



## CALLIGRAPHY ART TRAINING TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY AT MI NU TBI KLUMPIT

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the development of students' interest and talent in calligraphy at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah Klumpit, Gebog, Kudus, through extracurricular calligraphy training. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach within a field research design, data were collected via observation, interviews, documentation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that students' calligraphy skills and enthusiasm have shown positive growth, supported by targeted preparation prior to competitions. Key supporting factors include strong teacher motivation and guidance, effective use of free time, and adequate facilities. Nevertheless, several challenges were identified, such as limited practice time, difficulties in producing khat, reduced concentration, and a shortage of instructors. Overall, the program has contributed significantly to enhancing children's creativity through calligraphy art.

**Keywords:** *Calligraphy Art, Interest and Talent, Creativity, Students'*

### INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, formal education at the primary level is provided through institutions such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which typically conduct classes in the morning and offer both general and religious subjects. The curriculum generally covers social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, Indonesian language, fiqh, aqidah, morals, and various aspects of worship relevant to daily life. Extracurricular activities form an integral part of the educational process, complementing formal classroom learning

by nurturing students' non-academic skills, interests, and talents (Inriyani et al., 2020).

Conducted outside regular class hours under the guidance of the school, these activities not only enhance students' personal development but also provide opportunities that may not be addressed within the formal curriculum. Education, therefore, extends beyond the classroom and includes both formal and non-formal learning experiences that contribute to the holistic growth of learners (Hasyim & Najibah, 2022).

One extracurricular activity with significant educational and cultural value is calligraphy art. According to Soedarso (Sabatari, 2015), art is a human creation that emphasizes inner experience and is presented uniquely to evoke meaning and emotion in those who engage with it. The term calligraphy originates from the Greek words *kalios* (beautiful) and *graphia* (writing), and refers to the artistic practice of beautiful handwriting (Kurniawati, 2016). In the Islamic context, calligraphy is the art of writing Arabic letters with aesthetic precision, following specific forms, proportions, and compositional rules. Beyond its visual appeal, Islamic calligraphy carries deep spiritual significance for Muslims, including remembering Qur'anic verses, seeking blessings, beautifying spaces, and serving as a livelihood for calligraphers.

Mastering calligraphy requires patience, perseverance, and sincerity, as it involves specific methods and techniques that many perceive as challenging. Learning this art can enhance students' creativity while fostering qualities such as discipline, focus, and persistence. In primary education, introducing Islamic calligraphy can be an effective means of strengthening students' connection to Islamic culture and traditions, while also developing their character and artistic abilities (Sa'adah et al., 2024).

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the implementation of Islamic calligraphy extracurricular activities at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah Klumpit, Gebog, Kudus. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, aiming to explore the potential of calligraphy in developing students' talents, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and provide recommendations for improving program effectiveness. By integrating artistic skill

with moral and spiritual education, calligraphy art not only expresses the beauty of Allah's creation but also shapes students' Islamic character through values such as patience, diligence, and discipline aligning with the broader objectives of Islamic Religious Education.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a **qualitative case study design** to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Islamic calligraphy extracurricular activities at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah, Gebog District, Kudus Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to explore phenomena in their natural context, emphasizing meaning, values, and participants' perspectives (Ummah, 2019). The case study method allowed for a detailed investigation of the teaching process, techniques, and factors influencing students' engagement in calligraphy (Ishtiaq, 2019).

### Participants

The primary participant was the extracurricular calligraphy teacher, **Mr. Afif Fahrni, S.Pd.I**, who provided insights into program implementation, instructional methods, and student development. Additional data were gathered from observations of participating students during calligraphy sessions.

### Data Sources

Data were drawn from **primary** and **secondary** sources. Primary data included observations and interviews with the calligraphy teacher. Secondary data consisted of literature, school records, and visual documentation related to the extracurricular program.

### Data Collection Procedures

The research followed **five structured stages** (Figure 1):



Figure 1. Stages of the case study research process.

This figure illustrates the five interconnected stages followed in the case study: (1) determining and defining the research question, (2) determining the research design and instruments, (3) collecting data, (4) determining data analysis techniques, and (5) preparing the case study report. The process is cyclical and iterative, ensuring integrity and quality in the research outcomes.

#### Techniques applied:

- a. **Observation** – Used to examine teaching processes, students’ writing practices, and classroom interactions (Sugiyono, 1967).
- b. **Interviews** – Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information from the calligraphy teacher (Fiantika et al., 2022).
- c. **Documentation** – Photographs, lesson records, and relevant archival materials served as supporting evidence (Sugiyono, 1967).

