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The Use of the KWL Chart as a Learning Reflection Tool in Islamic Education Teaching and Learning (Form Three) at SMK Tengku Intan Zaharah, Dungun, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pedagogical effectiveness of the KWL (Know–Want to Know–Learned) strategy in enhancing students' comprehension and engagement in the Sirah topic Perjanjian Hudaibiyah within the Malaysian Islamic Education curriculum. Although Sirah constitutes a critical component for developing students' moral, ethical, and spiritual identities, it is frequently regarded as challenging due to its reliance on memorisation and limited integration of interactive, learner-centred methodologies. Consequently, students often display low interest and superficial understanding, indicating the need for more effective instructional approaches. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the extent to which the KWL Chart functions as a reflective learning tool capayyble of activating prior knowledge, guiding learning intentions, and supporting metacognitive processing among Form Three students. Adopting a qualitative research design supplemented with pre-test and post-test measures, the study engaged 129 students through structured KWL activities, classroom observations, and assessment tasks, with data analysed thematically and descriptively. The results demonstrate substantial improvement in students' academic performance, with mean scores increasing from 79.5% to 87.8%, the proportion of distinction achievers rising from 21% to 53%, and the complete elimination of low-achievement categories. Both male and female students recorded comparable gains, confirming the strategy's broad applicability. Observational data further indicate heightened learner participation, improved cognitive engagement, and enhanced reflective capacity, as students became more proactive in questioning, expressing ideas, and evaluating their own learning. In conclusion, the findings affirm that the KWL strategy constitutes an academically robust pedagogical tool that effectively strengthens conceptual mastery, fosters reflective thinking, and promotes more meaningful and student-centred learning experiences, with strong implications for wider implementation across Islamic Education and other concept-driven disciplines.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background Study

Islamic Education in Malaysia plays a fundamental role in shaping students' identities and fostering humanistic values. Its syllabus encompasses six core areas: Qur'an, Hadith, Aqidah, Fiqh, Sirah, and Akhlak, with Sirah often receiving less attention due to its reliance on memorization of historical events and the lives of prominent Islamic figures. Despite this, Sirah is highly significant, providing guidance that leads to hidayah (divine guidance), as highlighted in Surah Taha, verse 21 [1].

The teaching of Sirah, however, presents several challenges. Students with weaker memory and comprehension skills may struggle to understand the subject, while teachers may face difficulties in delivering content effectively. Additional obstacles include the lack of interactive teaching aids, insufficient alignment with 21st-century learning objectives, and the challenge of fostering an appreciation for the values and lessons embedded in Sirah. These factors collectively affect students' understanding and performance in Islamic Education.

One effective approach to address these challenges is the integration of 21st-century learning strategies, such as the KWL Chart (Know, Want, Learned). This strategy actively engages students throughout the learning process. Initially, teachers and students identify prior knowledge and generate questions through brainstorming. Students then articulate what they wish to learn, followed by engagement with new content and reflection on what they have learned. This process encourages active participation, critical thinking, and self-assessment while allowing teachers to monitor learning progress [9,12].

Reflection is a critical component of the teaching and learning process, supporting both student comprehension and teacher evaluation of instructional effectiveness. The KWL Chart facilitates meaningful reflection at each stage of PdPc, enabling students to assess their understanding and enabling teachers to prepare more effective daily lesson plans (RPH) and evaluate learning outcomes [14].

This qualitative study involved 129 Form 3 students from SMK Tengku Intan Zaharah, Dungun, focusing on the topic of the Hudaybiyyah Treaty in Sirah. Pre-tests and post-tests were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the KWL Chart. The findings indicate that the strategy enhances student engagement, comprehension, and reflection, while also providing teachers with practical tools to improve teaching effectiveness. Zakaria *et al*., [15] highlight that the use of graphic organizers significantly strengthens students' comprehension skills, especially among Malaysian secondary school learners, by helping them structure information more clearly and process complex content more effectively. Overall, integrating 21st-century learning strategies in Islamic Education moves instruction beyond traditional methods, supporting more effective, reflective, and meaningful learning experiences.

