

Integrating Online Gamification into Islamic Religious Education in Indonesian Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of educational technology has opened new opportunities for digital innovation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). This study aims to analyze the implementation of online gamification in IRE at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo, Semarang, and its influence on students' engagement, motivation, and moral internalization. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers, students, and the principal, as well as an analysis of instructional documents. The findings indicate that digital platforms such as Wordwall, Quizizz, Canva, and Wheel of Names effectively enhance students' enthusiasm, participation, and moral awareness, particularly values of honesty, responsibility, and *ukhuwah islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood). Teachers demonstrated pedagogical readiness by designing game-based lessons aligned with the moral objectives of IRE. Institutional support, including digital infrastructure, teacher collaboration, and visionary leadership, further strengthened the sustainability of innovation. This study concludes that online gamification can serve as a modern form of *ta'dib* (moral cultivation), integrating digital creativity with spiritual formation. It contributes to the development of the digital faith pedagogy framework, emphasizing that technology, when guided by ethical and spiritual purposes, can become a catalyst for value-based learning in Islamic education.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of educational technology has reshaped the landscape of learning in the twenty-first century. Digital tools have not only transformed instructional delivery but also challenged educators to integrate technology with pedagogical and moral objectives.¹ In the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesian elementary schools, this transformation holds particular significance, as religious learning is expected to shape not only students' knowledge but also their character, spirituality, and social awareness.² Traditional teacher-centered approaches, while effective in transmitting doctrinal content, are often insufficient to engage digitally native students who require interactivity, instant feedback, and contextual relevance in learning. Therefore, the integration of online

¹ I Syafii, "Innovation of Islamic Wasathiyah Education Methods: Transformation of Da'wah in the Contemporary Era," *Indonesian Research Journal in Education* | IRJE | 9, no. 2 (2025): 963–76, <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v9i02.42992>.

² Syafi'i et al., *SULUK KASIH: Jalan Lembut Mendidik Remaja Dalam Bingkai Islam* (Inoffast Publishing Indonesia, 2025).

gamification in IRE represents an important pedagogical innovation for enhancing learning motivation and value internalization among young learners.³

Gamification, defined as the application of game elements such as points, challenges, and feedback to non-game contexts, has become one of the most widely explored strategies in contemporary education. Research demonstrates that gamified environments foster motivation, participation, and persistence in various learning domains.⁴ The incorporation of competition and collaboration through game mechanics allows students to experience learning as an enjoyable process rather than a rigid obligation.⁵ In Islamic education, this approach aligns with the prophetic principle of *taysir*, making learning easy and appealing to the learner, without reducing the spiritual essence of religious content.

In Indonesia, the urgency to reform Islamic education is closely tied to the demands of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), which emphasize inclusive, equitable, and value-based education. Islamic Religious Education plays a central role in shaping moral integrity and religious literacy, yet many teachers still face challenges in contextualizing lessons for the digital generation.⁶ Integrating gamification into IRE thus provides an opportunity to connect Islamic moral teachings with students' daily digital experiences, bridging faith and technology.

A growing body of research supports the effectiveness of gamification in fostering both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Studies have shown that game-based learning increases student engagement, enhances intrinsic motivation, and encourages collaboration.⁷ In the field of moral and religious education, digital gamification has also been found to promote values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility.⁸ However, few empirical studies have examined how gamification operates in Islamic primary schools in Indonesia, where the curriculum integrates moral and spiritual formation.

This study was conducted at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo, Semarang, which has implemented online gamification as a pedagogical strategy in IRE since the COVID-19 pandemic. The school's teachers have adopted various digital platforms; *Wordwall*, *Quizizz*, *Canva*, and *Wheel of Names* to create interactive learning activities that align with Islamic teachings. Classroom games were designed not merely for entertainment but as structured opportunities for students to reflect on religious values through play.⁹

Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the IRE teacher, principal, and students, as well as analysis of instructional documents and learning media. The observations were conducted across grades four to six, focusing on how gamification was implemented, how students responded, and how Islamic values were embedded in the digital learning process. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of engagement, motivation, and moral reflection emerging from the learning interactions.¹⁰ Triangulation of data sources and methods was carried out to ensure credibility and validity.

