

Tauhid Learning Innovation: Implementing Active Methods to Enhance Student Motivation and Understanding in Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

tauhid learning;
auditory
intellectually
repetition method;
student motivation;
islamic religious
education; active
learning innovation

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Tauhid education plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral awareness and spiritual understanding; however, in many classroom contexts it is still dominated by memorization-based instruction that often reduces student motivation and engagement. This study aims to examine how the implementation of the Auditory Intellectually Repetition (AIR) learning method can enhance students' motivation and conceptual understanding in Tauhid learning at the junior high school level. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a case study design conducted in Class IXF at SMP Nurul Abror Al-Robbaniyin, Banyuwangi, Indonesia. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and documentation analysis derived from classroom action research reports and learning records. The data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the AIR method transforms the learning environment by integrating auditory engagement with reflective discussion and structured repetition, which gradually increases student participation, learning motivation, and comprehension of the theological text *Khoridatul Bahiyah*. The study concludes that the integration of auditory experience, cognitive interaction, and repetition can bridge traditional memorization practices with active learning approaches. These findings contribute to the development of innovative pedagogical strategies in Islamic Religious Education and offer practical insights for teachers seeking to make classical theological learning more engaging and meaningful for contemporary students.

Article History:

Received : 13/02/2026

Revised : 20/02/2026

Accepted: 17/03/2026

Available online: 27/03/2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/>

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Safitri, Y., Firoso, H., & Al Hanif, M. N. (2026). Tauhid Learning Innovation: Implementing Active Methods to Enhance Student Motivation and Understanding in Junior High School. *EDUNOVATION: Journal of Education and Innovation*, 1(1), 01-15.

INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of digital transformation has profoundly reshaped the social and moral landscape of contemporary societies, including within the sphere of education. In this context, Tauhid education occupies a crucial role as a moral anchor that guides individuals in navigating the complexities of modern life. Tauhid, understood as the theological foundation of Islamic belief in the oneness of God, does not merely function as a doctrinal framework but also as a moral compass that shapes ethical behavior and spiritual consciousness (Saruhan, 2025; Yunus et al., 2024). In the digital era characterized by information overload, algorithmic influence, and shifting value systems, young learners are increasingly exposed to competing ideologies and fragmented moral narratives. Consequently, the effectiveness of Tauhid instruction in schools becomes a matter of broader societal concern. Scholars have emphasized that Islamic education must not only transmit theological knowledge but also cultivate reflective faith, ethical reasoning, and responsible action (Mahmudulhassan et al., 2024; Saada, 2023). When Tauhid learning fails to engage students meaningfully, its transformative potential diminishes. Therefore, improving the pedagogical effectiveness of Tauhid education represents an urgent challenge for educators, policymakers, and the wider Muslim community.

Despite its recognized importance, Islamic religious education often faces persistent pedagogical challenges, particularly at the secondary school level. One of the most widely discussed issues is the dichotomy between textual memorization and internalized understanding. In many educational settings, theological instruction tends to prioritize rote learning of doctrinal texts rather than fostering reflective comprehension and personal engagement with the material (Papakostas, 2025; Sinaga, 2025). While memorization remains an integral tradition within Islamic pedagogy, an overreliance on passive learning approaches may lead students to perceive religious knowledge as abstract and disconnected from their lived experiences. Moreover, conventional teacher-centered instruction frequently limits opportunities for students to interact critically with the material, resulting in declining motivation and classroom disengagement (Fidan, 2023). This phenomenon is particularly evident in junior high school environments where adolescents seek participatory learning experiences that resonate with their cognitive and emotional development. Without pedagogical innovation, Tauhid education risks being reduced to a purely formal subject rather than a transformative learning experience capable of shaping students' moral and intellectual growth.

