



The Students Facilitator and Explaining Learning Model to Improve Student Learning Achievement in Islamic Education Learning at SMP Negeri 2 Ulim

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ABSTRACT

This classroom action research aimed to improve students' learning achievement on the topic Courtesy, Politeness, and Sense of Shame through the application of the Students Facilitator and Explaining (SFAE) learning model in Grade VIII/B of SMP Negeri 2 Ulim, Pidie Jaya Regency. The research subjects consisted of 25 students, and the study was conducted in two cycles, each comprising the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through learning achievement tests, classroom observations, documentation, and interviews, and analyzed using both qualitative descriptive and quantitative approaches. The results showed a significant improvement in students' learning outcomes and activeness after the implementation of the SFAE model. During the pre-cycle, only 7 students (28.00%) achieved the minimum mastery criterion (70). After the first cycle, the number increased to 17 students (68.00%), and in the second cycle, it reached 22 students (88.00%). The class average also rose from 60.0 in the pre-cycle to 69.6 in Cycle I and 80.6 in Cycle II. Furthermore, students demonstrated higher motivation, participation, and confidence in explaining lesson content. Thus, the SFAE model effectively created an interactive and engaging classroom atmosphere, significantly enhancing students' achievement in Islamic Education and Character Building.

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Introduction

Education plays a vital role in shaping students' intellectual, moral, and social competence. In the context of Indonesia's 21st-century education framework, teachers are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to cultivate active learning attitudes, collaboration, and character development in students. However, the reality in many classrooms still reflects a dominance of traditional teacher-centered learning, where students act as passive recipients rather than active participants (Arends, 2012).

This approach often results in low engagement, weak comprehension, and minimal retention of learning materials, particularly in moral and character education subjects such as Tata Krama, Sopan Santun, dan Rasa Malu (Courtesy, Politeness, and Sense of Shame).

At SMP Negeri 2 Ulim, Pidie Jaya, initial classroom observations revealed that student participation during lessons remained low. Most students tended to listen passively, hesitated to ask questions, and were reluctant to express opinions or explain learning materials in front of the class. The lack of active participation affected their academic performance—preliminary evaluation showed that only 28% of students achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 70. This condition indicated that the instructional strategy used did not yet create a dynamic learning environment that encouraged communication, responsibility, and confidence. Therefore, it became essential to implement a model that could foster student activeness, enhance motivation, and improve learning achievement.

One such model is the Students Facilitator and Explaining (SFAE) learning model. SFAE is a cooperative learning strategy that emphasizes students' role as both facilitators and explainers of learning materials (Suprijono, 2013). In this model, students are not only recipients of knowledge but also communicators who convey information to their peers. The learning process encourages each student to understand the material deeply enough to explain it to others, thereby strengthening comprehension, confidence, and communication skills. As stated by Slavin (2014), when students are responsible for explaining information to others, they construct knowledge more effectively through verbalization and social interaction.

The theoretical foundation of the SFAE model is rooted in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners build their own understanding through active engagement and reflection (Piaget, 1973). Moreover, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory supports this model, asserting that learning occurs most effectively within social contexts where students interact, discuss, and exchange ideas with peers. These interactions not only deepen conceptual understanding but also enhance social-emotional competence, an aspect strongly emphasized in character education. The SFAE model aligns with these theories because it places students at the center of the learning process while encouraging communication, collaboration, and reflection.

Previous studies have provided strong empirical support for the effectiveness of SFAE. For instance, Huda (2017) reported that the implementation of SFAE improved students' conceptual mastery and participation in Islamic Education learning. Similarly, Rahayu and Suyono (2020) found that SFAE increased students' learning independence and motivation by providing opportunities to practice explaining concepts in their own words. Moreover, Prasetyo (2018) noted that students taught using SFAE demonstrated

higher achievement compared to those taught through conventional methods. These studies confirm that SFAE is particularly beneficial for subjects that involve moral reasoning, communication, and social interaction—areas that align with the objectives of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti (Islamic Education and Character Building).

