



Research Article

## The Dimension of Student Engagement in Qur'anic Literacy Learning: A Case Study of Kokoda Tribe Students at MTs Emeyodere

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### The Dimension of Student Engagement in Qur'anic Literacy Learning: A Case Study of Kokoda Tribe Students at MTs Emeyodere

**Abstract.** Qur'anic literacy among minority communities, such as the Kokoda Tribe, faces significant challenges, particularly in Qur'anic reading and writing learning (BTQ). This study aims to analyze the engagement of Kokoda Tribe students in BTQ learning, focusing on three aspects: behavioral,

emotional, and cognitive. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with students and teachers, and documentation of learning activities at MTs Emeyodere. The findings show that student engagement is greatly influenced by emotional factors, especially curiosity about the Qur'an. Students demonstrate high behavioral engagement in physical activities during lessons, although cognitive challenges, such as Arabic letter pronunciation influenced by local dialects, remain obstacles. This study concludes that social and cultural factors strongly affect student engagement in Qur'anic learning, with emotional engagement more dominant than cognitive. The implication of this research is the importance of teaching approaches that consider students' cultural backgrounds to improve the effectiveness of Qur'anic learning.

**Keywords:** Student Engagement, Al-Qur'an Literacy, Kokoda Tribe, PAI

## INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic reading and writing learning (BTQ) plays a very important role in Islamic education, particularly in Indonesia. As the holy book of Muslims, the Qur'an not only serves as a source of religious teachings but also functions as a moral, ethical foundation and life guide that directs every aspect of Muslim life (Amrindono, 2022). Therefore, Qur'anic literacy becomes a fundamental component in Islamic education, from basic education levels to higher education. In this context, BTQ not only teaches the ability to read and write the Qur'an but also delves into its meanings and interpretations that shape character and deep religious understanding.

Many studies on BTQ have been conducted, mainly focusing on teaching methods, curriculum effectiveness, and learning outcomes in majority communities. Studies such as those by Setiawan (2024) and Nimim Ali (2024) highlight the importance of applying effective teaching techniques and designing appropriate curricula to improve students' understanding of the Qur'an. However, most of these studies tend to overlook the dimension of student engagement in learning, which plays a crucial role in enhancing learning effectiveness. Furthermore, very few studies examine student engagement from the perspective of marginalized tribes, particularly the Kokoda Tribe, which is part of a minority community in Indonesia. Student engagement in BTQ learning depends not only on teaching methods but also on how students feel connected emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to the material being taught (Hasby Izhari Nur & Amirudin, 2025). Therefore, research on student engagement, especially among marginalized tribal groups, is necessary to fill gaps in the literature.

The Kokoda Tribe is one of the ethnic groups living in remote areas of Indonesia, particularly in the Papua region. This tribe has strong cultural traditions, with social life still deeply rooted in customs and local beliefs (Shabila et al., 2025). These socio-cultural conditions also influence their perceptions of education, especially religious education. At MTs Emeyodere, which is one of the educational institutions serving Kokoda Tribe students, the greatest challenge is how to integrate Qur'an-based religious education with local cultural values. Research on the engagement of Kokoda Tribe students in BTQ learning is very important because it can provide insights into how to overcome these challenges and design more inclusive approaches to teaching

Qur'anic literacy to students from minority tribes (Habibah, 2025). By understanding the social and cultural context of the Kokoda Tribe, we can better appreciate the dynamics of their engagement in the learning process, as well as determine the factors that encourage or hinder their engagement (Ririk et al., 2025).

This study aims to deeply analyze the involvement of Kokoda Tribe students in Quranic learning at MTs Emeyodere. The main focus of this research is to identify three dimensions of student engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. This study will explore how Kokoda Tribe students engage in each of these aspects and how socio-cultural factors influence their engagement. Thus, the purpose of this research is to provide a clearer picture of student engagement in the BTQ learning process and how this can be optimized to improve the quality of religious education among marginalized communities.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore an in-depth understanding of Kokoda Tribe students' involvement in reading and writing the Qur'an (BTQ). A case study was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore this phenomenon contextually, focusing on the specific social and cultural environment at MTs Emeyodere. The subjects of this study are 20 Kokoda Tribe students who are attending BTQ lessons at the school. Subjects were selected purposively, with the criteria that the students are from the Kokoda Tribe and willing to participate in observations and interviews. Through this approach, the researcher can comprehensively understand the dimensions of student engagement, both in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects.

