

The Effect of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence on Improving Learning Motivation of Fourth Grade Students at SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to conceptually examine the role of teachers' pedagogical competence in enhancing students' learning motivation within the primary education context, linking it to current educational policies and classroom practices. The study employs a literature review approach, complemented by preliminary empirical data from limited observations and interviews at the research site, as outlined in the thesis proposal. Data were analyzed descriptively and analytically, dialoguing conceptual insights with initial empirical findings, relevant learning motivation theories, pedagogical competence frameworks, and prior studies. The findings indicate that teachers' pedagogical competence—particularly in understanding student characteristics, designing instructional activities, and utilizing interactive learning media—plays a crucial role in fostering students' learning motivation. These results emphasize the need to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills to improve instructional quality continuously. The novelty of this article lies in synthesizing the conceptual link between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' learning motivation, contextualized within actual classroom practices, providing a strong basis for future quantitative research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education has a strategic role in developing students' potential comprehensively, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Through a well-planned educational process, students are expected to develop the intelligence, personality, and skills needed for social life. At the elementary school level, education not only serves as a means of knowledge transfer but also lays the foundation for character development, ways of thinking, and students' learning motivation. Learning motivation is a key factor in determining the success of the learning process, as it encourages students to be actively involved, persistent, and responsible in learning activities [1], [2].

Learning motivation is influenced by a range of internal and external factors. Internal factors relate to students' impulses, such as the desire to succeed and expectations for the future, while external factors relate to the learning environment, learning strategies, and the roles of educators and school management [3], [4]. In the context of elementary school learning, external factors play a significant role, especially because students still require intensive stimulation and guidance to foster interest and enthusiasm for learning. Therefore, the role of teachers, the use of learning media, and support from school principals become important and interrelated elements in shaping students' learning motivation [5], [6].

Teachers play a central role in the learning process, not only as transmitters of subject matter but also as facilitators and motivators who can create a conducive, meaningful learning environment. Teachers' pedagogical competence serves as the main foundation in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning in accordance with students' characteristics [7]. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence tend to manage classrooms effectively, apply varied methods, and foster interactions that encourage active student engagement. Conversely, limitations in pedagogical competence can lead to monotonous learning and a reduced ability to stimulate students' motivation to learn.

In addition to teachers' pedagogical competence, the use of interactive learning media also plays an important role in enhancing learning motivation. Interactive learning media present learning materials in a more engaging, visual, and participatory manner, thereby helping students better understand learning concepts [8]. In the digital era, the use of interactive media is both a demand and an opportunity for elementary schools to create learning experiences that align with students' characteristics. However, in practice, the use of interactive learning media in elementary schools has not always been optimal. Initial empirical findings from observations and preliminary interviews indicate that learning is still dominated by conventional methods, leading students to quickly feel bored and less motivated to participate in the learning process actively.

Teachers' pedagogical competence is a primary factor in improving learning motivation among elementary school students. Teachers not only act as conveyors of material but also as learning designers, facilitators, and motivators, creating meaningful and enjoyable learning environments. According to Suyanto and Jihad [9], pedagogical competence includes teachers' ability to understand students' characteristics, design and implement educative learning, and conduct continuous evaluations to improve the quality of the learning process. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence can adjust learning methods and strategies to students' needs, thereby fostering students' interest, attention, and learning motivation.

Besides teachers' pedagogical competence, the use of interactive learning media also enhances students' learning motivation. Interactive learning media help teachers present materials in visual, engaging, and contextual ways, so students become more actively involved in the learning process. Putra and Setiawan [10] state that the use of technology-based interactive learning media can increase attention, engagement, and learning motivation among elementary school students by providing more varied and less monotonous learning experiences. Thus, teachers' pedagogical competence in selecting and using appropriate learning media is a key to successful learning.

Various previous studies indicate that teachers' pedagogical competence significantly affects elementary school students' learning motivation. Fitriani [1] found that teachers with strong pedagogical competence can increase active participation and students' learning motivation. However, studies specifically examining the influence of teachers' pedagogical competence in the context of SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency, remain limited. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on the learning motivation of fourth-grade students at SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency, and is expected to make theoretical and practical contributions to the development of learning in elementary schools.

