

**SMART GAME AND QUR'ANIC LEARNING: AN EFFORT
TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' LEARNING INTEREST AT
SDN PATAONAN 03 BANGKALAN**

JURNAL



Disusun Oleh:

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**PROGRAM STUDI PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM
FAKULTAS STUDI ISLAM DAN PERADABAN
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURABAYA**

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Diajukan kepada Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya
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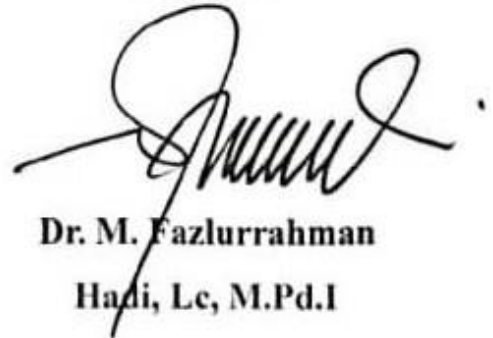
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ISI



Smart Game and Qur'anic Learning: An Effort to Enhance Students' Learning Interest at SDN Pataonan 03 Bangkalan

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Abstract

Qur'anic learning at the elementary school level plays a crucial role in developing students' religious literacy, moral growth, and foundational reading skills. However, many primary schools still implement conventional approaches that emphasize repetition and teacher-centered instruction, which often fail to sustain students' learning interest, particularly among digitally oriented young learners. This study aimed to examine the effect of smart game-based Qur'anic learning on students' learning interest at SDN Pataonan 03 Bangkalan. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design was employed, involving 45 students from grades IVa and IVb. The experimental group participated in smart game-based Qur'anic learning, while the control group received conventional instruction. Students' learning interest was measured using a validated Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test. The results revealed a significant increase in learning interest for the experimental group ($M = 78.26$) compared to the control group ($M = 65.14$), with $Z = -4.22$ and $p = 0.000$. These findings indicate that smart game-based Qur'anic learning effectively enhances students' learning interest, transforming situational interest into more enduring individual interest and providing an engaging, interactive, and motivating learning experience. The study highlights the pedagogical value of integrating technology and gamification strategies in primary school Qur'anic education to promote student engagement, motivation, and positive attitudes toward learning.

Keywords: Smart game, Qur'anic learning, learning interest, elementary school

INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic learning at the elementary school level plays a crucial role in shaping students' religious literacy, moral development, and foundational reading skills. Nevertheless, many Qur'anic learning practices in primary schools continue to rely on conventional instructional approaches that emphasize repetition and teacher-centered instruction. Such approaches often fail to sustain students' learning interest, particularly in the context of digitally oriented young learners. Educational psychology literature consistently demonstrates that learning interest is a decisive factor influencing students' engagement, persistence, and achievement (Harackiewicz et al., 2016; Renninger & Hidi, 2022; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2018). Consequently, innovative pedagogical strategies that align with students' cognitive and motivational characteristics are increasingly required in Qur'anic education.

Previous studies in Qur'anic pedagogy have primarily focused on improving technical reading and memorization skills through structured methods such as Qiroati, Wafa, and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), as well as reward-based strategies to enhance motivation (Rohim et al., 2024; Firmansyah et al., 2025; Muzaiyanah et al., 2023). Other research has explored activity-based Qur'anic instruction and teacher communication strategies, particularly for students with special educational needs (Dzulkipli et al., 2020, 2021; Zulkifli et al., 2022). While these studies contribute valuable insights into pedagogical effectiveness, they largely remain within traditional or semi-digital instructional paradigms and pay limited attention to the systematic cultivation of students' learning interest in mainstream elementary school contexts.

Alongside these developments, the rapid advancement of educational technology has positioned digital and game-based learning as promising approaches to enhance student engagement. Serious games, in particular, are designed to integrate learning objectives with game mechanics, feedback systems, and meaningful user interaction to foster motivation and sustained engagement (Al-Awadai, 2025; Alee, 2025; Pujosakti & Asrori, 2026). Empirical evidence also indicates that digital learning systems and data-driven instructional technologies can support learning materials and improve instructional effectiveness when appropriately designed (Huda et al., 2025a; Hehsan et al., 2024; Wahid et al., 2024). In Qur'anic education, digital innovations such as memorization applications and visual-based learning media have demonstrated positive effects on students' motivation and learning experiences (Mustafa et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2025). However, these studies tend to emphasize technological functionality or learning outcomes rather than examining how interactive game-based designs influence students' learning interest as a core psychological construct.

