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The Effect of Critical Incident Learning Model on Student Engagement in Akidah Akhlak Education

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the low level of student engagement in learning, as evidenced by uneven student participation in class, students' reluctance to ask questions, answer, and express their opinions, and the limited variety of instructional models used. In addition, students often had difficulty understanding the problems presented by teachers because they were not directly related to their own experiences. This study aims to determine whether the Critical Incident learning model influences students' learning engagement in Akidah Akhlak lessons. This is a quantitative study using a quasi-experimental method with a nonequivalent control group design. Data were collected using a questionnaire completed by the students. The study population consisted of 197 students, with a sample of 64 students: Class V.1 served as the experimental group and Class V.2 as the control group. The sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling. Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, the findings of this study are as follows. First, the learning engagement of students in Class V.2 without the use of the Critical Incident learning model had an average of -32%, falling into the low category. Second, the learning engagement of students in Class V.1 using the Critical Incident learning model had an average of 79%, falling into the active category. Third, the Critical Incident learning model has a significant effect on student learning engagement. This is supported by the results of the hypothesis test at a significance level of 0.05, which yielded a Sig. value of 0.00. Since Sig. 0.00 < 0.05, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted. This means that the Critical Incident learning model has an effect on students' learning engagement in the Akidah Akhlak course.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a consciously designed process to develop students' potential through active, purposeful, and meaningful learning activities. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System emphasizes that education aims to develop students' abilities and shape their character so that they become individuals who are faithful, God-fearing, of noble character, and possess the skills necessary for life in

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society. Therefore, the success of learning is determined not only by the teacher's delivery of material but also by students' active engagement in the learning process. From an Islamic perspective, the importance of students' active thinking is also reflected in Quranic Surah Yusuf, verse 111, which emphasizes that the stories in the Quran contain lessons for those who use their reason. This indicates that effective learning must encourage students to think, understand, and derive wisdom from the material being studied. One factor that can enhance student engagement is the use of instructional models that align with students' characteristics and learning objectives (Susanto, 2019).

The reality in the classroom shows that student engagement in the Akidah Akhlak subject remains relatively low. Interviews with the Akidah Akhlak teacher for fifth grade at the Muhammadiyah Tamiang Private Madrasah Ibtidaiyah revealed that only a few students actively ask or answer questions, while the majority tend to be passive and under-engaged in the learning process. Furthermore, low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and shyness are factors that hinder students from expressing their opinions. This situation is reinforced by observation results showing that students often avoid eye contact and appear hesitant when asked to answer the teacher's questions. On the other hand, the learning model used is still dominated by Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which, in some situations, actually makes it difficult for students to understand the context of the problem because it does not align with their direct experiences. As a result, the learning process becomes less than optimal, and learning objectives are difficult to achieve to the fullest extent (Sardiman, 2011; Hamalik, 2017).

The issue of low student engagement in learning requires immediate attention because engagement is one of the key indicators of a successful learning process (Oktavia et al., 2024). Engaged students tend to have a better understanding of the material, stronger critical thinking skills, and greater confidence in expressing their opinions (Mahmud & Sakkir, 2020). Conversely, passive students will struggle to develop their academic and social potential. In Akidah Akhlak instruction, student engagement becomes even more crucial because the material covered emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also the development of attitudes and character. Therefore, innovative teaching approaches are needed that can connect the material to students' real-life experiences so they can more easily understand, internalize, and apply moral values in their daily lives. One alternative that can be used is the Critical Incident learning model, which emphasizes the use of students' significant experiences as a source of learning (Toha, 2018; Nasrullah & Amal, 2024).

Various previous studies have shown that active learning models can improve student participation and learning outcomes. A study conducted by Rahayu et al., (2024) found that the use of active learning models can increase student engagement in classroom discussions. Another study by Muliadi et al., (2023) showed that the application of the Critical Incident model effectively improves students' reflective skills and participation in social studies. However, most of these studies were conducted at the secondary education level and in general subjects. Research specifically examining the effect of the Critical Incident model on student learning engagement in the Akidah Akhlak subject at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level remains very limited. Furthermore, there has been little research linking students' real-life experiences to the teaching of moral values within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation. This gap serves as a crucial basis for conducting further research.

