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EXPLORING AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES OF LOWER-SECONDARY STUDENTS IN ARABIC WRITING (KITABAH): A CASE STUDY AT SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 5 NGAWI

Muhammad An Naufar Prastyo [1]*, Yeni Maratus Solekah [2]
[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia
[2] Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

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*** Correspondence Address:**
Annaufar31@gmail.com

Abstract: This qualitative phenomenological study explores junior high school students' affective experiences in learning Arabic writing (kitabah), identifying triggers for positive and negative emotions, and mapping how emotional dynamics shape motivation and learning outcomes. The study involved 10 eighth-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Ngawi. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, post-lesson reflection journal analysis, and non-participant classroom observation. Data were analyzed using the Colaizzi method, which involves transcription, repeated reading, extraction of significant statements, formulation of meaning, organization of themes, and description of the fundamental structure of the experience. A synthesis of various Arabic language education studies highlights that enjoyment, pride, and self-confidence emerge when tasks are scaffolded, feedback is supportive, and peer collaboration is active. Anxiety, frustration, and embarrassment arise from grammatical burden, unfamiliar writing conventions, monotonous instruction, and low self-efficacy. The resulting practical framework emphasizes the importance of scaffolding or the gradual structuring of writing tasks and the provision of supportive, process-oriented feedback. These emotional dynamics directly influence levels of effort, persistence, and learning outcomes. Reduced anxiety and increased self-efficacy lead to higher engagement and better writing quality. Conversely, prolonged anxiety can interfere with focus and memory, ultimately hindering learning outcomes. The implications inform teachers, curriculum designers, and school leaders seeking evidence-based and emotionally sensitive Arabic writing pedagogy at the junior secondary level.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic writing (maharah al-kitabah) learning at the junior high school level must be designed with attention to the duality of academic demands and students' affective needs (Fitriyanti et al., 2024). From a linguistic perspective, proper mastery of the hijaiyah alphabet, orthographic skills for writing Arabic letters and punctuation, and a basic understanding of grammar and grammar are essential foundations. Without these foundations, students' writing will be difficult to understand and full of structural errors. However, linguistic skills alone are insufficient because writing is both a cognitive and emotional activity, so that students' attention, memory, and ability to sustain effort are strongly influenced by their affective states (Putri et al., 2021). Negative emotions such as anxiety and shame can divert attention from the writing process to concerns about assessment, disrupting working memory and increasing errors. On the other hand, positive affective experiences increase the courage to experiment with language structures, extending the time spent on revision, and improving the quality of written products. Therefore, the maharah al-kitabah curriculum must synergize technical exercises with activities that foster a sense of emotional security so that both aspects are mutually reinforcing

(Fakturmen, 2020). Interventions that emphasize only grammatical theory without establishing structured writing habits and supportive feedback tend to fail to change students' writing behavior.

Observations of current teaching practices reveal a number of obstacles that frequently arise in classrooms at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Ngawi, reducing the effectiveness of Arabic writing instruction. Many teachers still prioritize lectures on grammar (Nahwu and Shorf) and assign one-off writing assignments without process guidance, preventing students from receiving gradual, repetitive practice (Soleha et al., 2025). Students experiencing writing anxiety often exhibit avoidance behavior, submitting half-finished assignments, or copying examples without internalizing the language structure. The lack of clear and constructive feedback leaves students unsure where to improve, while corrections that only emphasize errors tend to reinforce feelings of inferiority (Kirani et al., 2025). Furthermore, differences in initial ability between students are often overlooked, leading some to feel left behind and lose motivation. Classroom environmental factors such as competitive pressure, lack of peer support, and an error-prone atmosphere contribute to worsening affective conditions. All of these factors lead to decreased active engagement in writing assignments, ultimately hindering linguistic progress (Rahmat et al., 2021).

To address these issues, a learning design that integrates structured practice, scaffolding, and tangible affective support is needed. Structured practice can take the form of writing assignments divided into pre-writing, initial drafts, in-person feedback, revision, and presentation stages, allowing students to learn writing as a process, not a single product. Teachers can implement formative assessment models with clear rubrics to ensure objective and constructive feedback and provide students with concrete steps to improve their writing (Puteri et al., 2023). Collaborative strategies such as small group work, peer review, and class discussions can reduce anxiety by providing peer support and opportunities to learn from peer examples (Mufidah, 2023). Applying anxiety-reducing techniques, such as brief relaxation exercises before writing, using tasks relevant to students' experiences, and emphasizing skill growth, helps improve affective development. Specific positive reinforcement for improvement boosts students' confidence and motivates them to continue practicing (Naiborhu et al., 2023). Furthermore, using multimodal learning strategies such as handwriting on a board, typing, and dictation exercises can maintain variety, maintaining student attention and interest.

