



Maslow Based Guidance and Counseling Strategies to Enhance Arabic Learning Motivation in Maahad Tahfiz

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Abstract

In tahfiz-based educational institutions, many students face challenges in maintaining strong motivation to learn Arabic, even though mastering the language is crucial for understanding and memorizing the Qur'an. This study aims to explore the strategies employed by teachers in guidance and counseling to enhance students' motivation in learning Arabic at Maahad Tahfiz As-Sa'idiyyah (MTAS), Malaysia. It also seeks to identify the challenges faced by teachers when implementing the strategies. This qualitative descriptive research employs a case study approach. The research subject purposively consisted of 2 teachers and 10 students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results reveal that teachers apply several strategies, including humanistic and personal approaches, emotional support, linking learning goals with spiritual values, and forming collaborative learning groups. These strategies align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, from safety to self-actualization. Challenges include limited time, lack of formal counseling training, varied student backgrounds and lack of support from institution. The study concludes that a holistic and psychologically grounded approach can serve as an effective strategy to enhance Arabic learning motivation in tahfiz-based institutions.

Keywords:

Arabic Language; Guidance and Counseling; Learning Motivation; Maahad Tahfiz; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

A. INTRODUCTION

Learning Arabic is an essential need, especially for students of tahfiz-based educational institutions that are oriented towards memorizing the Qur'an. Because by learning Arabic, students find it easier to memorize the Quran (Zubaidillah, 2018; Nidia et al., 2022). By learning Arabic, students can understand the meaning of the Quran easily and will have a lot of Arabic vocabulary (Baharin et al., 2025). So that they will be easy to remember, fast to memorize, and more careful in reading (Nidia et al., 2022). Therefore, learning Arabic is an essential thing for students, especially those who study at Maahad Tahfiz.

However, in many Maahad Tahfiz (institutions that are oriented towards memorizing the Qur'an), not all students show a high level of motivation in memorizing the Qur'an. For instance, at MI Al-Qur'an Singosari, students' motivation to memorize the Qur'an is at a moderate level, with notable differences between those who reside in dormitories and those who live at home (Rochmah & Dariyadi, 2023). In fact, there is a significant relationship between the motivation to learn Arabic and the motivation to memorize the Qur'an (Fatimatuzzahrah et al., 2024). This phenomenon represents a critical issue that needs to be addressed within institutions oriented toward producing Qur'an memorizers.

Maahad Tahfiz As-Sa'idiyyah (MTAS) is a semi-boarding educational institution at the secondary school level located in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. As a institutions that are oriented towards memorizing the Qur'an, MTAS has a vision to produce a generation of rabbani who have excellent memorization of the Al-Quran. Various activities carried out at MTAS are

proof of the seriousness of this Maahad to produce a generation of Al-Quran memorizers. Activities such as Shobahul Qur'an and Hafalan Qur'an are one of the many activities that accommodate the creation of Al-Quran memorization at MTAS.

Arabic language learning at MTAS has been going well. Learning is carried out indoors and outdoors. Formally by following existing policies and curriculum, and informally through interesting activities supported by the school to improve students' mastery of Arabic. At MTAS, the problem of Arabic language learning does not come from the teacher or the system. Teachers as educators have carried out their obligations properly, as well as the system that regulates the learning process is systematic and structured. This can be proven by the author from the documents available when conducting observations.

The problem of learning Arabic in MTAS comes from students who have minimal motivation to learn Arabic. In general, this lack of motivation comes from students who have a general educational background and have never experienced learning Arabic when they were still studying in lower schools (equivalent to elementary schools in Indonesia). This condition results in an imbalance in basic abilities between students and the emergence of psychological barriers such as fear, inferiority, and lack of confidence in facing Arabic lessons. When students feel left behind and do not have a strong foundation, their motivation to learn becomes low. They tend to be passive, reluctant to ask questions, and even show an attitude of giving up before trying. This is certainly a big challenge for teachers.

Therefore, in response to the above phenomenon, the role of teachers is very necessary to foster students' motivation to learn Arabic. Because teachers do not only act as facilitators or material providers. More broadly, teachers have a role to educate, teach, guide, instruct, train, and evaluate students during learning (Amelia & Hilyana, 2022). In fact, according to Djamarah (2000) teachers have 13 main roles, one of which is to motivate. Motivating students to be enthusiastic about learning is the main task of teachers besides other tasks. Motivating means providing encouragement, influencing students, moving and hypnotizing students in every guidance process at school. Teachers who are professional in carrying out their duties are teachers who succeed in motivating their students to take lessons with them (Umasugi, 2020).

