THE CONTROVERSY OF STUDENTS LEARNING INTEREST IN ENGLISH AS A FUTURE CAREER



ARTICLE

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2026

JOURNAL ARTICLE FINAL PROJECT REPORT

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2026

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Article title:

THE CONTROVERSY OF STUDENTS LEARNING INTEREST IN ENGLISH AS A FUTURE CAREER

By: Madina Maqfiroh
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The Final Project Journal Article of **MADINA MAQFIROH** has been submitted to the board of examiners of the FINAL PROJECT JOURNAL ARTCLE of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Keguruan (FTK) KH. Mukhtar Syafaat University Blokagung Banyuwangi and has been accepted and ratified one of the requirements to obtain a Bachelor of Education Dgree (S.Pd).

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FOREWORD

All praise and gratitude are devoted to Almighty God for His blessings, which have enabled the writer to complete the article entitled “The Controversy of Students’ Learning Interest in English as a Future Career”. This research, conducted at Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat (UIMSYA) and the ECC Course of Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung, aims to explore students' interest in learning English and their perspectives on it as a future career opportunity. While English is an essential international language for professional development, students often show different levels of motivation due to various educational, social, and personal factors, which this article addresses.

The setting of this research holds personal and academic significance for the writer as a student at UIMSYA, making the topic closely connected to their own academic environment. Additionally, the ECC Course at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung serves as a vital learning environment where students actively develop both academic and communicative English skills. Therefore, these specific institutions were selected to obtain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of students' actual learning interests and future career expectations.

The writer wishes to express sincere gratitude to the lecturers, teachers, tutors, classmates, and everyone who provided invaluable guidance, motivation, and support throughout this writing process. Realizing that this article is still far from perfect, constructive criticism and suggestions are highly appreciated for its future improvement. Ultimately, it is hoped that this study can provide useful insights, broaden readers' understanding, and contribute positively to discussions on English learning and career development.

Banyuwangi, January 29, 2026

Madina Maqfiroh

MOTTO

“Through knowledge, people grow; through character, people are remembered.”

“Every useful piece of knowledge is a lasting legacy of goodness

Dedication

This article is dedicated as a sincere academic endeavor in contributing to the development of meaningful and future-oriented English education. Through this study, the writer hopes to provide valuable insights for educators, researchers, and students in understanding the relationship between learning interest, career orientation, and English language learning. This work is also devoted to everyone who continuously strives for knowledge with faith, perseverance, and dedication, believing that education is not only a path toward personal achievement but also a bridge to creating positive contributions for society. May this article become a small but meaningful contribution to the advancement of education, knowledge, and future generations

STATEMENT

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Banyuwangi, 10 Mei 2026

Declarator,





Madina Maqfiroh

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The Controversy of Students Learning Interest in English as A Future Career

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A.ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This study examines students' learning interest in English and their perceptions of English as preparation for future careers across formal and non-formal educational contexts. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving 30 participants consisting of 15 students from ECC Course and 15 undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations, and analyzed using thematic analysis with data triangulation to ensure credibility. The findings reveal that most students recognize English as an important skill for academic and professional advancement. However, a contradiction was identified between students' awareness of English as a career-related asset and their actual learning engagement, particularly due to grammar difficulties and classroom boredom. The study also found no major differences between students from the two educational contexts in terms of their perceptions and learning challenges. This study contributes to the field of EFL motivation by highlighting the gap between students' awareness and their actual engagement in English learning. The findings suggest that more engaging, contextualized, and career-oriented teaching approaches are needed to enhance students' learning interest and participation.

B.Introduction

Proficiency has become increasingly important in supporting employability and competitiveness in the global workforce (Seargeant & Erling, 2023). In the context of globalization and rapid technological development, English functions as a lingua franca that enables individuals to access international communication, academic mobility, and broader professional opportunities (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020). Consequently, English is widely perceived not only as an academic subject but also as a strategic skill for future career development.

From a theoretical perspective, students' learning interest and motivation play a crucial role in shaping language learning outcomes. Research suggests that learners tend to demonstrate higher engagement when they perceive English as relevant to their personal goals and future careers (Al-Hoorie et al., 2021). When English is associated with clear career aspirations, students are more likely to develop purposeful learning orientations and stronger motivation.

However, a contradiction emerges in practice. Although English is widely recognized as essential for future careers, students do not always demonstrate corresponding learning interest (Lamb, 2022). Some learners acknowledge the importance of English but remain disengaged in classroom contexts. This gap between perceived importance and actual engagement indicates that awareness alone does not necessarily lead to sustained learning interest.