The novelty of this study lies in the application of the Critical Incident learning model to enhance student engagement in the Akidah Akhlak subject for fifth-grade students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Unlike previous studies, which have primarily applied this model to

general subjects or higher levels of education, this study integrates students' real-life experiences with Akidah Akhlak content, particularly regarding the topic of avoiding reprehensible moral traits such as greed and stinginess. This approach allows students to reflect on personal experiences relevant to the material, making learning more contextual, meaningful, and encouraging active student participation. Thus, this study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of more innovative and effective Akidah Akhlak learning models.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design and a nonequivalent control group design. The study was conducted at the Muhammadiyah Tamiang Private Elementary School (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Muhammadiyah Tamiang), located at Jalan Madura, Jorong Saroha, Ujung Gading Village, Lembah Melintang Subdistrict, West Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The study population consisted of all fifth-grade students at the Muhammadiyah Tamiang Elementary School (MIS), totaling 197 students distributed across six classes. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves selecting samples based on specific criteria. The research sample consisted of two classes: Class V.1, with 32 students, served as the experimental class and was treated with the Critical Incident learning model; and Class V.2, with 32 students, served as the control class and used the conventional learning model.

The data collection methods used in this study included questionnaires and documentation. Questionnaires were used to measure students' level of learning engagement after the intervention was administered, while documentation was used to obtain supporting data such as student rosters, instructional materials, and records of research activities. Data analysis was conducted in several stages, namely a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test, a homogeneity test, and a hypothesis test using the Independent Sample t-Test with the help of SPSS version 26 to determine the effect of the Critical Incident learning model on students' learning engagement. In addition, an N-Gain test was conducted to determine the level of increase in students' learning engagement after the treatment was administered, thereby determining the effectiveness of the applied learning model (Alhaktullah, 2021; Sari et l., 2024; Nafisah et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2023; 2025; 2026; Hamdi & Devia, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Assumptions

Normality Test

To determine whether the sample is normally distributed or not, a normality test was conducted on the data for each group, namely the experimental group (Class V.1) and the control group (Class V.2). The normality test in this study used the Shapiro-Wilk method with the assistance of SPSS version 26. The decision rule for this test is that if the Sig. value is > 0.05, the data are normally distributed; conversely, if Sig. is < 0.05, the data are not normally distributed. The results of the normality test data analysis are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Sample Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
CLASS	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest Control	.132	27	.200*	.953	27	.249
Postest Control	.107	27	.200*	.958	27	.332
Pretest Experimental	.107	27	.200*	.958	27	.332
Postest Experimental	.136	27	.200*	.941	27	.332
Postest Experimental	.136	27	.200*	.941	27	.129

Based on the results of the normality test conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test, the Sig. value for the control class's pre-test data was 0.249, while the Sig. value for the control class's post-test data was 0.332. Furthermore, the Sig. value for the pre-test data of the experimental class was 0.332, and the Sig. value for the post-test data of the experimental class was 0.129. The decision in the normality test was made based on the criterion that if the Sig. value is greater than 0.05, the data is considered to be normally distributed. Based on these results, all Sig. values for the pre-test and post-test data for both the control and experimental classes were greater than 0.05; therefore, it can be concluded that all research data are normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test, also known as the test for equality of variances, aims to determine whether the two samples have homogeneous variances. This test is interpreted as follows: if the Sig. value is > 0.05, the data are homogeneously distributed; conversely, if the Sig. value is < 0.05, the data are not homogeneously distributed. The following table presents the results of the homogeneity test for the experimental and control classes.

Homogeneity Test for the Pre-test of the Experimental and Control Classes

Table 2. Homogeneity Test for the Pre-test Samples

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
NILAI	Based on Mean	1.185	1	52	.281
	Based on Median	.813	1	52	.371
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.813	1	47.742	.372
	Based on trimmed mean	1.086	1	52	.302

Based on the results of the homogeneity of variances test using Levene's test in the "Based on Mean" section, a Sig. value of 0.281 was obtained. Decision-making in the homogeneity test is based on the criterion that if the Sig. value is greater than 0.05, the data are considered homogeneous. These results show that the Sig. value of 0.281 is greater than 0.05; therefore, it can be concluded that the variances of the pre-test data across groups are homogeneous.

Homogeneity Test for the Post-test of the Experimental and Control Classes

Table 3. Homogeneity Test for the Pre-test Sample

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
NILAI	Based on Mean	.009	1	52	.926
	Based on Median	.002	1	52	.963
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.002	1	51.982	.963
	Based on trimmed mean	.010	1	52	.922

Based on the results of the homogeneity of variances test using Levene's test in the "Based on Mean" section, a Sig. value of 0.926 was obtained. Decision-making in the homogeneity test is based on the criterion that if the Sig. value is greater than 0.05, the data are considered homogeneous. These results show that the Sig. value of 0.926 is greater than 0.05; therefore, it can be concluded that the variances of the post-test data across groups are homogeneous.