Practical implications for teachers and the curriculum include the need for teacher training that emphasizes emotionally sensitive Arabic writing pedagogy and the development of teaching materials that combine linguistic exercises and affective activities (Nuh et al., 2025). Teachers need to be trained to recognize signs of writing anxiety and respond to them with pedagogical strategies that are supportive and adaptive to students' diverse abilities. The curriculum should include examples of step-by-step tasks, feedback guidelines, and achievement indicators that encompass both linguistic and affective aspects so that assessments are not solely about grammatical correctness (Ansyoriah et al., 2024). Further research in the junior high school context is also needed to evaluate the effectiveness of learning models that combine linguistic scaffolding and affective interventions in the medium and long term. Thus, learning the Maharah al-Kitabah will not only produce students who are able to write linguistically correctly but also students who have the courage, perseverance, and enjoyment in writing, so that these skills can continue to develop at higher levels.

Findings from recent empirical studies further confirm the complexity of this problem and point to possible solutions. A 2024 qualitative study at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan by Rambe

et al., found similar obstacles, particularly in motivation and negative affective experiences, which often hinder student learning outcomes (Rambe et al., 2024). These findings suggest that patient teacher support, constructive feedback, and peer support play a crucial role in fostering positive emotions that foster student engagement. Learning media such as word games and creative worksheets were highlighted for their ability to reduce anxiety and make writing exercises more enjoyable. Another study by Lina & Mahdi in 2024 emphasized the importance of interactive media to support maharah kitabah learning (Lina & Mahdi, 2024). Meanwhile, a study by Misbahul Arifin et al., in 2025 showed that a contextual approach can increase self-confidence and motivation (Arifin et al., 2025). Thus, the empirical evidence from these studies collectively leads to the practical recommendation of combining interactive media, safe and constructive feedback, a contextual approach, and strengthening peer collaboration to create a supportive and productive kitabah learning environment.

Based on this background, this research was formulated to answer the questions: (1) What are the emotional experiences of students during kitabah learning? (2) What factors trigger the emergence of positive and negative emotions in kitabah learning? (3) How do these emotional dynamics influence students' motivation and kitabah learning outcomes?

Phenomenological studies are highly relevant to uncovering the meaning of students' emotional experiences because this approach positions students as subjects who give meaning to their own experiences in the context of kitabah learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Ngawi. This approach allows researchers to hear students' narratives about how they interpret classroom situations, writing assignments, and interactions with teachers and friends so that often hidden affective nuances become visible (Lubis & Widiawati, 2021). The research problem formulation is directed at exploring three important aspects: students' emotional experiences during kitabah learning, factors that trigger positive and negative emotions, and how emotional dynamics influence their motivation and kitabah learning outcomes. Thus, this study not only describes the emotions that arise but also unravels the structure of experiences that determine how students respond to kitabah learning. The resulting findings are expected to be contextual and applicable to learning practices at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Ngawi.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design with a phenomenological study approach. Phenomenology was chosen to understand the essence and meaning of students' emotional experiences in learning the kitabah from their own perspectives. In this study, the researcher acted as a key instrument, applying bracketing and phenomenological reduction to examine the structure of these experiences. Ideally, participants would be junior high school students in grades VII to IX from several classes to capture the variety of experiences. This study involved ten eighth-grade students from SMP 5 Muhammadiyah Ngawi, selected through purposive sampling based on their varying levels of achievement in the kitabah which are categorized as high (consistent score >85), moderate (score 70-85), and low (often score <70). Data were collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, reflective journal analysis, and non-participant observation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore moments of intense emotion, such as during dictation, proofreading, or text presentation, as well as perceptions of difficulties in nahwu and sharaf, vocabulary, and letterforms (Sholihin et al., 2024). The interview guide was designed to cover themes such as motivation, self-efficacy, and the meaning of successful writing according to students' experiences. Reflective journal analysis complemented the interviews by recording dominant emotions, triggering factors, perceptions

of self-development, and improvement plans written by students after each kitabah session (Wahyuni, 2024).

