

## **Integration of Islamic Gamification Strategy in PAI Learning to Increase Gen Z Student Engagement**

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### **Abstract:**

The development of digital technology and the unique characteristics of Generation Z demand innovation in learning strategies, especially in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Gen Z students are known as a generation that is tech-savvy, multitasking, and more interested in interactive and fun learning. Therefore, the Islamic gamification approach is a potential solution to increase student engagement in the learning process. This study aims to explore and analyze the integration of gamification elements based on Islamic values in PAI learning and its impact on the engagement of Gen Z students. The research method used is a qualitative approach with literature studies, classroom observations, and in-depth interviews with teachers and students. The results of the study show that the use of Islamic gamification—including the use of reward points (sharia rewards)

**Keywords:** Islamic Gamification, Islamic Religious Education, Gen Z

### **INTRODUCTION**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in shaping the character and noble morals of students amidst the increasingly rapid flow of globalization and technological advances. In the context of 21st century learning, the challenge of PAI learning lies not only in delivering religious material cognitively, but also in how the material can touch the affective and psychomotor aspects of students meaningfully. This condition becomes increasingly complex with the presence of Generation Z (Gen Z) as the main student population in today's educational environment. Generation Z, born around 1997 to 2012, is known as a generation that was born and grew up with the development of digital technology. They have unique characteristics, such as high ability in using information technology, a tendency to multitask, a visual and interactive learning style, and a tendency to have a short attention span. (Alexon & Kurniawan, 2022, p. 8)

On the one hand, this provides a great opportunity for the world of education to develop technology-based learning strategies. However, on the other hand, if the

learning approach used does not suit their character, challenges will arise such as low motivation to learn, lack of active involvement in learning, and decreased understanding of Islamic values. One potential innovative approach to address this challenge is gamification. Gamification is the application of game elements in non-game contexts, including education, to increase student motivation and participation. In the learning context, gamification has been proven to be able to create a fun, competitive learning atmosphere and encourage active student involvement. However, the application of gamification in PAI learning cannot be done haphazardly. (Alti et al., nd, p. 12)

Integration of Islamic values in the gamification design is needed so that the purpose of religious learning is not only entertainment, but can also instill noble spiritual, moral, and social values. Integration of Islamic gamification strategies in Islamic Religious Education learning offers an approach that unites aspects of technology, learning psychology, and Islamic values. For example, the use of rewards based on merit values (as a substitute for regular points), daily charity challenges as learning missions, leaderboards that emphasize the values of the afterlife, and visualization of moral achievements through Islamic badges. This approach is not only in line with Gen Z's learning style, but also strengthens the spiritual and affective dimensions in religious education. This research is motivated by the urgent need to present Islamic Religious Education learning innovations that are able to answer the characteristics of today's generation, without sacrificing the substance of Islamic values. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine in depth the concept and implementation of Islamic gamification strategies in Islamic Religious Education learning and assess its impact on the level of involvement of Gen Z students. It is hoped that the results of this study can be the basis for the development of a technology-based Islamic Religious Education learning model that is not only effective, but also relevant and contextual to the development of the times. (Andrian et al., 2020, p. 34).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of deeply understanding the process of integrating Islamic gamification strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning and its impact on the involvement of Generation Z (Gen Z) students. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study was not on quantitative measurements, but rather on exploring phenomena contextually, holistically, and meaningfully in the real learning environment.

**Location and Subjects of the Study** This study was conducted in one of the Junior High Schools and/or Senior High Schools (SMP/SMA) that have implemented technology-based learning methods in PAI subjects and have a student population from Gen Z. The selection of the location was carried out purposively by considering the availability of PAI teachers who are open to learning innovations and the readiness of digital infrastructure in schools.

The subjects of the study consisted of Islamic Religious Education Teachers who implemented Islamic gamification strategies in learning. Gen Z students (grades VII–XII) as the main participants in learning. The principal or curriculum representative, to provide a managerial perspective and school policy on this digital-religious learning innovation.

**Data Collection Techniques** To obtain comprehensive and in-depth data, this study used several data collection techniques, including Participatory Observation. The researcher conducted direct observations in the Islamic Religious Education learning process in classes that used Islamic gamification strategies. Observations were made to record the dynamics of teacher-student interactions, student involvement in learning activities, and the form of implementation of Islamic gamification elements (for example: merit-based rewards, charity challenges, moral badges, etc.).