1.2 Problem Statement

The subject of Sirah constitutes a vital component of Islamic Education, as it plays a significant role in shaping students' moral and ethical character. Despite its importance, many students demonstrate limited interest in the subject, perceiving it as challenging, heavily reliant on memorization of immutable facts, and lacking direct relevance to everyday life. This disinterest negatively impacts academic performance, highlighting the necessity of creative teaching approaches to make learning more engaging, enjoyable, and effective, while simultaneously enhancing students' understanding, motivation, and critical thinking skills.

Previous studies have indicated that students often regard Sirah as a tedious subject, difficult to comprehend, and of limited practical application. Their understanding is generally superficial, as they tend to memorize factual content without applying it to real-life contexts. Consequently, learning experiences are often perceived as meaningless, failing to cultivate essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving [4].

Moreover, the utilization of Teaching Aids in Sirah remains limited, particularly in relation to 21st Century Learning strategies. Many teachers continue to employ traditional methods focused primarily on reading, memorization, and examination preparation. Textbooks written in Jawi script further hinder students who are less proficient in reading this script. Consequently, innovative approaches, such as the implementation of KWL Charts and the integration of technology, have the potential to enhance students' comprehension, retention, and interest in Sirah in a more effective and engaging manner [3,6,7].

1.3 Literature Review

The implementation of the KWL chart as a reflective tool in teaching Islamic education to Form Three students is strongly supported by existing research. Ajmain *et al*., [3], in their article "Cabaran pengajaran bidang sirah bagi guru pelatih Pendidikan Islam", identify several significant obstacles in teaching Sirah, including students' limited comprehension, a shortage of interactive teaching resources, trainee teachers' insufficient mastery of Sirah, and challenges in adapting instruction to varying student abilities. These issues underscore the importance of a teaching strategy that enables students to utilize prior knowledge, collaboratively build new understanding, and assess their own learning. In this context, the KWL chart is particularly valuable, as it structures the learning process by highlighting prior knowledge (K), formulating learning questions (W), and reflecting on newly acquired knowledge (L).

Supporting this, Jamil *et al*., [9], in his article "Penerapan strategi pembelajaran Know, Want to Know, and Learn (KWL) untuk meningkatkan hasil belajar dan aktivitas siswa SMK: Materi butir-butir penting dari satu buku pengayaan (nonfiksi)", demonstrates that the KWL strategy significantly improves both conceptual understanding and academic performance. The approach aids students in organizing information effectively and promotes self-reflective learning by guiding them through what they already know, what they want to learn, and what they have learned. This aligns with the present study's objective, which employs the KWL chart as both a planning and reflection tool to assess Form Three students' comprehension of Islamic Education content, particularly in the Sirah domain.

In a comparable manner, Nair *et al*., [12] affirm in their paper "The effect of graphic organizer (KWL chart) on young learners' reading comprehension in an ESL setting" that the KWL approach strengthens reflection by allowing students to compare their knowledge before and after instruction, encourages students to ask insightful questions, and fosters active learning. They stress that KWL improves metacognitive abilities, which are crucial for students to keep an eye on and control their own learning. This is extremely pertinent to the study since students can monitor their cognitive development during the lesson by using the KWL chart as a reflection tool, which enables teachers to adjust their teaching methods in response to actual student needs.

Finally, the article "The influence of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) on the creative practices of Islamic education teachers" by Saili *et al*., [13] highlights the increasing importance of creativity in 21st-century Islamic education pedagogy, including the use of interactive approaches to meet the learning needs of students who are digital natives. The use of the KWL chart as a creative and pertinent reflective method in Form Three Islamic Education is further supported

by their study's emphasis on teacher creativity, a variety of instructional resources, and cutting-edge equipment, even if it does not expressly address the KWL technique. This supports the claim that the KWL approach not only improves learning efficacy but also complies with modern pedagogical requirements, which demand more active, visual, and reflective teaching techniques.