Previous studies have examined English learning in relation to career orientation and motivation. While many highlight the positive relationship between career awareness and language engagement, findings also suggest that overly instrumental approaches may weaken intrinsic motivation (Papi et al., 2021). Moreover, existing research often addresses employability, motivation, or curriculum relevance separately, without integrating students' learning interest, career perceptions, and learning contexts within a single analytical framework.

Furthermore, limited studies have explored how this contradiction manifests across different educational settings, particularly in both formal and non-formal English learning contexts in Indonesia. English learning in course institutions and university programs may shape students' experiences differently, yet comparative qualitative evidence remains limited.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to examine students' learning interest in English and analyze how they perceive English as preparation for future careers across two educational contexts: ECC Course as a non-formal institution and the English Education Study Program (TBIG) at Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat as a formal context. This study focuses on students' perceptions of the relevance of English for future careers, the challenges influencing their learning interest, and the similarities across learning contexts. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative examination of learning interest, career orientation, and institutional context within a qualitative framework.

In this study, the term "controversy" refers to the contradiction between students' recognition of English as an important skill for their future careers and their relatively low engagement in the actual learning process. This concept highlights the tension between awareness and practice, which constitutes the central focus of this research.

C.Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of students' learning interest in English and the contradiction between their recognition of English as an important skill for future careers and their actual learning engagement. A qualitative approach was used to explore meanings, perceptions, and subjective experiences related to English learning, resulting in narrative data rather than numerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this approach, the researcher sought to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how students interpret the relevance of English to their future career orientation. This approach was considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of students' perceptions and experiences in relation to English learning and career orientation.

Participants

The study involved 30 participants, consisting of 15 students from ECC Course as a non-formal English learning institution and 15 undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program (TBIG) at Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat (UIMSYA) as a formal educational context. Participants were selected using

purposive sampling based on their active engagement in English learning and their relevance to the research focus, namely students who were currently involved in English learning and had considered English in relation to their future careers (Palinkas et al., 2015). This sampling strategy ensured that participants possessed direct experience and insight relevant to the objectives of the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected in December through open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations.

The open-ended questionnaire consisted of 11 questions designed to explore students' perceptions of English, their learning interest, and their views on English as preparation for future careers. The questionnaire was distributed to all 30 participants.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven selected participants to obtain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives. Each interview lasted approximately 7-10 minutes and was guided by flexible interview protocols that allowed participants to elaborate on their responses (Kallio et al., 2016). With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Classroom observations were conducted in five sessions to understand the instructional context and students' engagement during English learning activities. Observations focused on teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, and student participation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis process involved data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, and refinement. Coding was conducted manually by the researcher to ensure close engagement with the data.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The analysis followed established qualitative rigor principles to ensure credibility and systematic theme development (Nowell et al., 2022).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by removing identifiable information from transcripts and reporting data using general identifiers.

D.Results

Students' Perceptions of English for Future Careers

The findings indicate that all participants (n = 30; 15 students from ECC Course and 15 students from the English Education Study Program/TBIG at Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat) generally perceive English as an important skill for their future careers. Most participants associated English with academic advancement, global communication, and increased employability. Several participants explicitly emphasized the role of English in supporting their future educational goals. For instance, one student stated, *"English is very important because I want to continue my higher education abroad in the health field*" (Participant 3). This suggests that English is viewed as a key requirement for accessing international academic opportunities.

Similarly, other participants highlighted the importance of English for professional purposes. One respondent explained, *"English is an international language. If I can speak English, I can communicate anywhere in the world, and in the workplace, English proficiency can be an added value for companies*" (Participant 7). This reflects a strong awareness of English as a form of professional capital.

In addition, several participants reported a shift in their perceptions over time. Initially, English was learned due to external demands; however, deeper engagement led to stronger personal motivation. As one participant noted, *"At first, I learned English because it was a requirement, but after learning it more deeply, I realized that English is very important, and I want to become an English lecturer" (Participant 12).*

Figure 1 illustrates that a dominant proportion of participants (25 out of 30) perceive English as important for their future careers, whereas only a minority (5 participants) consider it less important. This finding
Suggests that students' awareness of the role of English in career development is consistently high across participants.

