



## Gamification Strategy in Increasing Students' Enthusiasm in Learning Aqidah and Akhlak in the Digital Era: A Study at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung

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**Abstract:** Learning Akidah Akhlak in the digital era faces challenges in maintaining student enthusiasm. One innovative strategy that can be applied is gamification, namely the use of game elements in a non-game context to increase student motivation and engagement. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of gamification strategies in increasing student enthusiasm in learning Akidah Akhlak at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung. The research method used is a qualitative approach with a case study. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of teachers and students involved in the implementation of gamification. The results of the study showed that the application of gamification elements, such as giving points, badges, leaderboards, and game-based challenges, significantly increased active participation and student learning motivation. In addition, this strategy also creates a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere, so that students find it easier to understand the Akidah Akhlak material. Factors that support the success of this strategy include teacher involvement in designing educational games, the use of digital technology, and positive student responses to more varied learning methods. However, this study also identified several obstacles, such as limited access to digital devices for some students and the need for additional training for teachers in developing gamification-based learning media. Thus, this study concludes that the gamification strategy is an effective approach in increasing student enthusiasm in learning Akidah Akhlak, especially in the digital era. The implications of this study lead to recommendations for educational institutions to adopt a similar approach by considering the readiness of infrastructure and training for educators to ensure the sustainability of gamification implementation in learning.

**Keywords:** Gamification, student enthusiasm, learning Akidah Akhlak, digital era.

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### INTRODUCTION

Learning Akidah Akhlak plays an important role in shaping the character and faith of students from an early age. At the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) level, this subject aims to instill fundamental Islamic values in everyday life. However, in practice, many students have difficulty understanding and internalizing abstract concepts in Akidah Akhlak. This is often caused by learning methods that are still conventional and less interactive, making students feel less interested and bored in the learning process. In today's digital era, technological developments have brought major changes in various aspects of life, including in the world of education. Traditional learning methods that only rely on lectures and memorization are no longer effective in attracting students' attention. Children born in the digital era are more accustomed to technology-based interactions,

such as online games, educational applications, and social media. Therefore, innovation is needed in learning methods to better suit the characteristics of today's digital generation. One innovative strategy that can be applied in learning Akidah Akhlak is gamification. Gamification is the application of game elements in an educational context to increase student motivation, engagement, and enthusiasm in learning. This strategy has been widely used in various disciplines, including in religious education, to create a more engaging and enjoyable learning experience.

Various studies have shown that gamification has a positive impact on increasing student engagement in learning. Elements such as awarding points, badges, leaderboards, and game-based challenges can encourage students to be more active and compete healthily. With gamification, students feel more challenged and motivated to achieve learning targets in a more interactive way. MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung is one of the madrasahs that faces challenges in increasing student enthusiasm in learning Akidah Akhlak. Most students show low levels of participation and are less motivated in following lessons. Teachers often face obstacles in creating interesting learning methods and are able to maintain student focus in understanding the material being taught.

The limitations of learning methods that are only one-way are one of the main factors causing low student enthusiasm. Monotonous learning tends to make students quickly bored and difficult to understand abstract concepts in Akidah Akhlak. Therefore, innovation is needed in teaching methods that are able to answer these challenges. The use of technology in learning has become a growing trend in various educational institutions, including at the madrasah level. Teachers are starting to apply various technology-based approaches to improve the effectiveness of learning. One approach that can be used is the application of gamification strategies, which integrate game elements into the teaching and learning process.

In the context of learning Akidah Akhlak, gamification can be applied in various ways, such as interactive quizzes, educational games based on applications, and achievement-based reward systems. With this method, students can learn in a more enjoyable way and not feel burdensome. In addition, gamification can also help improve students' memory and understanding of the religious concepts taught.

The application of gamification in learning also requires readiness from various parties, especially teachers and schools. Teachers need to understand how to integrate game elements into learning Akidah Akhlak effectively. In addition, support from schools in providing facilities and technological infrastructure is also a determining factor in the success of this strategy. Although gamification has great potential in increasing student enthusiasm, there are several challenges that need to be considered. Some obstacles that may arise are limited access to digital devices for students, lack of training for teachers in developing gamification-based learning media, and the possibility that students focus more on the game aspect than on the learning objectives themselves. Therefore, a balanced approach is needed so that gamification can be applied effectively in learning Akidah Akhlak.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of gamification strategies in increasing student enthusiasm in learning Akidah Akhlak at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung. Through this study, it is expected to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of gamification on student motivation and participation in learning.