1.4 Research Objectives

i. To identify the level of understanding among Form Three students regarding the topic Perjanjian Hudaibiyah after the use of the KWL Chart in Islamic Education teaching and learning.
ii. To evaluate Islamic Education students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the KWL Chart as a learning reflection tool in enhancing their understanding and engagement.

1.5 Research Questions

i. What is the level of understanding among Form Three students on the topic Perjanjian Hudaibiyah after the use of the KWL Chart in Islamic Education teaching and learning?
ii. ii. How do Islamic Education students perceive the effectiveness of the KWL Chart as a learning reflection tool in improving their understanding and engagement?

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology used to evaluate the effectiveness of the KWL (Know–Want to Know–Learned) strategy in the subject Teaching Methods through a qualitative approach based on observation. This study applies a pre-test and post-test design to assess changes in students' understanding and level of engagement before and after the intervention.

2.2 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with classroom observation as the primary design to assess student interaction, engagement levels, and responses toward the KWL teaching strategy. Observation enables the collection of in-depth data regarding students' behaviours and experiences directly within the actual classroom context. In addition, the study uses pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' understanding of the concepts taught before and after the implementation of the KWL activity. The qualitative approach was selected because it focuses on students' experiences, behaviours, and perceptions holistically, aligning with the research objective that emphasises direct observation in the learning process. 2.3 Population and Sample The study population consisted of students enrolled in the Teaching Methods subject at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Tengku Intan Zaharah. The sample comprised 129 students, including 52 male and 77 female students. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, as they were directly involved in the teaching sessions utilizing the KWL strategy and were therefore able to provide relevant feedback regarding its effectiveness.

2.4 Research Instruments

2.4.1 KWL chart

The KWL chart was utilized to gather qualitative data, encompassing three key components: K (Know), W (Want to Know), and L (Learned). The K section assessed students' prior knowledge of the topic, the W section captured their learning questions or areas of interest, and the L section documented reflections after the lesson, providing insight into knowledge gained and conceptual understanding.

2.4.2 Classroom observation

Classroom observations were conducted using a structured checklist to systematically record student engagement, interactions between students, teachers, and peers, and responses to the KWL strategy. Observations also focused on changes in learning behavior before and after the intervention, thereby evaluating the strategy's effectiveness in fostering active participation and deeper learning.

2.4.3 Pre-test and post-test

A pre-test was administered prior to the KWL activity to determine students' baseline knowledge, while a post-test was conducted afterwards to assess improvements in understanding. Students' responses were analyzed thematically to identify shifts in thinking and comprehension, offering empirical evidence of the KWL strategy's impact on learning outcomes. The comparison between pre-test and post-test results was used to determine the effectiveness of the KWL strategy in improving student achievement. These instruments were essential for gathering information on students' prior knowledge, learning intentions, learning outcomes, and behavioural changes observed throughout the teaching process.

2.5 Research Procedure

In Phase 1, the researcher began by reviewing and selecting suitable topics from the Teaching Methods subject that aligned with the objectives of the KWL activity. All required instruments including the KWL chart, observation form, pre-test, and post-test were then prepared to ensure a systematic and well-structured data collection process. Phase 2 involved the administration of the pre-test, during which students completed the assessment to determine their initial level of understanding prior to the implementation of the KWL strategy. In Phase 3, the KWL activity was carried out. The teacher first introduced the KWL strategy, after which students completed the K and W sections of the chart. The teacher then delivered the lesson using a student-centred approach, promoting active participation and inquiry-based learning. At the end of the lesson, students filled in the L section to reflect on the knowledge they had gained, while the researcher conducted structured observations throughout the session to record students' engagement and learning behaviour. Phase 4 focused on the administration of the post-test, where students completed a second assessment to evaluate their understanding after participating in the KWL activity. The post-test data were collected and analysed alongside the pre-test results to identify changes and improvements in students' comprehension. Finally, in Phase 5, the quantitative data obtained from both the pre-test and post-test were analysed descriptively to identify patterns, trends, and overall shifts in students' understanding. This analytical process provided a clear picture of the effectiveness of the KWL strategy in enhancing students' conceptual grasp of the selected topic.

