



Learning Culture of Elementary School Students: An Ethnographic Study at MI Nurul Huda Bengkulu City

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ABSTRACT

Learning culture is an important factor in determining the success of the learning process in elementary schools. This study aims to describe students learning culture and analyze the factors that influence it at MI Nurul Huda, Bengkulu City. This study used a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design. Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that students learning culture is formed through four main themes: discipline, learning habits, social interaction, and learning motivation. Students learning culture has generally developed well, especially in aspects of discipline and social interaction, but is not evenly distributed in the aspect of independent learning habits. The role of teachers has proven to be a key factor in shaping a learning culture through learning strategies and classroom management, while the social and cultural environment also influences students learning habits. The findings of this study indicate that learning culture is the result of an on going interaction between internal and external factors of students. Systematic efforts are needed through culture-based learning, strengthening the role of teachers, and environmental support to improve students learning culture.

Key words: *learning culture, ethnography, elementary school, learning, social interaction*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process that focuses not only on the transfer of knowledge but also on the formation of character, values, attitudes, and habits in students daily lives. Education serves as a means of cultural transformation, enabling individuals to develop cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically in a balanced manner. A crucial aspect of the educational process is a learning culture, which is an indicator of success in achieving learning objectives (Sari, 2021; Anjelita, 2024).

A learning culture can be defined as a pattern of learning habits formed through repeated and continuous activities, thus becoming part of the student's life. This culture encompasses attitudes toward learning, motivation, discipline, learning strategies, and social interactions within the learning process. A positive learning culture will encourage students to take responsibility for their learning process and develop independence in acquiring knowledge (Putri, 2024).

From a modern educational perspective, learning culture is closely linked to the paradigm of active and constructive learning. The learning process is no longer viewed as a passive activity, but rather as an active process involving experience, social interaction, and individual reflection. Constructivism theory emphasizes that knowledge is constructed independently by students through direct involvement in the learning process (Anjelita, 2024; Rahmawati, 2022). The learning culture that develops in the school environment significantly determines the level of student engagement and the quality of learning.

A learning culture also plays a strategic role in developing 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Students with a positive learning culture tend to have high intrinsic motivation, are disciplined, and are able to manage their study time effectively. Similarly, students with a low learning culture tend to have difficulty understanding the material and demonstrate less than optimal learning outcomes (Sari, 2021; Putri, 2024).

Experiences in the field indicate that students learning culture, particularly at the elementary school level, still faces various challenges. Pre-observations at MI Nurul Huda in Bengkulu City revealed that some students exhibited suboptimal learning behaviors, such as a lack of discipline in participating in lessons, low participation in class activities, and a lack of motivation for independent learning. This situation indicates that students' learning culture has not yet been fully developed.

These problems are influenced by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include motivation, interest, readiness to learn, and students psychological state. External factors include family, school, and community environments. The social environment plays a crucial role in shaping students learning behavior because social interactions influence their learning habits and patterns (Mahendra, 2025; Anjelita, 2024).

On the other hand, local cultural values also influence the development of students learning styles. Local wisdom fostered within communities encompasses values such as discipline, responsibility, and hard work, which can foster a positive learning culture. Integrating local culture into learning can make the learning process more contextual and meaningful for students (Utami, 2022).

Several previous studies over the past five years have shown that learning culture has a significant influence on various aspects of student development. Research by Apriliyanti and Yasip (2025) showed that a learning culture formed in the home and school environment positively influences elementary school students learning motivation. Research by Lestiarini and Ningsih (2025) found that school culture plays a crucial role in shaping student character, particularly in aspects of discipline and responsibility. These findings are reinforced by research by Asmoro and Munir (2024), which shows that implementing a school culture can improve students discipline through teacher role models.

Research conducted by Humaeroh, Dewi, and Hayat (2024) revealed that integrating cultural literacy into learning can improve students self-confidence and social skills. Research by Simbolon, Lubis, and Vanesa (2023) also emphasized that a strong school culture can shape students' character while creating a conducive learning environment. Meanwhile, Juliani et al. (2024) showed that culture-based learning can improve character and make learning more contextual. Recent research by Imelda and Syafi'ah (2025) also highlighted that project-based learning innovations integrated with culture can increase student engagement in the learning process.