2. METHOD

The research method in this article employs a conceptual study approach enriched with a literature review and initial empirical data. The objective of this study is to analyze the interrelationships among teachers' pedagogical competence, the use of interactive learning media, and school principals' support capacity in shaping the learning motivation of elementary school students, based on theoretical studies and empirical contexts in the field.

This research was conducted at SD Negeri 03 Susukan, Comal District, Pemalang Regency. The location was selected based on the identified problems related to students' learning motivation, associated with teaching practices, the use of learning media, and leadership support from the school principal, as observed during the initial observation stage.

The data sources in this study include theoretical and initial empirical data. The theoretical data were obtained through a literature study covering textbooks, accredited national journal articles, and previous research findings relevant to the research topic. Initial empirical data were collected through classroom observations and limited preliminary interviews conducted with teachers and school representatives. The number of respondents involved in the collection of initial empirical data was not intended for statistical representation but rather as a source of contextual information to strengthen the conceptual analysis.

Data collection techniques included literature study, non-participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. The literature review was used to construct the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework, while observations and preliminary interviews were conducted to obtain an initial overview of learning conditions, the use of interactive learning media, and the school principal's support for the learning process.

Data analysis was carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach, examining the interrelationships among concepts based on theories and previous research findings, and then relating them to the initial empirical findings in the field. This analysis aimed to develop a conceptual synthesis explaining the roles of teachers' pedagogical competence, interactive learning media, and school principal support in enhancing students' learning motivation.

Further research is recommended to employ a quantitative approach using survey or ex post facto designs to empirically test the relationships and effects among the variables discussed in this article, as outlined in the research proposal.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented in the form of a conceptual analysis based on a literature review and strengthened by initial empirical findings from observations and preliminary interviews conducted at SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency. The discussion links contemporary theories, findings from previous studies, and field conditions to examine the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on the learning motivation of fourth-grade elementary school students.

3.1 Teachers' Pedagogical Competence and Students' Learning Motivation

Teachers' pedagogical competence is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of students' learning motivation, particularly at the elementary school level, where students' cognitive, emotional, and social development is still forming. Pedagogical competence encompasses teachers' abilities to understand learners' characteristics, design instructional strategies, implement effective teaching methods, manage classrooms, and conduct assessments that support continuous learning improvement. When these competencies are optimally developed, teachers can foster a learning environment that is engaging, meaningful, and motivating for students.

Several empirical studies have demonstrated that pedagogical competence has a direct and significant relationship with students' learning motivation. According to Hattie [16], teachers with strong pedagogical skills are more effective at creating learning experiences that enhance students' intrinsic motivation and engagement. This is supported by Darling-Hammond et al. [17], who argue that teachers' ability to align instructional strategies with students' learning needs significantly influences students' willingness to participate actively in classroom activities.

Fitriani [1] asserts that teachers' pedagogical competence significantly affects elementary school students' learning motivation, as teachers who understand students' learning styles, prior knowledge, and socio-emotional conditions are better equipped to design relevant and meaningful instruction. Similarly, Baihaqi and Utama [7] emphasize that systematic lesson planning, appropriate strategy selection, and the implementation of student-centered learning approaches contribute positively to students' interest and motivation in learning. Student-centered pedagogical practices, such as collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and contextual teaching, have been shown to increase students' sense of autonomy and competence, which are key components of learning motivation [18].

Initial empirical findings at SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency, reveal notable variations in teachers' pedagogical competence. Some teachers have demonstrated the ability to implement diverse instructional approaches, including interactive discussions, group work, and the use of learning media that actively engage students. In classrooms where such practices are applied, students tend to show higher levels of enthusiasm, confidence in asking questions, and active participation in discussions. These findings align with the work of Schunk, Meece, and Pintrich [19], who state that engaging instructional strategies positively influence students' motivational beliefs and learning behaviors.

Conversely, the findings also indicate that some teachers still rely heavily on conventional lecture-based methods with limited student interaction. In such learning environments, students are more likely to experience boredom, reduced attention, and lower motivation to engage in learning activities. Research by Kunter et al. [20] confirms that monotonous instructional practices negatively affect students' learning motivation and emotional engagement. Moreover, ineffective classroom management and limited feedback further reduce students' motivation and interest in learning [21].

