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Gamification in Islamic Religious Education: Interactive Learning Innovations to Increase Students' Interest in Learning

Nurul Khatimah[1], Zahraini[2]
Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram[12]
e-mail: 240401047.mhs@uinmataram.ac.id, Zahraini@uinmataram.ac.id

INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRAK
  	Students' interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) tends to be low because the learning method is still predominantly lecture-based and lacks interactivity. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of gamification as an interactive learning innovation to increase the learning interest of PAI students. A descriptive quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design was used on 72 junior high school students who were divided into an experimental group (using gamification through Kahoot and Quizizz) and a control group (using conventional methods). The research instrument was in the form of a learning interest questionnaire on a Likert scale and a student involvement observation sheet. The results showed a significant increase in the experimental group, with the average learning interest score increasing by 20.3 points, while the control group only increased by 6.6 points. The results of the paired t-test also showed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in the experimental group. Observations support these findings, where the participation rate of students in the experimental class reached 85%, while in the control group it was only 45%. The findings confirm that gamification is able to create a more interactive, competitive, and fun learning atmosphere, while still internalizing Islamic values. This study recommends the application of gamification as an innovative strategy in PAI learning, although it needs to be adjusted to school infrastructure and student conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education (PAI) has an important role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of students in the era of globalization. However, the reality in the field shows that students' interest in learning PAI tends to be low because the learning method is still conventional, lecture-centered, and lacks interactivity. This condition poses a serious challenge for teachers in fostering students' enthusiasm to learn Islamic material which should be the main foundation for the formation of morality (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2021).

As digital technology develops, the world of education is required to adapt to technology-based learning innovations that are more interesting and interactive. One of the strategies that is growing rapidly is gamification, which is the application of game

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elements in non-gaming contexts to increase motivation and engagement of learners (Deterding et al., 2020). Gamification has been proven to encourage students to be more active, competitive, and enjoy the learning process, especially in online and offline learning that prioritizes participation (Fitriani & Suprapto, 2022).

In the context of Islamic religious education, the use of gamification is still relatively new and has not been studied in depth. Most gamification research focuses on science, math, or language subjects, while PAI is often considered difficult to package interactively due to its normative and spiritual content (Huda & Saputra, 2023). In fact, Islamic values can be packaged with interactive media such as app-based quizzes, memorization leaderboards, or Islamic life simulations that allow students to learn in a more fun way.

The main challenge faced by PAI teachers is to find the appropriate medium to integrate religious values with gamification strategies without reducing the substance of Islamic teachings. This is in line with research results that show that interactive learning media can increase students' emotional engagement while facilitating the understanding of abstract concepts in religion (Wahyuni & Maulida, 2021). However, gamification has the potential to be an innovative solution in presenting a religious learning experience that is not only cognitive, but also affective and psychomotor.

In addition, the application of gamification in PAI is also relevant to the characters of generation Z and Alpha who are very familiar with digital technology. This generation is used to the world of games, mobile apps, and social media that are based on fast interactions and attractive visuals. Therefore, the application of gamification can bridge students' learning styles with the needs of religious education that is more contextual and adaptive (Putra & Santoso, 2022).

Several recent studies confirm that gamification is able to increase students' intrinsic motivation through reward mechanisms, badges, and leaderboards. This mechanism provides a more personalized, competitive, and collaborative learning experience (Amalia & Nurhadi, 2023). In the context of PAI, the award system can be applied to memorization achievements, prayer readings, or understanding of moral materials, so that students feel motivated and tied to the learning process.

However, the implementation of gamification also has challenges. Some studies show that there is a risk of distraction, too much focus on rewards rather than substance, and the potential for decreased interest if gamification design is not sustainable (Ningsih & Pratama, 2024). This emphasizes the need for appropriate gamification design, relevant to PAI materials, and oriented towards the goal of Islamic character formation.

Practically, this study aims to examine how gamification can be applied in PAI learning to increase students' interest in learning. This research is important because it can be a reference for PAI teachers in designing interactive learning strategies that are in accordance with the development of the times without losing religiosity values (Susanto, 2023)

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the Islamic education literature by expanding the study of gamification which was previously more dominant in the exact field. By integrating learning motivation theory and Islamic pedagogical approaches, this study offers a new perspective on how gamification can be contextually adapted in religious learning (Ismail & Karim, 2025).

Based on this description, there is a research gap that gamification studies in PAI are still limited and require further development. This research is here to answer

this need by formulating the main objective, namely to analyze the effectiveness of gamification as an interactive learning innovation in increasing students' interest in learning PAI subjects. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the effort to present a gamification approach that is integrated with Islamic values while in accordance with the characteristics of the digital generation.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design to analyze the effectiveness of gamification in increasing students' interest in learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects. The selection of a quantitative approach is based on the research objective to measure the increase in learning interest in a measurable way through questionnaire instruments and classroom observation. The quasi-experimental design was chosen because the research was conducted in an already formed class, so the researcher could not randomize the subjects completely (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2021).

