners.

Data for this study comprised two principal types: (1) data on the causes of students' boredom in Akidah and Akhlak at MA Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, and (2) data describing teachers' strategies to mitigate that boredom. These data were obtained from three sources: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and institutional documents (lesson plans/RPP, class logs, and related artefacts). The study population consisted of all students enrolled in the MA program at the pesantren; a purposive sample was used for in-depth inquiry, including seven students selected for variation in grade and engagement level, two *Akidah & Akhlak* teachers, and the headmaster (roles reported rather than names).

Data collection took place from 20 February 2024 to 25 June 2024. Non-participant classroom observations documented indicators of boredom (e.g., reduced participation, off-task behavior, flat affect) and the enactment of instructional routines. Semi-structured interviews elicited participants' explanations of causes, descriptions of classroom practices, and evaluations of mitigation moves; documents were reviewed to triangulate reported practices with lesson planning. Thematic analysis was then conducted using an iterative process of coding, category development, and constant comparison across roles and sources (Braun & Clarke, 2021); (Saldaña, 2021). Methodological

procedures and instrument design followed established qualitative conventions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), and triangulation across sources supported analytical credibility.

Data analysis in this study was conducted concretely and systematically to reflect the real process in the field. After all observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents were compiled, the researcher read and re-read the data to identify recurring themes related to the causes of student boredom and teachers' strategies to overcome it. Each piece of information was coded manually according to its relevance to these two themes. The codes were then grouped into broader categories such as "academic overload," "method monotony," "low motivation," and "pedagogical variation." Patterns and relationships between categories were compared across teacher, student, and headmaster perspectives to ensure consistency.

To maintain the credibility of the findings, the researcher compared data from different sources and moments of observation to confirm emerging patterns. Teachers were consulted to verify the accuracy of the interpretations, and all records of field notes and coding processes were documented to preserve analytical transparency. Ethical considerations were also implemented throughout the study by obtaining institutional permission, ensuring participant anonymity, and securing all data files.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Factors Contributing to Students' Learning Boredom

Data triangulation from interviews, classroom observations, and documents (see Figure 1) revealed five interconnected factors underlying students' boredom in Akidah and Akhlak learning: (1) low motivation, (2) heavy daily workload, (3) monotonous classroom climate, (4) limited method variation, and (5) lack of refreshing micro-breaks. Evidence from all sources consistently indicated that these elements collectively contributed to learning fatigue, particularly during mid-day sessions.

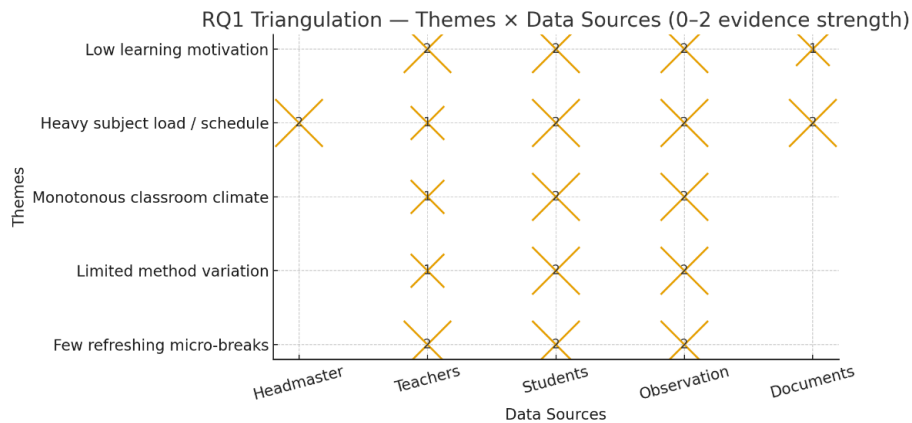


Figure 1. Data Triangulation Across Respondents and Data Sources

Figure 2 visualizes the frequency and salience of each factor, showing low motivation and heavy subject load as the most prevalent (5/5), followed by classroom monotony, limited variation, and few refreshing activities (4/5). These findings highlight how structural and instructional conditions intersect to shape disengagement. Students reported diminished attention when lessons felt repetitive or disconnected from real-life moral reasoning, while teachers noted reduced participation under static routines.

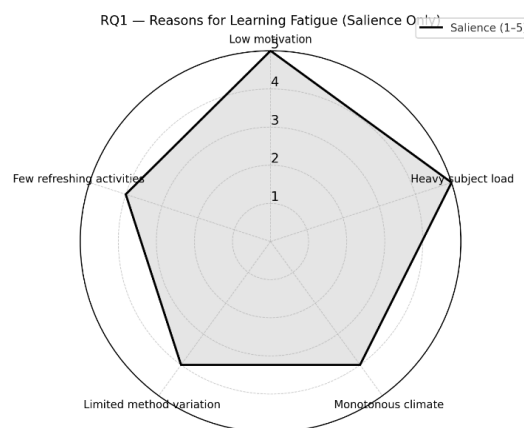


Figure 2. Main Factors Contributing to Learning Fatigue in Akidah and Akhlak Classes

Table 1 summarizes representative quotations illustrating each theme. Collectively, the data indicate that boredom arises not only from cognitive overload but also from weak task relevance and insufficient affective stimulation. In pesantren settings with compact schedules, the absence of short, engaging transitions or reflective pauses further amplifies fatigue, suggesting the need for a more dynamic instructional rhythm.

