



Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Creativity in Overcoming Student Problems at SMPN 01 Jarai

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Abstract

This study examines the creativity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in addressing student problems at SMPN 01 Jarai. The background stems from various student behavioral issues during learning, including boredom, drowsiness, chatting, and difficulty understanding material, which demand creative teacher intervention. This research aims to identify the manifestations of PAI teacher creativity and the supporting and inhibiting factors in overcoming student problems. Employing a qualitative approach with exploratory purpose, case study function, and descriptive method, data were collected through non-participant observation using APKG I and II instruments, structured interviews, and documentation from January to February 2026. The subject was purposively selected: the PAI teacher of Class VII. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model of reduction, display, and verification. The findings reveal that: (1) teacher creativity is manifested through varied strategy combinations—Drill, SPBM, Cooperative Learning, CTL, and Project-Based Learning—progressively improving from 75% to 91.6%; (2) supporting factors include school facilities, policy freedom, MGMP collaboration, and intrinsic motivation, while inhibiting factors comprise limited projectors and irregular MGMP schedules. These creative practices effectively resolved student behavioral problems and enhanced learning engagement.

Keywords: Teacher Creativity; Student Problems; Learning Strategies

Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping students' personalities to become faithful, pious, and morally upright individuals aligned with national educational goals. To achieve this, teachers must move beyond merely delivering textual material and instead demonstrate creativity in managing the learning process. Creativity has become an essential element in education because it enables students to construct more meaningful understanding through active, innovative learning experiences (Beghetto, 2021; Valqueresma, 2024). Teachers hold strategic importance in fostering creativity through varied, flexible learning strategies that accommodate diverse student needs. When education is directed toward stimulating creativity in both teaching and learning approaches, the learning process becomes more

dynamic, motivating, and effective in producing a generation that excels in critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (Musrizal & Azhar, 2023).

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), teachers face increasingly complex challenges related to student problems during the learning process. These problems include boredom, drowsiness, chatting with peers, and difficulty understanding material, all of which demand creative solutions from educators. The phenomenon of *Ruwaybidah*—where unqualified individuals are perceived as knowledgeable—has further complicated students' religious understanding, particularly as they receive information from unverified sources, including social media (Muliana et al., 2024). This condition leads to misconceptions about religious teachings, declining critical attitudes, and behaviors that contradict

Islamic values. Without proper intervention through creative teaching, such problems can hinder the formation of students' religious character and disrupt the overall learning atmosphere.

Teacher creativity is particularly crucial in addressing the diverse problems students face during instruction. Creativity involves not only producing something new but also enabling teachers to discover solutions by recombining existing learning elements into innovative approaches (Sudari, 2020). Creative teachers can transform learning activities into more engaging and interactive experiences, create conducive classroom environments, and overcome negative behaviors such as lack of focus and motivation. Furthermore, creative teachers can deliver material in contextual ways relevant to students' daily lives, making learning more enjoyable while ensuring educational objectives are achieved efficiently (Riyanto & Dacholfany, 2021). Recent studies emphasize that effective classroom management strategies—including clear expectations, positive reinforcement, and structured routines—significantly enhance student engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Abidin, 2024; Herman, Reinke, Dong, et al., 2020; Tekir, 2025).

The specific context of SMPN 01 Jarai in Lahat Regency reveals persistent challenges requiring creative teacher intervention. Many students exhibit undisciplined behaviors, including tardiness, leaving class without permission, and failing to show adequate respect toward teachers, which disrupts the learning process and affects overall educational outcomes (Deshpande et al., 2025; Musaya, 2022). These behavioral patterns not only disturb classroom atmosphere but also diminish teacher authority and reduce learning effectiveness. Research indicates that proactive classroom management strategies—such as establishing clear behavioral guidelines, modeling ideal behavior, and providing differentiated scaffolding—are essential for creating predictable, safe learning environments that support student self-regulation and engagement (Hoseini Shavoun et al., 2025; Ullah et al., 2025). Teachers must therefore apply creative strategies such as collaboratively designed classroom agreements, engaging opening activities, and professional yet firm communication to rebuild discipline, respect, and motivation.