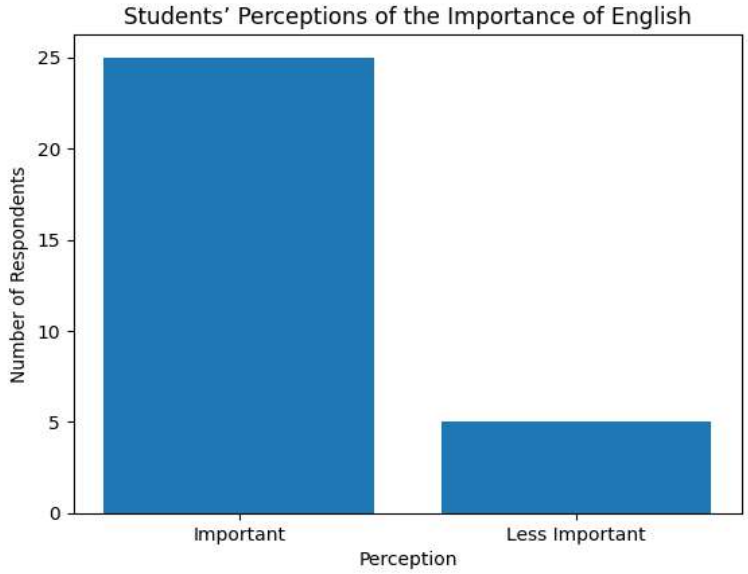

Figure 1. Students' perceptions of the importance of English for future careers

These findings indicate that while students demonstrate strong awareness of the importance of English, this awareness does not necessarily translate into consistent learning engagement, highlighting the perception–engagement gap.

Learning Challenges in English Learning

Despite their positive perceptions, many participants reported significant challenges in learning English. Based on questionnaire and interview data, approximately 21 out of 30 participants identified grammar as one of the most difficult aspects of English learning. One participant expressed, "Although English is very important, when I am faced with grammar, I feel very confused and find it difficult because I do not like grammar and do not master it well" (Participant 9). This indicates that grammatical complexity can reduce students' confidence and negatively affect their engagement.

In addition to linguistic difficulties, classroom environment and teaching methods were also reported as major challenges. Around 18 participants mentioned that monotonous teaching approaches contributed to boredom and reduced motivation. As one student explained, “The role of the teacher or tutor is very important. When the teacher does not master the material or teaches in an uninteresting way, the class becomes chaotic and boring” (Participant 15).

These findings suggest that students’ disengagement is influenced not only by internal factors such as ability and motivation, but also by external factors, particularly instructional practices and classroom dynamics.

Similarities across Learning Contexts

The findings show that there are no substantial differences between students from ECC Course and those from the English Education Study Program (TBIG) in terms of their perceptions and learning challenges. Participants from both contexts similarly recognized the importance of English for future careers and reported comparable difficulties, particularly related to grammar and classroom boredom.

For example, participants from both groups expressed similar views regarding grammar difficulty and teaching methods. This consistency indicates that the challenges experienced by students are not strongly influenced by the type of educational institution, but rather reflect broader patterns in English language learning experiences.

Overall, these similarities reinforce the central finding of this study, namely the existence of a shared contradiction between students’ strong career-oriented perceptions of English and

Their relatively low engagement in the learning process across both formal and non-formal contexts.

E.Discussion

Students' Perceptions of English for Future Careers

The findings of this study indicate that most students perceive English as an important skill for their future careers. This perception reflects students' awareness of the role of English in supporting academic and professional mobility, particularly in relation to further study and international career opportunities. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies, which highlight English proficiency as a form of professional capital that enhances employability and global workforce participation (Galloway & Ruegg, 2021).

Students' aspirations to pursue overseas education and career advancement suggest that English is no longer viewed merely as an academic subject, but as a strategic investment for future professional development. This supports the argument that when learners associate English learning with clear career goals, they tend to develop more purposeful perceptions and stronger motivation toward language learning (Papi & Khajavy, 2021).

However, this study further reveals that strong awareness does not necessarily lead to active engagement in learning. In line with previous research, awareness of the importance of English may not automatically translate into sustained learning interest (Lamb, 2022). This indicates that motivation in language learning is not solely driven by external goals, but also depends on learners' engagement and learning experiences.

Learning Challenges in English Learning

Despite students' positive perceptions of English, the findings reveal a gap between their recognition of its importance and their actual learning experiences, particularly in relation to grammar mastery. Many students reported difficulties with grammatical aspects, which negatively affected their confidence and comfort in using English. This supports the view that high learning interest does not always result in effective learning processes, especially when linguistic components are perceived as complex and demanding (Al-Hoorie et al., 2021).

