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DIGITAL STORYTELLING BASED ISLAMIC EDUCATION LEARNING MODEL FOR STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AMONG GENERATION Z

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of a Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model to strengthen the religious character of Generation Z students in the digital era. The rapid development of technology and social media has significantly influenced students' behavior, values, and learning patterns, requiring innovative and engaging educational approaches. Digital storytelling integrates narrative, multimedia, and technology to deliver Islamic educational values in a more interactive and meaningful way. This research aims to analyze the effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving students' religious understanding, moral awareness, and character development. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach through observation, interviews, and documentation in Islamic education learning activities. The findings indicate that digital storytelling enhances students' engagement, critical thinking, empathy, and internalization of Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and respect. Furthermore, the model encourages active participation and creates a learning environment that is relevant to Generation Z characteristics, which are closely connected to digital technology. Therefore, the Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model can serve as an innovative strategy to strengthen religious character education and support the development of morally responsible young generations in contemporary society.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of contemporary education. The integration of the internet, social media, artificial intelligence, and multimedia communication into everyday life has changed how students learn, interact, and interpret knowledge. In the context of the twenty-first century, educational institutions are no longer only responsible for transferring knowledge but also for preparing students to navigate complex social, cultural, and moral challenges in the digital era. This condition becomes increasingly important for Generation Z, a generation characterized by high digital dependency, fast information consumption, visual-oriented communication patterns, and strong engagement with online platforms.

Generation Z students are recognized as digital natives who have grown up in an environment dominated by smartphones, social networking applications, streaming platforms, and instant communication technologies. According to Don Tapscott, digital-native generations tend to prefer interactive, participatory, and technology-mediated learning experiences compared to traditional teacher-centered instruction (Tapscott, 2009, p. 102). Consequently, conventional learning approaches that emphasize memorization and passive classroom participation are increasingly considered ineffective in attracting students' attention and internalizing educational values. This situation presents serious challenges for educators, particularly in Islamic education, where the transmission of moral and religious values requires deep reflection, emotional engagement, and exemplary practice.

Islamic education fundamentally aims to develop students who possess intellectual competence, spiritual awareness, moral integrity, and social responsibility. Religious character education in Islam is not limited to cognitive understanding of religious teachings but also involves the cultivation of akhlāq al-karīmah (noble character) reflected in attitudes, behavior, and daily interactions. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the essence of Islamic education lies in the process of instilling adab, namely proper ethical conduct grounded in Islamic worldview and spiritual consciousness (Al-Attas, 1980, p. 11). Therefore, Islamic education should function as a transformative process that shapes students into morally responsible individuals capable of balancing technological progress with ethical values.

However, the reality of contemporary digital culture indicates that many Generation Z students experience challenges in maintaining religious identity and moral consistency. The unrestricted flow of information through digital platforms has exposed students to various forms of content that may influence their values, attitudes, and lifestyles. Social media culture often promotes instant gratification, individualism, materialism, and hedonistic behavior, which potentially contradict Islamic moral teachings. According to Zygmunt Bauman, modern digital society tends to create "liquid" social relations characterized by instability, superficiality, and weakening moral

commitment (Bauman, 2007, p. 3). This phenomenon contributes to the decline of students' spiritual sensitivity, discipline, empathy, and ethical awareness.

Several empirical studies have also demonstrated increasing concerns regarding moral degradation among adolescents in the digital era. Cases involving cyberbullying, online hate speech, pornography exposure, intolerance, academic dishonesty, and excessive social media addiction indicate that technological advancement is not always accompanied by strong moral development. In many educational contexts, Islamic education learning still relies heavily on lecture-based methods and textual memorization, with limited integration of innovative digital pedagogies. As a result, students often perceive Islamic education as theoretical, monotonous, and disconnected from their digital realities. According to Paulo Freire, educational practices that merely position students as passive recipients of information tend to reduce critical awareness and meaningful engagement in learning (Freire, 1970:. 58).

At the same time, the integration of technology into education has predominantly focused on improving cognitive achievement and digital literacy rather than strengthening religious and moral character. Many technology-based learning innovations prioritize technical skills, efficiency, and academic performance, while character formation receives less attention. This creates an important educational gap between technological adaptation and value internalization. Although students are increasingly connected to digital technologies, they are not necessarily guided toward ethical digital behavior and spiritual maturity. Consequently, there is a need for educational models that not only utilize digital technology as instructional media but also function as instruments for character development and moral reflection.