Despite the proven benefits of SFAE, its application in rural or small-town schools such as SMP Negeri 2 Ulim is still relatively limited. Teachers often rely on lecture-based instruction due to time constraints, lack of training, or the perception that student-centered approaches are too complex to manage in larger classes. This situation has created a gap between curriculum expectations, which emphasize student activity and character development, and actual classroom practices. As Mulyasa (2017) emphasized, the success of educational reform depends heavily on teachers' ability to implement interactive learning models that encourage student engagement and responsibility. The current research seeks to bridge this gap by demonstrating how the SFAE model can be applied effectively within a real classroom context to enhance both cognitive and affective outcomes.

The urgency of implementing SFAE at SMP Negeri 2 Ulim lies in the need to transform passive learning into active, participatory, and meaningful experiences. According to Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun (2015), learning models that integrate interaction, reflection, and communication help develop higher-order thinking skills and self-confidence. The SFAE model not only supports academic growth but also aligns with the moral dimension of Islamic education, which values humility, respect, and cooperation. By engaging students in explaining and facilitating learning activities, the model cultivates responsibility and empathy—key aspects of good character.

Moreover, cooperative and communicative learning models like SFAE promote equal participation and reduce the learning gap among students of different abilities. As noted by Johnson and Johnson (2019), cooperative learning fosters interdependence, where students help each other to succeed, leading to a more inclusive classroom environment. In the SFAE context, students who master the material earlier assist their peers through explanation, ensuring that all learners achieve understanding. This approach is consistent with the principles of differentiated instruction, which aim to meet diverse learning needs within one classroom setting (Tomlinson, 2014).

Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the Students Facilitator and Explaining learning model in improving students' activeness and learning achievement in the topic Courtesy, Politeness, and Sense of Shame in Grade VIII/B of SMP Negeri 2 Ulim, Pidie Jaya Regency. Specifically, it aimed to (1) describe the process of implementing the SFAE model, (2) determine the improvement in students' activeness during learning, and (3) measure the improvement in learning achievement through test results across two action cycles. By conducting this classroom action

research, it is expected that teachers can gain insights into how SFAE enhances both cognitive and character outcomes, and that schools can adopt similar models to promote student-centered learning. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader effort of transforming education into a process that empowers students to learn actively, think critically, and apply moral values in daily life.

Methods

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design aimed at improving students' learning achievement and activeness through the implementation of the Students Facilitator and Explaining (SFAE) model. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), classroom action research is a cyclical process of inquiry conducted by teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their own classrooms. The approach involves systematic planning, action, observation, and reflection to bring about desired educational improvements. In this study, the researcher acted as both the planner and the practitioner, while a collaborating teacher served as an observer to ensure objectivity in data collection and analysis.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Ulim, located in Pidie Jaya Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia, during the 2024 academic year. The subjects of the study were 25 students of Grade VIII/B, consisting of 13 male and 12 female students. The class was selected based on preliminary observation and analysis, which indicated low student participation and learning outcomes in the subject Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti (Islamic Education and Character Building), particularly in the topic Courtesy, Politeness, and Sense of Shame. The choice of this class was intentional, as it represented a common problem found in similar learning contexts—students' reluctance to participate actively and their difficulties in mastering moral values through traditional, teacher-centered instruction.

The classroom action research followed the two-cycle model as proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), with each cycle consisting of four interrelated stages: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. These stages formed a continuous process aimed at diagnosing problems, implementing improvement strategies, observing the effects, and reflecting on the outcomes to plan subsequent actions. During the planning stage, the researcher and collaborator identified key problems such as low student motivation and limited engagement during learning activities. Lesson plans were then designed to integrate the SFAE model into classroom activities, with clear learning objectives, cooperative group structures, and role assignments. Teaching materials were adapted to encourage students to take turns explaining content to peers, consistent with the SFAE framework outlined by Suprijono (2013).