Hypothesis Testing

In this section, a hypothesis test was conducted to determine whether the previously formulated hypothesis could be accepted or rejected based on the research data. The test used was the T-test. This hypothesis test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference based on the T-test results. This study aims to determine whether there is a difference in Islamic education learning outcomes between the experimental and control classes. This study used one T-test, namely the independent samples T-test. The independent samples T-test is a T-test conducted to determine the difference in means between two independent or distinct groups of data.

The decision criteria for this independent samples t-test are as follows: if the Sig. value is < 0.05, accept Ha and reject H0; conversely, if Sig. is > 0.05, reject Ha and accept H0. After conducting the independent samples t-test in this study, the following results were obtained:

Table 4. Independent Samples t-Test

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
nilai	Equal variances assumed	.009	.926	21.693	52	.000	27.778	1.280	25.208	30.347
	Equal variances not assumed			21.693	51.967	.000	27.778	1.280	25.208	30.347

Based on the results of the independent samples t-test in the "t-test for Equality of Means" section, a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.00 was obtained. Decision-making in the independent samples t-test is based on the criterion that if the Sig. value is < 0.05, there is a significant difference between the two groups. These results show that the Sig. value of 0.00 is less than 0.05; therefore, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted, and there is a significant difference between the learning outcomes of students in the experimental class and the control class. This indicates that the Critical Incident learning model has an effect on student engagement in the Akidah Akhlak subject.

Furthermore, the results support the research hypothesis that the learning engagement of students in Class V.1 in the Akidah Akhlak subject using the Critical Incident learning model is better than that achieved using the conventional learning model.

N-Gain Score Testing

The N-Gain test is a data analysis technique used to determine improvements in student learning following the implementation of a specific instructional intervention. This test is conducted by comparing pre-test and post-test scores to determine the extent of improvement in students' abilities after participating in the instruction. N-Gain, or Normalized Gain, is used to measure the effectiveness of a learning model, method, or medium in improving student learning outcomes.

According to the decision-making criteria for the N-Gain test, an N-Gain value is classified as high if g > 0.7, indicating that the instruction was highly effective in improving student learning outcomes. Furthermore, an N-Gain value falls into the moderate category if g is between 0.3 and 0.7, meaning the instruction is fairly effective in improving student learning outcomes. Meanwhile, an N-Gain value falls into the low

category if g is less than 0.3, indicating that the improvement in student learning outcomes is still low or that the instruction has not yet yielded optimal results.

Based on the N-Gain Score effectiveness interpretation categories, the level of learning effectiveness can be determined by the percentage increase in students' learning outcomes after receiving the intervention. An N-Gain value with a percentage below 40% is categorized as ineffective because the increase in learning outcomes is still very low. A percentage of 40–55% falls into the "less effective" category, indicating an increase but one that is not yet optimal. Furthermore, a percentage of 56–75% is categorized as moderately effective because the learning model has been able to produce a fairly good improvement in learning outcomes. A percentage above 76% falls into the effective category, meaning that the intervention successfully improved students' learning outcomes significantly. After conducting the N-Gain test in this study, the following results were obtained:

N-Gain Test Scores for the Experimental Class

Table 5. N-Gain Test Scores for the Experimental Class

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NGain_Score	27	.47	1.00	.7924	.14112
NGain_Persen	27	47.22	100.00	79.2421	14.11170
Valid N (listwise)	27				

Based on the results of the N-Gain Score test in the experimental class, the mean N-Gain Score was 0.79. This value falls into the "effective" category because it lies within the range of g > 0.7. This indicates that there was an increase in students' learning engagement following the implementation of the learning method in the experimental class. Furthermore, the mean N-Gain percentage of 79% falls within the "effective" category based on the interpretation of N-Gain Score effectiveness. Thus, it can be concluded that the learning model implemented in the experimental class was able to improve students' understanding and learning engagement with a good level of effectiveness; consequently, this learning model can be considered successful in helping students understand the learning material more effectively.