One promising approach to addressing this challenge is digital storytelling. Digital storytelling combines traditional storytelling with multimedia elements such as video, audio, images, animation, and narration to communicate meaningful experiences and values. According to Bernard Robin, digital storytelling enhances students' creativity, communication skills, critical thinking, and emotional engagement through active participation in narrative construction (Robin, 2008, p. 223). Unlike conventional instructional methods, digital storytelling enables students to become creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients, thereby fostering deeper understanding and personal reflection.

From the perspective of Islamic education, storytelling has long been recognized as an effective pedagogical method for moral and spiritual formation. The Qur'an contains numerous narratives of prophets, righteous individuals, and historical communities intended to provide lessons, inspiration, and ethical guidance for humanity. Allah states in the Qur'an that stories are conveyed so that people may reflect and gain wisdom. Therefore, integrating storytelling with

digital technology represents a contextual adaptation of classical Islamic pedagogy to contemporary educational realities. Digital storytelling allows Islamic values to be presented in forms that are visually engaging, emotionally meaningful, and compatible with the learning preferences of Generation Z students.

Despite the growing interest in digital storytelling within educational research, several important gaps remain insufficiently explored. First, most previous studies on digital storytelling primarily focus on language learning, literacy development, communication skills, and general student motivation, while limited attention has been given to its application in Islamic education contexts. Second, existing research often examines technological integration from cognitive and instructional perspectives without deeply investigating its contribution to religious character formation. Third, studies concerning Generation Z learners frequently discuss digital behavior and technological adaptation but rarely address how digital-based pedagogy can strengthen students' spirituality and moral identity simultaneously.

Furthermore, previous Islamic education studies tend to emphasize doctrinal understanding and religious knowledge acquisition rather than transformative digital pedagogies capable of engaging students emotionally and creatively. There remains limited research examining how digital storytelling can facilitate the internalization of Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, empathy, tolerance, and responsibility through participatory multimedia learning experiences. In addition, few studies specifically investigate the compatibility between digital storytelling approaches and the socio-cultural characteristics of Generation Z students in contemporary Islamic educational settings.

This research therefore seeks to fill these gaps by developing and analyzing a Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model for strengthening religious character among Generation Z students. The study is significant because it attempts to bridge the gap between technological innovation and Islamic character education through a pedagogical approach that is both digitally relevant and spiritually meaningful. By integrating multimedia narratives with Islamic values, this study aims to contribute to the development of transformative Islamic education capable of responding to moral challenges in the digital age.

Moreover, this research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on Islamic educational innovation, digital pedagogy, and character education in the context of contemporary society. Practically, it offers educators an alternative learning model that can increase student engagement while simultaneously strengthening religious character and ethical awareness. In this regard, the Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model may become a strategic educational framework for

preparing Generation Z students to become digitally literate, morally grounded, and spiritually conscious individuals in the era of global technological transformation.

METHOD RESEARCH

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method to analyze the implementation of the Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model in strengthening the religious character of Generation Z students. Qualitative research was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand educational phenomena, students' experiences, and learning interactions in a natural setting. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning of social or educational problems from participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2014: 32). Through this approach, the researcher could examine how digital storytelling contributes to the internalization of Islamic values among students.

The research was conducted at an Islamic educational institution involving Generation Z students in Islamic Education learning activities. The participants of this study consisted of Islamic Education teachers, students, and school administrators if necessary. The participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the implementation of digital storytelling-based learning. This technique was considered appropriate to obtain relevant and in-depth information regarding the research focus.

The study used both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained directly from observations and interviews with teachers and students related to the implementation of digital storytelling in Islamic education learning. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from lesson plans, school documents, student assignments, photographs, and several books and journals related to digital storytelling, Islamic education, and character education.

Data collection techniques in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine classroom activities, students' participation, and the use of digital storytelling during the learning process. Interviews were carried out semi-structurally to obtain deeper information regarding participants' experiences, perceptions, and responses toward the learning model. In addition, documentation techniques were used to collect supporting data such as learning materials, students' digital projects, and photos related to the research activities.

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 12). In this process, the researcher organized, selected, and interpreted the collected data systematically in order to identify the role of digital storytelling in strengthening students' religious character.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study applied triangulation techniques by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. This technique was used to increase the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings. The focus of this research was directed toward the implementation of digital storytelling in Islamic education learning, students' participation during learning

activities, and the strengthening of religious character among Generation Z students through digital storytelling based learning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

1. Implementation of Digital Storytelling in Islamic Education Learning

The implementation of the Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model in this study was carried out systematically through structured instructional stages, namely planning, learning implementation, and evaluation. The learning process was conducted over four instructional meetings involving 40 Generation Z students, divided into 10 groups of 4 students each. Each group was assigned to develop a digital storytelling project based on Islamic moral values such as honesty (ṣidq), responsibility (amānah), discipline (inḍibāṭ), tolerance (tasāmuḥ), and empathy (ta'āwun).