Despite the recognized importance of teacher creativity, research specifically examining the creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers in addressing student problems remains limited, particularly in Indonesian junior high schools. Previous studies generally discuss teacher creativity or student problems separately without deeply

connecting both aspects within a contextual framework (Cremin & Chappell, 2021; Dare et al., 2021; Henriksen et al., 2021; Leung, 2020; Strom & Viesca, 2023; Tytler et al., 2023). This research gap motivated the present study, which aims to analyze the forms and manifestations of PAI teacher creativity in overcoming student problems at SMPN 01 Jarai. By employing a qualitative approach with case study function, this research seeks to contribute both theoretically to the field of Islamic education and practically by providing evaluative insights for teachers and schools in developing effective, creative teaching strategies.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with an exploratory purpose, utilizing a case study function and descriptive method to examine the creativity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in addressing student problems at SMPN 01 Jarai. The research was conducted as field research from January 6 to February 6, 2026, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The population comprised all 60 teachers at the school, with the sample selected through purposive sampling—specifically, the PAI teacher assigned to Class VII, Ropika Ratu, S.Pd., who demonstrated observable creativity in managing diverse student behavioral issues such as boredom, drowsiness, off-task chatting, and difficulty understanding material. Data were collected through non-participant observation using the Teacher Competency Assessment Instrument (APKG I for lesson planning and APKG II for implementation), semi-structured interviews with the PAI teacher, school principal, and students, as well as documentation in the form of teaching modules, attendance records, photographs, and audio recordings. This triangulation of data sources ensured comprehensive and valid capture of the teacher's creative strategies in real classroom contexts.

Data analysis followed Miles & Huberman's (2014) interactive model, consisting of three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and verification. During reduction, raw data from observations, interviews, and documents were systematically selected, summarized, and organized according to the research focus—namely, the forms of teacher creativity, student problematics, and supporting or inhibiting factors. The reduced data were then displayed in thematic tabulation tables to identify patterns and relationships between teaching strategies and student behavioral changes. Finally, verification was achieved through source triangulation (comparing data from teachers,

students, and documents) and technique triangulation (cross-checking observations with interviews), ensuring that conclusions were credible, consistent, and grounded in empirical evidence rather than researcher bias.

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Overview of Teacher Creativity in Lesson Planning

The analysis of lesson planning creativity (APKG I) revealed significant improvement across four teaching sessions. The teacher demonstrated progressive competence in designing meaningful and contextual learning objectives, selecting varied teaching strategies, and adapting materials to student characteristics. Table 1 presents the detailed assessment results.

Table 1. Teacher Competency Assessment (APKG I): Lesson Planning Creativity

No	Indicator	Creativity Aspect	Meeting 1	Meeting 2
1	Learning Objectives	Meaningful	✓	✓
		Contextual	✓	✓
2	Learning Materials	Enjoyable	✓	✓
		Easy to Understand	✓	✓
		Connect PAI with Problems	X	X
		Connect PAI with Daily Life	✓	✓
3	Strategy Selection	Varied Strategy/Method Selection	✓	✓
		Varied Strategy/Method Development	✓	✓
4	Learning Media	Create Innovative Media	X	X
		Innovative Media Usage	X	✓
		Integrate Media and Technology	✓	✓

Note: ✓ = Implemented, X = Not Implemented

The data indicate that the teacher achieved 75% in Meeting 1 (Fairly Good), 83.3% in Meeting 2 (Good), and 91.6% in both Meetings 3 and 4 (Very Good). The progressive improvement demonstrates the teacher's

growing confidence and systematic refinement in instructional design. The unimplemented indicators—particularly "Create Innovative Media" in early meetings—reflected strategic prioritization rather than deficiency, as the teacher focused on foundational strategy mastery before advancing to complex media creation.