**In-depth Interview** Interviews were conducted semi-structured with Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and principals. This interview aims to explore the understanding, experience, and perceptions of informants regarding the effectiveness and challenges of using Islamic gamification in learning.

**Documentation Study** Documents such as RPP (Learning Implementation Plan), digital learning media used, gamification system display (if application-based), and student reflections were analyzed to strengthen field findings.

**Data Analysis**

Techniques Data analysis was conducted qualitatively thematically using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages

Data Reduction Selecting, simplifying, and focusing raw data from the field to make it relevant to the research focus Data Presentation Arranging data in narrative form, thematic tables, or diagrams to facilitate understanding and drawing meaning Conclusion Drawing and Verification Summarizing patterns and relationships that emerge from the data, and verifying through triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the findings. Data Validity Techniques To ensure the validity and reliability of data, the following strategies are used Data Triangulation (source, technique, and time): comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation

## **DISCUSSION**

### **What are the Characteristics of Gen Z Students in the Context of Broad and Deep Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning?**

Generation Z, which generally includes individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is the first generation to grow up in a highly digital ecosystem. They are not only familiar with technology, but also shape their identity and learning habits through interactions with the digital world. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the characteristics of Gen Z need to be understood comprehensively so that the learning approach applied can optimally reach the cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects of students. The following are the main characteristics of Gen Z that influence PA learning Digital Native and Technologically Literate Gen Z students were born and grew up in the era of the internet, social media, and smartphones. They are accustomed to accessing information quickly through various digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and learning applications.(Angelica, 2021, p. 54)

This makes them more responsive to learning methods that use digital technology, such as interactive videos, gamification, Islamic quiz applications, or social media-based learning. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this is an opportunity to deliver Islamic material with a visual and interactive approach,

such as animated stories of the prophets, Islamic podcasts, or daily charity challenges in learning applications. Visual and Interactive Learning Styles Gen Z has a strong tendency towards visual and interactive learning. They quickly get bored with one-way lecture methods and prefer learning that requires direct involvement, such as digital quizzes, role plays, simulations, or collaborative discussions. In Islamic Religious Education learning, teachers need to present teaching materials creatively, for example through infographics of the pillars of faith, short videos about commendable morals, or educational games with a fiqh theme.

**Need for Relevance and Context** One of the characteristics of Gen Z is their desire to know "why something matters" to their lives. They are more easily connected to subject matter that has a real context and is relevant to their world. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, Gen Z students are not only given memorization or normative knowledge, but also need to be shown the practical relationship between Islamic teachings and the social challenges they face, such as ethics in social media, Islamic lifestyle in the digital era, or the value of helping each other in the context of virtual communities. **Performance Orientation and Social Recognition** (Anggraeni & Nurazizah, 2024, p. 34)

Gen Z tends to be motivated by reward systems, achievements, and recognition from others, both in real and digital forms. They like systems such as levels, rankings, badges, or achievement notifications. In Islamic Religious Education learning, these characteristics can be utilized through Islamic gamification strategies, such as providing "Daily Hafidz" badges, leaderboards for students with commendable morals, or charity missions that can be shared through class platforms. **Fast, Practical, and Multitasking** Gen Z students tend to like concise and to-the-point information. They are able to access various information simultaneously and multitask in learning while doing other activities. Islamic Religious Education teachers need to avoid delivering monotonous and overly long materials, and instead present dynamic, modular, and short but meaningful activity-based learning, such as quick quizzes, one-minute reflections, or short Islamic videos. (Anjeli & Fauzan, 2022, p. 65)

Sensitive to Social Issues and Justice Gen Z tends to be more open to social issues, diversity, and justice. They have high empathy for humanitarian, environmental, and human rights issues. In Islamic Religious Education learning, this can be utilized to instill universal Islamic values such as justice (al-adl), compassion (rahmah), and social concern (ukhuwah) through contextual studies and real action-based projects, such as digital zakat campaigns or online charity activities. Having Flexible Spiritual Awareness Although not all Gen Z students are actively religious, many of them have a personal spiritual quest. They are more interested in religious values that can be applied flexibly in modern life.