These broader challenges are reflected in classroom realities observed in Islamic educational institutions. Empirical observations conducted in a junior high school in Banyuwangi, East Java SMP Nurul Abror Al-Robbaniyin illustrate

how motivational barriers can emerge within Tauhid instruction. In one ninth-grade classroom, students demonstrated limited participation during lessons, frequently appearing disengaged from the learning process. Teachers reported that many learners struggled to understand and memorize *Khoridatul Bahiyah*, a classical poetic text (*nadhzm*) that forms part of the Tauhid curriculum. The linguistic complexity of the Arabic verses, combined with the abstract nature of theological concepts, created additional learning difficulties for students who lacked sufficient contextual support. As a result, classroom interaction tended to remain one-directional, with students passively receiving explanations from the teacher rather than actively engaging with the material. Some students even exhibited signs of declining concentration during lessons, indicating a deeper motivational issue within the instructional process. These classroom dynamics highlight the pressing need for pedagogical strategies capable of transforming passive learning environments into participatory spaces that encourage curiosity, reflection, and sustained engagement with theological knowledge.

Within the broader field of Islamic education research, numerous studies have explored pedagogical innovations aimed at enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Active learning strategies, collaborative inquiry, and student-centered instruction have increasingly been recommended as effective approaches for revitalizing religious education (Adigun, 2025; Assalihee et al., 2024)). Research has also highlighted the importance of integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions within Islamic pedagogy to promote holistic understanding of religious teachings (Karwadi et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025). However, despite these developments, existing literature tends to focus predominantly on general Islamic studies or broader moral education frameworks (Zakkiyah et al., 2025). Only limited attention has been directed toward the pedagogical challenges associated with teaching classical theological texts, particularly those written in poetic forms such as *nadhzm*. These texts play a significant role in traditional Islamic scholarship but are often perceived by modern students as difficult and distant from contemporary learning contexts. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap concerning how active learning methodologies can be adapted to facilitate meaningful engagement with such textual traditions in formal school settings.

Building upon this gap, the present study introduces the implementation of the Auditory Intellectually Repetition (AIR) learning method as a pedagogical innovation in Tauhid education. The AIR approach integrates three interconnected dimensions of learning: attentive listening (auditory engagement), reflective reasoning (intellectual processing), and structured reinforcement through repetition (Fischl, 2025; Namaziandost & Hwang, 2025). Unlike conventional lecture-based instruction, the AIR method emphasizes

interactive participation and iterative learning processes that encourage students to actively construct understanding. When applied to theological texts such as *Khoridatul Bahiyah*, the auditory component allows students to appreciate the rhythmic and poetic nature of the verses, the intellectual phase stimulates analytical discussion and interpretation, while the repetition stage reinforces conceptual retention and confidence. This integrative framework offers a promising alternative to traditional memorization-focused teaching methods. By combining sensory engagement, cognitive reflection, and repeated practice, AIR has the potential to transform theological learning from a passive memorization task into an active and meaningful educational experience.

Against this backdrop, this article presents a synthesis and scholarly development of a classroom action research project conducted in an Indonesian Islamic junior high school. The study investigates how the implementation of the AIR method can enhance both student motivation and conceptual understanding in Tauhid learning. By examining classroom dynamics across multiple instructional cycles, the research seeks to demonstrate how pedagogical innovation can address the motivational barriers commonly encountered in religious education. More broadly, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational transformation within Islamic schooling. Theoretically, it expands the literature on active learning in Islamic education by exploring the pedagogical potential of AIR within theological instruction. Practically, it offers a concrete model that teachers can adapt to revitalize classroom engagement when teaching classical Islamic texts. Through this dual contribution, the research aspires to bridge the gap between traditional religious scholarship and contemporary educational practices, thereby reinforcing the relevance of Tauhid education in the evolving landscape of modern learning environments.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study design to explore the implementation of the Auditory Intellectually Repetition (AIR) learning method in Tauhid instruction at the junior high school level. The qualitative paradigm was chosen because the study aims to understand the complexity of classroom interactions, student engagement, and the learning dynamics that emerge when an active learning strategy is implemented in a natural classroom environment. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to interpret educational phenomena within their real-life context and to capture meanings constructed by participants during the learning process (Dahal, 2023; Yanto & Ramdani, 2023). A case study design was considered appropriate because it allows an in-depth investigation of a bounded system specifically a Tauhid learning classroom where the AIR method was implemented. Case