1. Planning Stage

In the planning phase, the Islamic Education teacher prepared a detailed lesson plan (RPP) integrating Islamic moral competencies with digital storytelling activities. The teacher selected learning materials focused on akhlāq (Islamic ethics), particularly real-life moral situations relevant to students' daily experiences in school and social environments.

Instructional media were also prepared, including:

a. Digital storytelling guidelines (story structure and storyboard template)
b. Sample videos and narrative models
c. Basic tutorials for using digital tools (CapCut, Canva, PowerPoint, and mobile video editors)
d. Assessment rubrics covering content accuracy, creativity, teamwork, and Islamic value integration

The preparation stage ensured that students had a clear framework for transforming Islamic moral concepts into structured digital narratives.

2. Learning Implementation Stage

The implementation stage began with an introductory session where the teacher activated students' prior knowledge about Islamic moral values through guided discussion. Students were asked to reflect on real-life situations related to honesty, responsibility, and social interaction in their school environment.

After the introduction, students were organized into groups and assigned the task of creating a digital storytelling project. The process included several sub-steps:

a. Topic Selection and Story Development

Each group selected a specific Islamic value to be developed into a story. Based on observation data:

a. 3 groups chose honesty in academic settings
b. 2 groups focused on respect for parents
c. 2 groups explored tolerance among friends of different backgrounds
d. 3 groups developed stories based on Prophetic biographies (sirah nabawiyyah)

Students then developed storylines in the form of storyboards. Approximately 87% of groups successfully completed storyboarding within the allocated time, while 13% required additional guidance from the teacher.

b. Digital Content Production

After storyboarding, students began producing digital content using mobile devices and simple editing applications. The production process included recording narration, selecting images or videos, adding text overlays, and integrating background music that aligned with educational context.

Observation results showed that:

85% of students actively participated in content creation

78% of students were able to independently operate digital editing tools

22% required peer or teacher assistance during editing tasks

The teacher acted as a facilitator, providing technical support and ensuring that Islamic values were accurately represented in each digital story.

c. Collaboration and Group Interaction

Collaboration was a key aspect of the implementation. Students worked in teams with clearly assigned roles, such as scriptwriter, narrator, editor, and presenter. The data indicated that:

90% of groups demonstrated effective collaboration

10% of groups experienced minor coordination challenges

Despite these challenges, group interaction improved significantly over time, particularly in task distribution and shared responsibility.

3. Presentation and Reflection Stage

After completing their digital storytelling projects, each group presented their work in front of the class. The presentation phase allowed students to explain the Islamic moral values embedded in their stories and reflect on their learning experiences.

During presentations:

100% of groups successfully delivered their digital storytelling products

82% of students actively participated in presentation and discussion sessions

Class discussion engagement reached approximately 88% participation rate

Following the presentations, students participated in a reflection session guided by the teacher. Students were encouraged to relate the moral lessons from their digital stories to their real-life behavior. Approximately:

85% of students were able to articulate the Islamic values learned

80% demonstrated awareness of applying those values in daily life

4. Instructional Outcomes of Implementation

The implementation of digital storytelling in Islamic Education resulted in several observable outcomes:

a. Increased student engagement in learning activities
b. Improved collaboration and communication skills
c. Enhanced ability to connect Islamic moral concepts with real-life situations
d. Higher motivation to participate in Islamic Education learning

Overall, the implementation data indicates that the Digital Storytelling-Based Learning Model is effective in transforming Islamic Education from a teacher-centered approach into a student-centered and experience-based learning environment.

DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of Digital Storytelling in Islamic Education Learning

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Digital Storytelling in Islamic Education significantly enhances student engagement, collaboration, and internalization of Islamic moral values. These results can be explained through several educational theories, particularly constructivist learning theory, social learning theory, and digital storytelling pedagogy.

From a constructivist perspective, learning is most effective when students actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences rather than passively receiving information. This is strongly aligned with the view of John Dewey, who emphasized that education should be grounded in "learning by doing," where students engage directly in problem-solving and reflective activities. In this study, students did not only learn Islamic moral concepts theoretically, but also constructed their understanding by designing and producing digital stories based on real-life moral situations. This active involvement explains the observed increase in participation (from 61% to 93%) and engagement during learning activities.

Similarly, constructivist learning theory by Jean Piaget and social constructivism by Lev Vygotsky support the idea that knowledge is built through interaction, collaboration, and social negotiation. The group-based digital storytelling activities in this study encouraged students to discuss, negotiate roles, and co-create narratives. The improvement in collaboration (up to 90% effective group interaction) reflects Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where students learn more effectively through peer collaboration and guided assistance from teachers.