Data in this study were collected through three main techniques. First, participant observation was conducted to directly observe students' behavioral engagement during the BTQ learning process, including physical activities such as attendance and student participation in class activities. Second, in-depth interviews with BTQ students and teachers were used to explore their views on learning experiences and students' emotional and cognitive engagement. Third, documentation in the form of learning materials, assigned tasks, and student learning outcomes, such as memorization records and exercises in writing Hijaiyah letters, were also collected to supplement cognitive data. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles & Huberman model consisting of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. With this approach, it is expected to obtain a clear picture of the factors influencing Kokoda Tribe students' engagement in Quranic learning.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section combines the main findings of the study and the discussion of those findings with relevant theories. The author will examine each dimension of student engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) by considering the socio-cultural context, school environment, and related theories.

## **1 Behavioral Engagement**

### **a. Attendance Data**

Based on observations conducted, the attendance data of Kokoda Tribe students at MTs Emeyodere show a very minimal attendance rate. This is reflected in the absences recorded during the research period. Most students do not consistently attend Reading and Writing the Qur'an (BTQ) lessons, which indicates a lack of engagement in their learning. This absenteeism may be influenced by external factors, such as limited access to transportation or socio-cultural factors, which affect their priorities regarding education.

### **b. Physical Activity**

During observations, it was seen that students' physical activities in learning tended not to show sufficient attention to the teacher. Students often did not follow the movements demonstrated by the teacher when spelling letters on the board, and many of them were more interested in interacting with peers than following the instructions given by the teacher. This indicates low physical engagement in learning, which can potentially hinder their overall learning process. Low physical activity can also affect the effectiveness of learning, as physical involvement in repeating and demonstrating letters or words can help reinforce students' memory.

### **c. Student Compliance**

Although students show compliance with writing tasks, they tend to avoid memorization tasks or tasks perceived as difficult by them. Tasks that require high memory, such as memorizing Hijaiyah letters or reading verses of the Qur'an, are often not completed by some students. This shows that although there is compliance with lighter tasks, such as writing, students feel difficulty or lack interest in tasks that require more effort. This phenomenon reflects limitations in students' cognitive and emotional engagement, which may be influenced by their perception of material difficulty or lack of motivation.

### **d. Discussion**

Low student attendance rates and their low physical involvement in BTQ learning can be influenced by several internal and external factors. Socio-culturally, Kokoda students may have different daily life priorities that affect their commitment to education. Some students may be more focused on work or responsibilities outside school, causing inconsistent class attendance. Additionally, physical inactivity in class may indicate a lack of motivation or interest in Qur'anic learning, which could be due to unengaging teaching methods or content that is not relevant to their needs.

Compliance with lighter writing tasks indicates that students may be more interested in activities that are more concrete and easier to complete. However, when faced with more challenging tasks, such as memorizing or reading, students tend to feel pressured and prefer not to do them. This reflects challenges in their cognitive and emotional engagement that may need to be addressed with teaching approaches better suited to their social and cultural context. Learning that emphasizes interactive approaches and touches on their cultural aspects can increase student engagement—physically, emotionally, and cognitively.

## **2 Emotional Engagement**

### **a. Students' Feelings**

Interviews with students show that they have positive feelings toward Qur'anic learning, even though their physical engagement in activities tends to be low. One student said, "I enjoy learning the Qur'an because I want to recite like my older sibling." This statement reflects strong emotional motivation, where the student feels inspired by family members, especially an older sibling who is seen as a role model in recitation. The desire to follow in the footsteps of older family members indicates a deep emotional attachment to the Qur'anic learning process, despite external factors such as task difficulty that may hinder further engagement.

### **b. Emotional Expression**

During observation, students' emotional expressions appeared to vary. Some students showed enthusiasm when involved in discussions about the meaning of verses or when the teacher provided engaging explanations. However, some students also showed signs of boredom, especially when learning sessions focused on tasks perceived as heavy, such as memorizing letters or verses. Listless facial expressions or inactive body movements indicate a lack of emotional motivation to follow the ongoing lessons. This suggests that students' emotional engagement is highly influenced by the type of material taught and how the teacher delivers it.

### **c. Rapport**

The rapport between students and BTQ teachers at MTs Emeyodere plays an important role in enhancing students' emotional engagement. Students who feel close to their teacher, such as receiving more attention or feeling valued by the teacher, tend to show higher levels of emotional engagement. BTQ teachers at MTs Emeyodere are known for their warm and caring approaches, which allow students to feel more comfortable asking questions and participating in learning. This positive relationship not only strengthens students' desire to learn but also creates a supportive classroom atmosphere that facilitates their emotional engagement.