To realize students who have maximum motivation to learn Arabic, teachers need certain strategies and approaches. The right approach from teachers will help students identify the learning obstacles they experience, so that students can develop self-confidence, and are able to develop effective learning strategies. Therefore, systematic, innovative, and effective strategies are needed by teachers to increase students' learning motivation so that they are able to adapt to the various challenges that arise in the world of education (Azura et al., 2025).

One approach that can be used to understand students' needs and motivations is the hierarchy of needs theory developed by Abraham Maslow. This theory explains that each individual has five levels of needs that must be met in stages, namely physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow & Lewis, 1987). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is relevant to this study because it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding students' motivation in learning Arabic at MTAS.

In a tafsir-based environment, students often face psychological and social challenges such as time constraint, inability to remember verses, strict disciplinary rules external noise (Abdullah et al., 2021), mental stress, emotional changes, and low self-esteem (Yahya et al., 2022). Teachers can identify which levels of students' needs—physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, or self-actualization—are unmet and provide appropriate guidance and counseling. This approach helps enhance students' intrinsic motivation and creates a supportive learning environment that fosters both academic success and personal growth.

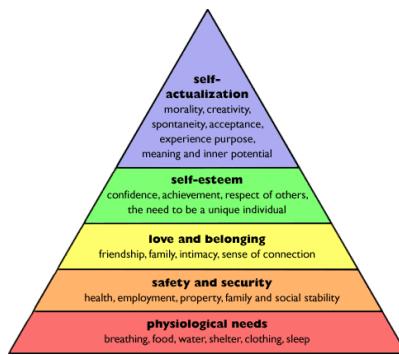


Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory Pyramid

Based on the pyramid of Maslow's hierarchy of needs above, the most basic needs in human life are physiological needs, such as eating, drinking, breathing, sleeping, and the like. A person will not be able to live a good life if these basic needs have not been met. After physical needs are met, the next stage is the need for security and protection from various threats or risks. Furthermore, the third need in this hierarchy is the need for love and affection, which includes relationships such as marriage, friendship, friendship, and social interaction. If these three initial needs have been met, the need for appreciation will arise. This need is related to self-esteem, recognition, and acceptance from others. The peak of Maslow's pyramid is the need for self-actualization, which is when a person tries to develop their potential to the maximum according to their skills and desires (Zahro & Jannah, 2023).

Many previous studies have examined teacher strategies in increasing student learning motivation, such as research conducted by Azura et al., (2025) which revealed that teachers in implementing guidance and counseling at SMP Negeri 8 Percut Sei Tuan, apply three main approaches: preventive (creating a supportive learning environment), curative (intervention through individual/group counseling), and development (programs to improve interests and talents). In addition, there is also research by Musa, (2024) regarding the implementation of group guidance as a teacher strategy at SMP Negeri 1 Rantepao in overcoming student learning motivation, the results of which showed positive results from the implementation of these services on increasing student learning motivation. Then research by Apriyanti, (2021) which revealed that interpersonal communication and group communication with the nature of *face-to-face communication* carried out by teachers can increase student learning motivation.

A few studies above are examples of the many strategies teachers use to improve students' learning motivation. However, the previous studies have focused on public schools or religious schools such as MI/MTs/MA, but very few have discussed guidance and counseling strategies in tafhiz-based schools such as MTAS. Then, there was no use of theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs in previous studies. This study is here to fill the gap above. Teacher strategies in guidance and counseling in tafhiz schools based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory are something new offered by this study.

Along with the importance of the role of teachers in guiding and motivating students, especially in learning Arabic in tafhiz institutions, a number of issues arise that need to be studied in depth. The main issues that are the focus of this study include: what strategies are applied by teachers in implementing guidance and counseling to increase motivation to learn Arabic; and what are the challenges faced by teachers in carrying out this role. These two aspects are important to analyze in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of learning and efforts to increase learning motivation at MTAS.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the strategies used by teachers in implementing guidance and counseling to improve motivation to learn Arabic at MTAS according to Maslow Hierarchy and to identify the challenges faced by teachers in providing guidance. Thus, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective guidance

and counseling practices in supporting Arabic language learning in tafhiz-based educational institutions.

B. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study type (Sugiyono, 2013). This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of teacher strategies in providing guidance and counseling to improve motivation to learn Arabic at MTAS, Malaysia. The case study is considered relevant because the focus of the study is on real conditions, namely the practice of guidance and counseling by teachers in the context of education based on tafhiz schools.

