



Utilization of Digital Platform-Based Gamification in Akidah Akhlak Learning: A Study of Effectiveness and Student Learning Motivation

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ABSTRACT

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Akidah Akhlak instruction plays a pivotal role in shaping students' faith and moral character; however, its practical implementation often faces challenges due to abstract content delivery and heavy reliance on rote memorization. This study aims to examine the utilization of digital platform-based gamification (such as Quizizz, Kahoot!, Wordwall, Educaplay, and ClassDojo) in enhancing the effectiveness of Akidah Akhlak learning. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review (SLR) method, this research synthesizes findings from prior empirical studies. The results indicate that integrating game mechanics—such as points, leaderboards, badges, and instant feedback—transforms classroom dynamics into a more interactive and engaging environment. Cognitively, quiz-based and interactive multimedia platforms significantly improve students' understanding of complex theological concepts and long-term memory retention. Affectively, positive reinforcement systems like ClassDojo foster character habituation through real-time social recognition. Nevertheless, challenges such as infrastructure limitations, teachers' TPACK readiness, and the risk of over-gamification remain. This study concludes that a balanced integration of digital gamification effectively enhances both cognitive achievement and the internalization of moral values among students.

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape faces a serious challenge in developing students who possess not only adequate intellectual competence but also strong moral character. Moral degradation among students is increasingly reflected in various forms of bullying, intolerance, abusive language, disrespect toward teachers and parents, and other behaviors that contradict religious and social values. These phenomena indicate that the transmission of religious knowledge does not always result in the internalization of moral values in students' everyday lives. Hidayat (2020) argues that the gap between religious

knowledge and moral practice remains an important concern in Islamic education. This condition is significant because schools and madrasahs are not merely responsible for transferring knowledge but also for developing students' attitudes, behaviors, and character. If moral education is unable to respond to the changing social and digital environment, the subject may lose its transformative function. Therefore, strengthening Akidah Akhlak instruction is essential to ensure that religious education contributes meaningfully to the formation of students who are intellectually capable, spiritually aware, socially responsible, and characterized by akhlakul karimah.

The main problem in Akidah Akhlak instruction concerns the persistent dominance of conventional learning practices that emphasize lectures, explanation of concepts, and memorization of religious materials. Such practices generally provide students with opportunities to understand definitions, principles, and theological concepts, but they do not necessarily provide sufficient opportunities to experience, practice, and internalize moral values. Nasution (2018) emphasizes that moral education should address not only the cognitive domain but also the affective and psychomotor domains through continuous habituation and meaningful experiences. In reality, however, Akidah Akhlak learning is often perceived by students as a subject that requires memorizing concepts rather than reflecting on their relevance to everyday situations. The problem becomes more complex when teachers face limited instructional time, insufficient professional development, and inadequate institutional and parental support. Consequently, there is a potential disconnection between what students learn in the classroom and how they behave outside it. This condition demonstrates the need for learning strategies that make Akidah Akhlak more contextual, interactive, engaging, and oriented toward behavioral transformation.

Alongside these challenges, a significant phenomenon has emerged in educational practice: the increasing use of digital technology and game-based learning to respond to students' changing learning preferences. Contemporary learners are increasingly familiar with interactive digital environments, making conventional and monotonous instructional approaches less attractive to them. In Akidah Akhlak and Islamic Religious Education, this development has encouraged teachers and researchers to explore gamification as an alternative learning strategy. Gamification refers to the use of game design elements in non-game contexts (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). Its application may include points, challenges, quizzes, rewards, competition, feedback, levels, and interactive tasks designed to encourage student participation. Recent Indonesian studies have demonstrated this growing trend through the use of Quizizz and Kahoot (Tiyas, 2025), Wordwall and Gimkit (Agustina, Rienovita, & Emilzoli, 2024), and ZEP Quiz (Mu'tamiroh & Burhanuddin, 2026). Other studies have explored physical and digital game-based media, including Ammar Puzzle (Azis, Soraya, & Kurjum, 2025) and Educaplay for learning the concept of divine decree

or takdir (An Najah, 2026). This phenomenon indicates a shift toward more participatory and technology-supported Islamic education.