Table 1. Key Findings for Research Question 1: Reasons for Learning Boredom

Themes	Salience	Quotation
Low Motivation	5	"I often feel uninterested and tired when the lesson feels repetitive." (Student)
Heavy subject load	5	"There are too many subjects in one day, so my focus decreases quickly." (Student)
Monotonous classroom climate	4	"The class routine is always the same, and students lose attention fast." (Teacher)
Limited method variation	4	"We mostly use lectures; more discussion would make the lesson lively." (Teacher)
A few refreshing activities	4	"Without short ice-breakers, students look tired before the class ends." (Teacher)

Source: Field data obtained through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews.

Teachers' Strategies to Mitigate Boredom

In response, teachers employed an integrated set of eight low-cost, high-impact strategies designed to sustain students' attention and engagement (see Table 2). These strategies emerged consistently across data sources and formed a coherent pedagogical package tailored to pesantren constraints.

Table 2. Key Strategies for Mitigating Learning Fatigue in Akidah and Akhlak Classes

Key Point (Strategy)	Purpose	Example Moves	Implementation Tip	Evidence Source
Method variation	Prevent monotony; sustain attention	Think–Pair–Share; mini-debate; short group tasks	Rotate formats every 10–15 minutes	Teachers, Students, Observation
Interactive lecture redesign	Keep the explanation clear yet engaging	Short bursts of input + Q&A/polls	Segment talk into 5–7 min blocks	Teachers, Observation
Structured discussion (roles)	Inclusive participation and accountability	Assign moderator, note-taker, questioner	Use role cards; rotate each session	Teachers, Students
Project-based micro-tasks	Build ownership and relevance	2–3 period mini-projects; brief presentations	Provide clear criteria & a small choice	Teachers, Students, Observation
Storytelling & prophetic exemplars	Connect doctrine to lived experience	Short narratives; prompt moral reflection	Link story → question → action point	Teachers, Students
Ice-breakers / refreshing activities	Reset attention; reduce fatigue accumulation	60–90s energizers; 1-minute reflection	Place at mid-session dip	Teachers, Students, Observation
Motivational media (selective)	Affective–cognitive hook for abstract concepts	Short video clip → guided questions	Keep <2 minutes; connect to task	Teachers, Observation
Learning-space adjustments	Facilitate collaboration and focus	Circle seating; small groups; clear sightlines	Rearrange for the main activity	Teachers, Observation

Source: Field data obtained through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews

First, teachers applied method variation and interactive lecture redesign to prevent monotony—rotating between mini-discussions, problem-based tasks, and short presentation bursts. Second, structured discussions with assigned roles (moderator, note-taker, questioner) promoted inclusive participation and accountability. Third, project-based micro-tasks fostered ownership and relevance by allowing limited autonomy within clear moral objectives.

Fourth, storytelling and prophetic exemplars served as affective anchors connecting doctrine to lived experience, while brief ice-breakers and motivational media (under two minutes) effectively reset attention. Finally, learning-space adjustments, such as circular seating and small-group layouts, enhanced visibility and interaction.

As summarized in Table 2, these practices collectively shifted classroom dynamics from passive reception toward active, value-oriented engagement. Teachers' lesson plans (RPP) confirmed planning–enactment coherence, demonstrating that even modest adjustments in variation, participation structure, and classroom environment can meaningfully reduce boredom without additional resources.

Cross-Source Pattern

The cross-source analysis reveals that students' boredom in learning Akidah and Akhlak stems from a combination of structural and instructional elements. Structurally, excessive workloads and rigid schedules restrict students' cognitive recovery and rest, while instructionally, monotonous teaching methods and low content relevance fail to sustain curiosity and engagement. These dual factors collectively lead to mental fatigue and a decline in classroom enthusiasm. However, when teachers began integrating varied learning strategies—alternating between discussion, storytelling, and group activities—students' emotional responses shifted toward greater attentiveness and enjoyment. This shift indicates that the relationship between instructional style and student motivation is dynamic and can be positively influenced through deliberate classroom adjustments.