The location of this study was MTAS (MTAS), located in Seremban, Malaysia. The subjects of the study consisted of 2 teachers, namely an Arabic teacher and a Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher. The selection of teacher subjects was carried out purposively, with the criteria being teachers who had experience in providing guidance and counseling services and were directly involved in the Arabic language learning process. In addition, this study also involved 10 students who were selected purposively based on their involvement in Arabic language learning and their willingness to participate in interviews. Data from students were obtained through non-structural interviews to explore their experiences, perceptions, and motivations in learning Arabic, as well as their responses to the guidance strategies implemented by the teachers.

Data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore the strategies implemented by teachers, the approaches used, and the challenges they face. Observations were conducted to directly see the implementation of guidance and counseling strategies in teaching and learning activities. Meanwhile, documentation was conducted by collecting supporting documents such as guidance notes, teacher daily journals, and lesson implementation plans (RPP) containing elements of guidance and counseling.

The data obtained from the three techniques were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction is done by filtering and summarizing important information from raw data. Furthermore, data presentation is done in narrative and tabular form to facilitate understanding. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, carried out continuously throughout the research process to ensure the validity and consistency of the data.

To maintain the validity of the data, this study applies triangulation of sources and techniques. Triangulation is done by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as reconfirming with informants (member checking) so that the research results truly reflect the existing reality. This technique is used to strengthen the validity of the data and ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the findings.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

Teacher Strategies in Guidance and Counseling to Increase Arabic Learning Motivation

Based on the results of interviews with guidance and counseling teachers and observations at MTAS, it was found that teachers use various strategies to improve students' learning motivation in Arabic subjects. These strategies are carried out in a structured and sustainable manner, and are directed not only at improving academic achievement, but also strengthening students' psychology and spirituality.

1. Humanistic and Personal Approach

One of the main strategies implemented by teachers in guidance and counseling to increase motivation to learn Arabic at MTAS is a humanistic and personal approach. This strategy focuses on a comprehensive understanding of the individual conditions of students, appreciation of their potential, and attention to students' emotional and psychological needs (Yusrahima, 2022 ; Patrick & Nordin, 2025). Teachers strive to build warm and empathetic interpersonal relationships with students, especially those who show symptoms of decreased enthusiasm for

learning or difficulty in following the subject matter.

The guidance process is not done in a formal or rigid manner, but through informal conversations, persuasive approaches, and daily interactions that are laden with attention and emotional reinforcement. Teachers try to understand the emotional condition of students, family factors, social problems, as well as challenges in memorizing the Qur'an which is a special feature of education in maahad. Through this strategy, students are given the space to feel heard, understood, and not judged, thus building relationships that support the formation of intrinsic motivation.

One of the BK teachers stated:

"We don't directly reprimand or punish, but try to chat first in a relaxed manner, so that they are comfortable and open."

This statement shows that teachers deliberately avoid authoritative or confrontational approaches, and prefer a humanistic approach that prioritizes students' psychological well-being. This approach is in line with the concept of humanistic education according to (Rogers, 1969), which places empathy, trust, and authenticity as the foundation of the learning process.

In the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this approach leads to the fulfillment of safety needs, namely the need for stability, protection, and emotional comfort. According to Maslow & Lewis (1987), these needs must be met before an individual can move up to the next stage in the hierarchy of needs, such as affection, esteem, and self-actualization.

Students who feel emotionally safe tend to have stability in concentration, are enthusiastic and able to overcome difficulties in learning. Conversely, insecurity in the learning environment can result in decreased motivation, anxiety, and even withdrawal from the learning process.

2. Providing Psychological and Emotional Support

In the guidance and counseling process at MTAS, an important strategy used by teachers to increase student learning motivation is to provide consistent psychological and emotional support. This is because students' psychological and emotional well-being has a direct impact on the teaching and learning process (Fauziati et al., 2021). Students whose psychological and emotional well-being is not met can result in decreased motivation, anxiety, and even withdrawal from the learning process. Therefore, students need psychological and emotional support, because by achieving both of these things, they tend to be more focused, enthusiastic, and able to overcome difficulties in learning (Irmayanti & Yuliani, 2020).

Teachers realize that students need not only cognitive direction, but also affective reinforcement that touches their emotional dimensions. To that end, teachers provide direct verbal support, such as encouraging sentences, appreciation for effort, and positive reinforcement that is aimed not only at the final result (grade), but also at the process and perseverance shown by students. For example, teachers will still give praise to students who try even though the exam results are not yet satisfactory. This strengthens the perception that effort is appreciated, not just the result.

As expressed by one Arabic teacher:

"If we praise and acknowledge their efforts, they feel more enthusiastic even though their marks are not yet high."