studies are particularly effective for examining contemporary educational practices within authentic contexts where instructional strategies interact with students' social and cognitive experiences (Akram & Abdelrady, 2025). Although the empirical data originate from a classroom action research project conducted by Safitri and Firoso (2025), the present article reinterprets and synthesizes those field findings through a qualitative case study lens to provide deeper analytical insights into Tauhid learning innovation. The research was conducted at SMP Nurul Abror Al-Robbaniyin, an Islamic junior high school located in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia. The school was selected purposively due to its pesantren-based educational environment where classical Islamic texts, including Khoridatul Bahiyah, are taught as part of the Tauhid curriculum. The subjects of this study were students from class IXF who participated directly in the learning process using the AIR method. This context provided a meaningful setting for examining how active pedagogical strategies can address motivational challenges encountered by students when studying classical theological texts.

Data collection employed three complementary techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. Participant observation was used to capture the dynamics of classroom interaction during the implementation of the AIR learning method, particularly students' participation, attentiveness, collaboration, and behavioral indicators of learning motivation during the stages of auditory engagement, intellectual discussion, and repetition activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with both students and teachers to explore their perceptions of the learning process, motivational changes experienced by students, and reflections on the effectiveness of the AIR method in facilitating comprehension of Khoridatul Bahiyah. Documentation analysis was also conducted by examining relevant materials such as the original classroom action research report, lesson plans, student worksheets, photographs of classroom activities, and learning evaluation results. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data condensation involved selecting and focusing relevant information from observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation to identify patterns related to student motivation and learning engagement. The condensed data were then organized through narrative descriptions and summary tables to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in empirical evidence. To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study applied triangulation strategies through the comparison of multiple data sources (students and teachers) and multiple data collection techniques (observation, interviews, and

documentation), enabling the researcher to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions.

RESULT

Implementation of the AIR Method in Tauhid Learning

The findings of this study describe how the Auditory Intellectually Repetition (AIR) learning method was implemented in Tauhid instruction and how it influenced students' learning motivation and conceptual understanding. In this research, the AIR method was operationalized through three sequential instructional stages applied during the teaching of Khoridatul Bahiyah, a classical poetic text that contains theological concepts regarding the attributes of God. The Auditory stage focused on students' listening engagement, where learners were guided to hear the rhythmic recitation of nadhzm verses while paying attention to their meanings. The Intellectual stage involved cognitive processing through guided questioning, small-group discussion, and interpretation of the verses' theological meanings. Finally, the Repetition stage emphasized reinforcement through repeated recitation, summarization of key concepts, and collaborative exercises designed to strengthen memory and comprehension. Within this study, the success indicators were defined through two main dimensions: learning motivation and conceptual understanding. Learning motivation was identified through observable indicators such as attentiveness during instruction, participation in discussion, willingness to ask questions, and persistence in completing learning tasks. Meanwhile, conceptual understanding was reflected in students' ability to interpret theological content and explain the meaning of Khoridatul Bahiyah verses during classroom activities and learning evaluations. These operational indicators served as the analytical framework for interpreting classroom observations, interview responses, and documented learning outcomes.

Perspectives of Teachers on AIR Implementation

Interview data with the Islamic Religious Education teacher revealed that the AIR method significantly transformed the classroom atmosphere during Tauhid learning. Prior to the intervention, the teacher described the instructional process as predominantly teacher-centered, where students tended to listen passively without meaningful interaction. According to the teacher, the introduction of AIR created a more dynamic learning environment where students became more attentive and actively engaged in the learning process. As expressed by the teacher during the interview:

“Before using this method, most students only listened and tried to memorize the verses without really understanding them. When the AIR stages were introduced, they became more involved especially when discussing the meaning of the verses

together."

This statement illustrates how the learning method shifted the pedagogical focus from passive memorization toward interactive engagement. The teacher further observed that the auditory phase helped students appreciate the rhythm and structure of the poetic text, while the intellectual discussion stage stimulated curiosity and encouraged students to articulate their interpretations. The repetition phase, according to the teacher, played a critical role in strengthening students' confidence in recalling and explaining the theological concepts embedded in the verses. From the teacher's perspective, the AIR method did not merely support memorization but also created a learning structure that allowed students to connect auditory experience with reflective thinking and collaborative reinforcement.