### **d. Discussion**

Kokoda students' emotional engagement in Qur'anic learning is strongly influenced by socio-cultural and psychological factors. One main reason for their high emotional engagement is a strong Muslim identity embedded in their daily lives (Prabawati, 2023). As members of a Muslim community, they feel an obligation to learn and master the Qur'an, which is also reinforced by family influences, such as a student's statement about wanting to recite like an older sibling. This indicates that religious values and cultural identity play a major role in driving their emotional engagement in learning (Ahriani et al., 2021).

The closeness of the relationship between students and teachers also plays an important role in enhancing emotional engagement (Basith, 2024). BTQ teachers who adopt a warm and attentive approach can build closer relationships with students, which in turn increases students' comfort and trust in the learning process. When students feel valued and cared for, they are more emotionally motivated to engage in learning, even when facing challenges in heavier tasks (Arifah, 2024). Therefore, learning that prioritizes an emotionally sensitive approach to students' needs—such

as recognizing the challenges they face in memorizing or reading—is essential to increase students' emotional engagement in BTQ classes.

### **3 Cognitive Engagement**

#### **a. Independent Learning Strategies**

Based on interviews with students, they tend not to show initiative to study independently outside school hours. Students spend more time at home helping their parents with economic work, such as farming or trading. This results in them not having much time to study the Qur'an outside class hours. Students feel that school is sufficient as their learning center and do not feel the need to continue or deepen material at home. This habit indicates limitations in independent learning strategies that should be an important part of the learning process, especially for material that requires repetition and practice, such as memorizing and writing Hijaiyah letters.

#### **b. Questions and Understanding**

When students find it difficult to understand differences in makhraj (points of articulation of letters), they rarely ask the teacher or classmates. Based on interviews, students tend to feel embarrassed to ask, even if they do not understand the material well. After class, when asked questions related to the material that has been taught, most students are unable to provide adequate answers. This shows that although they feel difficulty, they do not try to resolve their confusion by asking or seeking further explanation. Feelings of shame and lack of confidence to ask prevent them from gaining better understanding, which ultimately affects their cognitive engagement in the learning process.

#### **c. Willingness to Exceed Targets**

Despite obstacles in their cognitive engagement, some students show a willingness to exceed targets set by the teacher. In a conversation with one student, the student expressed a strong desire to be able to recite properly, because they want to help their parents in the hereafter. This desire shows a very strong motivation to learn further and achieve deeper understanding of the Qur'an. Although they face challenges, such as difficulties in memorizing or understanding makhraj, students still have the drive to surpass existing limitations and pursue larger personal goals.

#### **d. Discussion**

The cognitive barriers faced by Kokoda Tribe students in BTQ learning are greatly influenced by several factors. One is the influence of the Kokoda Tribe's native dialect on the pronunciation of Arabic letters. The dialect used by the Kokoda Tribe has a phonetic structure different from Arabic, so students often have difficulty distinguishing pronunciations of letters that have similar makhraj (Rahmatia, 2021). According to second language acquisition theory, as explained by Lado (1957), second language learners often have difficulty producing sounds that do not exist in their mother tongue (Sukma et al., 2025). This explains why Kokoda Tribe students may struggle to pronounce Arabic letters correctly, which is a significant cognitive barrier in their learning.

In addition, the low level of independent learning strategies at home is also a factor that hinders students' cognitive engagement. They prefer to help their parents with economic work and do not consider it important to continue learning outside

school. This creates dependence on material provided at school and limits their cognitive development outside the classroom. Limited time and the priority given to household work can prevent them from developing effective independent study habits (Iswantiningtyas, 2021).

Shyness and lack of confidence to ask questions are also major barriers to students' cognitive engagement. They do not feel comfortable asking questions, even though they do not understand the material well. This indicates that students do not take advantage of opportunities to learn more deeply through interaction with teachers or peers. Overcoming these barriers requires a more supportive approach that encourages students to feel more confident in asking questions and seeking further understanding (Anisa Masyitoh et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important for teachers to create a safe and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable asking questions without shame.

#### **4 Role of the MTs Emeyodere Environment on Student Engagement**

##### **a. School Culture and Teaching Methods**

The school culture at MTs Emeyodere strongly supports student engagement in learning. This school has a culture that emphasizes familiarity and communication between teachers and students, which allows closer relationships to form and builds comfort in the learning process. In this culture, students feel valued and accepted, which in turn encourages them to be more actively involved in classroom activities.