Furthermore, research on learning interest underscores that interest develops dynamically through interaction between individual predispositions and situational learning environments. The interest loop theory suggests that well-designed learning tasks can transform situational interest into

more enduring individual interest, thereby enhancing long-term engagement and knowledge acquisition (Wong et al., 2020; Renninger & Hidi, 2022). Despite its relevance, this theoretical perspective has rarely been applied in studies of Qur'anic learning, particularly those employing interactive digital or game-based approaches at the elementary school level. Methodologically, many existing studies also rely on descriptive or pre-experimental designs, leaving a need for more rigorous quasi-experimental approaches to examine causal relationships between instructional interventions and student interest (Krishnan, 2019; Cham et al., 2024).

In response to these gaps, this study investigates the implementation of smart game-based Qur'anic learning as an effort to enhance students' learning interest at SDN Pataonan 03 Bangkalan. By integrating principles of serious game design with theories of interest development, this research offers a novel empirical contribution to Qur'anic pedagogy in primary education. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical insights into interest-oriented Qur'anic learning and practical implications for teachers seeking to design more engaging, learner-centered instructional strategies in elementary schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of smart game-based Qur'anic learning on elementary school students' learning interest. This approach was selected because it allows for the analysis of causal relationships within the naturally occurring classroom context, while also accommodating the practical limitations of full randomization, which is often not feasible in educational research (Levine, 2021; Cham, Lee, & Migunov, 2024).

The research design applied was a non-equivalent control group design with pre-test and post-test measurements, in which the experimental and control groups were formed from intact classes. This approach is commonly used in educational research as it enables comparisons of treatment effectiveness even without full randomization (Krishnan, 2019).

The study was conducted at SDN Pataonan 03 Bangkalan, involving 45 students from grades IVa and IVb, divided into an experimental group and a control group based on existing class arrangements. The experimental group participated in smart game-based Qur'anic learning, which integrated interactive digital games and immediate feedback to enhance learning interest, while the control group followed conventional teacher-centered instruction focusing on repetition and rote memorization. This setup allowed the researchers to examine the effect of innovative, technology-enhanced learning on students' engagement and interest within a natural classroom environment, providing practical insights for implementing interactive Qur'anic learning in primary schools.

The independent variable in this study was smart game-based Qur'anic learning, while the dependent variable was students' learning interest. Students' learning interest was measured using

a Likert-scale questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability, ensuring that the instrument accurately captured the research variable and allowed for meaningful comparisons between groups (Mack, Hensen, & Barbera, 2019).

The research procedure included administering a pre-test, conducting smart game-based learning in the experimental group, and providing a post-test for both groups. This procedure supports the drawing of causal inferences within a quasi-experimental design (Fu, Arnou, Trickey, & Knowlton, 2022).

Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and an independent-samples t-test with a significance level of 0.05. Prior to hypothesis testing, data normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results indicated that students' learning interest scores for both pre-test and post-test in both groups were not normally distributed. Given that normality tests are highly sensitive to sample size and data distribution shape, these results were interpreted with caution (Gosselin, 2024; Vaclavik et al., 2020; Wijekularathna et al., 2022). Consequently, inferential analysis was conducted using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test, which is more appropriate and reliable for comparing two independent groups with non-normally distributed data (Treister et al., 2015). The choice of the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test also aligns with recent methodological developments in non-parametric analysis emphasizing statistical accuracy and efficiency (Park, 2025; Marx et al., 2016).

By adhering to ethical principles in educational research and implementing interactive game-based learning supported by previous empirical findings (Wordofa et al., 2025; Wasilkiewicz et al., 2024), this study provides an in-depth examination of the effect of smart game-based Qur'anic learning on elementary school students' learning interest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the empirical findings derived from the quantitative data analysis to examine the effect of smart game-based Qur'anic learning on the learning interest of students at SDN Pataonan 03 Bangkalan. The data analysis was conducted in stages, beginning with descriptive statistics to illustrate the initial and final conditions of students' learning interest, followed by a normality test as the basis for selecting the appropriate inferential analysis technique, and concluding with a difference test using the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test to determine the significance of differences in learning interest between the experimental and control groups. The presentation of results is systematically organized, and each finding is referenced against the relevant statistical table.