In the implementation stage, the teacher facilitated the learning process following the principles of SFAE. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher introduced the topic and objectives, then divided students into small groups. Each student within a group was assigned specific responsibilities such as facilitator, recorder, or presenter. The teacher modeled the process of explanation, after which students collaboratively discussed the material and presented their understanding to classmates. This method required students not only to comprehend but also to communicate their learning effectively. The teacher functioned primarily as a facilitator, providing feedback and encouragement to promote confidence and participation.

The observation stage was conducted simultaneously with the implementation, focusing on students' activeness, collaboration, and ability to explain the material. Observation sheets and field notes were used to record the behaviors and attitudes of students during learning activities. The collaborating teacher observed aspects such as student enthusiasm, peer interaction, confidence, and responsibility in performing assigned roles. Finally, in the reflection stage, the researcher and collaborator analyzed observation data, discussed student progress, and identified areas for improvement. Based on Cycle I reflection, several modifications were made for Cycle II, such as more structured group management, increased use of learning media, and additional motivation strategies for less active students. Reflection was essential to ensure that the teaching strategies were continuously refined and that each cycle led to measurable improvement, as emphasized by Mertler (2017) in his framework for reflective teaching.

Data were collected using multiple instruments to ensure validity and comprehensiveness. The learning achievement test was used to assess students' cognitive improvement after each cycle. The test consisted of multiple-choice and short-answer questions designed according to the lesson objectives and validated by the collaborating teacher. The observation sheets were used to assess students' affective and behavioral aspects, including participation, enthusiasm, cooperation, and communication. Each indicator was rated on a descriptive scale to capture qualitative nuances of student behavior. In addition, field notes were used to document learning events, challenges, and teacher-student interactions that might influence learning outcomes. Interviews were conducted informally with selected students to gather feedback about their experiences with the SFAE model. The triangulation of data collection methods strengthened the credibility and reliability of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data derived from the test results were analyzed by calculating class averages and the percentage of students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 70. Improvement in achievement across cycles was interpreted as an indicator of cognitive progress. Qualitative data from observations, field notes, and interviews

were analyzed through thematic interpretation, identifying patterns of improvement in student activeness, motivation, and communication. The combination of both data types provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of SFAE implementation, consistent with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), who emphasized the importance of integrating numerical and narrative data in classroom research.

To maintain research validity, the principle of triangulation was applied by comparing data from different sources—tests, observations, and interviews (Denzin, 2012). The collaborator's role as an independent observer minimized subjectivity and strengthened objectivity in the interpretation of findings. Reflective discussions between cycles also contributed to procedural reliability by ensuring that the intervention evolved systematically based on real classroom evidence. This research adhered to ethical principles in educational research, including obtaining permission from the school principal, securing informed consent from students, and ensuring that participation posed no harm to learners. Students were informed that their performance results would be used solely for educational improvement, not for evaluation purposes. As McNiff and Whitehead (2011) highlight, ethical action research must uphold transparency, respect, and professional integrity throughout the inquiry process.

Result

The implementation of the Students Facilitator and Explaining (SFAE) learning model in Grade VIII/B of SMP Negeri 2 Ulim aimed to improve students' activeness and learning achievement in the subject Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti (Islamic Education and Character Building), particularly in the topic Courtesy, Politeness, and Sense of Shame. This section presents the findings obtained from two action cycles, each consisting of the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were derived from students' learning achievement tests, observation sheets, field notes, and informal interviews. The results are presented in narrative form, emphasizing the improvement process that occurred throughout the research cycles.

The pre-cycle condition indicated that students' learning outcomes and activeness were relatively low. During the pre-observation phase, most students appeared passive, hesitant to respond to the teacher's questions, and lacked confidence to express ideas in front of the class. The teacher's approach tended to be lecture-based, focusing more on direct explanation rather than interactive learning. This teaching pattern caused students to become dependent on the teacher and rarely participated in discussions. Quantitatively, the results of the pre-cycle test showed that only 7 out of 25 students (28%) reached the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 70. The class average score was 60.0, reflecting that the majority of students had not yet mastered the material. Qualitatively, observation data revealed that students seemed disengaged; some were distracted or uninterested in the topic, while others showed limited initiative in group

activities. This finding confirmed the problem diagnosis made before the research began, namely that traditional learning methods did not effectively stimulate student participation or understanding (Arends, 2012; Joyce et al., 2015).