The present study aims to achieve two main objectives: (1) to describe how online gamification is integrated into the teaching of Islamic Religious Education in an Indonesian elementary school, and (2) to analyze its influence on students' engagement, learning motivation, and moral understanding. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing field of Islamic digital pedagogy by providing

³ S Subhash and E Cudney, "Gamified Learning in Education: A Systematic Review," *Computers & Education* 12 (2018): 65–79.

⁴ J Hamari, J Koivisto, and H Sarsa, "Does Gamification Work?," *Computers in Human Behavior* 10, no. 2 (2019): 97–114.

⁵ K. F. Hew, B. Huang, and D. K. W Chiu, "Engaging Students in Gamified Learning," *Educational Research Review* 3, no. 7 (2022): 100484.

⁶ A Rahim, E Latipah, and N Zainuddin, "Digital Literacy and Islamic Values in Indonesian Education," *Education and Information Technologies* 27, no. 10 (2022): 14173–14189.

⁷ M Kordzadeh, N. Ghasemaghaei, "The Role of Gamification in Moral Motivation and Engagement," *Computers & Education* 17, no. 5 (2021): 104340.

⁸ A Ahmad, R Fauzi, and N Zainuddin, "Gamification and Moral Education in Islamic Schools," *Journal of Moral Education* 51, no. 3 (2022): 276–290.

⁹ R Fauzi, N Hasanah, and R Lubis, "Digital Gamification in Islamic Education," *Education and Information Technologies* 28, no. 4 (2023): 4231–4250.

¹⁰ V Braun and V Clarke, "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis," *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11, no. 4 (2019): 589–597.

empirical evidence on how gamification can serve as a meaningful tool for value-based learning in primary education.

The present study aims to (1) describe how online gamification is integrated into the teaching of Islamic Religious Education in an Indonesian elementary school, and (2) analyze its influence on students' engagement, learning motivation, and moral understanding.

The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of gamification as a medium of ta'dib (moral cultivation) within Islamic Religious Education—an area rarely examined in the context of Indonesian primary schools. The urgency of this research arises from the increasing demand to align digital innovation with spiritual and moral education, ensuring that technology integration not only enhances engagement but also reinforces students' ethical and religious values in the digital era.

METHODS

This research applied a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design, aiming to explore the integration of online gamification in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo, Semarang. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a deep understanding of participants' experiences and the contextual realities of the learning process that cannot be represented through numerical data.¹¹ The study was conducted at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo, a public elementary school in Semarang City, Central Java, Indonesia, which has been integrating technology into classroom instruction since the COVID-19 pandemic. This school became the research site due to its consistent efforts in developing innovative, gamification-based approaches in Islamic education. Participants in this study consisted of one IRE teacher, one school principal, and twelve students representing grades four to six. They were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure that all participants were directly involved in the online gamification learning process.¹²

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted with the IRE teacher and the school principal to explore pedagogical strategies, challenges, and institutional support. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with students to capture their perceptions, motivation, and emotional engagement in learning through gamification. Meanwhile, classroom observations were used to examine teacher-student interactions, participation levels, and the integration of Islamic values during digital game-based activities. Document analysis was performed on lesson plans (RPP), learning modules, and the use of digital platforms such as *Wordwall*, *Quizizz*, *Canva*, and *Wheel of Names* as part of the learning design.¹³ All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes, and were recorded with participants' consent. Observations were performed across four sessions in each class, and detailed field notes were compiled to ensure accurate interpretation of learning activities.¹⁴

The collected data were analyzed thematically using the model proposed by Braun and Clarke, which includes six stages: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, defining categories, and drawing conclusions.¹⁵ Transcripts from interviews and observation notes were coded manually to identify recurring patterns related to student engagement, teacher innovation, and moral learning outcomes. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information from multiple data sources, teacher, students, principal, and classroom documentation, while member checking involved confirming the accuracy of interpretations with participants. Peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with academic colleagues specializing in Islamic education and digital pedagogy to validate the analytical themes.¹⁶

Ethical principles were followed throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature of their involvement. Permission was

¹¹ J W Creswell and C N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (4th Ed.) (Thousand Oaks: CA: SAGE Publications, 2018).