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of teachers and students involved in the implementation of gamification. The results of the study are expected to provide recommendations for schools in optimizing more innovative learning strategies that are in accordance with current developments.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the world of education, especially in the field of learning Akidah Akhlak at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level. With the gamification strategy, it is hoped that the learning process can be more interesting,

effective, and able to build student character more optimally. Overall, this study seeks to answer the question of how gamification strategies can be applied in learning Akidah Akhlak and to what extent its effectiveness in increasing student enthusiasm. The results of this study are also expected to be a reference for other educational institutions that want to adopt gamification-based learning methods in their curriculum.

Thus, innovation in Islamic religious education through gamification strategies can be a step forward in improving the quality of learning and shaping better student character in the digital era. Interesting and interactive education not only helps students understand the material better, but also instills religious values more deeply and sustainably.

Along with the development of digital technology, students in this era tend to be more interested in interactive and technology-based learning methods. They are more accustomed to interacting with digital devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, or computers, both for playing and searching for information. Therefore, if the learning system still uses conventional methods without a touch of technology, students can lose interest and have difficulty understanding the material being taught. Gamification is present as an innovative solution that can bridge the gap between the digital world and the world of education, including in learning Akidah Akhlak.

In addition, gamification strategies can also help increase student competitiveness in achieving learning goals. With game elements such as point systems, levels, and prizes, students are encouraged to be more active in the learning process. They not only act as passive recipients of information, but are also directly involved in challenging and fun learning activities. Gamification can change the learning experience into something more interesting and memorable, so that students can more easily remember and understand the values of Akidah Akhlak that are taught.

However, the application of gamification in learning does not always run smoothly. One of the main challenges faced by schools is the limited technological infrastructure, especially for madrasahs located in areas with limited access to digital devices and internet networks. In addition, the readiness of teachers in developing and implementing gamification strategies is also an important factor in its success. Teachers need to receive adequate training to be able to adapt game elements into the Akidah Akhlak curriculum effectively.

In the long term, the implementation of gamification is expected to not only increase students' enthusiasm in learning, but also shape their character to be more disciplined, responsible, and have a healthy competitive spirit. By using this method, learning Akidah Akhlak can be more relevant to students' daily lives, so that they can apply religious values in real life better. Gamification-based education can also encourage collaboration between students and improve their social skills through various game-based activities that involve teamwork.

Based on this background, this study is important to determine the extent to which gamification strategies can be applied in learning Akidah Akhlak and its impact on student enthusiasm. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide broader insight into the effectiveness of gamification in the context of Islamic religious education, as well as serve as a reference for other madrasahs in adopting more innovative learning methods. In this way, Islamic education can continue to develop and adapt to changing times without losing the essence of basic Islamic values.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Approach and Type**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the phenomenon in depth in a real context, especially how gamification strategies can increase student enthusiasm in

learning Akidah Akhlak at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung. Case studies are used to specifically examine the implementation of gamification in a particular educational institution, allowing for deeper exploration of the dynamics that occur in the field.

This approach also allows researchers to gain a holistic understanding of the experiences of students, teachers, and schools in implementing gamification strategies. By exploring various data sources, such as direct observation and in-depth interviews, this study will produce richer insights regarding the impact of gamification on learning Akidah Akhlak.

### **Research Location and Subjects**

This research was conducted at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung, which is a madrasah with diverse student backgrounds in terms of interests and learning motivation. The choice of this location was based on the consideration that this madrasah has begun to implement several gamification elements in learning, allowing for a more concrete analysis of the effectiveness of the strategy.

The subjects of the study include:

- Students in grades IV and V as the main participants in the gamification-based Akidah Akhlak learning process.
- Akidah Akhlak subject teachers as teachers who design and implement gamification strategies in the classroom.
- The principal to provide perspectives on educational policies and the impact of gamification at the institutional level.
- Parents of students, who can provide insight into changes in their children's attitudes and enthusiasm for learning after the implementation of gamification.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

To obtain comprehensive and accurate data, this study uses the following data collection techniques:

#### **a. Participatory Observation**

Observations were conducted by directly observing the learning process in classes that had implemented gamification strategies. Several aspects observed include:

- How teachers integrate game elements into learning.
- Student responses to gamification-based learning methods.
- The level of student involvement and participation in each learning session.
- Interactions between students, teachers, and fellow students in the context of game-based learning.