Descriptive Statistics of Students' Learning Interest

A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the students' learning interest scores in both the experimental and control groups, measured before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the learning intervention. The purpose of this analysis was to identify general trends and patterns in students' interest levels and to compare the initial equivalence and subsequent changes between groups. The results of this descriptive analysis are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Learning Interest Scores

Group	Test Stage	N	M	SD	Min	Max
Experimental	Pre-test	23	61.87	6.45	50	74
Experimental	Post-test	23	78.26	5.38	67	88
Control	Pre-test	22	60.91	6.12	49	72
Control	Post-test	22	65.14	5.97	54	76

Based on table 1, the pre-test mean scores show that both the experimental group (M = 61.87) and the control group (M = 60.91) were initially at relatively similar levels, indicating that the two groups were comparable in terms of learning interest prior to the intervention. After the implementation of the smart game-based Qur'anic learning, the post-test results revealed a notable increase in the experimental group's mean score, rising to 78.26, compared to a more modest increase in the control group, which reached 65.14. This pattern suggests that the learning intervention had a positive effect on students' learning interest, particularly in the experimental group. The range of scores (Min–Max) also indicates that students in the experimental group experienced a greater overall improvement and consistency in higher scores compared to the control group.

Normality Test of Data

Before conducting inferential statistical analyses to compare group differences, the normality of the students' learning interest scores was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. This test evaluates whether the data are normally distributed, which is a prerequisite for parametric tests. The results of the normality test are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test Results

Group	Test Stage	W	p
Experimental	Pre-test	0.912	0.028
Experimental	Post-test	0.894	0.015
Control	Pre-test	0.918	0.031
Control	Post-test	0.907	0.022

As shown in table 2, the p-values for all test stages in both groups were below the threshold of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the data were not normally distributed. This finding necessitated the use of non-parametric statistical methods to analyze the differences between groups.

Difference Test of Students' Learning Interest

To examine the difference in learning interest between the experimental and control groups after the intervention, the Mann–Whitney–Wilcoxon test was employed. This non-parametric test is suitable for comparing two independent groups when the assumption of normality is not met. The post-test rank scores of the students' learning interest are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Post-test Rank Scores of Students' Learning Interest

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Experimental	23	30.74	707.00
Control	22	14.95	328.90

As observed in table 3, the experimental group exhibited a higher mean rank (30.74) than the control group (14.95), indicating that students who received smart game–based Qur'anic learning demonstrated greater learning interest overall compared to those who followed conventional learning methods. The sum of ranks further confirms that the majority of higher scores were concentrated in the experimental group.

Summary of Mann–Whitney–Wilcoxon Test Statistics

The Mann–Whitney–Wilcoxon test results are summarized in table 4. The statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of learning interest after the intervention.

Table 4. Summary of Mann–Whitney–Wilcoxon Test Statistics

Statistic	Value
U	75.00
Z	-4.22
p (2-tailed)	0.000

As indicated by table 4, the significance value ($p = 0.000$) is below 0.05, demonstrating that the difference in post-test learning interest scores between the two groups is statistically significant. This finding provides strong evidence that the smart game–based Qur'anic learning intervention had a positive and meaningful impact on students' interest in learning. Taken together, the descriptive statistics (table 1) and the inferential analyses (tables 3 and 4) indicate that smart game–based Qur'anic learning is more effective in enhancing elementary school students' learning interest

compared to conventional teaching methods. The substantial increase in scores observed in the experimental group highlights the potential of gamified and interactive learning approaches to foster student motivation, engagement, and sustained interest in Qur'anic education. These results underscore the educational value of integrating technology-driven, game-based learning tools into primary school curricula.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of smart game-based Qur'anic learning significantly enhances students' learning interest in elementary school, as evidenced by both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The descriptive statistics showed that students in the experimental group experienced a substantial increase in learning interest scores from a pre-test mean of 61.87 to a post-test mean of 78.26. In contrast, the control group, which received conventional learning, only showed a modest increase from 60.91 to 65.14 (table 1). These findings suggest that the integration of interactive, game-based elements into Qur'anic learning fosters a more engaging and motivating learning environment, consistent with prior research highlighting the positive effects of gamified learning on student engagement and motivation (Al-Awadai, 2025; Alee et al., 2025; Pujosakti & Asrori, 2024).

The substantial improvement in the experimental group aligns with the theoretical framework of interest development, which posits that learning activities that actively engage students and provide meaningful, enjoyable experiences can enhance situational and individual interest (Harackiewicz et al., 2016; Renninger & Hidi, 2022; Wong et al., 2020). The smart game-based learning method appears to have successfully transformed situational interest into more sustained individual interest, as evidenced by the higher post-test scores. This is particularly relevant in Qur'anic education, where maintaining student motivation can be challenging due to the repetitive and complex nature of memorization and recitation tasks (Fakhrudin, & Ahmad, 2020, 2021; Firmansyah et al., 2025; Iqbal et al., 2025).