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through a **thematic analysis** process, which involved reading and re-reading transcripts, coding data, identifying patterns, and grouping them into emerging themes. The analysis was both **holistic**—covering the entire case—and **embedded**—focusing on

specific aspects such as students’ creativity and discipline in calligraphy practice.

#### Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility, **triangulation** was applied by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. **Member checking** was conducted by sharing key findings with the calligraphy teacher for verification. **Thick description** was provided to enhance transferability, and an audit trail was maintained for dependability and confirmability.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A Brief History of MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah

MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah (MI NU TBI) is located in Pedak Klumpit, Gebog District, Kudus Regency. It was founded on August 17, 1949 by KH Ahmad Dahlan as a women’s religious study group (majelis ngaji) with only 35 students. The term Banatil derives from the Arabic word *banāt*, meaning “girls,” reflecting the institution’s initial focus on female students. Early activities centered on Qur’an recitation and Islamic studies.

Over time, the institution evolved into Madrasah Diniyah, holding afternoon classes and teaching salafiyah books such as *Al-Qur’an*, *Hadith*, *Nahwu*, *Shorof*, *Tauhid*, *Fiqh*, and *Pegon* (Javanese-Arabic script). In 1952, the madrasah, under the leadership of KH Ahmad Dahlan and administrators Kyai Syamsudin (Chair) and Kyai Sukandar (Treasurer), organized a grand maulid (Prophet Muhammad’s Birthday commemoration). This event, attended by nearly the entire community of Klumpit, featured speeches and recitations of the Prophet’s biography, which deeply moved the audience and inspired many to enroll their daughters at the madrasah. As a result, the number of students increased from 35 to 150.

The madrasah's facilities were later expanded and endowed, comprising two buildings:

- a) West Side – Three classrooms, one office, and a library.
- b) East Side – A two-story building with three classrooms, the principal's office, a teachers' room, an administration office, a kitchen, and two toilets (Figure 2).

On January 15, 1953, MI TBI was officially established and, on October 2, 1967, received its Charter of Recognition of Obligation to Study from the Kudus Regency Religious Education Inspection Office. The school transitioned to a morning schedule and incorporated general education subjects such as mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences alongside religious studies.

Further formal recognition came on January 9, 1978, when MI TBI received an operational permit from the Semarang Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion. The school is managed under both the Ministry of Religion and the NU Ma'arif Education Institution (LP Ma'arif NU Kudus). In 2003, in compliance with NU Education Authority directives, "NU" was added to the institution's name, becoming MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah.

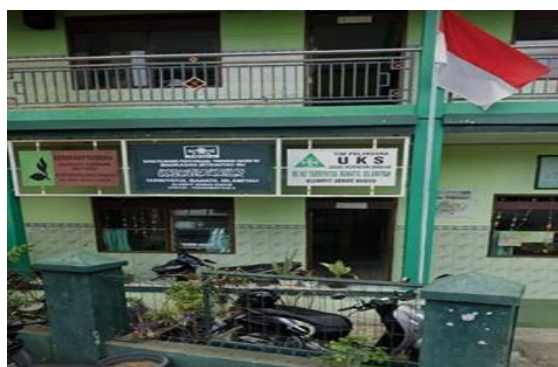


Figure 2. The main building of MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah, Gebog District, Kudus Regency

The photograph illustrates the central building complex of MI NU TBI, which houses key academic and administrative facilities. The signage on the building highlights the school's identity, its health unit (UKS), and extracurricular program offerings. This infrastructure supports the institution's dual mission of delivering religious and general education, while also accommodating creativity-based extracurricular activities such as the calligraphy art training examined in this study.

### **Analysis of the Development of Students' Interest in Calligraphy Art Through Extracurricular Activities at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah**

The development of students' interests and talents in madrasah can be fostered through various extracurricular activities. Since 2004, MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah Klumpit Gebog Kudus has actively nurtured students' interest in calligraphy through dedicated extracurricular sessions. These activities are open to students in Grades III–VI and are held every Wednesday at 12.20 WIB, after regular classroom learning hours.

Based on interviews with the principal, who also serves as the calligraphy teacher, calligraphy is defined as the art of writing fine Arabic letters in accordance with specific rules, reflecting established styles (khat) rather than arbitrary forms. An individual's interest in calligraphy refers to their desire to master this art. Such interest does not arise spontaneously; it develops through participation, experience, and habitual practice, which are often linked to personal needs and aspirations. As illustrated in **Figure 3**, student engagement in calligraphy sessions demonstrates this gradual development from participation to sustained interest.