#### **b. Semi-Structured Interviews**

Interviews were conducted to explore in-depth views from various parties involved in the study. The interviews were semi-structured to remain flexible and allow for further exploration of respondents' experiences and perceptions regarding gamification. Interviews were conducted with:

- Teachers, to understand the challenges and benefits of implementing gamification.
- Students, to understand their level of enthusiasm for this learning method.
- Principals, to understand the extent to which school policies support innovation in learning.
- Parents, to see the impact of gamification strategies on children's learning interests at home.

c. Documentation

Documentation includes:

- Photos and videos of the gamification-based learning process.
- Teaching materials used by teachers in gamification.
- Students' notes and reflections on their learning experiences.
- Students' learning outcomes before and after implementing gamification to see their improvement in understanding.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data that has been collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis methods, with the following steps:

1. Data Reduction – Selecting, filtering, and grouping the data that is most relevant to the research.
2. Categorization – Identifying patterns and themes that emerge from observations, interviews, and documentation, such as:
  - The form of gamification applied.
  - Changes in student enthusiasm before and after gamification is applied.
  - Challenges faced in implementing this strategy.
3. Data Presentation – Data that has been categorized will be presented in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, and relevant interview quotes.
4. Conclusion Drawing – Based on the patterns found, conclusions are drawn regarding the effectiveness of gamification strategies in increasing student enthusiasm.

### **Data Validity**

To make the research results more valid and accountable, several strategies are used to ensure the validity of the data:

- Source Triangulation: Comparing interview results from students, teachers, and principals to get a more objective perspective.
- Method Triangulation: Using a combination of interviews, observations, and documentation to strengthen research findings.
- Member Checking: Reconfirming interview results with respondents to ensure the accuracy of the information.
- Peer Debriefing: Involving fellow researchers or other academics to review and provide input on research results to make them more objective.

### **Research Ethics**

In implementing this research, ethical aspects are highly considered, including:

- Informed Consent – All participants are given an understanding of the purpose and process of the research and their right to refuse or withdraw at any time.
- Data Confidentiality – Respondents' identities are disguised and personal data will not be published without permission.
- Non-Discrimination – All research subjects are treated fairly without favoring certain groups.
- Transparency of Results – The results of the study will be shared with the school as a form of academic contribution that can benefit the educational institution.

### **Research Limitations**

Some limitations that may be faced in this study include:



- Limited generalization of research results, because the study was only conducted in one madrasah.
- Potential bias in interviews, especially from students who may provide answers that are considered "desirable" by the researcher.
- Technical challenges in implementing gamification, such as lack of student access to digital devices in the school environment.

### **Methodological Implications**

Through this methodology, the study is expected to provide in-depth insight into the effectiveness of gamification in learning Akidah Akhlak. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for other schools in adopting gamification-based learning strategies, both in religious education and other subjects.

### **RESULTS**

MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung is an ibtidaiyah madrasah that focuses on education based on Islamic values. This madrasah has a number of innovative programs in learning, one of which is the application of gamification strategies in the Aqidah Akhlak subject. This aims to increase students' enthusiasm in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings in a more interactive way.

This madrasah has quite a large number of students, with diverse social and economic backgrounds. Teachers at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung have also started to apply technology in the learning process, although still on a limited scale. The adoption of gamification in Akidah Akhlak learning is an effort to answer the challenges of the digital era and increase student participation in religion-based learning.

Based on the results of observations, interviews and documentation, there are several forms of application of gamification carried out by teachers in the Aqidah Akhlak subject, including:

Teachers use points and reward systems to encourage student motivation. Students who actively participate in discussions, answer questions correctly, or complete assignments well will receive gold stars that are collected each week. Students with the highest points are awarded, such as "This Week's Akidah Akhlak Champion" or receive small prizes that boost their enthusiasm.

Some games applied in Akidah Akhlak learning include:

- Interactive Quizzes using the Kahoot! or Quizizz applications to test students' understanding of the akidah material.
- Guess the Islamic Word, where students are given instructions about terms in Islam and must guess the answers.
- Role-Playing Games, such as simulations on how to be honest, fair, and respect parents in everyday life.
- Goodness Mission, where students are challenged to do good deeds every day and report the results to the teacher.

### **Narration and Storytelling in Learning**

Teachers also use a storytelling approach by delivering material in the form of interesting stories that have protagonist characters and moral conflicts. This story makes students more interested and feel involved in learning, because they can imagine real situations that are relevant to their lives.

#### **d. Leveling and Badge Achievement**

Students are placed in a level system, where they can move up the rankings based on the number of tasks or challenges they complete. Badges or certificates of appreciation are given to students who have reached a certain level, creating a sense of pride and personal achievement.