Rahman and Suryani [11] emphasize that teachers' pedagogical competence functions not only as a technical teaching skill but also as a psychological factor that influences students' motivation, attitudes, and engagement. Teachers who can provide positive reinforcement, foster supportive classroom climates, and adapt teaching methods to students' individual differences are more effective at stimulating learning motivation. This view is supported by Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory [22], which highlights the importance of autonomy support, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation among learners.

Furthermore, effective pedagogical competence enables teachers to conduct formative assessments and reflective evaluations that support students' learning progress. Feedback-oriented assessment practices help students recognize their strengths and areas for improvement, thereby increasing their motivation to learn [23]. In the context of elementary education, such practices are crucial for building students' confidence and sustaining their interest in learning over time.

Thus, it can be concluded that teachers' pedagogical competence strongly influences the improvement of fourth-grade students' learning motivation at SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency. The greater the teachers' pedagogical competence in understanding students, designing instruction, implementing engaging learning activities, and conducting meaningful evaluations, the higher the students' learning motivation, as reflected in their activity, interest, confidence, and enthusiasm in participating in the learning process.

3.2 Synthesis of Findings and Research Novelty

Based on the literature review and initial empirical findings, it is evident that teachers' pedagogical competence plays a significant role in enhancing elementary school students' learning motivation. Teachers who understand students' characteristics, design meaningful and contextually relevant learning, implement varied instructional strategies, and conduct reflective evaluations are better able to create a conducive learning environment that promotes active student involvement. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which highlight pedagogical competence as a key factor in motivating students and improving learning outcomes [24].

Initial empirical findings at SD Gugus Pattimura indicate that variations in teachers' pedagogical competence directly correspond to differences in students' learning motivation, particularly in attention, activity, and enthusiasm during classroom activities. Classrooms led by teachers with higher pedagogical competence tend to demonstrate more dynamic interactions, stronger student engagement, and a more positive learning atmosphere.

Conversely, limited pedagogical competence often results in less engaging instruction and lower student motivation. These results reinforce the argument that pedagogical competence is a critical component of effective teaching in elementary education [25].

The novelty of this article lies in its emphasis on positioning teachers' pedagogical competence as the primary variable influencing the learning motivation of fourth-grade elementary school students, supported by analysis within the initial empirical context of SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency. Unlike previous studies that often examine pedagogical competence in relation to learning outcomes or achievement, this study highlights its role in shaping students' learning motivation within a real classroom context. This localized empirical perspective provides a more concrete, context-specific understanding of how pedagogical practices directly affect students' motivational dynamics in elementary schools.

Accordingly, the findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of research on teacher competence and learning motivation, particularly in elementary education contexts. In practice, the results may serve as a reference for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in designing professional development programs and learning strategies that prioritize the enhancement of pedagogical competence to improve students' learning motivation.

4. CONCLUSION

This article emphasizes that teachers' pedagogical competence plays a crucial role in improving the learning motivation of elementary school students, particularly fourth-grade students at SD Gugus Pattimura, Comal District, Pemalang Regency. Teachers who possess strong pedagogical abilities, such as understanding students' characteristics, designing meaningful learning experiences, implementing interactive learning, and conducting reflective evaluations, can create a conducive learning environment and motivate students to engage in the learning process actively.

The main contribution of this article lies in strengthening the conceptual study on the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' learning motivation, supported by initial empirical findings in the field. This article confirms that students' learning motivation is influenced not only by internal student factors but also strongly determined by the quality of teachers' pedagogical practices in managing classroom learning. Therefore, efforts to improve students' learning motivation should focus on systematic initiatives to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence.

The practical implications of this study indicate that elementary education units need to pay serious attention to developing teachers' pedagogical competence through continuous training, reflective teaching practices, and the implementation of student-centered learning strategies. Pedagogically competent teachers are expected to deliver learning experiences that are engaging, meaningful, and capable of fostering sustainable learning motivation among students.

As a limitation, this article remains conceptual, is supported by initial empirical findings, and therefore has not quantitatively tested the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on students' learning motivation. Accordingly, future research is recommended

to employ a quantitative approach using survey or ex post facto designs to statistically examine the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on students' learning motivation. Further studies involving a larger number of respondents and standardized instruments are expected to provide stronger empirical support for the findings and conceptual framework presented in this article.

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