Ethical considerations in this study included an informed consent procedure in which participants and their parents/guardians agreed to participate after understanding the study's purpose and procedures. Confidentiality of participants' identities was guaranteed using anonymous codes (P1 to P10), and data was stored securely.

Non-participant observation focused on emotional expressions through gestures and facial expressions, participation patterns, responses to instructions, group dynamics, and pressure points such as dictation tests and open-ended corrections (Rahman, 2025). A non-participant approach was chosen to minimize interference with the classroom setting and allow for observation of students' natural interactions. Each interview lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes to allow for in-depth narratives. Reflective journals were collected for each lesson over four weeks to capture temporal aspects and emotional changes. Observations were conducted during six Kitabah lesson sessions to obtain consistent behavioral and emotional data. Data from the three sources were analyzed using the Colaizzi method, which includes transcription, repeated reading, extraction of significant statements, formulation of meaning, organization of themes, and description of the fundamental structure of the experience (Hadi et al., 2021). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of data sources and member checking with participants, allowing for verification of findings. Furthermore, the researcher's critical reflection on personal bias and thorough methodological documentation contributed to the study's credibility, and the findings are expected to provide a basis for affectively sensitive pedagogical recommendations.

The data collection process was stopped after reaching data saturation, which is when the data obtained from interviews, journals, and observations began to show recurring patterns and no longer provided significant new information or themes.

RESULTS

Spectrum of Emotional Experience

Students reported a wide range of emotions. Positive emotions included pride and satisfaction when successfully constructing a correct sentence, and enjoyment when engaging in games or group writing activities. Negative emotions were frequently mentioned, such as frustration when repeatedly failing to understand i'rab (word ending changes), anxiety when facing timed writing tests, and boredom during lectures or repetitive copying exercises.

Table 1. Participant Profile and Dominant Emotional Experiences

participant code	Gender	Kitabah Achievement Level*	Dominant Positive Emotions	Dominant Negative Emotions
P1	Male	High	Pride, Satisfaction	Frustration (mild)
P2	Female	High	Pleasure, Satisfaction	Anxiety (during exams)
P3	Female	Medium	Joy, Pride	Boredom, Frustration
P4	Male	Medium	Satisfaction	Anxiety, Frustration
P5	Female	Medium	Pride	Boredom, Anxiety
P6	Male	Low	-	Frustration, Anxiety
P7	Female	Low	Pleasure (rare)	Boredom, Frustration
P8	Male	Low	-	Anxiety, Frustration
P9	Female	High	Satisfaction, Pleasure	-
P10	Male	Medium	-	Anxiety

* Description of Achievement Level:
High: Consistently gets a score of >85 in Kitabah assignments.
Medium: Got a score of 70-85 in the Kitabah assignment.
Low: Often scores <70 in Kitabah assignments.

Data analysis revealed a pattern of emotional polarization that appeared closely related to participants' ability levels in kitabah skills. Participants classified as high-ability, such as P1, P2, and P9, more frequently reported positive emotional experiences such as self-confidence, pride in achievement, and enjoyment when writing. Conversely, participants with low ability, namely P6, P7, and P8, were dominated by negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and boredom that emerged when facing writing tasks. The group with moderate ability showed an unstable and volatile emotional pattern, sometimes experiencing optimism and confidence but in other situations easily falling into anxiety and doubt. These differences in emotional responses appeared to be related to previous successful experiences, mastery of the learning material, and how they received feedback from teachers and peers. These findings illustrate that ability level not only determines academic outcomes but also shapes participants' affective landscapes during the kitabah learning process. Therefore, understanding these patterns of emotional polarization is important for designing interventions that tailor affective support and academic scaffolding to each ability group.

The Muhammadiyah school context, with its emphasis on religious education and Arabic, appears to influence students' emotional dynamics in two ways. On the one hand, the emphasis on Islamic values may increase some students' intrinsic motivation to seriously study the Quran, reflected in pride (as in P1 and P9) when successfully mastering skills considered religiously important. On the other hand, the pressure to master Arabic as part of their religious identity may actually exacerbate anxiety and shame, particularly in lower-ability students. This is because failure is not only viewed academically but may also be linked to religio-cultural expectations. The more structured and disciplined classroom atmosphere in Muhammadiyah schools can also amplify feelings of tension during formal assessments such as dictations, while potentially creating a positive, collaborative climate if managed supportively.