Students' Experiences During Tauhid Learning

Students' perspectives collected through interviews indicated noticeable changes in their attitudes toward Tauhid learning after the AIR method was introduced. Prior to the implementation of the method, several students described the lesson as difficult and monotonous, particularly due to the challenge of understanding Arabic poetic expressions. However, after experiencing the interactive learning stages, students reported increased interest and confidence during classroom activities. One student representative explained:

"At first the verses were difficult for us because we only memorized them. But when we listened together, discussed the meaning, and repeated them several times, it became easier to understand."

This response highlights how the structured learning stages facilitated deeper engagement with the learning material. Students also reported feeling more motivated because the learning process involved collaborative discussion rather than individual memorization tasks. The intellectual discussion stage was frequently mentioned as the moment when students began to understand the meaning of the verses more clearly. In addition, the repetition phase provided opportunities for students to reinforce their understanding through group recitation and peer explanation. As a result, many students demonstrated increased participation during classroom discussions and expressed greater enthusiasm toward Tauhid lessons.

Learning Outcome Development Across Instructional Cycles

The improvement in students' learning engagement and understanding was also reflected in the documented learning outcomes across instructional cycles. The progression of students' performance is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Development of Student Learning Outcomes
Across Instructional Cycles**

Instructional Cycle	Average Score	Minimum Mastery Standard	Learning Achievement Category
Cycle I	315	1400	Not Achieved
Cycle II	900	1400	Moderate Improvement
Cycle III	1510	1400	Mastery Achieved

As shown in Table 1, students' average scores increased progressively across instructional cycles. In the initial cycle, students demonstrated limited understanding of the Tauhid material, reflected in the relatively low average score. However, after adjustments in the learning process and continued application of the AIR stages, students' performance improved substantially in the second cycle. The most significant improvement occurred in the third cycle, where the average score exceeded the minimum mastery standard. This trend indicates that the iterative implementation of AIR contributed to gradual improvement in both motivation and conceptual understanding.

Classroom Observation of AIR Learning Dynamics

Classroom observations further revealed important behavioral changes during the implementation of the AIR method. During the Auditory phase, students demonstrated heightened attentiveness when listening to the rhythmic recitation of the nadhzm verses. The structured listening activity appeared to help students focus on both pronunciation and meaning. Several students who previously appeared disengaged began to follow the recitation more actively, occasionally repeating lines spontaneously with their peers. In the Intellectual phase, the classroom atmosphere shifted toward collaborative inquiry. Students were divided into small groups to interpret selected verses and discuss their theological implications. During this stage, students who initially hesitated to speak gradually became more confident in sharing their interpretations. Some groups even engaged in brief debates about the meaning of certain expressions within the verses. The Repetition phase served as the reinforcement stage where students practiced reciting and summarizing the learned concepts. The repetitive recitation combined with group quizzes and interactive exercises strengthened students' retention of key concepts. Observational notes indicated that students who previously appeared passive or distracted became more willing to participate actively during these activities.

Patterns of Learning Transformation

Overall, the findings reveal a consistent pattern of transformation in students' learning behavior during the implementation of the AIR method. Initially, students approached Tauhid learning primarily as a memorization task.

However, as the instructional process incorporated auditory engagement, reflective discussion, and structured repetition, students began to demonstrate greater curiosity and confidence in interpreting theological material. A notable pattern observed during the learning process was the relationship between the rhythmic auditory experience and students' ability to recall and explain the verses more quickly. Students who actively participated in the listening and repetition stages tended to show faster improvement in both memorization and conceptual understanding. These findings suggest that the integration of auditory experience, cognitive processing, and repeated practice created a supportive learning environment that facilitated deeper engagement with Tauhid material.