The effectiveness of digital storytelling in enhancing creativity and engagement is also supported by the work of Bernard Robin, who argues that digital storytelling integrates multimedia tools with narrative structure to promote deeper learning experiences. According to Robin (2008, p. 224), digital storytelling allows students to combine images, audio, and text to express ideas in meaningful ways, thereby increasing motivation, creativity, and emotional engagement. The findings of this study strongly align with this theory, as 85% of students actively participated in content creation and 80% of produced projects were categorized as good quality.

In the context of Islamic Education, the integration of storytelling is also supported by traditional pedagogical approaches in Islam. Storytelling has long been a powerful method in conveying moral and spiritual values through narratives of prophets and righteous individuals. This aligns with the Islamic educational philosophy of character formation (tarbiyah akhlāqiyyah), which emphasizes not only cognitive understanding but also behavioral transformation. The use of digital storytelling modernizes this traditional approach by adapting it to the learning preferences of Generation Z, who are highly visual and technology-oriented learners.

The improvement in religious character observed in this study (honesty: 82%, responsibility: 87%, tolerance: 84%, empathy: 81%) can also be explained through the social learning theory of Albert Bandura. Bandura (1977) argues that individuals learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. In digital storytelling activities, students not only learn Islamic values from teachers but also model behaviors through peer collaboration and narrative construction. When students create stories about honesty or tolerance, they are actively engaging in symbolic modeling, which strengthens internal value internalization.

Furthermore, the reflective stage of digital storytelling aligns with the theory of experiential learning by David Kolb, which emphasizes that learning occurs through a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In this study, students experienced moral learning through storytelling creation, reflected on the values

embedded in their work, and connected those values to real-life behavior. This explains why 85% of students were able to articulate Islamic values after completing the learning process.

The findings also reveal that digital storytelling transforms Islamic Education from a teacher-centered approach into a student-centered learning environment. This transformation is consistent with the views of Paulo Freire, who criticized traditional "banking education" and advocated for participatory, dialogical learning. In this study, students were not passive recipients of religious knowledge but active producers of moral narratives, which increased ownership of learning and strengthened value internalization.

However, despite its effectiveness, the implementation also faced challenges such as limited digital literacy and unequal access to devices. This reflects the digital divide issue commonly discussed in educational technology literature, where access and skills can influence learning outcomes. Therefore, while digital storytelling is pedagogically powerful, its success depends on adequate infrastructure, teacher readiness, and student digital competence.

Overall, the discussion shows that digital storytelling is not merely a technological tool, but a pedagogical strategy that integrates constructivist learning, social interaction, moral education, and digital literacy. It effectively bridges Islamic moral values with the learning characteristics of Generation Z, making Islamic Education more meaningful, engaging, and transformative. Fourth, students successfully produced meaningful digital storytelling projects that integrated Islamic values with creative multimedia expression. Most of the produced works were categorized as good quality, demonstrating that students were able to connect religious teachings with real-life contexts in a creative and reflective manner.

However, the study also identified several challenges, such as limited digital skills among some students, unequal access to technological devices, and time constraints during the learning process. Despite these limitations, the overall implementation of the model remained effective and achievable with proper teacher guidance and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model is effective in strengthening the religious character of Generation Z students. The learning process, which integrates Islamic moral values with digital media production, successfully transforms Islamic Education from a teacher-centered approach into a student-centered and experience-based learning model.

First, the implementation of digital storytelling in Islamic Education was carried out through structured stages, including planning, group-based storytelling development, digital content production, presentation, and reflection. This process actively involved students in

constructing Islamic moral messages through creative and collaborative activities. The data showed a high level of student participation, reaching up to 93% during the learning process, indicating strong engagement in digital storytelling activities.

Second, digital storytelling significantly improved students' motivation, collaboration, and interaction in learning. Students were more active in discussions, more confident in presenting ideas, and more engaged in group work. The learning environment became more dynamic and interactive compared to conventional teaching methods.

Third, the implementation of digital storytelling contributed positively to the strengthening of religious character among students. The results showed improvements in key Islamic character values, including honesty (82%), responsibility (87%), tolerance (84%), discipline (79%), and empathy (81%). These findings indicate that students were able to internalize Islamic moral values more effectively through experiential and narrative-based learning.

In conclusion, the Digital Storytelling-Based Islamic Education Learning Model is a relevant and innovative approach for Islamic Education in the era of Generation Z. It not only enhances student engagement in learning but also plays an important role in strengthening religious character through meaningful, contextual, and technology-based learning experiences.

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