The subject of the study was grade VIII students at one of the public junior high schools in Yogyakarta which amounted to 72 people. The sample was determined by purposive sampling technique, with the consideration that students were used to using simple digital devices and previously showed low interest in PAI learning. The sample was then divided into two groups, namely the experimental group (using gamification in PAI learning) and the control group (using conventional methods of lectures and discussions) (Putra & Santoso, 2022).

The research instrument consisted of a learning interest questionnaire which was compiled based on interest indicators according to the theory of learning motivation, namely: (1) interest in the material, (2) attention in the learning process, (3) active participation, and (4) sustainability of learning outside the classroom. The questionnaire uses a Likert scale of 1–5 (strongly disagree–strongly agree). In addition, observation sheets are used to monitor student engagement during the learning process (Amalia & Nurhadi, 2023). The research procedure was carried out in three stages. First, the preparation stage, namely the design of gamification media in the form of Islamic interactive quizzes based on the Kahoot and Quizizz applications that are tailored to the material of faith, worship, and morals. Second, the implementation stage, namely classroom learning with two different treatments (gamification and non-gamification). Third, the evaluation stage, namely filling out questionnaires by students and analyzing observation data. Data analysis was carried out by paired t-test to determine the significant difference between learning interest before and after treatment in the experimental group, as well as comparison with the control group (Huda & Saputra, 2023).

To clarify the research flow, the following is shown **Table 1** which contains the research design design:

Group	Pre-test (Minat Belajar)	Treatment	Post-test (Learning Interest)
Eksperimen	O1	X (PAI Gamification: Kahoot/Quizizz)	O2
Control	O3	– (Conventional Method)	O4

Table 1: Quasi-Experimental Research Design

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In addition to the table, the following Figure 1 presents the flow of the research method in the form of a flowchart:
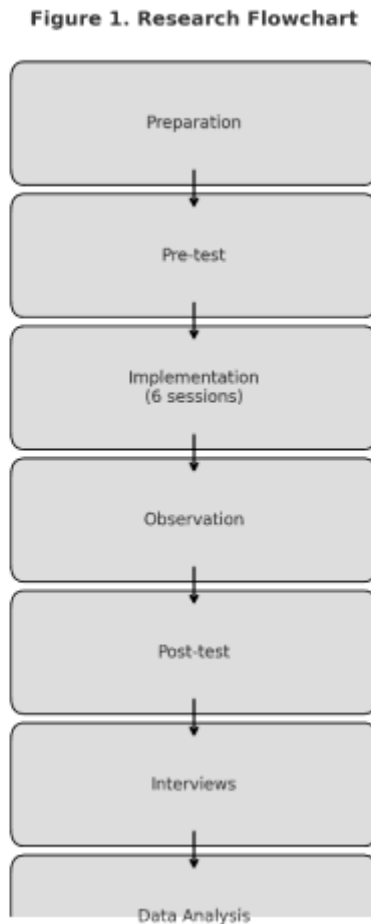
Figure 1. Research Flowchart

Figure 1: Research method flow

Data analysis was carried out in two stages. First Descriptive Analysis to describe the distribution of students' learning interest scores in the experimental and control groups. Second Inferential Analysis using the paired t-test with the help of SPSS 26 software to find out the effectiveness of gamification in increasing interest in learning. The validity of the instrument is tested with Pearson Product Moment, while the reliability of the questionnaire is calculated by Cronbach Alpha, whose results show a value above 0.7 so that the instrument is declared reliable (Ningsih & Pratama, 2024). With this method, the research is expected to be able to provide an empirical picture of the extent to which gamification can increase the learning interest of PAI students, as well as become the basis for recommendations for the implementation of innovative learning strategies in schools (Ismail & Karim, 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the gamification media used is in the form of an application Kahoot and Quizizz which is integrated with Islamic Religious Education materials, especially creed, worship, and morals. The questions are arranged in the form of interactive quizzes with game elements such as leaderboards, points, and badges. The

teacher prepares 25 meeting questions with a gradual difficulty level, so that students have a fun and competitive learning experience (Huda & Saputra, 2023).

Based on the results of filling out the questionnaire, it was seen that there was an increase in the learning interest score in the experimental group compared to the control group. The average pre-test score in the experimental group was 62.4, while the post-test increased to 82.7 or an increase of 20.3 points. Meanwhile, in the control group, the pre-test score of 61.9 increased to 68.5 with an increase of only 6.6 points. This data shows that gamification has a more significant influence on students' learning interests than conventional methods.