Triggers of Positive and Negative Emotions

Factors that trigger emotions in kitabah learning can be classified into positive and negative triggers, stemming from the design of activities and classroom interactions. Positive triggers include the use of game-based learning, which makes writing activities feel lighter and more enjoyable, encouraging students to try. Collaborative activities, such as writing stories in small groups, foster social support and a sense of ownership of shared work, increasing pride and motivation. Constructive and appreciative feedback from teachers provides direction for improvement while reducing embarrassment, allowing students to feel valued. A sense of immediate achievement, for example, when students write a short self-introduction, provides evidence of success that bolsters self-confidence.

Negative triggers, on the other hand, include linguistic complexity, where grammatical difficulties and limited vocabulary are major sources of frustration that erode motivation. Monotonous teaching methods, such as long lectures and repetitive individual assignments, create boredom, leading to decreased participation. Time pressure on tests and time-limited assignments triggers anxiety, which disrupts focus and working memory during writing. Fear of making mistakes in front of peers leads many students to withdraw or copy rather than explore their own ideas. Therefore, teachers need to design activities that maximize positive triggers and reduce negative triggers through a variety of methods, language scaffolding support, reasonable time management, and a culture of safe and constructive feedback.

Table 2. Affective Experience Themes and Their Triggers

No	Affective Theme	Example Statements from Interviews/Journals	Common Triggers
1	Pride and Satisfaction	"I was happy when the teacher said my sentence was correct."	Success in assignment, positive feedback
2	Fun and Excitement	"Writing with friends using puzzle cards is fun."	Games, group work
3	Frustration	"I'm confused, why does the ending of the word have to change?"	Grammatical complexity, lack of vocabulary
4	Anxiety	"I was nervous during the test, afraid I wouldn't finish."	Time pressure, exams
5	Boredom	"Just copying from books makes me sleepy."	Repetitive tasks, monotonous methods

The Impact of Emotional Dynamics on Motivation and Learning Outcomes

The emotional dynamics experienced by students directly impact their motivation and learning outcomes. Students who frequently experience positive emotions demonstrate higher intrinsic motivation. They are more active in asking questions, voluntarily practice writing outside of class, and show improvement in their writing. As one student noted in her journal, "After I felt happy when I successfully wrote a dialogue, I became more enthusiastic about memorizing new vocabulary."

In contrast, students who are constantly trapped in negative emotions, especially frustration and anxiety, show decreased motivation. They tend to be passive, avoid practice, and some even develop negative mindsets toward the Koran in general. Observations confirm that these students often appear lethargic and hesitant during lessons. This condition ultimately hinders the development of their Koran reading skills, as evidenced by the stagnation in their assignment grades.

Table 3. Emotional Triggers and Their Impact on Motivation and Learning Outcomes

Participant Code	Trigger Factors for Positive Emotions	Triggers for Negative Emotions	Impact on Motivation and Learning Outcomes
P1	Detailed feedback from the teacher; success in understanding nahwu	Complexity of tasrif (change of word form)	Very high motivation, actively seeking new writing challenges, very structured writing results
P2	Project-based learning (poster making); group work	Limited work time (time pressure)	Motivated by creative tasks, but less than optimal when pressed for time. Creative writing results but sometimes contain minor grammatical errors.
P3	Language games (crossword puzzles)	Long lecture method; monotonous copying tasks	Motivation fluctuates; high when there are games, low when the method is monotonous. Learning outcomes are inconsistent.
P4	The teacher's explanation is slow and clear	Limited vocabulary; afraid of being laughed at if wrong	Motivation is stable but not high. Tends to be passive in class. Writing is simple and safe (avoids difficult words).
P5	When you successfully write a long correct sentence	Noisy classroom atmosphere; uninteresting writing topics	Motivation requires a conducive environment. Good writing results when conditions are supportive.
P6	*(Not mentioned in interview/journal)*	All aspects: nahwu, shorof, mufradat, pressure from teachers	Very low motivation, exhibiting avoidance behavior (e.g., pretending to be sick). Written results are full of errors and incomplete.
P7	During a writing session with my deskmate	A teacher who is strict and often interrupts conversations	Motivation is highly dependent on the social environment. Learning outcomes are below their true potential.
P8	*(Not mentioned in interview/journal)*	Excessive shyness; feel not talented in Arabic	Zero motivation, never submitting volunteer assignments. Need a personal approach to build self-confidence
P9	All writing activities; feel challenged	*(Not mentioned in interview/journal)*	High intrinsic motivation, always enthusiastic, and writing results develop very rapidly
P10	When given concrete examples and analogies	When you have to write without guidance (free writing)	Motivation is high on structured tasks, but low on independent tasks. Writing results are good for tasks with examples.

