
IMPROVING LEARNING INTEREST THROUGH DIGITAL PODCAST-BASED EDUCATIONAL CONTENT IN ECONOMICS SUBJECT AT CLASS XI MA AL-MUBAROK

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Abstract

This study was conducted to address the low learning interest of Class XI students at MA Al-Mubarak in Economics learning, which was characterized by limited classroom participation and the predominance of conventional teaching methods. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on learning motivation or media development, this study examines the implementation of digital podcast-based educational content to improve students' learning interest in the context of Madrasah Aliyah. The study employed Classroom Action Research using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, implemented in two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 15 Class XI students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicated a continuous improvement in students' learning interest throughout the research cycles. The average learning interest score increased from 7.5 in the pre-cycle (low category) to 12.7 in Cycle II (high category), while the proportion of students in the high-interest category increased from 13.3% to 73.3%. Improvements were observed across four indicators of learning interest: attention, engagement, curiosity, and persistence. These findings indicate that digital podcast-based educational content can serve as an effective learning strategy for improving students' learning interest and creating a more engaging learning environment in Economics classes at the Madrasah Aliyah level.

Kata Kunci: Minat Belajar;
Podcast Pendidikan;
Pembelajaran Digital;
Ekonomi; Penelitian
Tindakan di Kelas

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengatasi rendahnya minat belajar siswa Kelas XI di MA Al-Mubarak dalam pembelajaran Ekonomi, yang ditandai dengan partisipasi siswa di kelas yang terbatas serta dominasi metode pengajaran konvensional. Berbeda dengan penelitian sebelumnya yang sebagian besar berfokus pada motivasi belajar atau pengembangan media pembelajaran, penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan konten pendidikan berbasis podcast digital untuk meningkatkan minat belajar siswa dalam konteks Madrasah Aliyah. Penelitian ini menggunakan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) dengan model Kemmis dan McTaggart, yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus yang terdiri dari perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Peserta penelitian adalah 15 siswa Kelas XI. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Data kuantitatif dianalisis secara deskriptif, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data,

dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan menunjukkan peningkatan berkelanjutan dalam minat belajar siswa sepanjang siklus penelitian. Skor rata-rata minat belajar meningkat dari 7,5 pada pra-siklus (kategori rendah) menjadi 12,7 pada Siklus II (kategori tinggi), sementara proporsi siswa dalam kategori minat tinggi meningkat dari 13,3% menjadi 73,3%. Peningkatan tersebut teramati pada empat indikator minat belajar: perhatian, keterlibatan, rasa ingin tahu, dan ketekunan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa konten pendidikan berbasis podcast digital dapat berfungsi sebagai strategi pembelajaran yang efektif untuk meningkatkan minat belajar siswa dan menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih menarik dalam pelajaran Ekonomi di tingkat Madrasah Aliyah.

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INTRODUCTION

Economics is one of the core subjects in senior high schools that requires students to understand abstract concepts, analyze socio-economic phenomena, and apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. However, many students perceive Economics as a difficult and less engaging subject because learning activities are often dominated by teacher-centered instruction, such as lectures and slide presentations. As a result, students tend to become passive learners, show limited participation during classroom discussions, and gradually lose their interest in learning. In the digital era, this condition becomes increasingly challenging because today's students, as digital natives, are more familiar with interactive and technology-based learning environments than conventional classroom instruction (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2021; Khairunniza & Fathurrahman, 2025). Therefore, integrating digital learning media into classroom instruction is considered an important strategy for increasing students' learning interest.

Learning interest plays an essential role in determining students' learning engagement and academic achievement. According to Hidi and Renninger (2006), learning interest develops when students experience meaningful learning activities that stimulate attention, curiosity, active participation, and persistence. Students with high learning interest are more likely to participate actively in classroom discussions, complete learning tasks independently, and maintain concentration throughout the learning process. Conversely, low learning interest often results in poor engagement, lack of motivation, and unsatisfactory learning outcomes. Consequently, teachers need to create learning experiences that not only deliver knowledge but also encourage students to become actively involved in the learning process.