Furthermore, triangulated data from teachers, students, and leadership teams demonstrate that effective boredom mitigation requires a holistic, rather than fragmented, approach. Teachers who synchronized method variation with affective and reflective practices—such as providing motivational feedback, short refreshing breaks, and moral reflection—observed marked improvements in class participation and emotional tone. The findings suggest that combating learning fatigue in Akidah and Akhlak education is not merely about introducing new activities, but about constructing an integrated classroom ecosystem where cognitive, emotional, and moral

dimensions of learning support one another. This integrative approach fosters not only attentiveness but also deeper internalization of Islamic ethical values, making the learning experience more meaningful and enduring.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that learning fatigue in Akidah and Akhlak at MA Nurul Falah Borongganjeng is not a mere classroom inconvenience but a systemic phenomenon emerging from intertwined instructional, environmental, and structural factors. Observed disengagement—manifested as fatigue, inattentiveness, and low motivation—mirrors the burnout pattern of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy, which has been reported in comparable educational contexts (Chong et al., 2025). These findings address the first research question by confirming that boredom in faith-based subjects arises when high academic demands meet monotonous pedagogy and low affective stimulation (Anggorowati et al., 2017); (Jahidi, 2020); (Effect et al., 2021).

According to Control–Value Theory (CVT) (Pekrun, 2024), boredom occurs when learners perceive low task value or low control. In this study, monotony of teaching methods and overloaded schedules reduced both value and perceived control, creating emotional disconnection from the subject matter. When this imbalance persists, burnout symptoms can follow—a process also captured in Burnout Theory (Chong et al., 2025). Hence, the CVT–burnout link explains why boredom in Akidah and Akhlak is not simply psychological but structural, shaped by curriculum design and time pressure.

Teachers' responses directly addressed these control–value imbalances. Through method variation, micro-segmentation of lectures, storytelling, role-based discussions, micro-projects, and icebreakers, instructors recalibrated both perceived control and task value. In CVT terms, these interventions increased value through relevance and narrative meaning while restoring control through manageable pacing and clearer roles. The observed rise in participation supports the CVT proposition that emotional engagement follows improved appraisal of both dimensions.

These results align with prior research emphasizing active and varied instruction as antidotes to classroom boredom. Micro-breaks were shown to sustain attention (Sharpe et al., 2025), while post-pandemic pedagogical reforms in Islamic education promoted interactive, technology-supported learning for renewed motivation (Savira et al., 2025). Similarly, Santana-Monagas and Nunez (2024) highlighted that systemic boredom stems from static classroom cultures, thus validating our transition from monologic to dialogic and project-based formats (Santana-Monagas

& Nunez, 2024). Yet, this study moves beyond confirmation by locating these mechanisms within the unique ecosystem of pesantren learning, where extended schedules and moral instruction coexist.

Nevertheless, contrasts with the literature also emerge. While mainstream CVT studies center on secular contexts, this research extends the framework to a faith-based curriculum where spiritual meaning coexists with affective fatigue (Choli, 2019); (Kholidah, 2022). Unlike prior findings that stress technology integration as the main driver of engagement, our data suggest that meaningful variation and moral storytelling can achieve similar outcomes without technological dependence. This contrast underlines the adaptability of CVT principles in low-resource environments.

Practically, the combined intervention bundle forms a theory-informed pedagogical model directly mapping causes (RQ1) to counter-strategies (RQ2): overload, segmentation, and micro-breaks; monotony, rotation of methods; low motivation, storytelling, and authentic projects; uninspiring climate, role-based discussions, and space reconfiguration. These alignments show that boredom mitigation is most effective when design components, structure, interaction, and affect are synchronized rather than isolated (Tafonao, 2018); (Vadodkar, 2022); (Fadhillah, 2022); (Zeng et al., 2024).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the integration of CVT and burnout theory in explaining how instructional design mediates the transition from boredom to fatigue. Control and value appraisals act as cognitive levers that either buffer or accelerate burnout risk. When teachers redesign routines to enhance perceived competence and meaning, they interrupt the boredom–burnout pathway, maintaining students' engagement even in intensive religious settings (Zulhimma, 2015); (Yani et al., 2023); (Mawardi, 2019); (Yani et al., 2023).

In sum, this research advances the field by localizing the CVT–burnout interface to Islamic education and pesantren pedagogy. It demonstrates that well-calibrated lesson design, anchored in value, control, and affect, can restore vitality to doctrinal learning without departing from its theological depth. Future research may further test this framework quantitatively across different pesantren models to consolidate its generalizability.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students' learning boredom and fatigue in Akidah and Akhlak at MA Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng stem from interconnected instructional and structural conditions. The findings reveal that excessive academic load, repetitive lesson delivery, limited classroom variation, and low perceived relevance jointly undermine students' motivation and control, leading to disengagement and loss of focus. These dynamics confirm that boredom in Islamic doctrinal learning is not merely psychological but systemic—rooted in classroom routines, pacing, and the absence of affective stimulation that could renew students' attention. To address these issues, teachers implemented integrated, low-cost strategies that recalibrate both the value and control dimensions of learning. Through method rotation, interactive lecture segmentation, role-based discussions, short projects, prophetic storytelling, and brief icebreakers, they restructured classroom dynamics toward active participation and meaning-making. Such strategies transformed Akidah and Akhlak learning from passive reception to dialogic engagement, reinforcing the relevance of moral and theological content. In doing so, this study highlights that carefully designed, context-sensitive pedagogy can mitigate boredom, sustain students' engagement, and strengthen the holistic aims of Islamic education in pesantren settings.

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