2. Implementation of Varied Teaching Strategies

The classroom observation data (APKG II) confirmed strong alignment between planned and executed lessons. The teacher successfully implemented diverse strategies including Drill, Problem-Based Learning (SPBM), Cooperative Learning, Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), and Direct Instruction. Figure 1. illustrates the strategic combinations employed across four meetings.

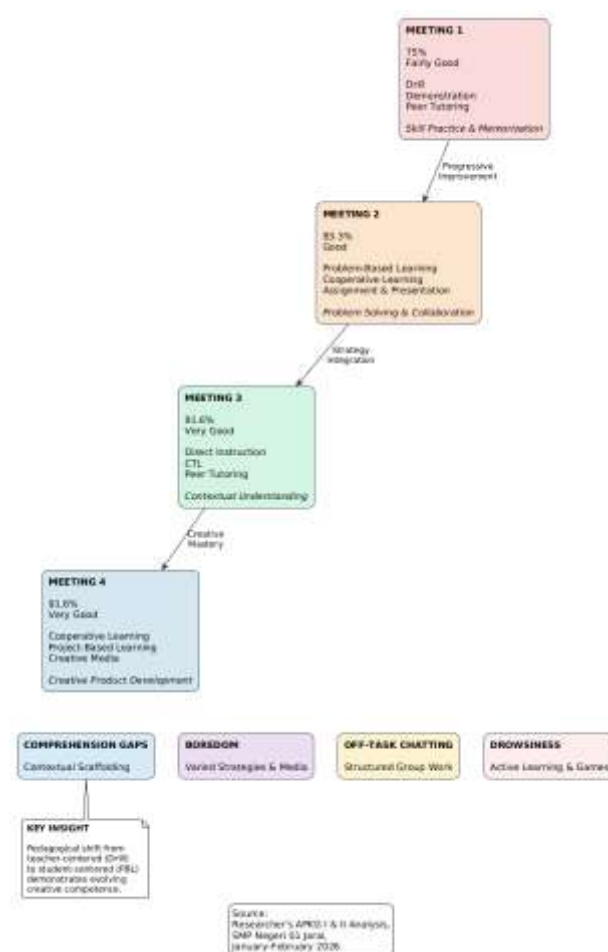


Figure 1. Teaching Strategy Combinations Across Four Meetings

The strategic variation directly addressed identified student problems. When the teacher shifted

from lecture-only methods to combined approaches, previously passive students became actively engaged. The teacher explained in interview: *"I feel the need to make PAI learning more interesting so students don't get bored. I combine strategies like SPBM for critical thinking, CTL to connect with real life, and Drill for skill practice"* (Interview with Ibu Ropika Ratu, November 7, 2025). This intentional diversification represents creative adaptation to classroom dynamics.

Table 2. Teacher Competency Assessment (APKG II): Lesson Implementation

No	Indicator	Creativity Aspect	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4	Document
1	Learning Objectives	Meaningful	✓	✓	✓	✓	Module
		Contextual	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Learning Materials	Enjoyable	✓	✓	✓	✓	Module
		Easy to Understand	✓	✓	✓	✓	
		Connect PAI with Problems	✗	✗	✓	✗	
		Connect PAI with Daily Life	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Strategy Selection	Varied Strategy/Method Selection	✓	✓	✓	✓	Module
		Varied Strategy/Method Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Learning Media	Create Innovative Media	✗	✗	✗	✓	Module
		Innovative Media Usage	✗	✓	✓	✓	
		Integrate Media and Technology	✓	✓	✓	✓	

5	Approach	Adapt Plan to Student Characteristics	✓	✓	✓	✓	Module
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Note: ✓ = Implemented, ✗ = Not Implemented

The implementation scores mirrored planning scores: 75% (Meeting 1), 83.3% (Meeting 2), and 91.6% (Meetings 3 and 4). This consistency validates the teacher's capacity to translate creative planning into effective classroom practice. Student responses confirmed the positive impact, with one student noting: *"The teacher's teaching is really fun, sometimes inviting discussion, sometimes games, so we understand quickly while still getting knowledge even while playing"* (Student Interview, November 2025).