2.6 Qualitative Analysis

Data from the KWL charts and classroom observations were analyzed using a systematic qualitative approach. The information was first organized in a structured manner to facilitate effective management and review. Key insights were then coded and categorized according to major themes aligned with the research objectives. This thematic analysis enabled an interpretation of students' cognitive progression and provided an understanding of their engagement levels throughout the learning activities.

3. Results

3.1 Pre-Test Findings

The pre-test was administered to a cohort of 129 students, comprising 77 female and 52 male students. The assessment aimed to evaluate students' initial understanding and readiness before the commencement of the instructional intervention. Each student's raw score was converted to a percentage, assuming a maximum possible score of 20, to allow standardized comparison across the cohort.

i. High Achievement (90–95%) Approximately 20.9% of the cohort scored in the high-achievement range. Female students dominated this category, with 21 students, while male students accounted for only 6. This indicates a higher initial competency among female students in comparison to their male counterparts.

ii. Moderate Achievement (75–85%) The majority of students (58.1%) scored in the moderate range. Notably, the distribution at 85% was evenly balanced between male and female students (15 each), whereas females predominated in the 75–80% range. This pattern suggests that most students possess a solid foundational understanding but may require targeted instructional support to reach higher performance levels.

iii. Low Achievement (50–70%) Around 20.9% of the students scored in the low-achievement range. Male students (9) were slightly overrepresented in this range compared to females (18). These students may benefit from additional scaffolding and intervention strategies to prevent gaps in understanding. Overall, the pre-test data demonstrates that the majority of students exhibited moderate to high levels of understanding prior to the instructional program. There is a discernible trend of higher performance among female students, particularly in the top percentile ranges. However, a significant minority of students, especially males, require additional support to reach proficiency. These findings provide a crucial baseline for informing instructional planning, targeted interventions, and the evaluation of post-test outcomes to monitor learning progress.

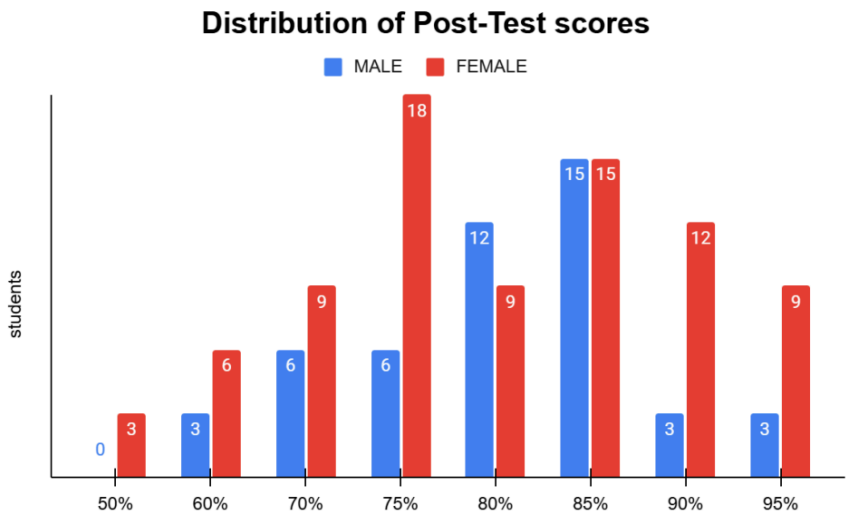

Fig. 1. Distribution of post-test scores

3.2 Post-Test Findings

The analysis of post-test results reveals a marked improvement in student performance across all achievement levels, demonstrating the effectiveness of the instructional intervention. Firstly, there was a major improvement at the top scores. The number of students achieving the highest mark of 95% increased dramatically from 12 students in the pre-test to 42 students in the post-test. Secondly, there was a notable shift from moderate to high achievement. Students who scored in the 75%–80% range in the pre-test largely progressed to higher score bands of 85%–95% in the post-test. Finally, the data shows a complete elimination of low scores. Students who previously scored 60% and 50% in the pre-test improved to at least 70% in the post-test, resulting in no students remaining in the lowest score bands.