N-Gain Score Test for the Control Class

Table 6. N-Gain Score Test for the Experimental Class

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NGain_Score	26	-4.67	.59	-.3297	1.15715
NGain_Persen	26	-466.67	59.09	-32.9663	115.71464
Valid N (listwise)	26				

Based on the results of the N-Gain Score test in the control class, the mean N-Gain Score was 0.−32. This value falls into the low category because it is within the range of g < 0.3. This indicates that there was a decrease in student learning engagement after the learning process compared to the experimental class. Furthermore, the mean N-Gain Percentage of -32% falls into the "ineffective" category based on the interpretation of N-Gain Score effectiveness, as it is below 40%. Thus, it can be concluded that instruction in the control class has not been able to optimally increase student learning engagement, meaning that the effectiveness of the instruction implemented in the control class remains low.

This study was conducted with fifth-grade MI students on the topic of "Avoiding the Reprehensible Traits of Greed and Stinginess." The Critical Incident learning model is a teaching approach that encourages students to recall and recount significant experiences or events they have encountered, then connect them to the

material being studied, thereby making learning more meaningful and actively engaging students. Instruction during the Critical Incident phase focuses students on real-life experiences they have personally experienced or witnessed in their daily lives. The experimental sessions for this study were conducted over three class meetings. In each session, the teacher distributed worksheets related to greedy and stingy behavior, such as experiences of seeing someone who was unwilling to share or who wanted to possess something excessively. Afterward, students were asked to recount their experiences and share their opinions on the impact of such behavior.

Through these activities, students became more active in expressing their opinions, asking questions, and discussing with their classmates. Next, the teacher linked the students' shared experiences to the lesson on avoiding the reprehensible traits of greed and stinginess, in accordance with Islamic teachings. By applying the Critical Incident learning model, students not only understand the material theoretically but are also able to reflect on their experiences, making the learning process more engaging and increasing student participation throughout the lesson. The steps in applying the Critical Incident learning model are as follows:

The following is a description of the activities of the teacher and students during each session, which can be used as photo captions in the research proposal. First, the presentation of the learning topic. The teacher introduced the learning topic, "Reprehensible Character Traits: Greed and Stinginess," and explained the learning objectives to be achieved. The students listened attentively to the teacher's explanation and prepared themselves to participate in the lesson. Based on observations conducted over three sessions, the implementation of the Critical Incident learning model showed an increase in students' readiness to learn. In the first session, most students paid attention to the teacher's explanation, although there were still a few students who appeared passive. In the second session, students began to show greater attention as they had become accustomed to the learning process being implemented. In the third session, nearly all students paid attention to the teacher's explanation and appeared ready to participate in the lesson.

Second, "Recalling Experiences" (Critical Incident). The teacher distributed worksheets to the students and asked them to recall personal experiences or events they had witnessed related to greedy behavior. The students received the worksheets and began recalling experiences relevant to the lesson topic. Based on observations, there was an improvement in the students' ability to connect personal experiences with the lesson material. During the first session, some students still had difficulty recalling and writing down experiences relevant to the material. By the second session, most students were able to write down their experiences more fluently and in line with the topic being studied. By the third session, nearly all students were able to complete the worksheets well without much guidance from the teacher.

Third is Independent Reflection. The teacher gives students a few minutes to think independently and write down the experiences they can recall in their worksheets. Students write down these experiences based on their own understanding. Based on observations, this independent thinking activity provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences. During the first session, students used the allotted time to recall their experiences and write them down on the worksheets, although some students still appeared hesitant. During the second session, students began to focus more intently and take the task more seriously as they worked independently. During the third session, all students appeared to be actively thinking and writing down their reflections without needing frequent guidance from the teacher.

Fourth, Sharing Experiences. The teacher asked several students to share the experiences they had written down in their worksheets. The students took turns recounting their experiences in front of the class, while the others listened attentively. Based on the observations, there was an increase in the students' confidence in sharing

their experiences. During the first session, only a few students dared to share their experiences, while the others still appeared shy and lacked confidence. During the second session, the number of students willing to share their experiences increased, and the classroom atmosphere became more interactive. During the third session, many students voluntarily raised their hands to share the experiences they had written down.

Fifth, linking experiences to the material. The teacher connects the experiences shared by students to the topic of the negative moral trait of greed. The teacher explains the connection between those experiences and greedy behavior in daily life. Students listen and respond to the teacher's explanation. Based on observations, this stage helps students develop a more meaningful understanding of the material. In the first session, the teacher helped students understand the connection between the experiences they shared and the lesson material. In the second session, students began to respond when the teacher linked their experiences to the material. In the third session, students not only understood this connection but were also able to provide additional examples based on their own experiences.

