

1. Introduction

A global phenomenon indicating a decline in student engagement and motivation in religious subjects, which are generally delivered in a textual format and centered on teacher lectures. Various studies reveal that the teaching of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and other religious subjects still relies on conventional and one-way methods, which leads to students quickly becoming bored and passive and having difficulty connecting the material to their lives as a digital generation already familiar with interactive technology (Mahmud and Furqan 2025; Triantafyllou, Georgiadis, and Sapounidis 2025). In Indonesia, this challenge is further complicated in the context of madrasahs (Zarkasi et al, 2025) and pesantren, which uphold strong religious values yet must integrate modern educational technology. Therefore, a pedagogical approach is needed that can proportionally connect tradition and innovation (Attarwiyah, Wasi'ah, and Jennah 2025).

On a national scale, various studies reveal that PAI learning in schools and madrasahs often takes place in a monotonous manner, is teacher-centered, and lacks meaningful interaction, especially for material requiring memorization and understanding of abstract concepts (Miranda, Rahmawati, and Adiyono 2024; Safroni and Hidayah 2024). This condition impacts students' low learning motivation, participation, and academic achievement, including frequent learning outcomes that do not meet the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM), even though the curriculum emphasizes character building and value internalization (Hamidah 2025). Initial observations through direct observation at MA Al Wathoniyyah Semarang showed a similar pattern: PAI learning was still centered on lectures, students were more focused on student worksheets (LKS), tended to neglect assignments, were less enthusiastic about participating in the learning process, and several times received scores below the minimum passing grade (KKM), which further emphasized the importance of finding more participatory and motivating learning strategies from a pedagogical and socio-religious perspective.

Generation Z and Alpha, who are currently still in school or madrasah, generally have a strong preference for visual, interactive, and game-based media. Various recent studies indicate that gamification, the application of game elements such as points, badges, levels, and leaderboards, can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement in various educational contexts, including

vocational schools and Islamic boarding schools (Dahalan, Alias, and Shaharom 2024; Ilmiyah 2024; Triantafyllou et al. 2025). In Islamic boarding schools, using gamification has been found to boost student motivation and involvement while still respecting discipline and spiritual values, as long as the games fit the school's principles.

Theoretically, the effectiveness of gamification in learning can be explained through the ARCS Motivation Model proposed by Keller (1987). This model states that sustained learning motivation is built upon four main pillars: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the Blooket platform effectively captures students' attention through dynamic visual stimulation, breaking the monotony of conventional lecture methods. In line with this, the platform builds relevance by aligning the learning process with the digital preferences inherent in Generation Z. Additionally, the instant feedback mechanism provided during quiz activities plays a role in building students' confidence by facilitating real-time monitoring of learning progress (Keller 1979). Finally, the competitive element and point reward system offered by Blooket provide a sense of satisfaction and achievement, thereby reinforcing positive learning behaviors.

This analysis of increased motivation is supported by a deeper psychological framework, namely Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan and Deci (2000). This theory explains the transition of motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic by emphasizing the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. In its classical application, Blooket uniquely addresses the need for connection by fostering intense social interaction and collective joy in the classroom, a dynamic often absent in individual digital learning. Simultaneously, the opportunity for students to conquer various challenges in quizzes fulfills the need for competence. The implication is that the learning process, which was initially perceived as a passive obligation, transforms into an engaging activity driven by the internal interest and will of the students (Deci and Ryan 2013).

However, the implementation of such gamification often faces technical and cultural realities in the field. Infrastructure constraints, regulations limiting device usage, and variations in digital literacy among educators are concrete challenges that stand in the way. This condition creates a significant gap, considering that most gamification models tend to rely on the one-

student-one-device paradigm. Therefore, media design and implementation strategies must be creatively adapted to align with local policies and the culture of specific educational institutions. For example, the ban on mobile phone use at MA Al Wathoniyyah necessitates the development of innovative and adaptive pedagogical approaches, ensuring that the motivational principles of gamification can still be accommodated within the existing limitations.