The number of students achieving the highest mark of 95% increased dramatically from 12 students in the pre-test to 42 students in the post-test. This surge represents the largest single jump in performance across the cohort and indicates that many students who were previously scoring lower were able to reach the top grade as a result of the intervention. The significant increase in high achievers reflects both the efficacy of the teaching strategies and the students' responsiveness to structured learning activities. Secondly, there was a notable shift from moderate to high achievement. This upward movement demonstrates that the instructional strategies were successful in promoting deeper understanding and consolidating knowledge, enabling students to achieve higher levels of academic performance. The transition of a substantial number of students from moderate to high achievement illustrates the intervention's impact on enhancing overall learning outcomes. Finally, the data shows a complete elimination of low scores. This outcome highlights the effectiveness of targeted interventions designed to support underperforming students, ensuring that all learners achieved measurable academic gains. By raising the minimum level of achievement, the intervention contributed to narrowing the performance gap within the cohort. Post-test results indicate substantial and widespread improvement across all levels of student performance. The increase in top scorers, the upward movement of moderate achievers, and the elimination of low scores collectively demonstrate the success of the instructional strategies in elevating student learning outcomes and fostering academic excellence throughout the cohort.

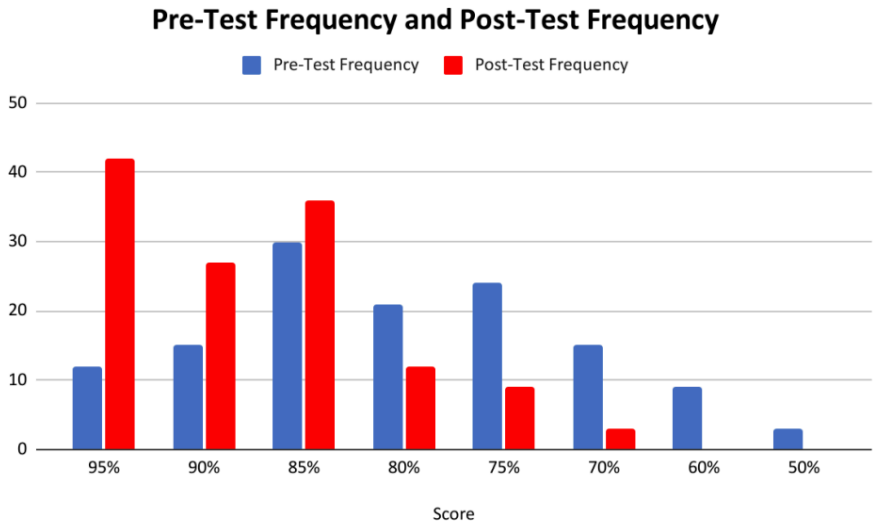

Fig. 2. Pre-test frequency and post-test frequency

Following the instructional intervention, the post-test results demonstrated significant improvements across all performance indicators. The mean score for the cohort increased to 17.56 (87.8%), reflecting an overall gain of +1.65 marks. The highest score remained at 19, while the lowest score rose from 10 to 14, highlighting substantial gains among students who previously struggled.

Notably, the number of students achieving distinction 90%-95% surged from 27 (21%) in the pre-test to 69 (53%) in the post-test, representing the largest improvement in high-achieving students. The post-test distribution also indicated that students previously scoring 75%-80% largely moved to higher score bands 85%-95%, while students who scored below 70% in the pre-test all improved to 70% or above, effectively eliminating the lowest score categories.

Table 1
Comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test performance

Metric	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
Mean Score	79.5%	87.8%	+8.25%
Highest Score	95%	95%	Maintained
Lowest Score	50%	70%	+20%
Distinction (18-19)	27 students (21%)	69 students (53%)	Significance increase

3.3 Gender-Based Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test Performance

When analyzed by gender, both male and female students demonstrated considerable gains. Male students' mean score increased from 80% to 88.45%, representing the highest improvement among the cohort. Female students' mean score increased from 79.25% to 87.4%. Although females initially had slightly lower mean scores than males, both genders exhibited substantial improvements, demonstrating the intervention's broad effectiveness.