**Figure 3. Learning Atmosphere During Calligraphy Extracurricular Activities**

Chaerunnisa Nabila Aulia & Bernard (2021) emphasize that interest emerges from ongoing exposure and involvement in learning or work activities. In this context, the students' growing interest in calligraphy at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah aligns with the supervising teacher's approach: participation leads to skill acquisition, which, in turn, fosters a deeper desire to engage in the art.

According to Dr. Ahmad Susanto (2016), artistic interest—such as in calligraphy—requires consistent practice and patience. The supervising teacher confirms that not all students initially possess the patience or skill needed, hence the structured guidance provided through mandatory participation for Grades III–VI. This approach ensures that students receive both the introduction and direction necessary for skill and interest development.

The implementation of the calligraphy extracurricular program at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah has been effective in cultivating students' artistic abilities. Calligraphy, within the context of Islamic art, is more than decorative writing—it adheres to specific aesthetic and linguistic rules. In Indonesia, this Arabic script art is known for producing works of beauty while preserving cultural heritage. Students are introduced to various *khat* styles, with particular emphasis on *khat naskhi*, popularized by

Ibn Muqlah in Iraq and refined by Ibn Al-Bawwab and Ya'qub Al-Musta'şimī. Its defining features include curved letters resembling arcs and semicircles (Al-Faruqi, 1999).

In addition to *khat naskhi*, teachers introduce other styles such as *kufi*, *tsuluts*, *riq'ah*, *diwani*, and *farisi*. This exposure broadens students' artistic horizons, enhances their appreciation of Islamic cultural heritage, and strengthens both their technical and cultural literacy—skills that will benefit them in future academic and artistic endeavors. Examples of these writing styles are shown in **Figure 4**.



**Figure 4. Examples of Calligraphy and Writing Styles**

As a flagship extracurricular program, calligraphy at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah benefits from strong teacher guidance. The supervising teacher provides continuous support by demonstrating techniques, guiding practice, evaluating student work, and motivating those who struggle. This comprehensive approach not only develops students' calligraphy skills but also instills discipline, patience, and an enduring appreciation for art.

#### **Analysis of the Development of Students' Calligraphy Talents Through Calligraphy Extracurricular Activities at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah**

Talent must be continuously honed and trained so that it can be channelled effectively and bring positive benefits to both the individual and the institution. Calligraphy talent is one such skill, yet not all students possess the artistic inclination to master it. For this reason, MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah Klumpit Gebog Kudus organises calligraphy extracurricular activities as a platform to develop students' artistic abilities and contribute to the madrasah's achievements.

According to the supervising teacher, *calligraphy talent* refers to the ability to create beautiful Arabic script in a relatively short time while maintaining high-quality results. This ability can be observed through the outcomes of students' practice sessions. As illustrated in Figure 5, the process of creating calligraphy requires both technical skill and artistic discipline.



Figure 5. The Process of Making Calligraphy

The development of students' calligraphy talent at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah is consistent with the view of Silverman (1990), as cited in Sitiatava Rizema Putra (2013), who states that talent is an innate potential that requires a supportive environment and proper guidance to be actualised. Without these, talent may remain dormant. Similarly, Shaleh (2005) emphasises that

interest is a key factor in talent development without sustained interest and effort, even a natural ability will not reach its full potential.

In practice, the supervising teacher has observed that talented students always display a genuine interest in calligraphy, while those without talent generally lack interest. However, interested students, even if not initially talented, can achieve results comparable to talented students through continuous training.

The process of nurturing calligraphy talent begins with developing students' interest in the art. As competitions approach, training becomes more targeted. The supervising teacher plays an active role in identifying students with both talent and interest, then providing additional practice sessions in the afternoon or evening, sometimes at the teacher's own home. The madrasah also provides strong institutional support by supplying equipment, offering motivation and constructive feedback, and guiding students through *khat* practice until they are competition ready.

Through this structured approach—identification, targeted training, and institutional support—MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah has successfully channelled students' calligraphy talents, enabling them to compete confidently and achieve recognition at various levels.

### **Analysis of Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Students' Calligraphy Art Development through Extracurricular Activities at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah**

In the implementation of any ongoing activity, there are inevitably both supporting and inhibiting factors that influence its success. This also applies to the development of students' interest and talent in calligraphy art through extracurricular activities at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah Klumpit Gebog Kudus. The supporting factors are

varied and significantly contribute to the students' progress. One of the most important elements is the motivation provided by the supervising teacher.