This strategy shows that emotional support is not only a form of attention, but also a psychological intervention that directly affects students' self-perception and intrinsic motivation. When students feel appreciated, they are more motivated to continue the learning process and overcome existing challenges.

In the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this approach is closely related to the need for esteem needs. Maslow & Lewis (1987) explain that this need includes two aspects: internal self-esteem and recognition from others. When students receive appreciation, praise, or recognition from teachers, this need is met, and as a result, they will feel more capable, valuable, and confident in facing learning tasks.

3. Linking Learning Objectives to Spiritual Values

One of the most meaningful strategies implemented by teachers in guidance and counseling to increase motivation to learn Arabic at MTAS is to link learning objectives with spiritual values

and religiosity. In the context of Islamic educational institutions such as Maahad Tahfiz, this spiritual approach is very important because most students have a life orientation based on religious values and Islamic scientific ideals.

Teachers consistently emphasize that learning Arabic is not just for academic purposes, such as exams or report card grades, but is also part of worship and self-servitude to Allah. Understanding Arabic is explained as the main key to understanding the Quran, Hadith, and classical Islamic literature. With this approach, students are invited to see Arabic lessons as a spiritual medium that connects them directly to the sacred texts and their religious mission.

As conveyed by one of the teachers:

"We remind students that learning Arabic is not just for exams, but to understand the word of Allah."

This expression reflects the process of internalizing spiritual values in learning activities, where student motivation is no longer only extrinsic (grades, punishments, or praise), but also intrinsic because it is related to the existential meaning of what they learn. In the view of humanistic psychology, this is closely related to self-actualization in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.

Maslow & Lewis (1987) placed self-actualization at the peak of the hierarchy of human needs, namely when individuals try to realize their highest potential—both intellectually, creatively, socially, and spiritually. In this framework, learning Arabic becomes a means for students to actualize themselves as knowledgeable and useful servants of Allah, and to prepare themselves to become preachers, religious teachers, or leaders of the community in the future.

4. Group Approach and Social Support

One of the strategies implemented by teachers in guidance and counseling to increase motivation to learn Arabic is through a group approach and providing social support. Teachers form small learning communities consisting of students with balanced ability levels. The goal is to create a collaborative learning atmosphere, where students can help each other understand the material, discuss, and motivate each other. Thus, students can interact and convey opinions or suggestions, without fear due to knowledge gaps. Through a group approach, teachers can also anticipate the emergence of problems and develop the potential possessed by students (Mudiantoro, 2021).

Teachers also provide space for students to share their experiences, difficulties, and learning strategies. This activity not only improves academic understanding, but also fosters a sense of togetherness and solidarity among students. When students feel like they are part of a supportive group, they tend to be more motivated to actively participate and show better learning performance.

As conveyed by the Guidance and Counseling teacher:

"Students are more enthusiastic when studying in groups, they don't feel alone."

This strategy is closely related to the need for love and belonging in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow & Lewis, 1987). At this stage, humans have a drive to establish meaningful social relationships, such as friendship, acceptance, and emotional support. In the context of learning, fulfilling these needs will help students feel more emotionally secure, so they are more open to the learning process and more confident in facing academic challenges.

Based on the results above, the strategies used by teachers at MTAS in increasing motivation to learn Arabic are more targeted at the three middle to upper layers in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, namely security, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-actualization. The following is a mapping between teacher strategies and Maslow's levels of needs:

Table 1. Mapping of strategies used by teachers based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs

No.	Teacher Strategies in Guidance and Counseling	Maslow's Level of Needs
1	Humanistic and Personal Approach (Personal relationships, verbal motivation, and emotional support)	Safety Needs (the need for emotional security)
2	Providing Psychological and Emotional Support (Giving praise, recognizing effort, and giving responsibility for learning)	Esteem Needs (need for self-esteem and recognition)
3	Linking learning objectives with spiritual values	Self-Actualization (actualization of one's highest potential, especially in a religious context)
4	Formation of study groups	Love and Belonging (need for social relationships and belonging)

This approach shows that teachers do not only act as instructors, but also as facilitators of students' personal development. By recognizing students' psychological and social conditions, teachers can develop strategies that touch their deepest needs. This is in line with Maslow's view that when psychological and existential needs are met, individuals will be internally motivated to develop, learn, and contribute optimally.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Guidance and Counseling

Although the guidance and counseling strategies implemented by teachers at MTAS show a positive impact on students' learning motivation, their implementation is not free from a number of challenges. Based on the results of interviews with Arabic teachers, there are several main obstacles that are often faced in the process of implementing guidance and counseling effectively, namely:

1. Time Constraints and Tight Learning Schedules

Time constraints to conduct are the main challenges experienced by many educational institutions (Mita Syahri et al., 2024; Tuasikal, 2024). At MTAS, time constraints due to a very tight learning schedule require students to divide their time between intensive memorization of the Qur'an and taking academic lessons, including Arabic, which also require high focus and concentration. This condition results in the space and opportunity for teachers to conduct in-depth counseling sessions being very limited. Teachers often face a dilemma between completing tightly scheduled learning materials or taking the time to listen and help solve students' personal problems individually.