Previous studies provide important evidence regarding the potential of gamification to improve students' engagement in Islamic education. Tiyas (2025), for example, examined the use of Quizizz and Kahoot and demonstrated the relevance of digital quizzes in creating more interactive learning experiences. Similarly, Agustina, Rienovita, and Emilzoli (2024) explored Wordwall and Gimkit, highlighting the potential of game-based platforms to increase students' participation and reduce the monotony associated with conventional instruction. Mu'tamiroh and Burhanuddin (2026) further expanded this discussion through the implementation of ZEP Quiz, demonstrating how digital game environments can be incorporated into Islamic Religious Education. These studies collectively suggest that gamification can create a more engaging classroom atmosphere and encourage active participation. Nevertheless, their contributions remain predominantly focused on the technological implementation of specific platforms and students' learning engagement. The findings therefore provide valuable evidence for the effectiveness of gamified media but do not fully explain how gamification can be integrated into the broader pedagogical process of Akidah Akhlak instruction. This limitation suggests the need for a more comprehensive examination of gamification beyond the question of which platform is used.

Other studies have similarly demonstrated the versatility of game-based learning through both digital and non-digital media. Azis, Soraya, and Kurjum (2025) investigated Ammar Puzzle as a learning medium, while An Najah (2026) examined the use of Educaplay in teaching the concept of takdir. These studies contribute to the literature by demonstrating that game-based learning can be adapted to different Islamic education topics and learning environments. However, the existing literature also reveals several limitations. First, many studies concentrate on the development or effectiveness of particular learning media rather than examining the overall learning process. Second, the majority emphasize student motivation, engagement, or learning outcomes, while the role of gamification in supporting the internalization of faith and moral values receives comparatively less attention. Third, studies focusing specifically on Akidah Akhlak remain relatively limited compared with broader studies of Islamic Religious Education. Thus, an important research gap exists concerning how gamification is positioned within Akidah Akhlak instruction as a pedagogical strategy for connecting religious knowledge, active learning, moral reflection, and habituation. Addressing this gap is important because effective moral education requires more than attractive learning media; it requires an instructional process capable of connecting learning experiences with students' real-life moral behavior.

The state of the art of this study therefore lies in examining gamification not merely as a technological learning medium but as an instructional approach within the broader process of Akidah Akhlak education. Unlike previous studies

that tend to investigate individual platforms such as Quizizz, Kahoot, Wordwall, Gimkit, ZEP Quiz, or Educaplay, this study seeks to understand how gamification can be incorporated into Akidah Akhlak learning to address the limitations of lecture-based and memorization-oriented instruction. The novelty of the study is positioned in the effort to connect gamified learning with the pedagogical objectives of Islamic moral education, particularly student participation, contextual understanding, moral reflection, and the habituation of akhlakul karimah. In this perspective, gamification is not treated simply as a mechanism for making lessons enjoyable, but as a potential pedagogical bridge between students' digital learning habits and the transformative objectives of Islamic education. This approach allows the discussion of gamification to move from the level of media utilization toward a deeper consideration of how technology-supported learning can contribute to meaningful Akidah Akhlak instruction.

Based on the identified literature gap, this study addresses the following research problem: how is the Akidah Akhlak learning process implemented through gamification, and how can gamification contribute to making Akidah Akhlak instruction more interactive, contextual, and oriented toward the internalization of moral values? Accordingly, this study aims to examine the implementation and pedagogical potential of gamification in Akidah Akhlak learning within school or madrasah contexts. The study is expected to contribute theoretically by extending the discussion of gamification in Islamic education from student engagement and learning outcomes toward the broader process of moral and character formation. It also seeks to strengthen the conceptual relationship between digital pedagogy and Islamic moral education by demonstrating that technology can be integrated with the values-oriented objectives of Akidah Akhlak. Practically, the study may provide teachers and educational institutions with a framework for considering more adaptive, interactive, and contextual approaches to Akidah Akhlak instruction. Ultimately, the argument of this study is that gamification should not replace the substantive values of Islamic education, but should function as a pedagogical strategy that helps students experience, understand, practice, and gradually internalize those values in their daily lives.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. This methodological approach was selected because the study is conceptual and synthetic in nature, aiming to systematically identify, examine, compare, and synthesize findings from previous studies concerning the implementation of gamification in Akidah Akhlak instruction. Unlike a single empirical study that focuses on a particular educational setting, an SLR enables researchers to obtain a broader understanding of existing knowledge, identify recurring findings and differing perspectives, and recognize gaps that remain insufficiently explored in the literature (Zed, 2014). Through this approach, the

study does not merely summarize previous research but critically examines the patterns, contributions, limitations, and development of gamification research within the context of Islamic moral education.