Data analysis revealed a relatively consistent pattern of emotional triggers, on the one hand, and a complex one, on the other. Among the most frequently occurring positive triggers, interactive learning methods such as games, projects, and group work were prominent because they made the writing process more engaging and reduced the fear of trying. Constructive teacher support, including clear feedback and patient explanations, also played a key role in fostering students' self-confidence and pride. The combination of interactive methods and teacher guidance created a learning environment that allowed for language experimentation without the fear of stigmatization for mistakes.

On the other hand, negative triggers demonstrate a complexity that goes beyond mere content, such as grammar and vocabulary. Psychological factors such as shame and fear of making mistakes often become major barriers to participation and writing efforts. Unsupportive classroom management, including teachers' perceived harsh attitudes and a non-conducive classroom atmosphere, further exacerbates students' affective states. The interaction between material, psychological, and environmental factors creates a mutually reinforcing network of causes, making a single solution ineffective. Therefore, recommended interventions must be comprehensive, balancing interactive activity design, sensitivity training for teachers, and an emotionally safe classroom setting to maximize positive triggers and minimize negative ones.

Data analysis also demonstrated a clear correlation between students' emotional states, learning motivation, and learning outcomes. The table shows a consistent correlation between these three variables, with positive emotions closely linked to high motivation and improved achievement. Students who frequently experience joy, pride, and self-confidence tend to take initiative, be active in assignments, and diligently revise their writing. This proactive learning behavior, in turn, improves the quality of their writing and generates positive feedback that further strengthens motivation. Conversely, persistent negative emotions lead to decreased motivation and stagnant or even worsening learning outcomes. Prolonged anxiety, shame, and frustration lead to avoidance behavior, incomplete submission of assignments, and a tendency to copy without understanding. In the cases of P6 and P8, the data demonstrates the formation of mental blocks that make it difficult for them to accept feedback and implement improvements. These findings underscore the need for interventions that balance affective support and academic scaffolding to break the negative spiral and optimize each student's learning potential.

DISCUSSION | مناقشة | DISKUSI

Emotional experiences and theoretical foundations

The research findings confirm that affect is not merely a residue that emerges after cognitive processing but serves as a key mediator between linguistic load and kitabah performance. Affect acts as a link that determines whether grammatical and vocabulary loads are processed effectively or instead lead to information processing failure. When linguistic load is high without adequate affective support, attention is easily distracted and working memory capacity is quickly depleted, resulting in decreased writing quality (Abdillah et al., 2025). Conversely, when positive affect is present, students are able to develop more adaptive cognitive strategies such as planning paragraph structure, double-checking spelling, and revising content more thoroughly. In practice, this means that students' psychological aspects are as important as understanding grammar and grammar and mastery of vocabulary. Therefore, effective teaching interventions must place emotional management as an equal component of language

instruction. Recognizing the mediating role of affect helps explain why two students with the same level of linguistic mastery can produce different writing results. Therefore, affective analysis should not be viewed as a trivial addition but must be integrated into kitabah learning design.

Language anxiety, particularly around grammar rules (Nahwu and Sharf), and during dictation, is a significant disruptive factor in the cognitive process of writing. When anxiety increases, students tend to focus on concerns about assessment, diverting mental resources that should be used to develop ideas and structure to monitor for errors that are not yet apparent (Nurislamidina et al., 2025). As a result, written production becomes rigid, vocabulary choices are limited, and revision is almost non-existent because students quickly give up or withdraw. Anxiety also reduces students' courage to try new sentence structures, resulting in stagnant and stagnant learning. Prolonged frustration can lead to avoidance behavior, which reduces the meaningful practice needed to improve skills. Furthermore, the feeling of embarrassment when errors are exposed can reinforce this negative pattern, leading students to prefer not to show their work. Observations show that this anxiety often arises during formal evaluation moments such as dictation tests and text presentations. Therefore, managing the evaluation situation and providing feedback is crucial to breaking the cycle of declining performance.