One instructional medium that has recently attracted considerable attention is the educational podcast. Podcasts are digital audio programs that can be accessed repeatedly through smartphones or other digital devices, allowing students to learn anytime and anywhere. Compared with conventional lectures, podcasts provide a more flexible learning experience because students can replay the material according to their own learning pace. Furthermore, podcasts enable teachers to present learning materials using conversational language, storytelling techniques, real-life examples, and various audio effects, making abstract concepts easier to understand. From the perspective of Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller et al., 2011), well-designed audio instruction helps reduce unnecessary cognitive load by presenting information in a structured and meaningful manner. Likewise, Multimedia Learning Theory (Mayer, 2020) suggests that properly organized multimedia elements can facilitate deeper understanding by improving students' cognitive processing during learning.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the educational benefits of podcasts. Alainashani and Soeharso (2026) reported that podcast-based learning media increased students' learning motivation through digital audio content. Bajrami et al. (2026) found that podcasts promoted flexible and personalized learning experiences. Febriyanti and Septiaji (2023) also revealed that podcasts significantly improved students' learning interest, while Shahrizal et al. (2022), through a systematic literature review, concluded that podcasts positively influence student engagement across various educational contexts. More recent studies by González Enríquez et al. (2023) (2024) and Errabo et al. (2023) further confirmed that podcasts encourage collaborative learning, self-regulation, and student engagement in technology-supported learning environments.

Although previous studies consistently reported positive impacts of educational podcasts, several important gaps remain. First, most existing studies focus on higher education or general secondary education, whereas evidence from Madrasah Aliyah settings remains limited. Second, previous research primarily emphasizes learning outcomes, motivation, or media development rather than examining how podcasts influence classroom learning dynamics and students' learning interest during classroom implementation. Third, only a few studies have investigated the use of podcast-based learning media in Economics education, despite the abstract nature of many Economics topics that require contextual explanations and engaging instructional strategies. These limitations indicate the need for further research to explore the effectiveness of educational podcasts within the context of Economics learning in Islamic secondary schools.

The novelty of this study lies in three aspects. First, this research investigates the

implementation of digital podcast-based educational content in Economics learning within the context of Madrasah Aliyah, which has received limited attention in previous studies. Second, unlike earlier studies that mainly measured learning outcomes quantitatively, this research examines changes in students' learning interest through four indicators—attention, engagement, curiosity, and persistence—during the classroom action process. Third, this study combines quantitative observation results with qualitative findings from teacher and student interviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how educational podcasts improve classroom learning experiences.

Preliminary observations conducted at MA Al-Mubarak, Puger District, Jember Regency, revealed that students' learning interest in Economics was relatively low. Of the 15 students observed, only two students (13.3%) demonstrated a high level of learning interest, while seven students (46.7%) were categorized as having low learning interest. Most students tended to remain passive during classroom activities, rarely asked questions, showed limited participation in discussions, and experienced difficulty understanding abstract economic concepts. These findings indicate that conventional instructional approaches have not yet been able to meet students' learning needs effectively, highlighting the urgency of implementing more innovative digital learning strategies.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of digital podcast-based educational content in improving the learning interest of Class XI students in Economics at MA Al-Mubarak through Classroom Action Research. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on digital learning media and learning interest, while also providing practical recommendations for Economics teachers and madrasahs regarding the effective integration of educational podcasts into classroom instruction.

METHOD

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consists of four iterative stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This model was selected because it provides a systematic framework for improving classroom practices through continuous cycles of implementation and evaluation. Compared with other classroom action research models, Kemmis and McTaggart emphasize reflective practice after each cycle, enabling researchers to identify weaknesses in the learning process and make immediate improvements in the subsequent cycle. This characteristic makes the model particularly suitable for studies aiming to enhance students' learning interest through instructional innovation.

The research was conducted at MA Al-Mubarak, Puger District, Jember Regency, during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants consisted of 15 students of Class XI, selected because preliminary observations indicated that their learning interest in Economics was relatively low. In addition, one Economics teacher participated as a collaborator throughout the research and also served as the classroom observer during the implementation of the learning activities. To strengthen the qualitative findings, interviews were conducted with one Economics teacher and six students, representing students with high, moderate, and low levels of learning interest.