The teacher consistently encourages students, refrains from discouraging them when their work is not yet optimal and inspires them to keep practicing building confidence. Such motivation, classified as extrinsic motivation because it comes from external sources, is vital in sustaining students' enthusiasm for calligraphy (Sholeh Hidayat, 2017). Equally important is the teacher's role as both a guide and a role model. The supervising teacher not only offers clear direction when students face difficulties but also exemplifies commitment and skill, inspiring students to persevere.

Another supporting factor is the effective use of students' free time. During school holidays, students are often assigned khat-making tasks, ensuring that their time is not entirely spent on leisure activities. This approach not only reduces idle time but also allows students to focus on developing their calligraphy skills without the constraints of regular school hours.

Additionally, adequate facilities provided by the madrasah further support these activities. For instance, when students are selected for competitions, the school supplies essential materials such as drawing paper, colors, markers, and pencils, as well as providing accompaniment during practice and competitions (Afif Fahroni, 2024). Such provisions ensure that students can work under optimal conditions to achieve their best results.

Despite these strengths, several inhibiting factors hinder the full realization of the program's objectives. One of the main challenges is the limited time allocated for

extracurricular activities. Since the calligraphy sessions begin after regular classes at 12:20 and must end by 14:00 to allow students to attend madrasah diniyah, practice time is restricted. This short duration limits students' opportunities to develop their skills. A potential solution would be to increase the frequency of sessions from once to twice a week, possibly on Wednesdays and Thursdays, to ensure more practice time.

Another obstacle is the difficulty some students face in creating khat. Frequent use of erasers during the drawing process prolongs completion time, and color combinations are sometimes poorly matched. Calligraphy requires patience and continuous practice, and teachers could address this by providing more targeted instruction on techniques and color harmonization to minimize unnecessary corrections. Students' focus also emerges as a challenge, as some rush through their work in order to leave early for madrasah diniyah, resulting in less-than-optimal output. Dividing students into smaller groups based on grade level – such as grades III–IV on Wednesdays and grades V–VI on Thursdays – could improve attention and allow for more individualized instruction. Furthermore, students with strong potential could be grouped separately for more intensive training, particularly in preparation for competitions.

Finally, the shortage of supervising teachers presents a significant limitation. Currently, the principal serves as the sole calligraphy instructor, which can disrupt the continuity of activities if other responsibilities arise. To address this, the school could enlist alumni who excelled in calligraphy during their time at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah to assist in teaching. This would not only ensure consistency in training but also foster a sense of community and inspiration for current students.

Overall, while the development of students' calligraphy interests and talents at MI NU Tarbiyatul Banatil Islamiyah is supported by strong motivational, instructional, and material resources, the program's effectiveness could be further enhanced by addressing time constraints, skill challenges, focus issues, and staffing limitations. By maximizing supporting factors and minimizing inhibiting ones, the extracurricular calligraphy program has the potential to make an even greater impact on students' creativity and artistic growth.

### Masterpiece

In the work below, it can be seen from the use of letters that students are able to distinguish between letters that can be separated and letters that cannot be separated, the shape of the writing is clearly visible so that it gives a beautiful impression and the meaning of the writing is maintained. The calligraphy above uses the naskhi script, a simple style often used by beginners and commonly found in religious texts. Therefore, this type of naskhi script is very easy to imitate, making it easier for students to draw calligraphy. The theme taken from the calligraphy is from the letter Al - Hasyr verse 23 as shown in Figure 6:

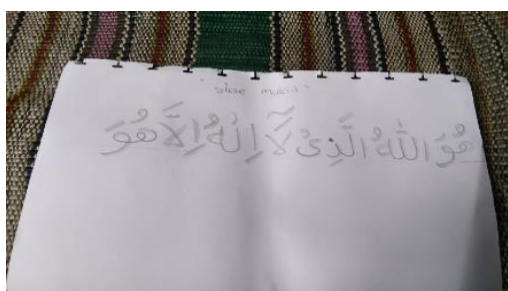


Figure 6: The Work of a Student Named Shae Mutia

### CONCLUSIONS

Education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Indonesia focuses on teaching general science and religion, with the extracurricular art of calligraphy as an

important part in developing students' character. This activity not only improves non-academic skills but also fosters students' interests and talents. The art of calligraphy, which is the art of beautiful writing, has spiritual and cultural significance for Muslims. Research shows that this extracurricular can help students develop patience, perseverance and creativity, supporting the goal of religious education in forming Islamic character

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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