The literature search was conducted by identifying relevant scientific publications addressing gamification, Akidah Akhlak learning, Islamic Religious Education, game-based learning, and technology-supported moral education. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research topic, academic credibility, and contribution to understanding the use of gamification in Islamic education. The analysis involved several stages, including identification of relevant literature, screening and selection of studies, classification of findings, comparison of research results, and thematic synthesis. The selected studies were then analyzed qualitatively to identify major themes, pedagogical approaches, forms of gamification, learning outcomes, and challenges associated with its implementation. The synthesis was subsequently used to identify research gaps and formulate a conceptual understanding of how gamification can support more interactive, contextual, and value-oriented Akidah Akhlak instruction. Thus, the SLR serves not only as a means of collecting previous findings but also as an analytical framework for developing a comprehensive theoretical argument regarding the role of gamification in strengthening Islamic moral education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Integration and Effectiveness of Gamification in Akidah Akhlak Instruction

Based on the analysis and synthesis of relevant literature and previous research findings, digital platform-based gamification has emerged as a promising pedagogical strategy for improving the quality of Akidah Akhlak instruction. Several platforms, including Quizizz, Kahoot!, Wordwall, Educaplay, and ClassDojo, have been utilized to integrate game-based elements into the learning process. These platforms provide various game mechanics, such as points, leaderboards, levels, badges, challenges, and instant feedback. In the context of Akidah Akhlak, these elements can be applied to learning topics such as Asmaul Husna, the obligatory attributes of Allah, qada and qadar, the Day of Judgment, akhlak mahmudah and akhlak mazmumah, and social etiquette (adab). Points and leaderboards, for example, can encourage healthy competition, while badges and leveling systems provide recognition for students' achievements and participation. Meanwhile, instant feedback enables students to immediately identify misconceptions and correct their understanding of theological and moral concepts.

The synthesis further indicates that gamification contributes positively to students' cognitive learning outcomes and conceptual understanding. Interactive activities allow students to engage repeatedly with learning materials in a more enjoyable and participatory manner, which may strengthen their retention of abstract religious concepts. Several studies also report improvements in students' post-test scores following the implementation of gamified learning compared

with conventional instructional approaches. This suggests that gamification can function not merely as an entertainment component but as an instructional mechanism that facilitates repetition, immediate correction, active recall, and meaningful interaction with learning content. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on the alignment between game mechanics and instructional objectives. Gamification becomes pedagogically meaningful when the game activities are deliberately designed to reinforce the substance of Akidah Akhlak rather than simply increase students' enjoyment. Therefore, the integration of digital gamification should remain grounded in the principles and objectives of Islamic education.

Pedagogical Impact and Challenges of Gamification Implementation

Beyond cognitive outcomes, the most visible contribution of gamification concerns students' motivation and classroom engagement. The synthesis shows that gamified learning can transform the classroom atmosphere from one that is perceived as monotonous and teacher-centered into a more interactive and dynamic learning environment. Students who previously tended to remain passive may become more willing to answer questions, participate in activities, make decisions, and interact with their peers. The use of points, competition, rewards, and immediate feedback can initially stimulate extrinsic motivation, particularly through students' desire to achieve higher scores or rankings. When supported by meaningful learning activities, this external motivation may gradually develop into greater interest and engagement with the moral and religious values being studied. Thus, gamification has the potential to bridge students' familiarity with digital environments and the educational objectives of Akidah Akhlak, particularly in creating opportunities for active participation and reflection.