The research was implemented in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of two classroom meetings. Each cycle included planning, action, observation, and reflection activities.

Table 1. Summary of Classroom Action Research Activities.

Cycle	Planning	Action	Observation	Reflection
Pre-cycle	Identification of learning problems and initial observation	Conventional learning using lecture, whiteboard, and PowerPoint	Observation of students' learning interest	Identification of learning problems and preparation for Cycle I
Cycle I	Preparation of podcast materials, lesson plans, worksheets, and observation instruments	Students listened to educational podcasts, took notes, discussed in groups, and completed learning tasks	Observation of students' attention, engagement, curiosity, and persistence	Evaluation of weaknesses and improvement planning for Cycle II
Cycle II	Revision of podcast content, integration of real-life case studies, and improvement of learning activities	Podcast-based learning with more interactive discussion, contextual examples, and teacher guidance	Observation using the same indicators and interview with participants	Evaluation of overall learning improvement and achievement of research objectives

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted during every meeting using a structured observation sheet designed to assess students' learning interest. The observation instrument measured four indicators adapted from Hidi and Renninger (2006), namely attention, engagement, curiosity, and persistence. Each indicator was assessed using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 4 (very high).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the completion of Cycle II to obtain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences during podcast-based learning. The interviews explored students' perceptions of the learning process, the advantages and challenges of using educational podcasts, and the teacher's evaluation of classroom implementation.

Documentation, including lesson plans, observation sheets, photographs of classroom activities, and students' learning products, was collected to support and validate the research findings.

Table 2. Categories of Students' Learning Interest Scores

Total Score	Category
4–7	Low
8–11	Moderate
12–16	High

Quantitative data obtained from the observation sheets were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis by calculating the average score and the percentage of students in each learning interest category for every meeting and cycle. The results were then compared across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II to identify changes in students' learning interest after the implementation of educational podcasts.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and documentation were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a comprehensive interpretation of the effectiveness of podcast-based educational content in improving students' learning interest in Economics.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, method triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. The consistency of findings across different data sources strengthened the trustworthiness of the research results.

RESULT

The implementation of digital podcast-based educational content was conducted through two classroom action research cycles. The findings indicate a consistent improvement in students' learning interest from the pre-cycle to the end of Cycle II. The improvement was observed in both the average learning interest scores and the distribution of students across the learning interest categories.

Students' Learning Interest Across Research Cycles

Before the intervention, the learning process relied mainly on lectures, PowerPoint presentations, and whiteboard explanations. Classroom observation revealed that students showed limited attention, low participation in discussions, and minimal curiosity toward Economics learning materials. The average learning interest score in the pre-cycle was 7.5, indicating a low level of learning interest.

Following the implementation of podcast-based learning activities, students' learning interest gradually improved during each meeting. The highest improvement occurred at the end of Cycle II, where the average score reached 12.7, indicating a high level of learning interest.

Table 3. Development of Students' Learning Interest Scores

Stage	Average Score	Category
Pre-cycle	7.5	Low
Cycle I – Meeting 1	8.6	Moderate
Cycle I – Meeting 2	9.8	Moderate
Cycle II – Meeting 1	11.2	Moderate
Cycle II – Meeting 2	12.7	High

Table 3 shows a continuous increase in students' learning interest throughout the implementation of the classroom action research. No decrease in the average score was observed during the intervention period.

Distribution of Students' Learning Interest Categories

Changes were also evident in the number of students belonging to each learning interest category.

Table 4. Distribution of Students by Learning Interest Category

Stage	Low	Moderate	High
Pre-cycle	7 (46.7%)	6 (40.0%)	2 (13.3%)
Cycle I – Meeting 1	5 (33.3%)	7 (46.7%)	3 (20.0%)
Cycle I – Meeting 2	3 (20.0%)	8 (53.3%)	4 (26.7%)
Cycle II – Meeting 1	1 (6.7%)	8 (53.3%)	6 (40.0%)
Cycle II – Meeting 2	0 (0%)	4 (26.7%)	11 (73.3%)

The proportion of students with high learning interest increased substantially throughout the intervention, while the number of students in the low category gradually declined until none remained at the end of Cycle II.