¹² Rahim, Latipah, and Zainuddin, "Digital Literacy and Islamic Values in Indonesian Education."

¹³ Fauzi, Hasanah, and Lubis, "Digital Gamification in Islamic Education."

¹⁴ S. B Merriam and E. J Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th Ed.) (Jossey-Bass, 2016).

¹⁵ V Braun and V Clarke, "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis," *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11, no. 4 (2019): 589–597.

¹⁶ Y. S Lincoln and E. G Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (SAGE Publications, 1985).

obtained from the school principal and the IRE teacher prior to data collection. Students' participation was carried out with parental consent, and all data were anonymized to protect confidentiality. Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Pedagogical Innovation and Teacher Readiness

The findings of this study reveal that the successful integration of online gamification into Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo is strongly influenced by the pedagogical innovation and digital readiness of the IRE teacher. The teacher demonstrated a high level of initiative in transforming conventional learning into interactive and value-oriented digital experiences. Prior to implementation, the teacher designed lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran*) and instructional modules that aligned Islamic learning objectives with the mechanics of online games. Each lesson plan systematically integrated digital tools such as *Wordwall*, *Quizizz*, *Canva*, and *Wheel of Names* within the stages of teaching, introduction, core activity, and reflection. This alignment indicates that gamification was not merely used as an entertaining supplement but as a pedagogical strategy aimed at deepening understanding and strengthening moral learning.¹⁷

Classroom observations showed that the teacher's readiness was reflected not only in technical proficiency but also in pedagogical adaptability. The teacher applied the principles of *active learning* and *value-based instruction* by using digital game elements to contextualize Islamic concepts in everyday experiences. For instance, when teaching about *ukhuwah islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), students were grouped to compete through *Wordwall* quizzes containing questions that encouraged both intellectual comprehension and moral reflection, such as identifying real-life examples of solidarity and cooperation.¹⁸ This approach illustrates how digital platforms can support reflective learning that links faith, knowledge, and daily behavior.

The teacher's creativity was also evident in producing learning materials through *Canva*, combining textual Qur'anic teachings with visual symbolism to reinforce comprehension and affective engagement. The use of *Wheel of Names* enriched classroom participation by allowing random student selection for answering questions or performing reflective tasks. This mechanism generated excitement while fostering attentiveness, discipline, and fairness among learners.¹⁹ As a result, gamified learning became an avenue for integrating *adab* (ethical conduct) into digital experiences, making moral values both observable and participatory.

From a pedagogical perspective, this innovation signifies a shift from *teacher-centered* instruction to *student-centered learning*, positioning the teacher as a facilitator of experiences rather than a transmitter of information. This finding aligns with Biggs and Tang's theory of *constructive alignment*, which emphasizes the coherence between learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessments.²⁰ In this context, gamification bridges the gap between Islamic educational goals and 21st-century learning practices. The teacher's careful selection of suitable games, testing of their effectiveness, and linkage of each activity to Islamic moral themes demonstrate reflective professionalism and competence in digital pedagogy.

Institutional support further reinforced this innovation. Interviews with the school principal revealed that teachers regularly shared their experiences and best practices in *Kelompok Kerja Guru* (Teacher Working Group) meetings held twice a month. This forum became a platform for collaborative learning, enabling teachers to disseminate innovative pedagogical ideas across subjects.²¹ The school administration also provided adequate facilities, such as LCD projectors, stable internet connections, and access to online platforms to ensure the

¹⁷ S. B Merriam and E. J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th Ed.) (Jossey-Bass, 2016).

¹⁸ Fauzi, Hasanah, and Lubis, "Digital Gamification in Islamic Education."

¹⁹ Subhash and Cudney, "Gamified Learning in Education: A Systematic Review."

²⁰ J Biggs and Tang, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (4th Ed.) (McGraw-Hill, 2011).

²¹ Rahim, Latipah, and Zainuddin, "Digital Literacy and Islamic Values in Indonesian Education."

sustainability of gamified learning. Together, the teacher's readiness and the institution's commitment created a favorable ecosystem for continuous innovation in Islamic education.