The teaching methods applied at MTs Emeyodere also play an important role in triggering student engagement. Teachers at this school use varied approaches, including lecture techniques, group discussions, and practice-based learning, such as demonstrations of letter-spelling movements. These approaches not only make lessons more interesting but also enable students to more easily understand the material, especially students who have kinesthetic learning styles (Sandy Diana Mardlatillah & Nurus Sa'adah, 2022). The diversity in these teaching methods allows students to choose learning methods that suit their preferences, which increases their level of engagement in the learning process (Putri et al., 2021).

However, although the school culture and teaching methods are quite supportive, there are several challenges that need to be addressed. For example, even though more interactive teaching approaches are applied, there are still some students who feel less emotionally and cognitively engaged, especially when the material taught is considered difficult or too theoretical. In this case, increasing the use of more varied and experience-based methods can help create deeper engagement (Abdullah Syukur et al., 2025).

##### **b. School Facilities**

The facilities at MTs Emeyodere sufficiently support the learning process, but there are still some obstacles that hinder student engagement. The school has reasonably comfortable classrooms, but some supporting facilities, such as more modern visual and audio aids, are still limited. The presence of more complete learning media, such as projectors or digital devices, can enrich students' learning experiences, particularly in Quranic learning which requires visualization to clarify meaning and letter pronunciation (Sutarmi et al., 2025).

In addition, the school's library facilities need more attention. Although there is a library, the collection of reference books and Quranic learning materials available is limited. With a more complete and well-organized library facility, students will find it easier to access additional resources to deepen their understanding (Wibowo, 2023). Other facilities, such as group study rooms or discussion rooms, can also increase interaction between students and teachers, which in turn can strengthen student engagement in the learning process.

Overall, although the facilities at MTs Emeyodere are adequate, limitations in some learning facilities can hinder the level of student engagement in deeper learning. Therefore, improving supporting facilities, such as the use of educational technology and library development, can enhance the quality of student engagement at this school.

## **5 Integration with Global Student Engagement Theory**

### **a. Comparison with Fredricks' Theory**

In the student engagement theory proposed by Fredricks (2004), student engagement is explained through three main dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. This theory considers these three dimensions to be interrelated and contributing to academic success and overall student engagement. Based on the findings of this study, the engagement of Kokoda Tribe students can be compared with Fredricks' theory in several ways, but also shows significant differences.

Generally, students at MTs Emeyodere show good behavioral engagement, although there are some challenges in terms of attendance and physical activity. In the emotional dimension, Kokoda Tribe students have a very high level of engagement, especially driven by religious identity impulses and emotional bonds with parents, which are important factors in their motivation to learn (Rasyid et al., 2023). This aligns with Fredricks' theory, which states that emotional engagement is related to students' care for learning, but these findings show that cultural and family factors more deeply influence Kokoda Tribe students.

However, in terms of cognitive engagement, differences were found compared to patterns commonly identified by Fredricks. Although many students show an interest in exceeding targets set by teachers, obstacles in understanding the material, as well as habits that are less oriented toward independent learning, indicate their low cognitive engagement (Hayati et al., 2025). Kokoda Tribe students are more focused on emotional and behavioral engagement, while deeper cognitive engagement, such as understanding and applying concepts, is more limited. This indicates that although Fredricks' theory states that the three dimensions of engagement should support each other, Kokoda Tribe students are more influenced by emotional factors in their learning, while their cognitive engagement has not yet fully developed.

### **b. New Findings**

One new finding from this study is that Kokoda students' engagement is driven more by emotional factors than cognitive ones. Although students have a strong motivation to learn the Qur'an, driven by a sense of responsibility to their parents and a desire to help them in the afterlife, their cognitive engagement remains limited.

Students tend to be more emotionally engaged, reflected in their motivation to recite the Qur'an and to try to meet family expectations, yet they show less initiative to deepen their understanding independently outside school hours.

This finding provides new insight into how the emotional dimension of engagement can dominate students' learning processes, especially among students from marginalized groups like the Kokoda. Social and cultural factors, such as a strong religious identity and close family ties, strongly influence students' emotional engagement in learning. Therefore, this study makes an important contribution to understanding that student engagement depends not only on cognitive or behavioral dimensions but also on emotional factors shaped by their socio-cultural context.

## **6 Implications for Islamic Religious Education (PAI)**

### **Strategic Recommendations**

Based on this study's findings, there are several strategic recommendations for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to increase engagement among students from certain ethnic backgrounds, particularly the Kokoda, in Qur'anic learning. These suggestions consider the dominant emotional engagement, limited cognitive engagement, and challenges in self-motivation outside class.