Conversely, experiences of competence and a sense of autonomy spark strong intrinsic motivation and encourage more intense and reflective writing practice (Tersta et al., 2023). When students experience consistent, small progress and are given the freedom to choose topics or text formats, they are more motivated to engage in meaningful practice that improves the quality of their writing. Within a phenomenological framework, the meaning of successful writing is more often articulated by students through three moments: social recognition in the form of praise from teachers or peers, completion of challenging tasks, and a subjective sense of progress. Each of these moments generates positive emotions that reinforce the motivational cycle, making students more persistent and creative in their writing. Social recognition serves as external confirmation that validates learning efforts and strengthens the developing writer's identity. Completion of challenging tasks builds evidence of successful experiences that can be internalized as self-capabilities. Therefore, a practical recommendation is to design incremental tasks, allow space for autonomy, and provide specific and appreciative feedback to maximize positive affect and minimize negative affect.

Emotional triggers: individual, pedagogy, context

Low self-efficacy and limited Arabic literacy experience often trigger a fear of making mistakes, leading students to avoid them rather than try. When a student feels incapable, every writing task becomes a mental threat, draining their energy, diverting attention and working memory to monitoring errors rather than processing ideas. This avoidance leads to minimal writing practice, severely limiting opportunities to improve letterforms, spelling, and sentence structure. A further consequence of this pattern is decreased exposure to useful feedback, perpetuating the negative cycle. Differences in initial experiences among students lead some individuals to give up quickly, while others persist despite difficulties. Therefore, early interventions that increase self-efficacy are crucial to prevent students from slipping into avoidance patterns. Strategies that target incremental success and reinforce effort can interrupt this negative cycle before avoidance habits become established. Late interventions tend to require greater effort because inactivity has become ingrained in students' routines.

Repetitive pedagogy without variety exacerbates boredom because activities become

routine, unchallenging and irrelevant for many students. In contrast, interactive learning such as language games, collaborative projects, and visual media transform cognitive load into manageable and meaningful challenges (Khoerunnisa et al., 2025). These interactive methods break large tasks into smaller steps, clearly signal the purpose of the activity, and allow students to experience incremental success, fostering a sense of competence. Visual media and language manipulatives help reduce the abstraction of rules, making concepts of grammar and vocabulary more concrete and memorable. Collaborative projects encourage authentic practice that combines reading, planning, writing, and revising within the context of concrete objectives, making skill transfer more likely. Language games provide opportunities for rapid practice without the pressure of formal assessment, making the risk of making mistakes more acceptable. By building in variety and measurable elements of challenge, teachers can maintain motivation and significantly reduce boredom.

Safe, specific, and process-oriented feedback plays a central role in reducing embarrassment and accelerating improvement in technical aspects such as letterforms, spelling, and sentence structure (Rufaiqoh et al., 2023). Effective feedback highlights areas of improvement, directs next steps, and avoids embarrassing public correction, allowing students to be more confident in presenting their work. Providing comments that focus on learning objectives and provide concrete examples of improvement helps students understand what needs to be worked on. In addition to the teacher's role, peer support fosters a sense of belonging because students feel less alone in facing academic challenges. Small-group peer review practices can minimize emotional isolation and provide opportunities for students to learn from mistakes while providing more nurturing feedback. Schools can strengthen these conditions through teacher training on sensitive feedback techniques and classroom designs that encourage supportive interactions. The combination of increased self-efficacy, pedagogical variation, and constructive feedback patterns can minimize affective barriers, making learning more effective and sustainable.

Emotions, motivation, and performance of kitabah

The literature demonstrates a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and Arabic language achievement. Emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and to respond adaptively to the emotions of others. (Maitrianti, 2021) A frequently cited important mechanism is that emotional regulation maintains attentional stability and working memory capacity, enabling students to process grammar and grammar rules more effectively. When students are able to suppress anxiety and transform frustration into a solvable challenge, they tend to persist on writing tasks longer and engage in meaningful revision. Correlational studies report a relationship between emotional intelligence scores and language test scores, while intervention studies suggest that training in emotional regulation skills can improve learning persistence. The research methods used vary from questionnaires to classroom observations and writing quality analyses, making the available evidence complementary. A key implication of these findings is that affective aspects cannot be separated from grammar and writing skills instruction. Therefore, curricula and teaching practices need to incorporate emotional regulation training alongside strengthening linguistic competencies to be more effective in improving achievement.