Although various studies have examined learning culture from various perspectives, most have focused on the relationship between learning culture and motivation, character, or learning outcomes using quantitative approaches. Research that explores learning culture in depth within specific social and cultural contexts is still limited. The use of qualitative approaches, particularly ethnography, to examine concrete learning culture practices is also rare, particularly in the context of regional elementary schools.

In contemporary educational studies, the sociocultural approach emphasizes that the learning process is the result of interactions between individuals and their environment. Effective learning occurs through meaningful social interactions and active student engagement

in their social context (Anjelita, 2024). To comprehensively understand learning culture, an approach capable of exploring social and cultural phenomena in depth is required.

An ethnographic approach is a relevant method for studying learning culture. This approach allows researchers to holistically understand cultural practices, social interactions, and values that develop within a community. Through this approach, researchers can identify how learning culture is formed, practiced, and maintained within the school environment (Mahendra, 2025).

This study offers a novel approach by examining student learning culture using an ethnographic approach within a local social and cultural context. This study aims to describe the learning culture of students at MI Nurul Huda, Bengkulu City, and analyze the factors influencing its development. The results are expected to contribute to the development of culture-based learning strategies and serve as a reference for further research in elementary education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an educational ethnography design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aimed to deeply understand the phenomenon of student learning culture within a natural context, namely the school environment. This approach allowed researchers to holistically explore the meanings, habits, values, and social interactions that shape students' learning culture. The ethnographic design was used because the focus of this study was to examine cultural practices that develop within a specific social group, namely elementary school students (Ansori, 2025; Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

1. Research Design

The research design used was educational ethnography, which emphasizes in-depth observation of behaviors, interactions, and habits that occur in educational environments. Researchers also sought to understand learning culture as a system of meaning formed through everyday social interactions in schools.

Ethnographic research has key characteristics: it is conducted in a natural setting, is descriptive in nature, and emphasizes understanding meaning from the participant's perspective. The researcher acts as the primary instrument (human instrument) directly involved in the data collection and interpretation process (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). Researchers conduct participant observation to capture cultural learning phenomena directly and build relationships with informants to obtain authentic data.

2. Location and Subject of Research

This research was conducted at MI Nurul Huda, Bengkulu City. The location was selected based on the school's characteristics relevant to the research objectives, particularly in examining student learning culture at the elementary school level.

The research subjects consist of several parties directly involved in the learning process, namely:

1. The principal as a key informant who has an understanding of school policies and culture,
2. Teachers as implementers of learning and shapers of learning culture in the classroom,
3. Students are the main subjects who experience and practice the culture of learning every day.

Subject selection was carried out purposively, namely based on the consideration that the informant has knowledge and experience relevant to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2022).

3. Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques used were purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was used to identify key informants deemed capable of providing in-depth information about student learning culture. Snowball sampling was used to obtain additional informants based on recommendations from previous informants, thus enriching and in-depth data (Sugiyono, 2022).

This technique is particularly relevant in qualitative research because it allows researchers to dig deep for information from individuals who truly understand the phenomenon being studied.

4. Research Procedures

This research procedure is carried out through several stages which are flexible and develop according to conditions in the field, namely:

1. Preparation Stage

At this stage, the researcher conducts a preliminary study to identify problems, compiles a research proposal, and prepares research instruments such as interview guidelines and observation sheets.

2. Data Collection Stage

Researchers conducted participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation collection at the research locations. Direct observations were made during learning activities to understand student behavior and interactions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth information from informants.

3. Data Analysis Stage

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously during the data collection process. Researchers performed data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions in stages.

4. Reporting Stage

The final stage is for the researcher to compile the research results in the form of a systematic scientific report in accordance with the rules for writing scientific papers.

This stage is in line with the characteristics of qualitative research which is iterative and flexible (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

5. Research Instruments

The primary instrument in this research is the researcher herself (human instrument), who plays a role in determining the research focus, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. This research also uses supporting instruments in the form of:

1. Interview guidelines for digging up in-depth information,
2. Observation sheets to record student activities and behavior,
3. Documentation in the form of photos, field notes, and school documents.

The instrument is designed based on the construct of learning culture which includes discipline, learning habits, social interaction, and student learning motivation.

6. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques used in this study include:

1. Participatory Observation

Observations are carried out directly by involving researchers in learning activities to obtain authentic data regarding student behavior and interactions.

2. In-depth Interview

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to provide researchers with flexibility in digging up in-depth information from informants.

3. Documentation

Documentation is used to complete data in the form of photos, notes, and documents relevant to the research.