3. Student Behavioral Changes

The most significant finding concerned measurable improvements in student behavior and engagement. Prior to strategy variation, students exhibited boredom, drowsiness, chatting, and inattention. Following implementation of creative approaches, these problematics substantially decreased. Figure 4.2 presents the comparative observation of student behaviors.

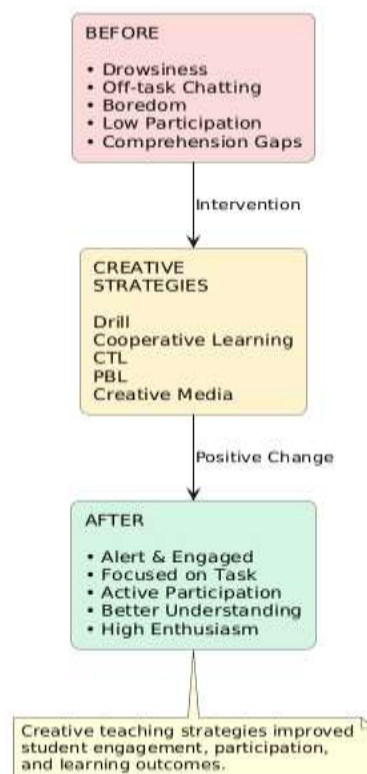


Figure 2. Student Behavioral Changes Before and After Strategy Implementation

The teacher's interview data corroborated these observations: *"Students become more active in class, more courageous in expressing opinions, and more enthusiastic about learning, especially when invited to play games in learning. The classroom atmosphere becomes more lively so students understand the material more easily"* (Interview with Ibu Ropika Ratu, November 7, 2025). This transformation illustrates the direct causal relationship between teacher creativity and student engagement.

The second student interview reinforced this finding: *"It's effective, especially when we play games and get gifts. When learning while playing, it really makes our enthusiasm burning and doesn't make us sleepy"* (Student Interview, November 2025). The gamification element—particularly evident in Meeting 4's project-based learning with card creation—demonstrated how creative media integration captured student interest while maintaining educational substance.

4. Supporting Factors for Teacher Creativity

Multiple factors enabled the teacher's creative performance. The school environment provided essential infrastructure and policy support. The principal confirmed: *"The school fully supports both in terms of facilities and policy. For facilities, we provide learning infrastructure such as projectors, books, WiFi, science laboratories, and computer labs. For policy, the school gives teachers freedom to choose various learning strategies and participate in MGMP activities"* (Interview with Eva Meiyusi, S.Pd., M.M., November 2025).

Table 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Teacher Creativity

The teacher's intrinsic motivation emerged as the primary internal driver. She stated: *"The most important supporting factor is motivation from within myself as a teacher. I feel the need to make PAI learning more interesting so students don't get bored"* (Interview with Ropika Ratu, November 7, 2025). This internal commitment, combined with external institutional support, created optimal conditions for creative teaching.

5. Inhibiting Factors and Adaptive Responses

Despite overall positive conditions, two significant constraints affected creative implementation. First, the insufficient number of projectors relative to classroom demand necessitated rotational scheduling. The teacher adapted by prioritizing projector use for meetings requiring maximum visual support—notably Meeting 4's project-based learning with card creation and video presentations.

Second, the irregular MGMP schedule—varying from monthly to semesterly—limited consistent professional development opportunities. The teacher nevertheless maximized each session: *"MGMP is still a supporting factor because through this activity, teachers can add insight and share experiences to improve learning quality"* (Interview with Ropika Ratu, November 7, 2025). This adaptive perspective transformed potential limitations into learning opportunities.