Interventions that emphasize goal setting and a step-by-step task structure have been shown to increase motivation and provide direction for meaningful practice. Goal setting helps students break down long-term goals into concrete steps, making each small achievement feel tangible and fostering a sense of competence. A step-by-step task structure that includes

prewriting, drafting, feedback, and revision transforms writing into a purposeful process that facilitates incremental improvement (Harahap, 2024). In the classroom, teachers can teach self-regulation techniques such as time management, progress monitoring, and simple strategies for coping with anxiety. Structured peer feedback and clear rubrics make feedback more focused on improvement and reduce the embarrassing effects of discussing mistakes publicly. This combination of cognitive and affective strategies allows students to practice more frequently with manageable experiences, making cognitive load less oppressive. Learning models that allow for student autonomy also help foster intrinsic motivation. The implementation of these strategies should be tailored to the student's ability level to ensure that the intervention is targeted and inclusive.

As the emotional dynamics shift from anxiety and embarrassment to confidence and enjoyment, the frequency of practice and willingness to revise writing tend to increase. Increased practice frequency provides more opportunities to strengthen the automation of letter forms, spelling, and morphosyntactic constructions, which are important in Arabic. This willingness to revise improves paragraph coherence because students are more open to feedback and able to organize ideas more logically. Empirically, this affective shift is reflected in indicators such as draft length, number of substantive revisions, and increased morphosyntactic accuracy. Therefore, assessment of kitabah learning should accommodate this process by using portfolios and progress notes rather than relying solely on the final product (Rukmini, 2023). Teachers need to be trained to recognize signs of affective change and implement approaches that stimulate this positive cycle. Further research could test combinations of affective and cognitive interventions in experimental designs to measure causal effects. By integrating literature findings into teaching practice, more sustainable improvements in Arabic language achievement can be achieved.

Comparison with Previous Findings and Practical Implications

The findings of this study align with previous studies cited in the introduction, such as Rambe et al.'s (2024) study at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan and Lina & Mahdi's (2024) study, which highlighted the critical role of teacher support, constructive feedback, interactive media, and contextual approaches in creating positive affective experiences. These findings reinforce each other and demonstrate that affective issues in learning the Quran are common, making recommendations for affectively sensitive learning strategies relevant across contexts. However, this study provides depth by detailing the spectrum of emotions, specific triggers at the micro-level (such as dictation or correction moments), and their relationship to student ability levels, as well as contextual reflections on the Muhammadiyah setting.

Based on these findings and discussions, the implications for curriculum development include the need to integrate socio-emotional education components and emotion regulation strategies into the Arabic language curriculum. The curriculum should provide space for gradual task design, media variation, and reflective activities that not only pursue linguistic competence but also build students' emotional resilience and intrinsic motivation. Meanwhile, the implications for teacher training are the importance of conducting training focused on emotionally attuned pedagogy. This would equip teachers with the ability to recognize signs of student affective distress (such as anxiety and frustration), the skills to provide supportive and process-oriented feedback, and techniques for managing a psychologically safe and collaborative classroom climate. Teachers need to be facilitators who are not only expert in the material but also sensitive to students' emotional dynamics during kitabah learning.

Practical implications for students

A step-by-step learning design is essential for guiding students through the writing process systematically, reducing anxiety and increasing their sense of competence. The pre-writing stage can be used for modeling writing techniques and introducing targeted vocabulary, providing students with a clear understanding of the task before beginning (Syukriya, 2024). The guided writing stage provides opportunities for students to experiment with teacher guidance through pair practice or structured assignments, allowing them to correct initial mistakes without feeling embarrassed. The independent writing stage should be allowed space after students feel adequately supported, allowing autonomy and responsibility to develop over time. The post-writing stage, characterized by reflection, allows students to assess their own process, plan improvements, and record progress, allowing successful experiences to become part of their learning memory. Brief and clear formative assessments at each stage can help mark achievement and maintain motivation. Teachers need to adjust the duration and complexity of tasks at each stage to avoid overwhelming cognitive load for students with varying levels of readiness. With a consistent step-by-step design, technical and affective skills develop simultaneously, improving writing and reducing anxiety.