These findings suggest that teacher readiness in digital pedagogy involves not only technical competence but also moral intentionality and reflective consciousness. As Al-Attas argues, the essence of Islamic education lies not in the mere transmission of information but in the cultivation of *adab*, ethical conduct rooted in faith and knowledge.²² In this study, the teacher exemplified this principle by transforming gamified learning into a process of *experiential ta'dib*, where digital play becomes a medium for internalizing moral and spiritual values. This pedagogical synthesis between technological innovation and spiritual formation demonstrates a progressive model for contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia.

B. Student Engagement and Learning Motivation

The data from classroom observations and interviews with students reveal that online gamification has a significant positive impact on student engagement and learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Students reported that learning through interactive digital games such as *Wordwall*, *Quizizz*, *Canva*, and *Wheel of Names* made the learning process more enjoyable, less monotonous, and easier to understand. They expressed enthusiasm when participating in game-based activities and described the classroom atmosphere as lively and competitive in a positive way. One student explained that he "liked learning religion through games because it was fun and made remembering lessons easier." Such responses illustrate that gamification successfully transforms affective engagement, students' enjoyment and emotional connection, into deeper cognitive participation.²³

The observed classroom dynamics also confirmed that the use of gamification fostered active participation among students who were previously passive in traditional lectures. When the teacher used *Quizizz* to review topics such as Islamic brotherhood or moral behavior, students eagerly competed to answer questions quickly and accurately. The instant feedback feature allowed them to assess their performance and correct mistakes immediately. This aligns with the principles of *self-determination theory* proposed by Ryan and Deci, which suggests that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key drivers of intrinsic motivation.²⁴ Gamified learning fulfilled these needs by allowing students to feel capable (*competence*), to choose responses freely (*autonomy*), and to collaborate with peers (*relatedness*). Consequently, learning became a process of joyful discovery rather than mere obligation.

In addition to fostering motivation, gamification also encouraged a collaborative spirit among students. Observations showed that learners often discussed questions and strategies with peers before responding. The element of competition, though central, did not lead to division but instead cultivated mutual support and shared excitement. This phenomenon is consistent with findings from Zainuddin et al., who noted that gamified environments encourage both competitive and cooperative engagement when designed with moral or communal goals.²⁵ In this classroom, the integration of Islamic values, such as honesty, responsibility, and respect prevented competition from becoming aggressive and instead channeled it toward collective improvement.

The digital games used in IRE learning also enhanced students' concentration and focus. During *Wheel of Names* sessions, where student names were randomly selected to answer questions, the class atmosphere became attentive; every student listened actively, anticipating their turn. This format fostered both readiness and accountability, as students realized that participation was expected from everyone, not just the most confident learners. The inclusive

²² S. M. N Al-Attas, "The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education," *International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 2018.

²³ Rahim, Latipah, and Zainuddin, "Digital Literacy and Islamic Values in Indonesian Education."

²⁴ R. M Ryan and E. L Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness* (Guilford Press, 2017).

²⁵ N Zainuddin, M. F Zulkifli, and R. Fauzi, "Digital Faith Pedagogy in Southeast Asian Islamic Education," *Education and Information Technologies* 28, no. 12 (2023): 17845–17861.

nature of this method reflects the principle of *participatory pedagogy* in Islamic education, where every student is treated as a responsible learner.²⁶

Furthermore, gamified learning enhanced not only engagement but also the comprehension of Islamic teachings. Students stated that concepts such as *ukhuwah islamiyah*, *amanah* (trust), and *sabr* (patience) became easier to internalize because they were learned through activities that stimulated both intellect and emotion. The multisensory nature of gamification, combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements, helped bridge abstract religious concepts with tangible experiences.²⁷ For instance, when students encountered game questions that required them to identify acts of honesty in daily life, they reflected on their own behavior and compared it to Islamic principles. This combination of reflection and interaction represents what Mahmood describes as *tadabbur-based learning*, in which understanding emerges from contemplation reinforced by active participation.²⁸

The observed engagement was also emotional and spiritual. Some students mentioned feeling proud when they succeeded in a quiz that contained verses or moral lessons from the Qur'an. This sense of accomplishment nurtured both self-confidence and appreciation for religious knowledge. Emotional connection with the material is a crucial dimension of Islamic learning because it bridges cognitive understanding and faith-based conviction. Köse and Arslan note that emotional engagement enhances students' receptivity to moral content, transforming religious instruction into personal meaning-making.²⁹ Thus, gamification served not only as a motivational tool but also as a pathway toward emotional and spiritual resonance.