Grammar-related difficulties have been widely recognized as a major challenge in EFL learning, as they may lead to anxiety, reduced confidence, and avoidance of active communication. Previous studies indicate that learners who perceive

grammar as cognitively demanding tend to show lower willingness to communicate and reduced classroom participation (Tsang, 2022). Therefore, grammatical complexity can hinder students' active engagement in English learning despite their strong career-oriented motivation.

In addition to linguistic challenges, the findings indicate that teaching methods and classroom atmosphere significantly shape students' learning experiences. Several respondents reported that monotonous and less engaging instructional approaches contributed to boredom and reduced learning interest. This suggests that students' disengagement is not merely a result of low motivation, but is also influenced by instructional practices.

Previous studies have similarly identified classroom boredom as a major affective barrier in EFL learning, particularly when instruction relies on repetitive and teacher-centered methods (Li, 2021). When learning activities lack interaction and contextual relevance, students may struggle to maintain attention and active participation. Consequently, the perception–engagement gap identified in this study can be understood as the result of both internal factors, such as cognitive and affective aspects, and external instructional factors.

Similarity Across Educational Contexts

The findings indicate that there were no major differences between course participants and university students in terms of their perceptions of English and the challenges they experienced. This suggests that students' attitudes toward English learning are not primarily shaped by institutional context, but rather by broader factors such as career orientation and personal beliefs about the role of English in their future.

Previous research has also highlighted that learners' motivation and perceptions are often influenced by cross-contextual factors, including career aspirations and global awareness, rather than by formal or non-formal educational settings alone. Therefore, the similarities observed in this study reinforce the argument that students' career-related considerations play a more dominant role than institutional differences in shaping their learning experiences.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for English teaching practices. Since students generally recognize the importance of English for their future careers but struggle with grammar and classroom boredom, teachers are encouraged to design more engaging and learner-centered instructional approaches. Integrating communicative activities, contextualized grammar instruction, and career-oriented materials may help bridge the gap between students' positive perceptions and their actual learning experiences.

By aligning instructional strategies with students' future aspirations, English learning can become more meaningful and motivating for learners across both formal and non-formal contexts. In addition, reducing overly complex grammar instruction and presenting it in practical contexts may help increase students' confidence and participation.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the number of participants was relatively limited to 30 students from two specific learning contexts, which may restrict the broader generalization of the findings. Second, the study relied primarily on questionnaire responses and limited interview data, which may not fully capture the depth of students' experiences. Additionally, classroom observation was conducted in a limited manner, which may not comprehensively represent instructional dynamics.

Future research is encouraged to involve more diverse participant groups and employ more extensive qualitative data collection methods to provide a deeper understanding of students' learning interest and career-oriented perceptions of English.

F.Conclusion

This study examined students' learning interest in English and their perceptions of English as preparation for future careers across formal and non-formal educational contexts. The findings indicate that most students recognize English as an important skill for academic and professional advancement. However, a contradiction was identified between students' awareness of English as a career-related asset and their actual learning engagement, particularly in relation to grammar difficulties and classroom boredom.

The study also found no major differences between ECC Course participants and university students in terms of their perceptions and learning challenges. This suggests that career orientation and personal beliefs about English play a more dominant role than institutional context in shaping students' attitudes and experiences in English learning.

This study contributes to the field of EFL motivation by highlighting the gap between students' awareness and their actual engagement in English learning. By integrating learning interest, career orientation, and educational context within a qualitative framework, this study provides a deeper understanding of how students negotiate the relevance of English in relation to their future aspirations. The findings emphasize the importance of aligning instructional practices with students' career goals to reduce disengagement and promote more meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

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E.APPENDIXES

1. Proof of Publication



ideas
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The Controversy of Students Learning Interest in English as a Future Career

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ABSTRACT

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3. Certificate of Research Completion



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Dengan ini menyatakan yang sesungguhnya bahwa nama mahasiswa tersebut **BENAR** telah melaksanakan penelitian di Kursusan English Conversation Club (ECC) Blokagung, Bnayuwangi dengan judul penelitian "**The Controversy of Students Learning Interest in English as a Future Career**".

Demikian surat keterangan ini kami buat untuk dipergunakan oleh yang bersangkutan sebagaimana mestinya.

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Perguruan Tinggi	: **Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat (UIMSYA)**

Benar telah melaksanakan penelitian di **Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat (UIMSYA), Blokagung, Tegalsari, Banyuwangi,** dalam rangka penyusunan **tugas akhir kuliah** berupa artikel ilmiah dengan judul: **"The Controversy Of Students Learning Interest In English As A Future Career."**

Penelitian tersebut telah dilaksanakan sesuai dengan ketentuan dan prosedur yang berlaku di lingkungan Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat (UIMSYA). Surat keterangan ini dibuat sebagai bukti bahwa yang bersangkutan telah menyelesaikan kegiatan penelitian untuk memenuhi salah satu persyaratan penyelesaian tugas akhir pada Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris.