Varying media in kitabah activities can make the task more engaging and less psychologically stressful, making ideas more readily apparent (Oktoviari & Sa'adiyah, 2025). Language games like Word Square or vocabulary puzzles make lexical practice a fun and healthy competitive activity. Collaborative writing projects provide an authentic context for vocabulary and grammatical structures, allowing students to see the practical benefits of learning. Innovative worksheets that incorporate images, story sequences, and step-by-step guides help break down tasks into more manageable chunks. The use of lightweight technology like simple typing apps or digital dictionaries provides quick support that reduces technical barriers and allows for exploration. Visual media like concept maps and patterned text examples make it easier for students to map out ideas before writing, reducing the burden on working memory. Media variation also allows teachers to accommodate different learning styles, increasing engagement. Pragmatically, incorporating multiple media into learning routines maintains attention and reduces boredom.

Supportive feedback and a supportive emotional classroom climate are key to transforming mistakes into learning opportunities. Feedback should focus on process and local improvement so students can take concrete steps to improve their letterforms, spelling, and sentence structure without feeling humiliated (Hendrawanto, 2020). A private correction policy for addressing sensitive errors helps minimize embarrassment and maintains students' dignity. Activating group work and peer feedback mechanisms fosters a sense of belonging as students learn from each other in a more friendly atmosphere. Establishing classroom norms that value effort and explore errors as a natural part of the learning process fosters a growth mindset. Teachers should practice supportive language and provide specific reinforcement for effort and progress, not just the final product. Short teacher-student conferences can be valuable opportunities for personalized guidance in a safe environment. A supportive classroom climate reduces resistance to linguistic challenges and increases openness to revision (Siregar, 2025).

Differentiating and strengthening dictation skills is a strategic step to address differences in student readiness and ensure that technical improvement is combined with meaningful improvements in writing (Raharjo et al., 2024). Adjusting the workload of rules and writing targets based on student readiness profiles helps avoid overload for beginning students and maintains challenges for more advanced learners. Visual scaffolding in the form of writing step diagrams, step-by-step text examples, and vocabulary maps facilitates the internalization of

language patterns. Sample texts analyzed together provide models of paragraph construction so students understand the standards they are aiming for. Regular, structured dictation practice with a simple rubric directs the focus to meaningful paragraph output rather than disconnected dictation (Nabilah et al., 2024). Linking technical practice to actual writing assignments ensures skill transfer, so improvements in spelling and letter form are immediately apparent in paragraph quality. Writing portfolios and progress notes should be used to monitor the process and celebrate progress, thus maintaining long-term motivation. With the combination of differentiation, scaffolding, and contextual dictation practice, dictation learning becomes more inclusive and effective.

CONCLUSIONS | خاتمة | SIMPULAN

Students' emotions in learning kitabah range from anxiety and embarrassment to joy and pride, making their affective experiences a central aspect of the writing learning process. This affective profile is strongly influenced by students' self-efficacy, the burden of rules they must master, the teaching style and practices they employ, the nature of teacher feedback, and the level of social support from peers. Positive emotions tend to increase when learning is designed in a varied, gradual manner, and conducted in a supportive atmosphere, allowing students to experience progress and repeated success. Conversely, negative emotions emerge clearly when high linguistic demands are not accompanied by adequate scaffolding, or when corrections are made in public, resulting in students feeling humiliated.

These emotional dynamics mediate motivation levels and learning outcomes because as anxiety decreases and feelings of competence increase, so does the frequency of practice, engagement, and willingness to revise writing. Interventions that reduce anxiety and increase feelings of competence contribute to more intense engagement and ultimately result in better writing quality. Therefore, prominent practical recommendations include gradual task design, providing safe, process-oriented feedback, fostering peer collaboration, and differentiation based on student readiness. Integrating meaningful dictation practice directly with paragraph production is also crucial so that technical improvements are immediately apparent in writing quality and students' affective experiences are transformed into energizing learning resources.

This study has several limitations. First, the findings from a case study in a single school with a limited number of participants (10 students) cannot be broadly generalized. Second, the focus on emotional experiences may not have explored specific cognitive and pedagogical factors in sufficient detail. Third, the reflections on the Muhammadiyah context presented are still preliminary and require further investigation. For future research, it is recommended to: (1) Conduct a study with a broader scope and a larger sample to test the generalizability of the findings. (2) Develop and test the effectiveness of an integrative kitabah learning model that explicitly combines academic scaffolding and affective support based on the practical framework generated by this study. (3) Investigate more deeply the role of institutional contexts (such as religious schools, Islamic boarding schools) in shaping the affective experience of Arabic language learning.

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