The use of various techniques aims to obtain comprehensive data and increase research validity (Sugiyono, 2022).

7. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used is the interactive qualitative model analysis from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which includes three main stages:

1. Data Reduction

The data obtained was selected, focused, and simplified according to research needs.

2. Data Presentation

Data is presented in narrative, table, or diagram form to facilitate understanding.

3. Drawing Conclusions

Researchers draw conclusions based on patterns, themes, and relationships between the data found.

Data analysis is carried out continuously from the beginning to the end of the research to ensure that the research results are valid and accountable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented based on the primary focus of the study, which is to describe student learning culture and the factors influencing it at MI Nurul Huda, Bengkulu City. Analysis was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, then interpreted using a thematic approach.

1. Student Learning Culture

The results of the research conducted revealed that the learning culture of students at MI Nurul Huda, Bengkulu City, is reflected in several key aspects, including learning discipline, study habits, social interactions, and learning motivation. Overall, the learning culture has been established, but it is not yet evenly distributed across all students.

Table 1. Categories of Student Learning Culture

No	Learning Culture Category	Indicator	Field Findings
1	Learning Discipline	Arrive on time, orderly	Most of the students are disciplined
2	Study Habits	Study at home	Not evenly distributed
3	Social Interaction	Group discussion	Active
4	Motivation	Enthusiastic about learning	Pretty good
5	The Role of Teachers	Learning methods	Very influential
6	Environment	Family support	Varied

Table 1 shows that discipline and social interaction have developed well, while independent learning habits still need improvement. This finding suggests that a learning culture is the result of repeated practice (Sari, 2021).

Observations showed that the majority of students demonstrated disciplined behavior, such as arriving on time, attending lessons in an orderly manner, and completing assigned assignments. These results indicate that the value of discipline has begun to be internalized. However, the impact on independent study habits at home remains uneven. Some students lack a consistent study routine, which impacts their understanding of the material.

From a social interaction perspective, students demonstrated active engagement in group discussions and collaboration in completing assignments. This indicates a well-developed collaborative culture. Student motivation to learn was also quite good, as evidenced by their enthusiasm for participating in the learning process, although there was still some variation among individuals.

This finding aligns with research by Sari (2021), which states that a learning culture is formed through a process of repeated and consistent habituation. Furthermore, research by Oktaviani, et al. (2022) shows that structured learning habits significantly influence student engagement in learning.

Theoretically, this finding can be explained through a constructivist approach, which emphasizes that learning occurs through students active involvement in constructing knowledge. Students who are active in the teaching and learning process will find it more engaging and more meaningful, especially when they participate in group discussions (Anjelita, 2024). The resulting learning culture reflects the internalization of learning values within students.

In the case of uneven learning culture, it shows that the internalization process is not optimal, this indicates the need for a more systematic strategy in building students independent learning habits, especially outside the school environment.

2. The Role of Teachers in Learning Culture

Research results show that teachers play a significant role in shaping students' learning culture. Teachers serve not only as transmitters of material but also as facilitators, motivators, and guides in the learning process. The researchers' observations show that teachers are actively creating a conducive classroom atmosphere, providing motivation for learning, and using a variety of learning methods, such as group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and assignments. These strategies have been shown to increase student engagement in learning.

There is also variation in the implementation of learning strategies among teachers. These differences impact student engagement and participation in class. Classes managed using interactive methods tend to exhibit a better learning culture than those still using conventional methods.

This finding aligns with research by Albina, et al. (2022), which states that innovative and interactive learning strategies can improve students' learning habits. Hikmawati, et al. (2022) the better the school environment, the more effectively character values can be instilled in students.

Recent research by Wulandari et al. (2024) shows that the teacher's role as a facilitator in student-centered learning significantly influences the development of an active and independent learning culture. Teachers who are able to create a supportive learning environment will encourage students to be more actively involved.

Researchers explain that the role of teachers is a key factor in shaping a learning culture. Teachers not only influence cognitive aspects but also shape students' attitudes, habits, and motivation to learn.

3. Influence of Social and Cultural Environment

The research results show that the social and cultural environment has a significant influence on students learning styles. Interactions between students in the classroom demonstrate good cooperation, such as helping each other with assignments and discussing in groups.

A supportive school environment creates a conducive learning environment, so students feel comfortable and motivated to learn. Local cultural values developed within the community, such as mutual cooperation, discipline, and responsibility, also influence students' learning behavior.