However, the implementation of gamification is not without limitations. The literature identifies several challenges, including unequal internet connectivity, limited access to smartphones or computers, and differences in schools' technological infrastructure. Another important concern is the risk of over-gamification, in which students become more focused on obtaining scores, rewards, or winning competitions than understanding and internalizing the moral values embedded in the lesson. This is particularly important in Akidah Akhlak because the ultimate objective of learning is not merely cognitive achievement but the formation and habituation of akhlakul karimah. In addition, teachers require adequate Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) to design game-based activities that are technologically feasible, pedagogically appropriate, and substantively consistent with Islamic values. Therefore, gamification should not be positioned as a replacement for teacher guidance or moral habituation. Rather, it should function as a complementary pedagogical strategy in which technology, interactive learning, teacher modeling, reflection, and real-life practice are integrated to ensure that increased engagement ultimately contributes to the internalization of Akidah Akhlak.

values.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic literature review indicate that gamification has considerable potential to address several longstanding challenges in Akidah Akhlak instruction, particularly the dominance of lecture-based learning, low student engagement, and the difficulty of connecting religious concepts with students' everyday experiences. The integration of platforms such as Quizizz, Kahoot!, Wordwall, Educaplay, and ClassDojo demonstrates that game-based elements can make learning more interactive and responsive to the digital characteristics of contemporary learners. This finding is consistent with the concept of gamification proposed by Deterding et al. (2011), in which game design elements are incorporated into non-game contexts to enhance user engagement and experience. In the context of Akidah Akhlak, however, the significance of gamification extends beyond increasing classroom enjoyment. Its pedagogical value lies in creating repeated opportunities for students to encounter, respond to, and reflect upon religious and moral concepts. Thus, gamification can serve as an intermediary between students' digital learning preferences and the substantive objectives of Islamic education.

The positive influence of gamification on cognitive learning outcomes can be understood through the interactive characteristics of game-based learning. Conventional lecture-based instruction frequently positions students as recipients of information, whereas gamification encourages them to actively retrieve information, make decisions, respond to challenges, and receive immediate feedback. These processes provide repeated cognitive engagement with learning materials and may strengthen students' conceptual understanding and retention. In Akidah Akhlak, this mechanism is particularly relevant because many learning materials are abstract, such as the attributes of Allah, qada and qadar, the Day of Judgment, and classifications of moral behavior. Gamified activities can transform these abstract concepts into questions, scenarios, challenges, and problem-solving activities that are easier for students to engage with. Nevertheless, the findings also suggest that improved test scores should not be interpreted as the ultimate indicator of success in Akidah Akhlak education. Cognitive mastery represents only one dimension of Islamic moral education. Therefore, the effectiveness of gamification should also be assessed in relation to students' attitudes, moral awareness, behavioral tendencies, and ability to apply learned values in real-life situations.

The findings further reveal that gamification has an important affective dimension through its capacity to increase motivation and student participation. Points, rankings, badges, challenges, and rewards can initially stimulate extrinsic motivation, encouraging students to participate actively in classroom activities. However, the educational significance of these mechanisms depends on whether external motivation can develop into sustained interest and meaningful engagement with the learning content. In Akidah Akhlak, this transition is

particularly important because the ultimate objective is not competition or achievement itself but the internalization of faith and noble character. Gamification should therefore be designed to move students from simply answering questions correctly toward understanding why a particular behavior reflects *akhlakul karimah* and how that value can be practiced. For example, a gamified activity concerning *adab* should not end when students select the correct answer; it can be followed by reflection, discussion, or a practical task that asks students to demonstrate the value in their daily interactions. In this way, gamification can support the movement from knowledge to awareness and, ultimately, toward habituated behavior.

Another important implication concerns the changing role of the teacher. The findings suggest that the implementation of gamification does not reduce the importance of teachers; instead, it requires teachers to assume a more strategic pedagogical role. Teachers are responsible for selecting appropriate game mechanics, designing meaningful questions and scenarios, providing contextual explanations, facilitating reflection, and connecting game activities with students' real-life experiences. This requires teachers to possess not only technological competence but also pedagogical and content knowledge, particularly the ability to integrate technology with the specific objectives of Islamic moral education. The TPACK perspective is therefore relevant because effective gamification requires the integration of technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and subject-matter knowledge. In *Akidah Akhlak* instruction, teachers must ensure that technology remains a means of achieving educational objectives rather than becoming the primary focus of learning. The teacher's role as a moral exemplar (*uswah hasanah*) also remains indispensable because moral values cannot be fully internalized through digital activities alone.