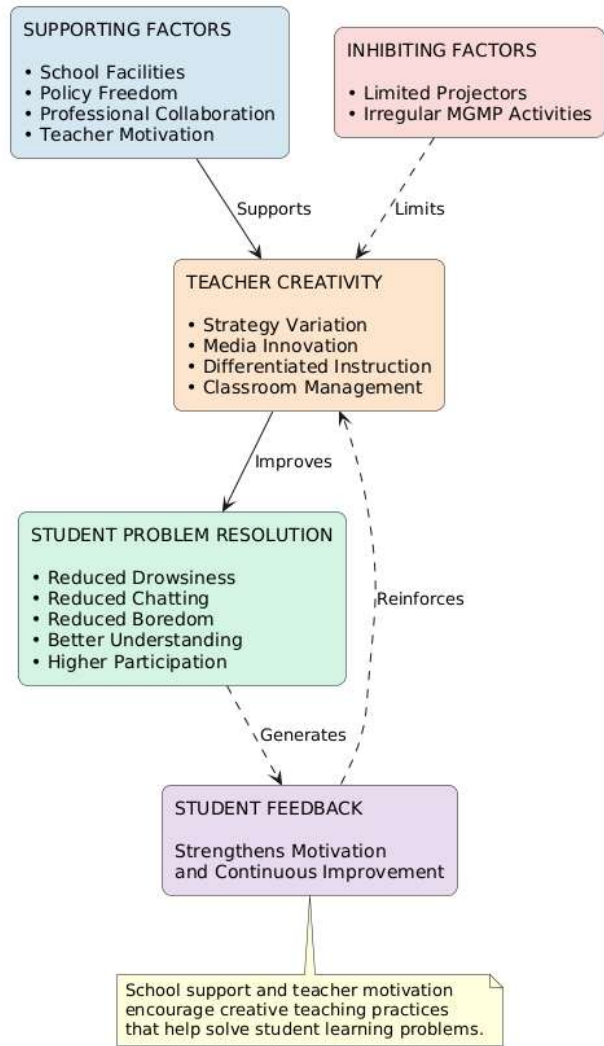


Figure 3. Relationship Between Supporting Factors, Teacher Creativity, and Student Problem Resolution

The diagram illustrates how school facilities, policy freedom, and professional collaboration (MGMP) combine with teacher intrinsic motivation to produce creative teaching strategies. These strategies

then directly address student problems—boredom, drowsiness, chatting, and comprehension difficulties—resulting in improved engagement, understanding, and classroom atmosphere.

6. Media and Technology Integration

The teacher's creative use of media evolved across meetings. Early sessions relied on basic technology integration (projector for standard displays), while Meeting 4 demonstrated sophisticated multimedia application. The teacher utilized video presentations about universe creation, displayed example cards with Quranic verses via projector, and guided students in creating their own creative cards on plano paper.

This progression from technology-assisted instruction to student-generated creative products represents advanced pedagogical creativity. The media served not merely as presentation tools but as scaffolding for student creativity and deeper conceptual understanding. The teacher's adaptation to available resources—despite projector limitations—demonstrated practical creativity within institutional constraints.

The student-created cards, combining Quranic text with artistic design, served dual purposes: reinforcing religious content through embodied practice and providing tangible evidence of learning. This product-oriented approach aligned with contemporary constructivist learning theory, where students actively construct knowledge through meaningful creation rather than passive reception.

7. Differentiated Instruction Practices

The teacher demonstrated creativity through consistent adaptation to student diversity. She modified explanations for students with varying comprehension speeds, provided additional scaffolding for struggling learners, and offered enrichment tasks for advanced students. This differentiation extended to content selection, process design, and product expectations.

The teacher explicitly acknowledged this adaptive practice: *"Students' abilities vary greatly, so I have to adjust learning strategies to their characteristics"* (Interview with Ropika Ratu, November 7, 2025). This responsiveness to individual differences—particularly important in Class VII's heterogeneous composition—prevented exclusion and maintained inclusive engagement.

The differentiated approach was evident in tutor-peer activities, where students with stronger Quranic reading skills assisted classmates. This peer-tutoring arrangement simultaneously supported struggling

students, reinforced tutors' own learning, and fostered collaborative classroom culture. The teacher's strategic grouping and role assignment reflected sophisticated understanding of social learning dynamics.