In response to the low learning outcomes, the first cycle introduced the Students Facilitator and Explaining model to create a more active, participatory classroom environment. During the planning phase, the researcher and collaborator designed lesson plans that encouraged students to facilitate and explain material to their peers. The class was divided into several small groups of mixed ability, allowing stronger students to assist others. In the implementation phase, the teacher first introduced the learning objectives and modeled how to explain a concept clearly. Students were then assigned to become “facilitators,” guiding discussions within their groups. Each group discussed subtopics related to Courtesy, Politeness, and Sense of Shame and later presented the results to the class.

At first, some students appeared nervous and unsure of their roles as facilitators. However, as the activity progressed, students gradually became more confident in speaking and sharing ideas. Observation data indicated that about 65% of students actively participated in discussions, asked questions, or contributed to group explanations. The teacher’s role shifted to that of a motivator and guide, providing feedback and encouragement. By the end of Cycle I, test results showed a clear improvement. The number of students who met the KKM increased to 17 students (68%), with an average score of 69.6. This result marked a substantial increase from the pre-cycle stage. Although some students still struggled to express themselves fluently or lacked depth in explaining concepts, the overall progress demonstrated that the SFAE model effectively motivated learners to engage more actively.

Reflection after Cycle I revealed that while most students enjoyed the cooperative activities, a few remained passive, preferring to rely on peers. Time management during group work also posed challenges, as discussions sometimes exceeded the planned duration. Based on this reflection, several adjustments were made for Cycle II: clearer role distribution within groups, more concise teacher instructions, and the use of visual aids to enhance students’ understanding. Furthermore, the teacher increased reinforcement through praise and feedback to sustain motivation among all students. These modifications were expected to promote more balanced participation and deeper comprehension in the subsequent cycle.

During Cycle II, the learning process showed marked improvement in both participation and performance. Students became more familiar with their roles as facilitators and explainers, showing increased enthusiasm and confidence. The class atmosphere was noticeably livelier; students interacted freely, asked questions, and supported one another during discussions. Teachers noted that the frequency of

student-initiated explanations increased, indicating that learners had internalized the purpose of the model. The collaborative environment also fostered mutual respect and attentiveness, aligning with the values of *budi pekerti* (character building) embedded in the curriculum.

Observation results during Cycle II showed that almost all students actively participated in the learning process. About 90% of students contributed meaningfully during group presentations, while others listened attentively and gave constructive feedback. Interview data revealed that students felt more motivated because they were given opportunities to speak, share ideas, and explain lessons to their friends. These findings support the views of Slavin (2014) and Vygotsky (1978), who assert that learning through social interaction promotes both academic and interpersonal development.

Quantitatively, the results of the Cycle II test demonstrated a significant improvement in learning outcomes. The number of students achieving mastery increased to 22 students (88%), with an average score of 80.6. This represented an overall increase of 20 percentage points from Cycle I and 60 percentage points from the pre-cycle. No student scored below 60, indicating that all participants benefited from the intervention. Furthermore, the distribution of scores became more uniform, suggesting that the learning model helped reduce performance gaps among students. These results are consistent with findings by Huda (2017) and Johnson and Johnson (2019), who reported that cooperative learning models like SFAE encourage equal participation and shared responsibility among learners, leading to improved collective achievement.

Qualitative observations also reflected substantial improvement in students' affective behaviors. They appeared more disciplined, cooperative, and willing to help peers who struggled with comprehension. Field notes described a noticeable increase in eye contact, gestures of respect, and attentive listening—behaviors that aligned with the lesson's moral objectives. Several students who were previously shy or disengaged began volunteering to explain concepts publicly. These behavioral changes illustrated the holistic benefits of the SFAE model, which extends beyond cognitive achievement to encompass emotional and social growth (Gillies, 2016; Mulyasa, 2017).