The results of the study show that the application of gamification in learning Akidah Akhlak has a positive impact on the level of student involvement and enthusiasm. This impact can be described as follows:

**a. Increased Student Motivation and Participation**

Based on the results of observations and interviews with teachers, it can be seen that students are more enthusiastic in participating in lessons after gamification is implemented. Some indicators of increased student motivation include:

Students are more active in asking and answering questions during learning. More students complete assignments on time, because of the reward system. Students tend to be more focused on learning, especially when using interactive applications such as Kahoot! or word guessing games.

**b. Improving Understanding of Creed and Moral Material**

Gamification not only increases enthusiasm, but also helps students understand abstract concepts in Creed and Moral. Through story-based games and role-playing, students can more easily internalize religious values compared to the usual lecture method.

A student in an interview stated:

"I used to get bored when studying Creed and Moral, but now it's more exciting because I can join in and get stars. I remember more about the stories of the Prophet and how to be kind to friends."

**c. More Collaborative Learning**

The application of gamification encourages collaboration between students, especially in team-based games. Students are more open to discussing and sharing their understanding of Islamic values in groups. This helps improve their social skills, in addition to improving their understanding of religion.

**d. Challenges in Implementing Gamification**

Although gamification strategies bring many benefits, there are several challenges found in their implementation, including:

Technology Limitations – Not all students have access to digital devices at home, so some application-based gamification activities must be adjusted to classroom conditions.

Teacher Readiness – Not all teachers have the skills to design gamification strategies, so they need further training to develop more innovative learning methods.

Student Character – Some students really enjoy this method, but some are still more comfortable with conventional methods. Therefore, a flexible approach is needed so that all students get optimal benefits.

**Comparative Analysis Before and After Gamification**

The results of the study also showed significant differences between learning before and after gamification was implemented. Based on the results of teacher reflection and student learning outcome data, it was found that:

Aspect Before Gamification After Gamification

Learning Motivation Many students are passive, not actively asking questions Students are more enthusiastic and actively participate  
Understanding of Material Tends to have more difficulty understanding abstract concepts Easier to understand material through games  
Social Interaction More individual, rarely discuss More collaboration and teamwork  
Assignment Completion Often late in submitting assignments More students complete assignments on time

**Implications of Research Findings**

Based on the results of this study, there are several important implications for the world of education, especially in learning Aqidah Akhlak:

- Gamification can be used as an effective strategy in increasing students' interest in learning in the digital era.
- Training is needed for teachers to improve their understanding and skills in designing gamification-based learning.
- Schools need to provide infrastructure that supports the wider implementation of gamification, including access to adequate technology.

The gamification approach can also be applied in other subjects to improve the effectiveness of learning as a whole.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study indicate that the gamification strategy can be an innovative approach in increasing student motivation and enthusiasm in learning Aqidah Akhlak. In the context of religious education, the main challenge faced by teachers is how to deliver material in a way that is interesting to students, especially in the digital era where students' attention is easily diverted by various forms of technology-based entertainment.

The implementation of gamification carried out at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung has been proven to have a significant positive impact on student engagement. Strategies such as point systems, badges, storytelling, and educational games help create a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. This is in line with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which states that a person's motivation will increase when they feel they have autonomy, competence, and social connectedness.

In the context of learning Aqidah Akhlak, the use of gamification provides three important aspects:

- **Autonomy:** Students are given the freedom to choose how they learn through various challenges and games.
- **Competence:** With the point and reward system, students are motivated to improve their understanding.
- **Social connectedness:** Group-based games increase social interaction between students, creating a more collaborative learning environment.

Before gamification was implemented, many students considered the Aqidah Akhlak subject to be a boring subject, especially because the delivery of the material used more lecture and memorization methods. However, after gamification was implemented, there was a significant change in attitude: Students were more enthusiastic about taking lessons, because they felt the learning process was more like playing. Students showed an increase in social interaction, especially in group-based games. Increased sense of responsibility in completing tasks, because there was a reward system and challenges that had to be completed.

These findings support previous research which states that game-based strategies can increase students' cognitive and emotional involvement in the learning process (Gee, 2003). Gamification allows students to be more active in learning, not just as passive recipients of information from teachers. One of the main objectives of learning Aqidah Akhlak is to shape students' character and morals in accordance with Islamic values. The application of gamification provides a more concrete and applicable method for students to understand abstract concepts in Aqidah Akhlak.