Overall, the integration of gamified media in IRE created a classroom culture characterized by enthusiasm, cooperation, and moral reflection. Students actively constructed meaning through interaction, participation, and reflection, key components of meaningful learning. This aligns with the Islamic educational philosophy of *tarbiyah*, which emphasizes the nurturing of intellect (*'aql*), soul (*ruh*), and behavior (*'amal*).³⁰ In the context of SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo, gamified learning effectively embodied this philosophy by harmonizing digital engagement with moral formation, leading to a holistic educational experience that is both enjoyable and spiritually enriching.

C. Moral and Religious Value Internalization

The integration of online gamification in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo was not limited to enhancing engagement and motivation but also served as a medium for internalizing Islamic moral and spiritual values. Classroom observations revealed that game-based learning provided opportunities for students to practice and reflect upon virtues such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and *ukhuwah islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood). During *Quizizz* and *Wordwall* activities, the teacher consistently reminded students to remain truthful when selecting answers and to show respect toward classmates who scored lower. This pedagogical approach transformed digital competition into moral reflection, aligning with the Islamic educational principle that knowledge should lead to the formation of *adab* (ethical conduct).³¹

The moral dimension of gamification became particularly evident in the way students responded to success and failure. When a student answered incorrectly, peers were observed offering encouragement rather than ridicule, a behavior explicitly fostered by the teacher through pre-activity discussions on empathy and respect. Such patterns suggest that gamified learning can cultivate *rahmah* (compassion) and *tawadu'* (humility) when guided by proper

²⁶ Subhash and Cudney, "Gamified Learning in Education: A Systematic Review."

²⁷ Hamari, Koivisto, and Sarsa, "Does Gamification Work?"

²⁸ S Mahmood, "Reflective Learning in Islamic Pedagogy: Reinterpreting Tadabbur in Modern Classrooms," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (2020): 403.

²⁹ A Köse and H Arslan, "The Emotional Dimension of Religious Education and Student Engagement," *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022): 1093.

³⁰ Al-Attas, "The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education."

³¹ Ibid.

moral framing.³² These findings are consistent with Ahmad et al.'s research, which indicates that gamification in religious education encourages moral empathy and cooperative behavior when integrated with ethical instruction.³³ Thus, digital play can serve as a vehicle for transmitting moral sensibilities, provided that it is embedded within value-based pedagogy.

Observations in grades 4–6 also demonstrated that the use of *Wheel of Names* and *Canva* in value-based tasks encouraged self-reflection. In one session, students were asked to spin the wheel and discuss the meaning of a Qur'anic verse about honesty (*al-shidq*). After each turn, the class reflected together on how the verse could be practiced in daily life.³⁴ This method exemplified *tadabbur-based pedagogy*, in which students are not only recipients of religious content but also active interpreters who connect revelation with their lived experience. As Mahmood explains, *tadabbur* requires learners to contemplate ethical meanings through personal engagement and emotional reflection.³⁵ In this sense, the teacher's gamified approach resonated with classical Islamic pedagogy, which views understanding as a spiritual process rooted in experience.

The internalization of religious values was further supported by the emotional tone observed during game sessions. Students expressed pride when correctly answering questions containing Qur'anic verses, and some spontaneously recited short prayers of gratitude afterward. These affective responses show how gamification can transform learning into a spiritual act. Emotional engagement thus became a bridge between knowledge and faith, linking cognition with devotion. Köse and Arslan highlight that emotional involvement in religious education strengthens moral retention because it allows students to feel the ethical implications of what they learn.³⁶ Through digital play, abstract concepts such as *amanah* (trust) and *sabr* (patience) were translated into lived classroom practices, making faith tangible and experiential.