The development of interactive media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning shows that various platforms such as Quizizz, Wordwall, Kahoot, Canva, and similar applications can increase interest, participation, and understanding of Islamic concepts in both public schools and madrasas (Hamidah 2025; Mahmud and Furqan 2025; Pasha and Rahmanto 2025; Suwanto 2025; Trajaya et al. 2025). Research at MAN Paser, for example, found that using an interactive application equipped with gamification elements (points, badges, and daily challenges) can significantly increase students' motivation and participation in learning the Quran and Hadith (Miranda et al. 2024). At the same time, other research shows that digital media with gamification elements can be adapted to the pesantren context to overcome boredom, strengthen interaction, and provide space for collaborative practice while still adhering to pesantren regulations (Munazzalrohmi et al. 2025; Shofiyani and Muti'ah 2021). This opens up opportunities for similar innovations in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at MA Al Wathoniyyah.

Specifically, Blooket has emerged as one of the gamified quiz platforms offering a variety of competitive and collaborative game modes, such as Tower Defense, Monster Brawl, Café, Factory, and others, designed to combine cognitive activity with an enjoyable gaming experience. Recent studies in Islamic education show that Blooket helps boost students' motivation, involvement, and understanding in Aqidah Akhlak and Arabic learning, especially with features like points, leaderboards, instant feedback, and different game modes (Khanah and Alam 2025). However, most of these studies use a quantitative approach or mixed methods and focus more on measuring learning outcome scores and increasing motivation percentages. Therefore, the dimension of the subjective experience of the interaction process in the classroom and the meaning experienced by students and teachers within the context of pesantren-based institutions are still relatively underexplored in depth from a qualitative

perspective, which is the contribution of this research.

A review of previous research on gamification-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strengthens the potential for innovation while also revealing research gaps. Research on gamifying Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through Quizizz, Wordwall, and other digital media generally shows increased motivation and learning outcomes, but most of this research was conducted in the context of public schools using classroom action research or experimental designs and relying on students' personal device ownership (Mahmud and Furqan 2025; Miranda et al. 2024; Purba et al. 2024; Suwanto 2025; Trajaya et al. 2025). Studies in pesantren are more focused on the effectiveness of specific media (e.g., Wordwall or physical games) in overcoming boredom and strengthening vocabulary or concept understanding, but few detail how the gamification implementation process unfolds when technological devices are only used by the teacher, the dynamics of interaction in the classroom, and how students interpret the gamified PAI learning experience within the context of pesantren culture (Attarwiyah et al. 2025; Munazzalrohmi et al. 2025; Shofiyani and Muti'ah 2021). There have been no studies that specifically explore game-based learning adaptation strategies in a pesantren environment with strict regulations prohibiting mobile phone use for students. This research fills that gap by offering a classical model for implementing Blooket.

Based on this background, this study aims to deeply describe the application of Blooket in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at MA Al Wathoniyyah Semarang. The main focus of this research is to analyze how these strategies or projectors can overcome the constraint of not being allowed to bring phones while increasing students' enthusiasm for learning, as reflected in their behavior, participation, and perceptions. Theoretically, this research aims to enrich the study of PAI gamification with a qualitative approach that emphasizes motivational theories such as ARCS and self-determination theory within the context of pesantren culture. This research aims to provide a Blooket media implementation model that accommodates device limitations and institutional regulations, serving as a reference for PAI educators and madrasah administrators in designing more interactive, engaging, and relevant learning experiences for the generation of santri in the digital era.

Furthermore, this study provides significant theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on educational gamification by demonstrating how the ARCS motivational model and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) operate within the strict technological constraints of a pesantren environment. Practically, this research offers a concrete, adaptive pedagogical framework for PAI educators and madrasah administrators. It provides an actionable model to integrate engaging digital learning platforms like Blooket without violating institutional bans on personal devices, ultimately fostering a more dynamic and interactive learning experience for students.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, aiming to deeply understand the implementation process of the gamified interactive media Blooket and the resulting changes in student learning motivation within the real-world context of Madrasah Pesantren rather than statistically testing the relationships between variables. The research subjects included PAI teachers as the main implementers of the Blooket gamification, as well as 22 male students from class X B who served as the intervention group. The selection of this class is purposive, considering ease of access, teacher readiness, and student characteristics. This research was conducted during the Field Experience Practice (PPL II) program at MA Al Wathaniyyah Semarang, which took place from September 29, 2025, to November 12, 2025. This experience provides researchers with ample time to repeatedly and naturally observe the learning process within the regular school schedule.