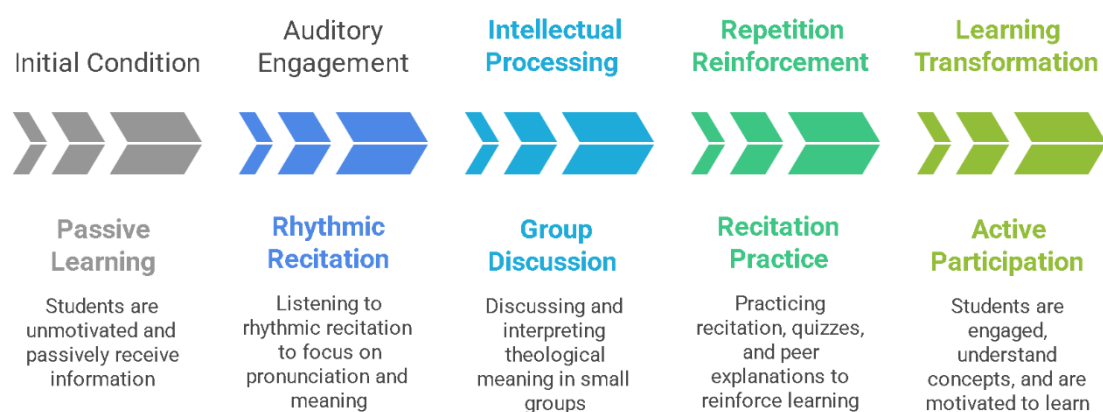


Figure 1. Transformation of Tauhid Learning through the AIR Method

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Auditory Intellectually Repetition (AIR) method was able to transform the dynamics of Tauhid learning from a passive instructional environment into a more active and reflective learning process. This transformation was not merely the result of applying an active learning strategy in general, but rather emerged from the synergy between the characteristics of the nadhzm material and the instructional design embedded in the AIR method. In the context of learning Khoridatul Bahiyah, the rhythmic structure and auditory patterns of the theological verses functioned as cognitive stimuli that helped students focus their attention and construct meaningful associations with the content. When the listening process (auditory) was combined with reflective thinking activities (intellectually) and reinforced through systematic repetition, students were no longer positioned as passive recipients of information but as active participants in the construction of knowledge. This transformation explains why students who previously displayed signs of disengagement such as lack of concentration

or even drowsiness gradually became more involved in discussion and repetition practices. From the perspective of Islamic pedagogy, this process reflects the integration of memorization traditions with deeper conceptual understanding, an approach that has long been regarded as fundamental in religious education (Amirudin et al., 2025). Therefore, the effectiveness of the AIR method in this study can be understood as the result of combining the strengths of classical Islamic textual traditions with participatory pedagogical strategies.

The findings of this study are also closely aligned with previous research emphasizing the importance of active learning strategies in religious education. A substantial body of literature demonstrates that instructional approaches positioning students as active participants significantly enhance learning motivation and conceptual understanding. Within the field of Islamic education, Abdullah and Halim (2019) argue that collaborative and dialogical learning environments enable students to internalize religious values more meaningfully than traditional lecture-based methods. However, most of these studies focus on Islamic education broadly, while investigations addressing the pedagogical challenges associated with teaching classical theological texts in poetic forms (*nadhzm*) remain limited. This gap highlights the empirical contribution of the present research. The findings demonstrate that active learning strategies are not only applicable to conceptual or discursive subjects but are also effective in facilitating engagement with classical textual traditions. In other words, learning *Khoridatul Bahiyah* does not necessarily need to rely exclusively on memorization-based instruction; through appropriate pedagogical design, classical texts can be studied in a more dialogical and contextualized manner. This perspective expands the discourse on methodological innovation in Islamic education, which has often been framed within the dichotomy between tradition and modernity (Ali, 2022; Alkoutli, 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, the success of the AIR method in improving students' motivation and understanding can be interpreted through several learning theories. First, from the perspective of Cognitive Load Theory, instructional strategies that integrate auditory stimuli with reflective thinking activities can reduce the cognitive burden experienced by learners when processing complex information (Oladele & Mccall, 2024). In the context of Tauhid learning, the poetic structure of *nadhzm* which initially appeared abstract and difficult became easier to comprehend when students listened, discussed, and repeated the material progressively. Second, from the standpoint of Social Learning Theory, the collaborative interactions that occurred during group discussions and repetition activities allowed students to learn through observation and imitation of their peers (Southam & Costley, 2024). This process strengthened not only cognitive understanding but also students' confidence in

expressing their interpretations. Third, the success of the AIR method is also closely related to theories of intrinsic motivation, which emphasize the importance of meaningful learning experiences that generate a sense of competence and achievement (Printer, 2023). When students succeeded in understanding the meaning of verses that were previously perceived as difficult, they experienced a sense of intellectual accomplishment that encouraged deeper engagement in the learning process. Within the tradition of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), the practice of repetition (*takrar*) has long been recognized as an essential method for internalizing knowledge. The findings of this study suggest that this traditional principle of repetition can be pedagogically modernized through interactive instructional strategies, transforming repetition from a purely mechanical activity into a reflective learning process.