This can be seen from the statement of one of the Arabic language teachers who said that they wanted to hear the complaints and problems of each student, but were hampered by the tight schedule and the need for students to immediately attend the hafazan halaqah after class. These time constraints not only hamper the ideal counseling process, but also reduce the effectiveness of teacher interventions in increasing students' learning motivation and psychological well-being. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reschedule more flexibly or integrate guidance and counseling activities into the daily learning process. This integrative approach allows teachers to provide continuous support without sacrificing students' learning time, while simultaneously creating an atmosphere that is conducive to students' academic and emotional development.

2. Lack of Specialized Training in Counseling

Most teachers at MTAS do not have a formal educational background or training in the field of guidance and counseling. As a result, they carry out their role as counselors intuitively or rely on personal experience without adequate theoretical foundation. The lack of knowledge of these teachers will affect the quality of guidance and services they provide (Kamaluddin, 2011). The lack of formal training also causes teachers to be less sensitive and less skilled in recognizing

signs of deep emotional distress or serious motivational disorders that students may experience.

This is reinforced by the statement of one of the Arabic teachers who said that they had never attended special counseling training and often only imitated the methods that had been practiced by previous teachers. The lack of competence in this field has the potential to limit teachers' ability to provide appropriate and effective interventions, so that the psychological support needed by students cannot be optimally met. Therefore, increasing capacity through formal training and professional development is a crucial step so that teachers can carry out the role of counselors more competently and systematically, so that students' learning motivation and emotional well-being can be better maintained.

3. Differences in Background and Emotional Maturity of Students

Students at MTAS come from very diverse family backgrounds, regions, and levels of learning readiness. This diversity demands that the counseling approach provided by teachers must be contextual and individually tailored, because each student has different needs, challenges, and psychological conditions. However, the reality in the field shows that teachers do not always have sufficient time or complete data to understand the background and personal conditions of each student thoroughly.

As expressed by one of the Arabic teachers, there are students who come from economically disadvantaged families, as well as students who are not used to living in a dormitory environment, so the problems faced are very diverse and difficult to monitor in detail. This situation is a challenge for teachers in maintaining objectivity and fairness when providing attention and counseling services. Because interpersonal communication between teachers and students, or students with students during counseling, both of which may come from different cultural backgrounds can cause conflict, mutual suspicion or other negative feelings (Nabila et. all 2024).

4. Lack of Structural Support from Institutions

Although teachers at Maahad Tahfiz informally carry out guidance and counseling, many tahfiz educational institutions have not provided formal structures that support the sustainability of optimal counseling services. Structures such as active counseling units, clear referral procedures, and case follow-up documentation are not yet fully available or functioning optimally. As a result, teachers often carry out counseling tasks individually, without systematic support from the institution. This makes guidance and counseling services tend to be sporadic and not fully integrated into the learning system at school.

As expressed by one of the Arabic teachers, when facing serious cases, they usually only refer students to the principal (mudir), but without any standard procedures and structured follow-up mechanisms. This condition is a significant obstacle in providing consistent and professional counseling services, and hinders efforts to create a learning environment that supports optimal student psychological development. Therefore, educational institutions need to strengthen institutional support by building an organized counseling system, complete with procedures, adequate human resources, and ongoing monitoring so that guidance and counseling services can run effectively and sustainably.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that guidance and counseling strategies based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs effectively enhance students' motivation to learn Arabic at MTAS. Teachers implement humanistic and personal approaches, provide psychological and emotional support, link learning objectives with spiritual values, and foster collaborative group learning, which correspond to the safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization levels in Maslow's theory. These strategies strengthen intrinsic motivation, emotional stability, and spiritual awareness, creating a holistic learning environment that integrates academic achievement with personal and religious development. However, challenges such as limited time, lack of formal counseling training, diverse student backgrounds, and insufficient institutional support indicate the need for systematic counseling structures, professional development for teachers, and integrative scheduling that allows continuous support. Therefore, educational institutions should establish organized counseling programs, train teachers in psychological and counseling skills, and embed

guidance activities within daily learning processes to optimize Arabic learning motivation and student well-being.

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