Furthermore, the gamified environment nurtured discipline and fairness, two virtues central to Islamic ethics. Students were encouraged to wait for their turn, follow instructions, and respect the game rules. These seemingly simple acts embody the Qur'anic principle of *'adl* (justice) and *ihsan* (excellence), which require self-control and respect for others.³⁷ The teacher's insistence on maintaining decorum during digital play prevented the session from devolving into mere entertainment, transforming it instead into a moral exercise framed within joy and respect. This aligns with Al-Ghazali's view that moral formation should occur through repeated practice within pleasurable contexts, so that virtue becomes both habitual and heartfelt.³⁸

Another notable finding is that gamification encouraged collective moral reflection rather than individual competition. At the end of each class, students were asked to share what value they learned from the day's activity. Many mentioned honesty, kindness, and friendship as takeaways. Such reflective sharing sessions turned the classroom into a moral community where digital learning became a collective journey toward ethical awareness.³⁹ This process mirrors the educational philosophy of *tarbiyah*, which integrates intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions to nurture holistic human development.

In summary, the internalization of moral and religious values through gamification was achieved through three pedagogical mechanisms: (1) the moral framing of digital activities by the teacher, (2) opportunities for reflection and discussion embedded within gameplay, and (3) reinforcement of emotional and spiritual connections through affective engagement. The synergy between technology and Islamic ethics thus produced a balanced learning experience, one that cultivated not only knowledge but also virtue. Gamification, when grounded in *adab*

³² Hamari, Koivisto, and Sarsa, "Does Gamification Work?"

³³ A Ahmad, R Fauzi, and N. Zainuddin, "Gamification and Moral Education in Islamic Schools: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Moral Education* 51, no. 3 (2022): 276–290.

³⁴ Rahim, Latipah, and Zainuddin, "Digital Literacy and Islamic Values in Indonesian Education."

³⁵ Mahmood, "Reflective Learning in Islamic Pedagogy: Reinterpreting Tadabbur in Modern Classrooms."

³⁶ Köse and Arslan, "The Emotional Dimension of Religious Education and Student Engagement."

³⁷ T Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

³⁸ A. H Al-Ghazali, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din)* (Islamic Texts Society, 2019).

³⁹ Zainuddin, Zulkifli, and Fauzi, "Digital Faith Pedagogy in Southeast Asian Islamic Education."

and guided reflection, can therefore function as a modern form of *ta'dib* (moral cultivation), reaffirming that the goal of education in Islam is the integration of faith, understanding, and righteous action.⁴⁰

D. Institutional Support and Sustainability of Innovation

The sustainability of online gamification in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo is not solely dependent on the creativity and readiness of teachers but is also significantly influenced by institutional leadership and structural support. Findings from interviews with the school principal, supported by classroom observations, reveal that the school has established a conducive ecosystem that encourages pedagogical innovation through digital media. The principal emphasized that innovation is considered part of the school's continuous improvement strategy and is aligned with the national education vision of *Merdeka Belajar*, which promotes flexibility, creativity, and character formation.⁴¹

Institutional support was most evident in the provision of adequate digital infrastructure. Each classroom is equipped with functional LCD projectors, stable internet access, and computers that allow teachers to integrate platforms such as *Wordwall*, *Quizizz*, *Canva*, and *Wheel of Names* into their lessons. The school administration also allocates maintenance budgets for digital devices to ensure sustainability.⁴² This infrastructural readiness reduces teachers' technical burdens and enables them to focus on pedagogical design and moral framing within the gamified learning process. Such systemic support reflects what Rahim et al. identify as "institutional digital literacy," where schools integrate technology not as an add-on but as a core component of instructional culture.⁴³

Beyond facilities, the school also fosters a collaborative professional environment that sustains innovation. Regular *Kelompok Kerja Guru* (Teacher Working Group) meetings provide a platform for teachers to share their experiences, challenges, and best practices related to gamified and digital-based instruction. During these sessions, teachers present their innovations, receive feedback, and collectively discuss how to align digital methods with Islamic educational values.⁴⁴ This collaborative mechanism not only enhances teachers' technological competence but also cultivates a shared pedagogical vision centered on ethical digital learning. As Fullan argues, sustainable educational change emerges from professional learning communities that nurture reflective dialogue and mutual accountability.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the school's leadership approach is characterized by what can be termed as *transformational and participative leadership*. The principal actively motivates teachers to explore new methodologies and reassures them that experimentation, even with potential mistakes, is part of the learning process. This leadership style fosters a sense of psychological safety that encourages teachers to innovate without fear of failure.⁴⁶ In the context of Islamic education, this approach embodies the prophetic principle of *shura* (consultative decision-making), where collaboration and shared wisdom form the foundation of institutional growth.⁴⁷