From a practical perspective, the results of this research offer important implications for Islamic Religious Education teachers, school administrators, and policymakers responsible for religious education at the secondary school level. First, teachers are encouraged to shift their instructional orientation from teacher-centered approaches toward more participatory and experience-based learning models. The AIR method illustrates that integrating listening activities, critical thinking processes, and structured repetition can significantly increase student engagement without abandoning the traditional characteristics of religious content. Second, for school administrators, these findings highlight the importance of fostering pedagogical innovation in the teaching of classical Islamic texts, which are often perceived as difficult by contemporary students. Instructional models such as AIR may serve as effective strategies for bridging the gap between traditional Islamic scholarship and modern educational practices. Third, at a broader policy level, the study suggests that curriculum development in Islamic education should consider incorporating interactive pedagogical approaches that enable classical texts to be taught in more engaging and relevant ways. If implemented systematically, similar instructional strategies could be applied to other classical texts commonly taught in Islamic education, such as *Aqidatul Awam*, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, or other foundational works.

At the theoretical level, this study contributes to the development of scholarship in Islamic Religious Education, particularly in the field of pedagogical innovation. Much of the existing literature tends to position memorization-based learning and critical understanding as two separate pedagogical approaches. The findings of this research suggest that these approaches can, in fact, be integrated through appropriate instructional design. The AIR method demonstrates that rhythmic memorization and structured repetition can function as an entry point toward deeper conceptual understanding rather than serving merely as the final objective of learning.

Consequently, the pedagogical innovation presented in this study expands current understanding of how classical theological texts can be taught in more contextualized and meaningful ways without undermining their traditional intellectual foundations. This contribution is significant for the development of a contemporary paradigm in Islamic education one that preserves the richness of classical Islamic scholarship while simultaneously adapting it to the pedagogical needs of modern learners (Romlah et al., 2025; Zul et al., 2026). Through such an approach, Tauhid education can continue to play a strategic role in shaping students' moral character and spiritual awareness within the rapidly evolving landscape of modern society.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Auditory Intellectually Repetition (AIR) method in Tauhid learning can transform students' learning experiences from passive reception into more active, reflective, and meaningful engagement. The integration of rhythmic listening to *nadhzm*, interpretative cognitive activities, and structured repetition was found to enhance students' learning motivation while strengthening their conceptual understanding of *Khoridatul Bahiyah*. These findings suggest that memorization-based traditions in Islamic pedagogy should not be perceived merely as mechanical practices, but rather as processes that can be enriched through interactive and participatory instructional strategies. In this sense, the study contributes conceptually to the development of contemporary Islamic Religious Education by demonstrating how classical theological texts can be taught through innovative pedagogical approaches that integrate auditory experience, social interaction, and cognitive reflection.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its specific research context, as it was conducted within a single classroom in a pesantren-based junior high school, which requires caution in generalizing the findings to broader educational settings. Furthermore, the study primarily examined short-term changes in learning motivation and conceptual understanding, leaving the long-term impact of the AIR method on students' internalization of Tauhid values relatively unexplored. Future research is therefore encouraged to examine the application of this method in more diverse educational contexts and across other classical Islamic texts commonly taught in Islamic Religious Education. Further studies may also employ mixed-method approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical innovations can effectively support the teaching of classical theological materials in contemporary secondary education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to the leadership and teachers of SMP Nurul Abror Al-Robbaniyin, Banyuwangi, for their support and openness in facilitating the field study. The authors also thank the students of Class IXF who actively participated in the learning activities and shared their experiences during the research process. Their engagement provided valuable insights into the dynamics of Tauhid learning in the classroom. Finally, appreciation is addressed to colleagues and reviewers who provided constructive feedback that significantly improved the quality and clarity of this manuscript.

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