The data collection techniques used were classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, following a qualitative case study pattern in an Islamic educational environment that emphasizes a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation (teachers and students) and technique triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation) (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014). Thus, the design of this method is considered adequate to capture the process and meaning of using Blooket in improving the learning motivation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the madrasah pesantren environment.

3. Result and Discussion

At MA Al Wathaniyyah Semarang, preliminary observations and interviews reveal an underdeveloped learning environment for Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This condition stems from the dominance of the lecture method and conventional teacher-centered teaching patterns, an approach that elicits passive responses and boredom among students.

This situation is evident in the statement of Student 1 from class XB, who revealed that learning activities often only involve listening and copying, accompanied by a feeling of drowsiness because the material is presented textually without any connection to real-life realities (Student 1, 2025). In line with this, a similar statement was made by Student 2, who considered the activity of answering questions in the workbook to be repetitive and unmotivating (Student 2, 2025)."

The impact of these field findings confirms that the rigid way the material is presented is a major factor in students' low attention levels. In a broader context, this situation is not an isolated phenomenon but rather aligns with previous research findings indicating that PAI instruction in Indonesia still heavily relies on traditional methods that are less relevant for the digital generation (Mahmud and Furqan 2025; Triantafyllou et al. 2025). Additionally, other studies reveal that monotonous and teacher-centered PAI learning significantly contributes to decreased student motivation and academic achievement (Miranda et al. 2024; Safroni and Hidayah 2024). Thus, empirically, it can be concluded that the traditional lecture-format learning paradigm is considered less effective in optimizing students' learning interest and engagement.

To address this condition, the researcher intervened by introducing interactive quizzes through the Blooket platform. However, limited infrastructure necessitates the use of a classical model, where the entire class participates in a single game displayed via a projector. Despite these limitations, the implementation successfully transformed the learning atmosphere by fostering a more enjoyable and competitive environment. This new atmosphere ultimately and tangibly improved collective concentration (attention) and active student engagement, overcoming the passive nature of previous lecture methods. The success of this change rests on the theoretical foundation of gamification in education, which explains that integrating elements such as points, leaderboards, and immediate feedback can encourage active

participation and motivate repeated learning (Mahmud and Furqan 2025). In line with this framework, various systematic reviews and meta-analyses indicate that adding a competitive aspect to educational games can significantly increase learners' intrinsic motivation and interest in learning (Aldalur and Perez 2023; Leitão et al. 2022). Based on this combination of empirical evidence and theoretical foundations, the application of Blooket in this study proved effective as a strategy to overcome boredom while simultaneously increasing learning enthusiasm through interactive and engaging learning experiences.

The results of using Blooket show a prominent paradoxical behavioral phenomenon. This symptom is reflected in the platform's capacity to shift the conceptually individualistic patterns of competition into a trigger for the emergence of spontaneous collaboration among students. Student 3's statement reflects that while leaderboards motivate individuals to improve their positions, they also encourage mutual assistance in recalling forgotten material to achieve higher scores (Student 3, 2025).

This reciprocal interaction pattern ultimately forms a symbiotic relationship between competition and cooperation within a single learning ecosystem. The direct consequence of this dynamic shows that organized competition can become an effective vehicle for building constructive social interaction, rather than merely triggering individualistic attitudes. Further findings confirm that the competitive mechanisms within Blooket do not operate in social isolation but rather encourage intense communication. Through this communication, students engage in active dialogue and group work to solve the problems they face. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that competition-oriented gamification successfully served as a cognitive-social trigger, converting passive knowledge into active skills through a dynamic learning simulation.

The framework of Self-Determination Theory enables Blooket to successfully establish an explanatory foothold from a theoretical perspective. Blooket's design, which combines a point system, challenges, and various game modes, simultaneously has the potential to meet three of humanity's core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Although infrastructure limitations restrict personal device ownership, the variety of game modes and role-sharing within groups still fosters a sense of independence (autonomy). In addition,

immediate feedback from the system on correct answers reinforces confidence in one's abilities (competence). Meanwhile, the way students interact and share strategies during the game genuinely contributes to building closer relationships (connectedness) among them, a trend that aligns with the findings of similar studies in Akidah Akhlak learning (Masroh 2025).