Despite these potentials, the review identifies several limitations that need to be considered. First, technological inequality can create differences in students' opportunities to participate in gamified learning. Unequal internet access, limited devices, and differences in school infrastructure may reduce the effectiveness and inclusiveness of digital gamification. Second, excessive emphasis on competition and rewards may create over-gamification, whereby students become more concerned with winning than understanding the moral meaning of the lesson. Third, gamification may produce temporary increases in motivation without necessarily generating long-term behavioral transformation. These limitations reinforce the argument that gamification should be implemented as part of a broader pedagogical framework rather than as an independent instructional solution. Digital games should be combined with discussion, teacher modeling, habituation, reflection, collaborative activities, and authentic moral practice. Such integration is particularly important in *Akidah Akhlak* because the transformation of moral knowledge into moral behavior requires continuous educational experiences beyond the classroom.

The synthesis of previous studies also reveals an important research gap. Most existing studies have focused on the use of particular digital platforms and

their effects on motivation, participation, or academic achievement. While these findings establish the potential of gamification, they provide relatively limited discussion of how gamification contributes to the deeper pedagogical objectives of Akidah Akhlak, especially the internalization and habituation of moral values. This study therefore positions gamification not merely as a digital learning medium but as a pedagogical strategy that can connect cognitive learning, affective engagement, moral reflection, and behavioral practice. The theoretical implication is that the effectiveness of gamification in Akidah Akhlak should be understood through a multidimensional perspective: cognitive engagement provides the foundation for understanding religious concepts, affective engagement develops interest and moral awareness, while contextual practice creates opportunities for students to translate those values into behavior. Accordingly, the contribution of gamification to Islamic moral education depends not simply on whether students enjoy the learning process, but on whether the learning experience facilitates a meaningful transition from knowing moral values, to appreciating them, and ultimately to practicing them.

Overall, the discussion confirms that gamification represents a promising pedagogical innovation for Akidah Akhlak instruction in the digital era, but its implementation must remain value-oriented. The central issue is not whether gamification makes learning more enjoyable, but whether the enjoyment and engagement it creates can be directed toward meaningful religious understanding and moral transformation. Gamification is most effective when digital technology, appropriate game mechanics, teacher guidance, contextual learning, reflection, and moral habituation operate as an integrated system. From this perspective, gamification should be regarded as a supporting strategy rather than a substitute for the essential elements of Islamic moral education. Its greatest potential lies in its ability to create an engaging learning environment while simultaneously opening space for students to understand, discuss, reflect upon, and practice *akhlakul karimah*. Therefore, the future development of gamified Akidah Akhlak instruction should move beyond measuring short-term motivation and test scores toward examining sustained moral awareness, character development, and the application of Islamic values in students' everyday lives.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that gamification has significant potential as an adaptive pedagogical strategy for strengthening Akidah Akhlak instruction in the digital era. The synthesis of previous studies demonstrates that the integration of digital platforms such as Quizizz, Kahoot!, Wordwall, Educaplay, and ClassDojo can enhance students' cognitive engagement, conceptual understanding, motivation, and active participation. Game elements, including points, leaderboards, badges, challenges, and immediate feedback, provide learning experiences that are more interactive and responsive to the characteristics of contemporary learners. However, the

effectiveness of gamification does not depend solely on the use of digital platforms but on the appropriate alignment between game mechanics, learning objectives, Islamic educational values, and students' learning needs.

More importantly, the findings indicate that the contribution of gamification to Akidah Akhlak education should extend beyond improving academic achievement and classroom engagement. Since the fundamental objective of Akidah Akhlak is the internalization and habituation of akhlakul karimah, gamification needs to be integrated with teacher modeling, contextual discussion, reflection, habituation, and opportunities for real-life moral practice. Several challenges, including technological inequality, limited infrastructure, teacher readiness, and the risk of over-gamification, must also be addressed to ensure that students do not focus merely on scores and competition. Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic education by positioning gamification as a bridge between digital pedagogy and value-based moral education. Future research should therefore move beyond measuring motivation and cognitive achievement by investigating the long-term effects of gamification on students' moral awareness, character development, and actual practice of Islamic values.

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