The reflection stage after Cycle II concluded that the objectives of the research had been achieved. The improvement in both learning achievement and activeness was evident, and the classroom climate had transformed from teacher-centered to student-centered. Students were no longer passive listeners but active participants who collaborated to construct knowledge and moral understanding. The teacher's reflections also emphasized the importance of flexibility, preparation, and emotional support in implementing active learning models. These findings reinforce Mertler's (2017) view that reflective teaching enables educators to continuously adapt their methods to students' needs and classroom realities.

Overall, the implementation of the SFAE model successfully addressed the problems identified in the initial diagnosis. It improved students' comprehension of the lesson content, enhanced their communication and cooperation skills, and fostered positive classroom relationships. The consistent increase across all indicators—academic scores, participation, and affective behaviors—demonstrated the model's effectiveness. Moreover, the success of this classroom action research highlights the potential of the SFAE approach as a practical and adaptable strategy for improving the quality of learning in Islamic Education and similar subjects.

The results of this study align with a broader body of research supporting cooperative and student-centered learning approaches. As noted by Prince (2004), active learning techniques that involve student discussion and explanation lead to deeper conceptual understanding and retention. Similarly, Gillies (2016) emphasized that cooperative learning structures enhance not only cognitive outcomes but also communication, empathy, and social skills—essential attributes for holistic education. In this context, the success of SFAE at SMP Negeri 2 Ulim provides empirical evidence that such models can be effectively implemented even in rural schools, provided teachers are willing to innovate and reflect on their teaching practices.

Discussion

The results of this classroom action research demonstrated that the Students Facilitator and Explaining (SFAE) model effectively improved both students' learning achievement and activeness in Islamic Education and Character Building lessons. The consistent increase from 28% mastery in the pre-cycle to 88% in Cycle II confirmed that SFAE fostered a more dynamic and participatory learning environment. This discussion section interprets the findings in relation to existing theories and prior research, explaining how and why the SFAE model contributed to these positive changes in cognitive, affective, and social domains.

The first major finding concerns the increase in students' learning achievement. The improvement in average scores—from 60.0 in the pre-cycle to 80.6 in Cycle II—indicates that students not only gained knowledge but also developed a deeper understanding of the learning material. This progress aligns with Slavin's (2014) theory of cooperative learning, which asserts that students achieve higher academic results when learning involves active participation, mutual assistance, and shared responsibility. In the SFAE model, each student is accountable for explaining part of the material to peers, ensuring that understanding is internalized through verbal articulation. The act of explaining, according to Vygotsky (1978), strengthens cognitive processing by transforming external social dialogue into internalized knowledge construction. The research findings at SMP Negeri 2 Ulim thus provide empirical support for the idea that

learning is both a social and cognitive process facilitated through communication and collaboration.

The second finding relates to the increase in student activeness and engagement. The transition from passive listening to active participation reflects a fundamental pedagogical shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. This transformation is consistent with Piaget's (1973) constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that learners must actively construct meaning through experience and reflection rather than receive knowledge passively. During the implementation of SFAE, students took on multiple roles—as facilitators, discussants, and explainers—which required them to engage in critical thinking, questioning, and clarification. Such engagement aligns with Prince's (2004) findings that active learning environments promote motivation, persistence, and improved conceptual retention compared to traditional instruction. The results from Cycle II, where nearly 90% of students actively participated, validate that active learning strategies like SFAE can effectively overcome classroom passivity, particularly in contexts where students are culturally accustomed to deference and silence.

Moreover, the findings highlight that the SFAE model fosters communication and confidence, key elements in character education. Students' willingness to explain materials and lead discussions indicated growth in self-efficacy and social interaction skills. This observation echoes Johnson and Johnson's (2019) concept of "positive interdependence," wherein each student's success contributes to group success, thereby encouraging cooperation and accountability. As students facilitated peer discussions, they developed empathy, patience, and respect for diverse viewpoints—values central to Islamic moral education. Similar results were observed in Gillies' (2016) study, which concluded that cooperative learning enhances not only cognitive outcomes but also communication, empathy, and teamwork. Thus, SFAE can be understood as a holistic pedagogical model that integrates intellectual, emotional, and moral dimensions of education.