8. Overall Achievement and Consistency

The comprehensive analysis reveals 85% achievement in both planning (APKG I) and implementation (APKG II), indicating strong consistency between design and execution. This alignment is professionally significant, as many teachers excel at planning but fail to implement effectively. The progressive improvement from 75% to 91.6% across meetings demonstrates developmental learning—both for the teacher and the observed students.

Table 4. Progressive Achievement Scores Across Four Meetings

Meeting	APK G I Score (%)	APK G II Score (%)	Category	Key Strategy Focus
1	75.0	75.0	Fairly Good	Drill + Demonstration
2	83.3	83.3	Good	SPBM + Cooperative Learning
3	91.6	91.6	Very Good	Direct Instruction + CTL
4	91.6	91.6	Very Good	Cooperative Learning + Project-Based Learning

Source: Researcher's APKG analysis

The identical scores between planning and implementation for each meeting indicate exceptional fidelity to instructional design. This consistency suggests that the teacher's creative planning was realistic and executable, not merely aspirational. The plateau at 91.6% in Meetings 3 and 4 may represent optimal performance given contextual constraints, or it may indicate the need for additional professional development to reach the "Excellent" category (91-100%).

The qualitative data—interviews, observations, and student responses—collectively confirm that the teacher's creativity successfully addressed the four identified student problems: boredom (through varied strategies), drowsiness (through active learning and games), off-task chatting (through

engaging group work), and comprehension difficulties (through contextualized, scaffolded instruction). The resolution of these problems validates the practical significance of the teacher's creative efforts beyond numerical achievement scores.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that teacher creativity in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) significantly transforms student behavioral problems into positive engagement, a result consistent with previous research on teacher creativity and student motivation. Al-Hawamleh (2019), Anwar & Inayati (2025), and Azzahro & Darmawan (2026) examined the creativity of PAI teachers in enhancing student motivation in Akidah Akhlak subjects and found that varied teaching strategies—including discussion, games, and group work—directly increased student enthusiasm and participation. Similarly, Maharani (2022) investigated the influence of PAI teaching creativity on student learning interest at SMP Miftahul Ulum Boarding School Demak and concluded that creative teaching positively impacted student learning behavior, with increased interest representing a reduction in student problematic behavior. These findings align with the present study, where the implementation of varied strategies at SMPN 01 Jarai shifted students from passive, disengaged behavior to active participation, thereby confirming that teacher creativity serves as a critical mediator in resolving classroom behavioral issues.

The progressive improvement in teacher creative competence observed across four meetings—from 75% (Fairly Good) to 91.6% (Very Good)—resonates with Fauzan et al (2022) and Rido et al (2025) study on teacher creativity in Fiqh learning which emphasized that creative teachers continuously develop their instructional planning and implementation through reflective practice. However, Sangadah & Fatimah (2025) research on PAI teacher creativity and tolerance character formation found that while teachers demonstrated creative teaching, the primary data source was the school principal rather than direct classroom observation, potentially limiting the validity of creativity claims. In contrast, the present study utilized direct non-participant observation (APKG I and II) and triangulated data with teacher and student interviews, providing stronger empirical grounding for the documented creativity progression. This methodological distinction highlights that creativity in teaching is not merely self-reported but must be observable and measurable through structured instruments.

The supporting factors identified in this study—school facilities, policy freedom, professional collaboration through MGMP, and intrinsic teacher motivation—corroborate the findings of Riyanto & Dacholfany (2021), who argued that innovation and teacher competence are fundamentally shaped by institutional support and collaborative professional environments. Anderson et al (2022), Gusrianto et al (2025), and Skrbinjek et al (2024) further emphasized that creative teachers require both external encouragement and internal drive to sustain innovative practices. Nevertheless, the inhibiting factors documented in this study, particularly the limited number of projectors relative to classroom needs and irregular MGMP schedules, contrast with the ideal conditions described by Lomos et al (2023) and Xu & Zhu (2023), who assumed adequate infrastructure as a baseline for teacher innovation. This discrepancy suggests that creative teachers in resource-constrained settings must develop adaptive strategies—such as rotational scheduling and self-directed peer learning—to compensate for institutional limitations, a reality not fully captured in prior literature.