Table 2
Gender-based performance

Gender	Mean Pre-Test	Mean Post-Test	Improvement
Male (L)	80%	88.45%	+8.45%
Female (P)	79.25%	87.4%	+8.15%

3.4 Performance Comparison

The analysis of students' performance revealed that the majority demonstrated measurable improvement following the intervention. A total of 69.77% of students showed enhanced understanding and achievement, indicating that the intervention was generally effective in supporting learning gains. Meanwhile, 27.91% of students maintained static performance, showing no significant change in comprehension levels. The remaining 2.32% of students experienced a decline in performance, suggesting that certain individual factors may have limited the impact of the intervention. The student who demonstrated the greatest improvement recorded an increase from 60% to 95%.In contrast, one student exhibited static performance, maintaining the same score of 85%.A decline in performance was observed in another student, whose score decreased from 85% to 75%.

Firstly, the student who demonstrated the greatest improvement recorded an increase from 60% to 95%.Classroom observations indicated that this student became more actively involved in question-and-answer sessions, frequently engaged the teacher with inquiries, and participated enthusiastically in classroom activities such as the "True or False" game. The teacher's use of small incentives for correct responses may have further strengthened the student's extrinsic motivation, contributing to the notable improvement in performance [11]. Secondly, one student exhibited static performance, maintaining the same score of 85%. Observational notes suggest that this lack of progress may be associated with lower interest or difficulty sustaining attention during lessons. These behavioural patterns may reflect limited intrinsic motivation to engage deeply with the learning content [5]. Finally, a decline in performance was observed in another student, whose score decreased from 85% to 75%. This reduction may have been influenced by factors such as reduced focus or health-related issues, as the student appeared unwell during the second assessment. Such conditions likely affected the student's ability to concentrate and perform optimally [2].

Table 3
Analysis of performance categories

Performance category	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Improved	90	69.8
Static	36	27.9
Declined	3	2.3
Total	129	100

3.5 Result of Research Objectives

The first objective of this study indicates that the KWL Chart significantly enhanced students' overall understanding of the topic Perjanjian Hudaibiyah. Post-test results show a clear upward shift in performance across the cohort, with the mean score increasing from 84.6% to 87.8%, and the highest score maintained at 95%. The number of students achieving distinction (90%–95%) more than doubled, rising from 21% to 53%, while low-achieving categories were completely eliminated as all students scored 70% and above after the intervention. These improvements demonstrate that students achieved a high level of understanding following the use of the KWL Chart, with the majority progressing into higher achievement bands. The tool effectively supported deeper comprehension, guided reflection, and consolidation of key concepts in Islamic Education. It helps students link new knowledge with prior knowledge and evaluate their own learning reflectively [10]. The second objective of this study students' performance patterns and classroom behaviours indicate positive perceptions of the KWL Chart as a reflective learning tool. The substantial score improvements,

increased participation in class discussions, and higher levels of engagement demonstrate that students found the KWL structure helpful in activating prior knowledge, setting learning goals, and monitoring what they had learned. Observational data supports this, as students became more active during questioning, more confident in expressing ideas, and more motivated to participate in learning activities. The complete removal of low-achievement scores further suggests that students perceived the tool as supportive and accessible. Improvements were consistent across genders, reflecting its broad acceptance and perceived usefulness. Overall, the findings suggest that students view the KWL Chart as an effective and meaningful tool that enhances both their understanding of lesson content and their engagement in Islamic Education learning processes.

3.6 Result of Research Questions

The first findings indicate that students demonstrated a substantial improvement in their understanding of the topic following the implementation of the KWL Chart. This is evident from the significant increase in post-test scores, where the cohort mean rose from 84.6% in the pre-test to 87.8% in the post-test.