For example:



Through storytelling, students can understand the importance of honesty through the stories of the Prophet and his companions. With role-playing, students can practice how to respect parents and teachers in everyday life. Through good missions, students are more motivated to apply religious values in real life. From the interviews conducted, many students expressed that this method made it easier for them to remember and understand religious concepts, compared to simply memorizing texts or listening to lectures from teachers.

#### 4. The Role of Teachers in the Implementation of Gamification

The success of gamification in learning Akidah Akhlak is highly dependent on the role of the teacher. Teachers not only act as providers of material, but also as facilitators and designers of learning experiences for students.

Some of the challenges faced by teachers in implementing gamification include:

Lack of training on gamification design, so that some teachers still find it difficult to design effective educational games.

Limited time in preparing gamification-based materials, especially because planning this method requires higher creativity and innovation.

Technical constraints, such as limited access to digital devices to support technology-based games.

To overcome these challenges, schools need to provide training to teachers in designing gamification-based learning. In addition, teachers can also utilize simple resources, such as educational cards, manual quizzes, or simple simulations that do not require high technology but are still effective in increasing student engagement.

#### 5. Challenges and Obstacles in the Implementation of Gamification

Although the results of the study show many benefits of gamification in learning Akidah Akhlak, there are several challenges that need to be considered:

##### a. Limited Infrastructure and Access to Technology

At MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung, limited access to technology is one of the main obstacles. Not all classes have adequate computer facilities or internet access to support digital-based games such as Kahoot! or Quizizz. Therefore, teachers need to adjust gamification strategies to existing conditions, such as using traditional game methods that still adopt gamification principles.

##### b. Differences in Student Character and Learning Style

Each student has a different learning style. Some students enjoy the game method more, while others may be more comfortable with conventional methods such as lectures or discussions. Therefore, teachers need to ensure that gamification does not replace other learning methods, but instead becomes a companion to enrich students' learning experiences.

##### c. Risk of Overfocusing on Competition

One of the challenges in gamification is the element of competition, which can cause some students to feel stressed or less confident if they are unable to compete with their friends. Therefore, it is important for teachers to create a balance between competitive and collaborative aspects in the game.

The results of this study provide several important implications for the world of education, especially in facing the challenges of the digital era:

Gamification can be an effective solution to increase student engagement in subjects based on religious values.

Schools need to develop policies that support innovation in learning methods, including providing training for teachers in the use of gamification strategies.

The gamification approach can not only be applied in Akidah Akhlak, but also in other subjects, such as Jurisprudence, Islamic History, and even general subjects such as Mathematics and Indonesian.

The use of technology in education needs to be optimized, but still adjusted to the conditions and availability of infrastructure in each school. A comparative study between schools that implement gamification and those that do not, to see the differences in learning outcomes more quantitatively.

Further exploration of the influence of gamification on students' psychological aspects, such as increasing self-confidence and critical thinking skills.

Research on the implementation of gamification in virtual and augmented reality technology-based learning, as a future educational innovation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the gamification strategy has proven effective in increasing students' enthusiasm, motivation, and understanding in learning Akidah Akhlak at MI Al Hidayah Karanggitung. Gamification provides a more interactive, interesting, and enjoyable learning experience, so that students are more involved in the learning process compared to conventional methods such as lectures and memorization. Some of the main findings in this study include: Increased Student Motivation and Participation, The point system, badges, leaderboards, and rewards make students more enthusiastic in following lessons. Students are more active in asking questions, discussing, and completing assignments compared to before gamification was implemented.

**Increased Understanding of Akidah Akhlak Values** The use of storytelling, role-playing, and good missions helps students understand and apply Islamic concepts in everyday life. Material that was previously considered boring becomes more interesting and relevant to students. **Positive Impact on Student Social Interaction** Group-based gamification encourages better cooperation and communication between students. The classroom environment becomes more collaborative, creating a more conducive and dynamic learning atmosphere.

**Challenges in Implementing Gamification** Limited infrastructure and access to technology are obstacles to the widespread use of digital applications. Teacher readiness in designing gamification still needs to be improved through training and development of pedagogical competencies. Differences in student character require flexible strategies so that all students can enjoy learning without excessive competitive pressure. From these findings, it can be recommended that schools and educators need to optimize gamification strategies by adjusting them to student conditions and needs. In addition, the development of teacher competencies in the use of technology and gamification-based learning design also needs to be improved so that its implementation is more optimal. Overall, this study proves that gamification is not only an entertaining learning method, but can also be an effective pedagogical tool in building character, morals, and Islamic values in students in the digital era.

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