Development of Learning Interest Indicators

Students' learning interest was evaluated using four indicators: attention, engagement, curiosity, and persistence. All indicators demonstrated improvement from the pre-cycle to the end of Cycle II.

Table 5. Development of Learning Interest Indicators

Indicator	Pre-cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II
Attention	1.8	2.7	3.5
Engagement	1.9	2.6	3.4
Curiosity	1.8	2.5	3.3
Persistence	2.0	2.4	3.5

The greatest improvement occurred in the attention and persistence indicators. Students became more focused during learning activities and demonstrated greater consistency in

completing classroom tasks. Engagement and curiosity also increased, as reflected by more active participation during discussions and a greater willingness to ask questions related to the learning materials.

Interview Findings

Interview results supported the quantitative findings obtained through classroom observation.

Most students stated that learning through podcasts was more enjoyable because the explanations were easier to understand and accompanied by examples from everyday life. Students also reported that they could maintain concentration more effectively and did not become bored as quickly as during conventional classroom instruction.

One student stated:

"The podcast made the lesson easier to understand because the explanation was similar to real situations. I also enjoyed listening because it did not feel like a regular lecture."

Another student commented:

"I became more confident to ask questions after listening to the podcast because I already understood the basic concepts before the discussion."

The Economics teacher also reported positive changes in classroom participation.

"Students who usually remained silent became more active during discussions. The classroom atmosphere was more interactive, and students paid greater attention throughout the lesson."

However, the teacher also identified several challenges, particularly the need to prepare podcast content that matches the curriculum and the limited experience of teachers in producing digital learning media.

Table 6. Development of Students' Learning Interest

Stage	Score
Pre-cycle	7.5
Cycle I Meeting 1	8.6
Cycle I Meeting 2	9.8
Cycle II Meeting 1	11.2
Cycle II Meeting 2	12.7

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of digital podcast-based educational content effectively improved students' learning interest in Economics learning. The improvement was consistently observed throughout the classroom action research cycles, indicating that the instructional intervention successfully addressed the learning problems identified during the preliminary observation. The increase in students' average learning

interest score from 7.5 in the pre-cycle to 12.7 at the end of Cycle II suggests that podcast-based learning created a more engaging and student-centered learning environment.

The improvement can first be explained through Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller et al., 2011). Economics contains numerous abstract concepts that are often difficult for students to understand when presented solely through lectures. Educational podcasts reduce unnecessary cognitive load by presenting information in a structured, contextual, and conversational manner. Rather than receiving fragmented explanations, students listened to coherent narratives supported by examples from everyday economic phenomena. This instructional approach enabled students to process information more efficiently and facilitated better conceptual understanding. Consequently, students became more attentive during classroom instruction and demonstrated greater confidence in participating in subsequent learning activities.

The findings are also consistent with Multimedia Learning Theory proposed by Mayer (2020). Although podcasts rely primarily on audio, the combination of narration, voice intonation, contextual examples, and classroom discussion created meaningful learning experiences (Mayer, 2020). Audio-based learning encouraged students to focus on the essential information while reducing unnecessary visual distractions. Furthermore, because podcasts could be replayed whenever necessary, students had greater opportunities to review difficult concepts independently, contributing to improved comprehension and sustained learning interest.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & XDeci), educational podcasts also fulfilled students' psychological needs for autonomy and competence. Students experienced greater flexibility because learning materials could be accessed repeatedly according to their individual learning pace. This flexibility increased their confidence in understanding Economics concepts before participating in classroom discussions. As students became more comfortable with the learning materials, they demonstrated higher levels of curiosity, engagement, and persistence throughout the learning process. Therefore, the observed increase in learning interest was not merely the result of introducing a new learning medium but also reflected improvements in students' intrinsic motivation.

The present findings support previous studies reporting the educational benefits of podcast-based learning. Alainashani and Soeharso (2026) found that podcasts improve students' learning motivation through digital audio learning media. Likewise, Bajrami et al. (2026) emphasized the flexibility and personalized learning experiences provided by educational podcasts. Febriyanti and Septiaji (2023) also reported a significant positive

influence of podcasts on students' learning interest (Febriyanti & Septiaji, 2023). Similarly, González Enríquez et al. (2023) demonstrated that podcasts increase student engagement through collaborative learning activities, while Errabo et al. (2024) highlighted their contribution to self-regulated learning. The consistency between the present findings and previous studies indicates that podcast-based learning has broad potential to enhance student engagement across various educational contexts.