The specific manifestation of teacher creativity through strategy variation—including Drill, SPBM, Cooperative Learning, CTL, and Project-Based Learning—finds partial support in Asy'arie et al (2024), who examined the influence of teacher creativity and digital media utilization on social studies learning. Ghathfan found that creativity combined with appropriate media significantly improved learning outcomes, whereas the present study emphasized that strategy variation alone—without consistent innovative media—could still effectively address behavioral problems. This distinction is important because it suggests that media innovation is facilitative but not mandatory for problem resolution; rather, pedagogical flexibility and contextual responsiveness matter more. Musrizal & Azhar (2023) similarly noted that teacher innovation in stimulating children's creative thinking requires adaptive strategy selection rather than rigid media dependence, which aligns with the finding that the PAI teacher at SMPN 01 Jarai achieved high effectiveness (91.6%) even when media creation was not implemented in all meetings.

The student behavioral changes documented in this study—reduced drowsiness, eliminated off-task chatting, overcome boredom, and improved comprehension—contrast with the findings of Herman et al (2020) and Wilkinson et al (2020), who

identified student behavior as a persistent challenge that negatively impacts classroom management when teachers lack creative intervention. In the present study, the teacher's creative strategies successfully reversed these negative patterns, suggesting that proactive creativity is more effective than reactive management. However, Khansa & Aditia (2022), who examined teacher efforts to address student boredom in elementary schools, found that outdoor learning and collaborative teacher networks were essential strategies—elements not fully realized in the present study due to infrastructural and scheduling constraints. This limitation indicates that while the PAI teacher at SMPN 01 Jarai demonstrated significant creativity within available resources, full optimization of student engagement may require broader institutional reforms beyond individual teacher initiative, a direction for future research and school policy development.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the creativity of the PAI teacher at SMPN 01 Jarai manifests through systematic variation of teaching strategies across four observed meetings, progressing from teacher-centered approaches (Drill and Demonstration) to student-centered methodologies (Project-Based Learning and Creative Media), with assessment scores improving from 75% to 91.6%. The teacher's creativity is demonstrated through strategic adaptation to student characteristics, integration of contextual learning (CTL), implementation of peer tutoring (Tutor Sebaya), and development of differentiated instruction that addresses diverse student needs. These creative practices effectively resolved the four identified student problems: drowsiness was reduced through active learning and games, off-task chatting was eliminated via structured group work, boredom was overcome through varied strategies and media, and comprehension difficulties were improved by contextual scaffolding. The consistency between lesson planning (APKG I) and implementation (APKG II) at 85% achievement indicates that the teacher possesses not only creative ideas but also the practical competence to execute them effectively in the classroom.

The supporting factors for teacher creativity include adequate school facilities (projector, books, WiFi), policy freedom allowing autonomous strategy selection, professional collaboration through MGMP activities, and strong intrinsic motivation to innovate. However, two inhibiting factors were identified: the limited number of projectors relative to classroom needs, which necessitates rotational scheduling, and

irregular MGMP schedules that constrain continuous professional development. Despite these limitations, the teacher demonstrated adaptive resilience by prioritizing resource allocation to high-impact meetings and leveraging peer networks informally. These findings suggest that teacher creativity in PAI is not contingent upon perfect institutional conditions but rather emerges from the dynamic interplay between available resources, professional autonomy, collaborative opportunities, and personal commitment to student-centered pedagogy. Future efforts should focus on expanding technological infrastructure and regularizing professional development schedules to sustain and enhance the creative capacities that have proven effective in transforming student behavioral problems into active, meaningful engagement.

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