Demikian Surat keterangan ini dibuat dengan sebenarnya agar dapat dipergunakan sebagaimana mestinya.

Blokagung, 20 Mei 2026
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2. SDN 1 Bumi Harjo (2016)
3. MTS Al-Amiriyyah (2019)
4. MA AL-Amiriyyah (2022)
5. sUniversitas KH.Mukhtar Syafaat (2022-Sekarang)

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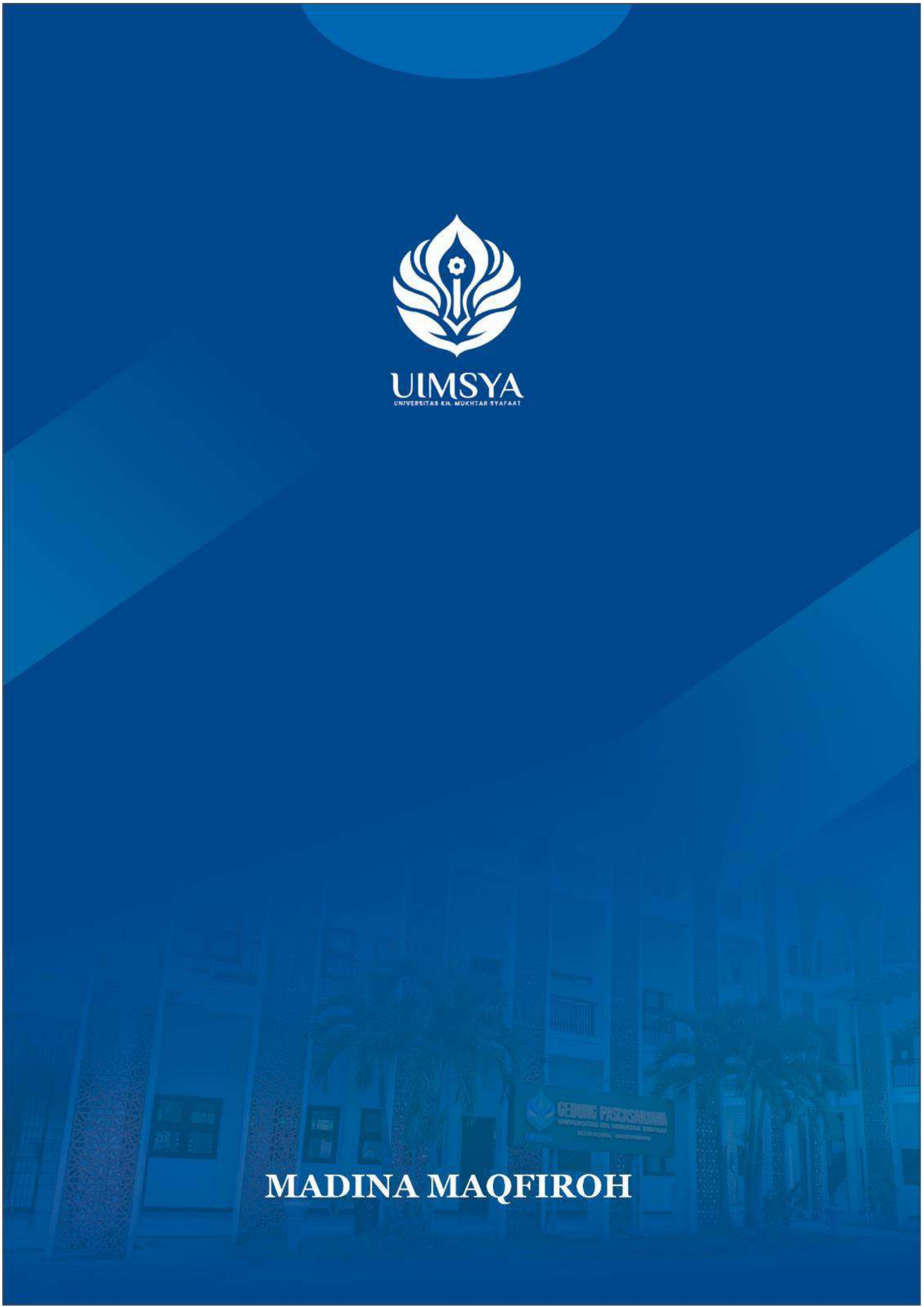

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