Researchers also believe that not all students receive the same support from their families. Some students come from families that pay little attention to learning activities, resulting in low levels of independent learning habits.

This finding aligns with research by Kurniawan and Suryani (2023), which states that social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping students' learning behavior. Furthermore, Utami (2022) explains that local wisdom values can be a source of character development and a positive learning culture.

Recent research by Melisa & Putra (2021) also shows that family support has a significant influence on the success of developing a student learning culture. Students who receive family support tend to have better motivation and study habits.

From a sociocultural perspective, these findings demonstrate that learning is the result of interactions between individuals and their environment. The social and cultural environment not only provides a background but also plays an active role in shaping students learning behavior patterns.

4. Student Learning Culture Model

The analysis results obtained, namely the student learning culture model, show that learning culture is formed through the interaction of three main factors: the role of the teacher, the social environment, and interactions between students. This can be seen in Figure 1 below:

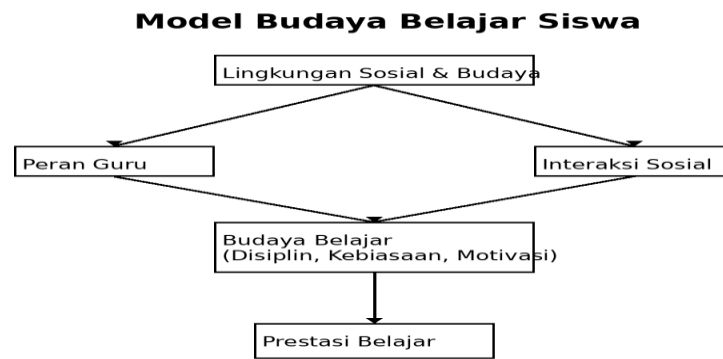


Figure 1. Student Learning Culture Model

These three factors shape learning habits, including discipline, motivation, and study habits, which ultimately impact student learning outcomes. Students with a positive learning culture tend to demonstrate higher learning motivation, greater engagement in learning, and more optimal learning outcomes.

Students who do not have a good learning culture tend to be less active, less disciplined, and have difficulty understanding learning materials. This shows a close relationship between learning culture, motivation, and student learning outcomes.

This finding aligns with research by Sari (2021), which states that study habits significantly influence student learning outcomes. Research by Tampubolon, et al. (2021) shows that learning motivation is a crucial factor driving student engagement in learning.

A recent study by Auliyah, et al. (2023) also revealed that the implementation of character-building for students through school culture is carried out through various school activities; this not only influences the learning process but also learning outcomes.

5. Summary of Discussion

All of the researchers' findings demonstrate that the learning culture of students at MI Nurul Huda, Bengkulu City, is formed through a complex process involving various factors. Learning culture is influenced not only by individual habits but also by the role of teachers, social interactions, and the cultural environment.

First, students learning culture is reflected in discipline, social interaction, and motivation to learn, which is quite good, although not evenly distributed. Second, teachers play a dominant role in shaping this learning culture through instructional strategies and classroom management. Third, the social and cultural environment has a significant influence as both supporting and inhibiting factors.

Thematic analysis shows that learning culture consists of four main components: discipline, study habits, social interaction, and motivation, which interact dynamically. These four components are influenced by external factors, such as teachers and the social environment.

A students learning culture is the result of the interaction between mutually influencing internal and external factors. A positive learning culture will impact student motivation and learning outcomes. Systematic and sustained efforts are needed to strengthen this learning culture through the role of teachers, a conducive school environment, and family and community support.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research and discussion conducted by the researcher indicate that the learning culture of students at MI Nurul Huda, Bengkulu City, is formed through a complex interaction between learning habits, the role of teachers, social interactions, and the social and cultural environment. Student learning culture is reflected in four main aspects: discipline, learning habits, social interactions, and learning motivation. These four aspects are interrelated and shape student learning behavior patterns in daily learning activities.

The research results show that students' learning culture has been quite well established, particularly in the areas of discipline and social interaction. However, independent learning habits are still unevenly distributed, necessitating more optimal development efforts. The role of teachers has been proven to be a key factor in shaping a learning culture through learning strategies, classroom management, and providing motivation to students. The social and cultural environment also has a significant influence, both as supporting and inhibiting factors in the formation of a student learning culture. A learning culture can be strengthened through synergy between teachers, schools, families, and the community.

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