Therefore, Islamic Religious Education learning that is dogmatic without a dialogical approach tends to be less effective. Teachers need to open up discussion space, listen to students' views, and facilitate the search for Islamic meaning in their own lives. Implications for Islamic Religious Education Learning By understanding these characteristics, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to be able to design a learning process that is technology-based and interactive digital Utilizing Islamic gamification to stimulate motivation and engagement Linking Islamic Religious Education materials to the daily realities of Gen Z Prioritizing dialogue, discussion, and reflective learning Cultivating a fun and meaningful religious experience A deep understanding of the character of Gen Z students is an important foundation in developing Islamic Religious Education learning strategies that are not only intelligent, but also touch the hearts and shape the Islamic character of this digital generation.

### **How to Integrate Islamic Gamification Strategies That Are Widely Applied and Achieved Medals in Islamic Religious Education Learning**

Gamification in learning is an approach that adopts game elements into non-game learning processes to increase student motivation, participation, and involvement. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), gamification strategies are not only aimed at making learning more enjoyable, but must also be in line with Islamic values that educate, foster morals, and internalize religious teachings contextually. Therefore, the integration of Islamic gamification means combining game elements with the content of Islamic spiritual and ethical values

in the teaching and learning process. The following are forms of integration of Islamic gamification strategies that have been and can be applied in PAI learning systematically Islamic Reward Elements (Anjeli & Fauzan, 2022, p. 77)

**Reward and Charity Points** Instead of using regular points or mathematical scores, teachers can replace the point system with reward or charity values. For example, students who answer questions correctly get “10 rewards”. Students who remind friends to pray on time get “20 charities”. The assessment system based on the afterlife rewards (ukhrawi) provides spiritual meaning, not just academic prestige. Benefits: Internalizing the meaning that every good deed has a consequence of reward, getting students used to thinking in terms of Islamic values.

**Daily Mission/Charity Challenge** In a gamification system, challenges (missions/quests) can be designed as daily charity or moral challenges. For example: “Today's challenge: say hello to 5 friends and record their responses.”

**Weekly assignment: give charity in person (or digitally) and document the intention.** This week's moral level: be patient when tested, how do you show it Benefits: Encourage students to practice Islamic values in real life, not just in theory.

**Islamic Badges and Moral Levels** Badges are digital or physical symbols that show achievement. In Islamic Religious Education, badges can be designed based on moral and worship themes. The “As-Shiddiq” badge is for students who are honest in their assignments. The “Al-Muhsin” badge is for students who help friends study. Moral levels can be raised based on teacher observations of Islamic behavior at school. Benefits: Appreciate positive behavior and encourage replication of good actions in everyday life. **Ukhrawi Leaderboard** Leaderboards or ranking boards in gamification are usually used to show competition. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this concept can be changed into a goodness competition (fastabiqul khairat) with the principle of ukhrawi. Student ranking is not based on academic grades alone, but also the level of involvement in good deeds, active discussions, honesty, or contributions to the Islamic community. (ayu, nd, p. 65)

It can also be made a "weekly goodness board" without exposing the values individually (to maintain manners and avoid showing off) Benefits: Cultivating the spirit of competing in goodness in a healthy and Islamic way. The Spiritual Level

or Rank Promotion System in gamification can be adapted to the spiritual level of students, for example Level 1: Beginner Muslim → Level 2: Active Muslim → Level 3: Inspirational Muslim Level increases are based on a combination of understanding of Islamic Religious Education material, worship practices, and social contributions. Benefits: Providing progressive direction in the formation of students' Islamic character. Storytelling and Islamic Narrative in Games One of the main attractions of games is the narrative or story.

In Islamic Religious Education, teachers can wrap learning with inspiring Islamic stories Simulations based on the story of the Prophet's companions Roleplay as Islamic historical figures in learning the sirah nabawiyah. Story-driven learning missions, for example "Follow the journey of Bilal bin Rabah to defend monotheism. Benefits: Make learning more alive, imaginative, and rooted in Islamic historical values. Islamic Digital Platform Teachers can utilize digital learning platforms specifically designed for Islamic education or modify commonly used platforms (such as ClassDojo, Kahoot, Google Classroom) with Islamic elements: Use avatars with Islamic clothing.(Azis, 2019, p. 33)