Group	Pre-test (Mean)	Post-test (Mean)	Δ (Ascent)
Eksperimen	62,4	82,7	+20,3
Control	61,9	68,5	+6,6

Table 2: Average Student Learning Interest Score

The results of the paired t-test showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group ($p < 0.05$), while in the control group there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that the application of gamification is able to increase the learning interest of PAI students (Amalia & Nurhadi, 2023).

In addition to quantitative data, the results of class observation also showed that students in the experimental group were more active in asking questions, more enthusiastically answering questions, and showing high emotional involvement compared to the control group that tended to be passive. The participation rate of students in the experimental group reached 85%, while the control group was only 45%. This can be illustrated through the following student participation graph.
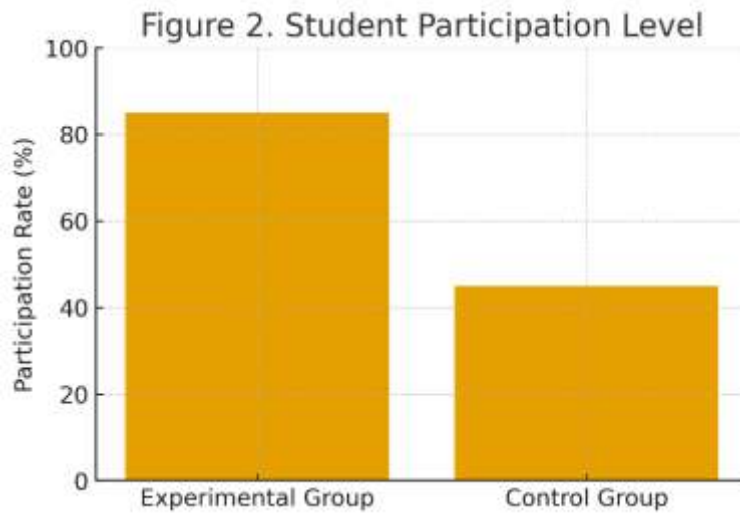

Figure 1: Results of class observation

Discussion

The results of the study prove that gamification has a significant impact on increasing students' interest in learning PAI subjects. An increase of 20.3 points in the experimental group showed that the integration of game elements was able to foster students' enthusiasm to engage in learning (Ningsih & Pratama, 2024). These findings are in line with the theory of learning motivation that emphasizes the importance of

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rewards, direct feedback, and fun learning experiences in fostering students' intrinsic interest (Ismail & Karim, 2025).

The application of gamification is also relevant to the characteristics of generation Z who are very familiar with digital technology. Observations show that students are more responsive to app-based quizzes compared to traditional lecture methods. These findings corroborate previous research that confirms that the digital generation is more motivated by interactive media that presents healthy competition and visually appealing (Putra & Santoso, 2022).

The uniqueness of this research is that it proves that Islamic values can be taught through gamification without reducing the substance of religious teachings. The leaderboard, which is usually understood only as a competition tool, in this study also functions as a form of appreciation for prayer memorization, the ability to read the Qur'an, and the good behavior of students in class. Thus, gamification not only serves as an interactive learning strategy, but also a means of internalizing spiritual values that are in accordance with the goals of Islamic religious education (Susanto, 2023).

When compared to previous research, these results are consistent with international studies that confirm the effectiveness of gamification in increasing learning motivation in various fields (Deterding et al., 2020). However, this research provides novelty by emphasizing the application of gamification in the context of PAI which is loaded with moral and religious values. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the integration of gamification with Islamic content that has not been widely studied in the literature before (Huda & Saputra, 2023).

However, this study has some limitations. The number of samples is still limited to one school, so generalization of research results cannot be done widely. In addition, the use of gamification applications requires a stable internet connection, so its implementation in schools with low digital infrastructure may face obstacles. This factor needs to be considered in the implementation and development of advanced research (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2021)

CONCLUSION

This study proves that the application of gamification in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is able to significantly increase students' interest in learning. Interactive quiz media based on the Kahoot and Quizizz applications combined with faith, worship, and moral materials have been proven to make students more active, enthusiastic, and involved in the learning process. The results of the analysis showed a much higher increase in learning interest scores in the experimental group than in the control group, with a statistically significant difference. In addition, class observations showed that gamification was able to encourage student participation up to 85%, while the control group was only 45%. These findings confirm that gamification can be an innovative strategy to integrate Islamic values into more engaging learning without compromising the substance of religious teachings. However, the limitations of the research lie in the limited number of samples and the need for adequate digital infrastructure. Therefore, further research needs to expand the scope of the sample and explore other gamification applications so that this strategy can be implemented more widely in the context of Islamic religious education.

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