Sixth is the Presentation of Material. The teacher explains the definition of greed, examples of greedy behavior, and the negative impacts it has on oneself and others. Students listened to the teacher's explanation, took notes on key points, and paid attention to the examples provided. Based on the observations, the experiences used as an introduction to the lesson made it easier for students to understand the material. This was evident in the increased attention, concentration, and participation of the students as the teacher explained the material during each session.

During the first session, students paid close attention to the teacher's explanation because the material was linked to experiences discussed previously. During the second session, students appeared more focused and began actively taking notes on important information. During the third session, students not only listened but also provided feedback and comments on the material being explained.

Seventh is the Question-and-Answer session. The teacher gives students the opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions regarding the material they have studied. Students actively asked questions, answered questions, and discussed the material with the teacher. Based on the observations, during the first session, only a few students dared to answer the teacher's questions or ask questions themselves. During the second session, the number of students participating in the Q&A session increased. During the third session, the Q&A session was more active, as many students asked questions, offered responses, and answered the questions posed by the teacher.

This study is a quasi-experimental study aimed at determining the effect of the Critical Incident learning model on student engagement in the Akidah Akhlak course at MIS Muhammadiyah Tamiang. In this study, there was an experimental class that received the treatment the application of the Critical Incident learning model and a control class that used conventional teaching methods. Before the treatment was administered, both classes took a pre-test in the form of a questionnaire to determine the students' level of engagement prior to the start of instruction. The effect of the Critical Incident learning model on the topic "Avoiding the Reprehensible Moral Traits of Greed and Stinginess" on student engagement can be seen from the results of the hypothesis test, which showed a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.00. Since the Sig. value of 0.00 is less than 0.05, Ha is accepted and H0 is rejected. This means that the application of the Critical Incident learning model has a significant effect on student engagement in the lesson on "Avoiding the Reprehensible Traits of Greed and Stinginess."

The results of this study are consistent with Behaviorist learning theory, which states that learning is a change in behavior resulting from the interaction between a stimulus and a response. In Critical Incident learning, teachers provide stimuli in the

form of events or experiences related to greedy and stingy behavior commonly encountered in daily life. Students then respond through activities such as recalling experiences, expressing opinions, discussing, and drawing conclusions about the impact of such behaviors (Rahmawati, 2024).

Based on the data analysis, it was found that there was an increase in student learning activity from the pretest to the posttest results after the implementation of the learning model used in this study. This increase was evident across all indicators of student learning activity, namely visual activity, oral activity, listening activity, writing activity, motor activity, mental activity, and emotional activity.

Table 7. Tabulation of Average Indicators for the Pretest and Posttest in the Experimental Class

Indikator	Mean Pretest	Mean Postest
Visual Activity	74.44 %	74.81 %
Oral Activity	68.70 %	71.30 %
Listening Activity	69.63 %	80.56 %
Writing Activity	49.63 %	85.93 %
Motor Activity	58.70 %	90.00 %
Mental Activity	49.38 %	93.52 %
Emosional Activity	49.31 %	87.96 %

Based on the table above, it can be seen that all indicators of student learning engagement showed an increase after the Critical Incident learning model was implemented. This increase indicates that the learning model used was able to encourage more active student engagement in the learning process physically, mentally, and emotionally. In general, the average percentage for each indicator on the posttest was higher than on the pretest, indicating a positive change in student learning engagement.

These findings align with research conducted by Akuba, (2023), which concluded that the implementation of the Critical Incident model can enhance student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. The study explained that students became more interested in participating in learning because the material was linked to their personal experiences (Akuba, 2023). Thus, the application of the Critical Incident learning model to the topic "Avoiding the Reprehensible Traits of Greed and Stinginess" has been proven to have a positive effect on student engagement. Learning centered on real-life experiences can increase student engagement in the learning process, thereby enabling learning objectives to be achieved more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Critical Incident learning model has a positive effect on student engagement in the Akidah Akhlak course at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Muhammadiyah Tamiang. This learning model encourages students to be more active in the learning process through activities such as recalling, recounting, reflecting, and connecting real-life experiences with the material being studied. Learning centered on student experiences makes the learning process more meaningful, engaging, and easier to understand, thereby encouraging students to be more confident in expressing their opinions, asking questions, participating in discussions, and engaging in various learning activities. Furthermore, the implementation of the Critical Incident model has also been proven to enhance students' learning engagement across various aspects, including visual, oral, listening, writing, motor, mental, and emotional skills. Thus, the Critical Incident learning model can serve as an effective alternative teaching method to enhance students' learning engagement in the Akidah Akhlak subject.

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