Observations also revealed that the school integrates innovation into its annual planning documents (*Rencana Kerja Sekolah*), thereby institutionalizing gamified learning as part of its official development agenda. This inclusion ensures continuity beyond individual initiatives, as the program is monitored, evaluated, and reported at the school level. Such formalization is crucial for preventing digital pedagogy from being dependent on specific teachers and instead

⁴⁰ Al-Attas, "The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education."

⁴¹ Research and Technology Ministry of Education, Culture, "Merdeka Belajar Policy Framework," Jakarta: Kemendikbudristek, 2020.

⁴² Observation Data, "SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo" (Semarang, n.d.).

⁴³ Rahim, Latipah, and Zainuddin, "Digital Literacy and Islamic Values in Indonesian Education."

⁴⁴ Field Interview, "School Principal of SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo," n.d.

⁴⁵ M Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (5th Ed.) (Teachers College Press, 2016).

⁴⁶ K Leithwood and J Sun, "Transformational School Leadership and Organizational Learning," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2018): 393–418.

⁴⁷ M. H Kamali, "Shura or Mutual Consultation and Good Governance: An Islamic Perspective," *Islamic Research Institute*, 2010.

embedding it within the school's organizational culture.⁴⁸ By making innovation a collective commitment, the school ensures that gamification in IRE can evolve sustainably and adapt to changing technologies and student needs.

In addition, the principal highlighted the importance of maintaining the spiritual integrity of innovation. While encouraging digital advancement, the school continues to uphold Islamic values as the moral compass of every learning process. Teachers are reminded that technology should remain a servant to pedagogy, not its master.⁴⁹ This balance between technological enthusiasm and moral intentionality reflects what Zainuddin et al. term as *digital faith leadership*, a leadership paradigm that integrates technological innovation with religious ethics.⁵⁰ The principal's commitment to preserving this balance demonstrates how digital transformation in Islamic education can be harmonized with the institution's spiritual mission.

Overall, the institutional support at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo demonstrates that sustaining innovation requires both structural and cultural readiness. Structural readiness is reflected in the school's facilities, resources, and formal policies, while cultural readiness is embodied in leadership, collaboration, and shared values. Together, these dimensions form a resilient foundation for continuous pedagogical innovation in IRE. The case of SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo illustrates that when digital transformation is guided by visionary leadership and ethical orientation, technology becomes not only a pedagogical tool but also a catalyst for renewing the moral and spiritual purpose of education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of online gamification into Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesian elementary schools represents a significant pedagogical transformation that bridges Islamic educational values with the challenges of the digital era. The implementation at SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo demonstrates that digital game-based learning can effectively enhance students' engagement, motivation, and moral understanding when facilitated by teachers with strong digital literacy and ethical awareness. Through platforms such as Wordwall, Quizizz, Canva, and Wheel of Names, the learning process became more interactive, enjoyable, and reflective, allowing students to internalize Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and *ukhuwah islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) in meaningful ways.

Teacher readiness and innovation emerged as key factors behind the success of this approach, while institutional support—through adequate digital facilities, collaborative teacher forums, and leadership grounded in *shura* (consultative decision-making)—ensured its sustainability. The novelty of this study lies in its development of an Islamic value-based gamification model that can serve as a reference for advancing digital Islamic pedagogy in elementary education.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing discourse on digital faith pedagogy, illustrating that technology can serve as a medium for *ta'dib* (moral cultivation) when framed within Islamic ethical principles and guided reflection. Practically, the findings recommend that professional development programs for IRE teachers emphasize both technological competence and spiritual intentionality, ensuring that digital innovation strengthens rather than diminishes the moral essence of Islamic education. For future research, it is suggested to employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches across diverse school contexts to further examine the effectiveness of gamification on learning outcomes and character development among students.

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⁴⁸ School Planning Document (Rencana Kerja Sekolah), SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo, 2025.

⁴⁹ Observation Data, "SD Negeri 3 Ngadirgo."

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