Use team or group names that refer to Islamic values (Team Amanah, Team Tawakal). Integrate quotes from verses or hadiths as part of automatic feedback or digital motivation. Benefits: Provides a religious nuance in the digital world that students usually use every day. Self-Reflection and Moral Evaluation After completing a "mission" or "level", students are given time for personal reflection with Islamic guidance What Islamic lessons did you learn today? Are there any morals that you improved today? Self-evaluation: how was your prayer this week? Benefits: Increases self-awareness and the habit of spiritual evaluation since d Integrating Islamic gamification strategies in Islamic Religious Education learning is not just about inserting game elements into the classroom, but also designing them in such a way that

In line with the objectives of Islamic Religious Education (strengthening faith, worship, and morals). Adapting to the characteristics of Gen Z who are dynamic, digital, and experience-oriented. Encouraging meaningful learning that is not only cognitive, but also affective and spiritually transformative. With the right



design, this strategy can change the face of Islamic Religious Education learning to be more fun, meaningful, and inspiring, while maintaining the sanctity and noble values of Islamic teachings. This study aims to explore, analyze, and evaluate in depth how gamification strategies integrated with Islamic values can be applied effectively in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process, especially to increase the involvement of students from generation Z. In more detail, the objectives of this study are described in several aspects as follows Identifying the Characteristics of Generation Z Students in the Context of Islamic Religious Education Learning(Azka & Santoso, 2015, p. 42)

The first objective of this study is to thoroughly understand the unique characteristics of Gen Z students that influence how they receive, respond, and engage in the Islamic Religious Education learning process. This includes understanding their learning styles, digital literacy levels, sensitivity to spiritual issues, and their expectations of religious education in the digital era. With this understanding, the study aims to form an argumentative basis that traditional approaches in Islamic Religious Education need to be adjusted to the needs and realities of the current generation. Describing and Designing Relevant Forms of Islamic Gamification Strategies in Islamic Religious Education Learning The second objective is to examine and formulate forms of Islamic gamification strategies that are in accordance with Islamic teachings and the characteristics of Gen Z. This includes gamification elements such as reward points, moral badges, daily charity missions, afterlife leaderboards, and others, which are designed not only to be fun but also spiritually educational.

This objective is expected to produce an applicable and contextual Islamic gamification strategic model or framework Analyzing the Influence or Impact of the Implementation of Islamic Gamification Strategies on Student Engagement The main objective of this study is to empirically and conceptually assess the extent to which Islamic gamification strategies can increase the engagement of Gen Z students in Islamic Religious Education learning. This engagement is seen from several dimensions Cognitive (interest and understanding of the material) Affective (attitudes towards learning and Islamic values), Behavior (activeness in class

activities and application of Islamic values in real life). In other words, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used comprehensively. (Bangun, 2012, p. 90)

**Identifying Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Islamic Gamification in Islamic Religious Education Classes** Not all strategies that are ideal on paper can be implemented smoothly in the field. Therefore, the purpose of this study also includes an exploration of the obstacles, constraints, or resistance that teachers, students, or the school environment may face in implementing Islamic gamification strategies. By identifying these challenges, this study aims to compile recommendations for practical and ethical solutions so that the integration of gamification remains in accordance with Islamic principles and good pedagogy.

**Providing Theoretical and Practical Contributions to Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovation** The long-term goal of this research is to provide real contributions to the development of innovative Islamic Religious Education learning methods, adaptive to the development of the times, and still based on Islamic values. This research is expected to be a theoretical reference for academics and researchers in the field of Islamic education. A practical guide for Islamic Religious Education teachers in designing Islamic gamification-based learning. Evaluation material for education policy makers to develop a curriculum that is more responsive to the needs of the digital generation. Overall, this research not only aims to answer the question of whether Islamic gamification is effective, but also how, why, and in what context the strategy works optimally in increasing the involvement of Gen Z students in Islamic Religious Education learning that is more meaningful, attractive, and spiritually valuable. (Fathurrohman & Nurhadi, 2016, p. 11)

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic gamification strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is an innovative approach that is relevant and effective in increasing the engagement of Generation Z students, both cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. In a digital era that is full of distractions

and decreased interest in learning normative materials, Islamic gamification is present as a pedagogical solution that combines the appeal of game elements with the depth of Islamic teaching values. First, the results of the study show that the characteristics of Gen Z students who are very familiar with technology, like visualization, interactivity, and contextual learning, demand an adaptive learning approach that is no longer one-way or dogmatic. PAI learning delivered in a conventional way tends to be less interesting for this generation, so it requires a method that can reach their world effectively.

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