Furthermore, the number of students achieving distinction 90%–95% increased sharply from 27 to 69 , representing the largest upward shift across achievement categories. Students who previously scored in the moderate range 75%–85% predominantly progressed to the higher bands of 85%–95%, demonstrating deeper conceptual mastery facilitated by the KWL Chart.

Most notably, the intervention succeeded in eliminating the lowest performance categories altogether. Students who had scored 50%–70% in the pre-test improved to 70% or above, indicating that the KWL Chart supported struggling learners through structured reflection and knowledge activation.

Overall, these results confirm that students achieved a high level of post-intervention understanding, with the majority attaining moderate to excellent proficiency. The KWL Chart clearly contributed to strengthening comprehension of Perjanjian Hudaibiyah, suggesting that it is an effective tool for supporting conceptual clarity and meaningful engagement with Islamic Education content.

The performance trends observed in the post-test provide a strong indication that students perceived the KWL Chart as useful and meaningful for their learning. Several key patterns support this interpretation:

i. Increased Engagement Among High-Improving Students. Observational data revealed that students who showed the greatest improvement became more active during Q&A sessions, asked more questions, and participated enthusiastically in learning activities. This behavioural change suggests that the KWL Chart enhanced learners' metacognitive awareness, enabling them to identify gaps in knowledge and engage more confidently during instruction.

ii. Positive Response to Structured Learning Reflection. The noticeable shift of students from moderate to high achievement implies that they benefited from the "Know–Want to Know–Learned" structure, which helped them organize prior knowledge, set learning intentions, and reflect systematically on new information. This structured reflection is aligned with students' positive perceptions of the KWL Chart as a tool that clarifies understanding and supports self-regulation.

iii. Reduction of Low Scores as Evidence of Supportive Learning. The complete removal of low-achievement scores suggests that lower-performing students found the KWL Chart accessible and supportive, helping them monitor learning progress and remain engaged despite prior difficulties. iv. Consistent Improvement Across Gender Groups. Both male and female students recorded substantial

gains (male: 80% → 88.45%; female: 79.25% → 87.4%), indicating that the tool was universally perceived as helpful regardless of gender. The broad effectiveness demonstrates that students generally recognised the KWL Chart as a meaningful scaffold for learning.

Overall, the findings emphasise that the KWL Chart is an effective reflective learning tool for enhancing students' understanding and engagement holistically [8]. The improvement in performance, along with observed increases in classroom participation, supports the conclusion that the KWL Chart was well-received and positively influenced students' learning behaviours.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study confirms that the application of the KWL Chart as a reflective learning tool effectively addresses the challenges highlighted in the introduction, particularly students' low engagement, overreliance on memorisation, and superficial understanding of Sirah content [1,4]. The results clearly demonstrate substantial learning gains following the intervention, with the cohort mean score increasing from 84.6% in the pre-test to 87.8% in the post-test, the number of students achieving distinction (90%–95%) rising sharply from 21% to 53%, and the complete elimination of low-achievement categories as all students scored 70% and above. In addition, 69.77% of students showed measurable improvement, indicating that the intervention was broadly effective, while only a small minority exhibited static or declining performance. These findings suggest that the KWL Chart successfully facilitated knowledge activation, structured reflection, and deeper conceptual understanding, particularly among students who previously performed at moderate or low levels. The discussion further reveals that increased classroom participation, questioning behaviour, and motivation were closely associated with improved performance, supporting the view that reflective and student-centred strategies enhance metacognitive awareness and learning engagement [11,14]. Importantly, the results of this study are consistent with previous research, which reported that the KWL strategy and graphic organisers significantly improve comprehension, learning outcomes, and student activity levels across various educational contexts [9,12,15]. In line with the literature, this study also supports the argument that innovative and reflective pedagogical approaches are essential in 21st-century Islamic Education to move beyond traditional memorisation-based instruction and foster meaningful, engaging, and effective learning experiences [3,13]. Overall, the findings affirm that the KWL Chart is a practical and effective instructional tool for enhancing both academic achievement and learning engagement in the teaching of Sirah.

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