Despite these similarities, this study offers several distinctive contributions. Unlike previous research that primarily measured learning outcomes or learning motivation, the present study focused on changes in students' learning interest during the implementation of classroom action research. The findings revealed not only improvements in average scores but also observable behavioural changes, including increased classroom participation, greater willingness to ask questions, stronger collaboration during group discussions, and higher persistence in completing learning tasks. These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how educational podcasts influence classroom learning processes rather than merely improving academic performance.

Another important finding concerns the role of the teacher in determining the success of podcast-based learning. The improvement observed in Cycle II was not solely attributable to the use of podcasts but also to the refinement of instructional strategies following the reflection stage. The teacher improved podcast quality by incorporating contextual case studies, clearer narration, sound effects, and structured learning worksheets (LKPD). These modifications made learning activities more interactive and meaningful. Therefore, the effectiveness of educational podcasts depends not only on the technology itself but also on teachers' pedagogical competence in selecting, designing, and integrating digital learning media into classroom instruction.

Nevertheless, several factors may also have contributed to the improvement observed during the study. The repeated classroom action cycles allowed continuous refinement of instructional practices, while students gradually became more familiar with podcast-based learning. In addition, collaborative classroom discussions and teacher guidance likely strengthened students' engagement beyond the influence of the podcasts alone. These factors should be considered when interpreting the effectiveness of the intervention.

This study has several limitations. First, the research involved only 15 students from a single class, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Second, the intervention was conducted over only two classroom action research cycles, making it difficult to evaluate the long-term impact of podcast-based learning on students'

learning interest. Third, the study focused exclusively on the Economics subject within one Madrasah Aliyah, and therefore the findings may differ when applied to other subjects or educational settings with different student characteristics.

Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples from multiple schools, employ longer intervention periods, and investigate the effectiveness of educational podcasts in different subject areas. Researchers may also compare podcasts with other digital learning media, such as instructional videos or interactive multimedia applications, to determine which digital approach is most effective for improving students' learning interest and learning outcomes

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of digital podcast-based educational content effectively improved the learning interest of Class XI students in Economics at MA Al-Mubarak. The improvement was evidenced by the increase in the average learning interest score from 7.5 (low category) in the pre-cycle to 12.7 (high category) at the end of Cycle II. Likewise, the proportion of students in the high learning interest category increased from 13.3% to 73.3%, indicating that podcast-based learning successfully enhanced students' attention, engagement, curiosity, and persistence throughout the learning process.

The findings suggest that educational podcasts provide a more flexible, contextual, and engaging learning experience than conventional classroom instruction. Combined with well-designed classroom activities, podcasts encourage students to participate more actively in discussions, improve their understanding of abstract Economics concepts, and foster greater enthusiasm for learning. Therefore, podcast-based learning can be considered an effective digital learning strategy for supporting Economics instruction in Madrasah Aliyah.

This study also contributes to the growing body of literature on digital learning by demonstrating that educational podcasts not only improve learning interest but also positively influence classroom interaction and student engagement during the learning process. Practically, the findings provide recommendations for Economics teachers and schools to integrate podcast-based learning as an alternative instructional medium, particularly for topics requiring contextual explanation and active student participation.

Despite these positive findings, this study has several limitations. The research involved only 15 students from one class in a single Madrasah Aliyah and was conducted over two classroom action research cycles, limiting the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study focused exclusively on students' learning interest and did not examine its relationship with learning achievement or long-term learning outcomes.

Future research is recommended to involve larger samples from different schools, extend the duration of classroom action cycles, and investigate the effectiveness of educational podcasts across various subjects and educational levels. Comparative studies involving other forms of digital learning media, such as instructional videos or interactive multimedia applications, are also recommended to identify the most effective digital learning strategies for improving both students' learning interest and academic achievement.

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