Not only does it provide theoretical support, but the uniqueness of this research context lies in the application of this classic model within a pesantren environment that has strict rules regarding the use of personal mobile phones. This situation strikingly distinguishes it from gamification studies in general, which typically focus on mobile learning or e-learning by relying on individual device ownership (Khatimah and Zahraini 2025; Mahmud and Furqan 2025). The main finding of this research actually shows that the core motivations in gamification, namely the elements of competition and cooperation, can still emerge and function effectively even when operated through a single shared device. In practical terms, these results give schools with similar technology policies a strong argument for using gamification to boost student motivation and participation without requiring students to own their own devices. Thus, this approach provides a more inclusive learning alternative and empirically proves that strict 'no cell phone' policies in Islamic boarding schools are not an obstacle to implementing gamification. The classic model successfully bridged the gap between technological limitations and the need for interactive learning.

This phenomenon of mutual assistance explicitly demonstrates the fulfillment of the relatedness need within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Interestingly, this sense of connection emerges even more strongly precisely because of the classic shared-screen setup, which forces students to interact physically and verbally to solve problems together, a dynamic often absent in individual device-based learning.

Implementing gamification through Blooket has been proven to significantly change students' perspectives on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Field findings show that this new experience through competitive game-based learning not only creates a fun atmosphere but also effectively strengthens students' memory of the material. The indication of this change is evident in Student 1's statement, saying that "Islamic Religious Education (PAI) doesn't feel boring anymore. It turns out learning Fiqh can be

this fun (Student 1, 2025)" which illustrates that incorporating a competitive element can increase motivation without diminishing the depth of the learning content.

These empirical findings confirm the theoretical hypothesis proposed in the introduction regarding the ARCS model. The implementation of Blooket, facilitated by single-screen projection, successfully captured student attention through dynamic visual stimuli, while instant feedback provided a sense of confidence previously absent in conventional lecture methods. Furthermore, the aspect of satisfaction is achieved not through individual victory but through the collective euphoria of the class. This confirms that the classical gamification model is able to transform the rigid perception of Fiqh material into a fun and meaningful learning experience.

Nevertheless, this achievement needs to be accompanied by critical vigilance against various implementation challenges. Despite the proven increase in participation and confidence that gamification brings, we must still take into account various technical and psychological limitations, particularly in the context of pesantren. These challenges encompass reliance on device accessibility and the likelihood of diminished motivation among less competitive students due to the prevalence of a competitive environment, as indicated in various studies (Kalogiannakis, Papadakis, and Zourmpakis 2021; Masroh 2025). Thus, it becomes especially important that the competitive elements in the gamification design do not distract from the essential learning objective, which is a deep mastery of Islamic Religious Education material. Overall, it can be concluded that gamification platforms like Blooket, when carefully designed to strengthen student independence and competence, have the potential to be effective pedagogical tools. However, for it to be successful, two important things are needed: good technology resources and supportive school policies that help use technology in teaching (Dehghanzadeh et al. 2024; Lampropoulos et al. 2022).

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on a qualitative analysis of the implementation process and its impact, this study concludes that the classical application of Blooket successfully increased the enthusiasm and motivation of XB class students in Islamic Education (Fiqh) subjects at MA Al Wathoniyyah Semarang. This is reflected in the transformation of the classroom atmosphere from passive to a

collaborative-competitive interactive arena, increased student activity and focus, and a shift toward a positive perception of the material. Theoretically, these findings enrich the study of gamification in religious education with a qualitative approach that confirms the relevance of the ARCS Motivational Model and Self-Determination Theory, even within the unique context of technological limitations. This research offers empirical evidence and a flexible framework demonstrating that gamification can be effectively implemented via shared devices (with the teacher as the facilitator) in a pesantren setting that limits mobile phone usage, thereby presenting an innovative solution that aligns with the institution's disciplinary principles. For sustainability, the policy implications emphasize the importance of basic digital infrastructure support and enhancing teacher competency in designing gamified learning experiences. Further research with a mixed-methods design and a wider sample size is recommended to quantitatively test the effectiveness of this model and explore its long-term impact on the internalization of religious values.

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