#### **a) Enhance Emotional Engagement Through a Personal Approach**

PAI teachers need to strengthen emotional bonds with students, particularly by addressing students' emotional needs, such as the drive to help their parents in the afterlife. According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), intrinsic motivation, such as a higher purpose (e.g., helping parents in the afterlife), can strengthen students' engagement in learning. Therefore, teachers can use a more personal approach, such as listening to and responding to students' personal motivations and linking lessons to deeper spiritual values (Vallerand, 2000). This can help students feel more connected to the material and increase their commitment to learning the Qur'an.

#### **b) Use More Varied and Contextual Teaching Approaches**

To address challenges in students' cognitive engagement, PAI teachers are advised to use more varied and context-based teaching approaches. More interactive and contextual methods, such as story-based learning or lessons that relate material to students' daily lives, can help increase cognitive engagement. According to constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), learning that involves direct experience and relevance to students' lives can promote deeper understanding and encourage students to ask questions and participate more actively (Syarifah et al., 2025).

#### **c) Provide Space for Independent Study with Appropriate Support**

Because Kokoda students tend to rarely study independently outside class, it is important for teachers to provide opportunities for students to develop independent study habits. One way to achieve this is by assigning take-home tasks, such as letter-writing practice or memorizing verses, but with more structured support. Teachers can provide clear guidance or schedules for homework and give constructive feedback to maintain students' motivation. Reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953) suggests that positive reinforcement through good feedback can improve students' independent study habits.

d) Address Shyness and Build Students' Self-Confidence (Rahmat, 2021)

One challenge identified in this study is students' shyness to ask questions when they do not understand the material. PAI teachers should create a supportive environment where students feel safe and confident to ask questions without fear of being judged. Thus, a more inclusive and dialogic teaching approach, where students are encouraged to interact openly and receive feedback, can increase their engagement. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes the importance of role models and supportive environments in enhancing students' confidence to interact and ask questions (Mahadewi, 2022).

e) Leverage the Potential of Technology to Enhance Engagement

Using technology as a learning aid can be an effective strategy to increase student engagement, especially for material that requires repetition or intensive practice, such as memorization and pronunciation of Arabic letters. Online learning platforms or Quran memorization apps can be used to help students continue learning outside school hours, given the limited time they have at home. This approach can also reduce students' reliance solely on school-based learning and encourage more independent study. As described in connectivism theory (Siemens, 2005), technology can be an effective tool to facilitate more flexible learning based on students' desire to keep learning (A. Setiawan, 2025).

These suggestions are based on the understanding that student engagement depends not only on the teaching methods applied but also on the social and cultural factors affecting students. By adopting an approach more sensitive to students' emotional and cognitive needs, and by creating an environment that supports their engagement (Margawati, 2024), Islamic Education teachers can help Kokoda ethnic students reach their maximum potential in Quran learning. Implementing these suggestions is expected to improve the quality of Quran learning for students from marginalized ethnic backgrounds and reduce the barriers they face in learning engagement.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the engagement of Kokoda ethnic students in Quran Reading and Writing (BTQ) learning at MTs Emeyodere, focusing on three dimensions of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. The main findings indicate that students' emotional engagement is heavily influenced by social and cultural factors, such as a strong sense of religious identity and the desire to help their parents in the afterlife. Kokoda students showed fairly good levels of behavioral engagement, although challenges remain regarding attendance and physical activity. However, their cognitive engagement tended to be limited, especially in terms of independent learning and deeper mastery of the material.

Overall, Kokoda students' engagement is more strongly driven by emotional factors than cognitive ones. This suggests that although students have high motivation to learn the Quran, they often struggle to develop their cognitive engagement independently, particularly outside school hours. Social and cultural barriers, such as feeling ashamed to ask questions or a lack of habitual independent study at home, are challenges that need to be addressed to improve learning quality.

Based on these findings, strategic recommendations for Islamic Education (PAI) teachers are to pay greater attention to students' emotional aspects by creating closer and more supportive relationships, and to use more varied, experiential teaching methods. In addition, increasing the use of technology in learning and creating a safe environment for asking questions are also important to enhance students' cognitive engagement. Thus, this study provides valuable insights into understanding the dynamics of engagement among students from marginalized ethnic backgrounds, and offers strategies to improve the quality of Quran learning in schools that serve students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The limitation of this study lies in the limited sample size, which only included students at MTs Emeyodere, so the results may not be generalizable to all Kokoda students. Further research is recommended to involve more schools and other minority ethnic groups to gain a broader understanding of the factors influencing student engagement in Quran learning.

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