The normality test results (table 2) indicated that the learning interest scores for both groups were not normally distributed, necessitating the use of the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test for between-group comparisons. The post-test rank scores (table 3) showed that the experimental group had a mean rank of 30.74, considerably higher than the control group's mean rank of 14.95. The Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test further confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ($U = 75.00$, $Z = -4.22$, $p < 0.001$; Table 4), demonstrating that smart game-based Qur'anic learning had a clear and measurable positive effect on students' learning interest. These findings corroborate previous studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of digital and gamified interventions in improving learning outcomes and engagement in Islamic education (Hendawi & Qadhi, 2024; Zakaria & Mahalle, 2024; Mustafa et al., 2021).

From an instructional perspective, the findings suggest that smart game-based Qur'anic learning provides several pedagogical advantages. First, it facilitates active participation, as students are required to interact with game elements, solve challenges, and receive immediate feedback, which enhances both motivation and cognitive engagement (Al-Awadai, 2025; Huda et al., 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). Second, gamified learning can reduce the monotony and cognitive load often associated with traditional Qur'anic teaching methods, enabling students to sustain attention and maintain interest over time (Parveen, 2025; Fu et al., 2022). Third, integrating digital technology in religious education aligns with contemporary demands for ICT literacy, allowing students to develop digital competencies alongside religious knowledge (Hendawi & Qadhi, 2024; Huda et al., 2025a).

Moreover, the interactive and reward-based nature of smart games appears to cater to diverse learner needs and preferences, providing scaffolding that supports both high-achieving and struggling students. This is consistent with the findings of Muzaiyanah, Hayumuti, and Asrori (2023), who reported that incorporating reward systems and interactive strategies significantly improves student motivation and learning persistence in Islamic educational contexts. Similarly, the results align with studies on Minecraft-based gamification in Islamic education, which have demonstrated that gamified environments can enhance engagement, retention, and overall learning satisfaction (Alee et al., 2025).

The results also highlight the importance of adapting instructional methods to the developmental and motivational needs of young learners. Traditional Qur'anic teaching approaches, often characterized by rote memorization and repetitive recitation, may not adequately stimulate interest or intrinsic motivation, particularly among elementary students (Dzulkifli et al., 2020; Dzulkifli et al., 2021; Firmansyah et al., 2025). By contrast, smart game-based learning provides a dynamic, interactive, and contextually meaningful learning environment that actively engages learners and fosters positive attitudes toward Qur'anic study. This supports prior research emphasizing the role of pedagogical innovation and technology integration in improving student-centered learning outcomes in religious education (Hendawi & Qadhi, 2024; Pujosakti & Asrori, 2024; Iqbal et al., 2025).

In summary, the discussion of the results demonstrates that smart game-based Qur'anic learning is not only effective in improving learning interest but also contributes to the broader objectives of modern Islamic education by integrating motivational, cognitive, and technological dimensions. The findings provide strong empirical support for incorporating gamified digital learning tools into primary school Qur'anic curricula, highlighting the potential for enhancing student engagement, fostering positive learning attitudes, and promoting sustained interest in religious learning (Al-Awadai, 2025; Alee et al., 2025; Zakaria & Mahalle, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that smart game-based Qur'anic learning significantly enhances elementary school students' learning interest. Empirical findings indicate that students who participated in interactive, gamified learning activities showed a substantial increase in learning interest compared to peers who received conventional instruction. The results confirm that integrating game elements, immediate feedback, and interactive digital media can effectively transform situational interest into more enduring individual interest, fostering sustained engagement and motivation in Qur'anic education. Pedagogically, the study highlights the potential of technology-enhanced, learner-centered approaches to improve both cognitive and affective outcomes in primary school religious education. These findings provide practical implications for teachers and curriculum designers, emphasizing the importance of incorporating gamification and digital learning strategies to create stimulating, enjoyable, and effective learning environments. Future research is recommended to explore long-term impacts on academic achievement, cognitive retention, and motivational development, as well as to examine the adaptability of smart game-based learning across diverse educational contexts and student populations.

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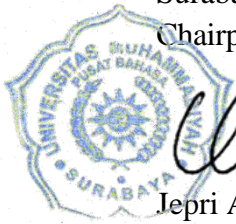
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