The success of this model at SMP Negeri 2 Ulim also illustrates how teacher roles evolve in active learning contexts. Instead of functioning solely as a transmitter of knowledge, the teacher in this research acted as a facilitator, guide, and motivator. This aligns with Arends' (2012) description of the modern educator as one who scaffolds learning by providing structure, feedback, and encouragement while allowing students to take ownership of the learning process. Observational data showed that when teachers reduced direct lecturing and allowed students to explain, learners became more engaged and responsible for their own progress. The reflective component of the classroom action research enabled the teacher to adjust strategies across cycles, which is consistent with Mertler's (2017) notion of reflective practice as an integral part of professional growth and continuous classroom improvement.

From an affective standpoint, the study found that the SFAE model positively impacted student motivation and classroom climate. The learning atmosphere became more enjoyable, with students expressing enthusiasm and interest in the subject matter. Interviews revealed that students appreciated being trusted to facilitate learning, which increased their intrinsic motivation. This is in line with Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that autonomy and competence are critical factors in sustaining motivation. By giving students active roles, SFAE satisfies both needs—students feel competent when successfully explaining to peers and autonomous when managing their learning tasks. The resulting sense of ownership encourages continuous engagement, even among previously passive learners.

Additionally, the moral and social dimensions of SFAE closely align with the goals of Islamic Education and Character Building. The subject matter—Courtesy, Politeness, and Sense of Shame—requires not only intellectual understanding but also behavioral embodiment. Through the cooperative and communicative nature of SFAE, students practiced values such as respect, humility, and mutual support in real-time classroom interactions. As Huda (2017) emphasized, effective Islamic education should integrate affective and cognitive learning through meaningful social experiences. The process of explaining and listening to peers provided a moral laboratory where students could internalize values through practice rather than memorization. This experiential learning component is what distinguishes SFAE from purely cognitive instructional methods.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the immediate classroom context. They suggest that models like SFAE are particularly effective in developing 21st-century learning competencies, including communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. According to Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun (2015), teaching models that involve peer instruction and dialogue not only enhance understanding but also prepare students to function effectively in collaborative and socially complex environments. This aligns with Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy, which promotes student-centered education and authentic learning experiences. The successful implementation of SFAE in a rural school context such as SMP Negeri 2 Ulim indicates that such models are scalable and adaptable across diverse educational settings.

However, the research also identified several practical challenges that must be addressed for optimal implementation. Managing time during group activities, ensuring balanced participation among students, and maintaining consistent motivation require careful planning and monitoring. Teachers need to establish clear expectations and structured guidance to prevent dominance by more outspoken students and disengagement by quieter ones. As Tomlinson (2014) suggested, differentiation and flexibility in instruction are necessary to accommodate varying learning needs and participation levels. Despite these challenges, the benefits of SFAE far outweighed the obstacles, as evidenced by the sustained improvements across two research cycles.

Conclusion

This classroom action research concluded that the implementation of the Students Facilitator and Explaining (SFAE) learning model significantly improved both students' learning achievement and activeness in the subject Islamic Education and Character Building in Grade VIII/B of SMP Negeri 2 Ulim, Pidie Jaya Regency. The study demonstrated a steady and meaningful increase in students' performance, as indicated by the rise in mastery rates from 28% in the pre-cycle to 68% in Cycle I and 88% in Cycle II, with class averages improving from 60.0 to 69.6 and 80.6, respectively. These results clearly show that SFAE is an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing understanding, communication, and responsibility among students. The model transformed the classroom environment from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, where learners actively engaged in discussions, facilitated peer learning, and confidently explained lesson content. This not only improved cognitive mastery but also fostered social and moral values such as respect, cooperation, and humility—key elements of budi pekerti (character education). The teacher's role evolved from a sole instructor to a facilitator and motivator, creating space for students to learn through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection. Furthermore, the cooperative structure of SFAE provided opportunities for peer mentoring, mutual respect, and shared accountability, which contributed to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

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