JKPI: Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan Islam
P–ISSN: 2655-9692
E-ISSN: 2746-5977
Vol.7, No. 2, Mei 2026

GAME ON! *JOYFUL LEARNING* AS A *BOOSTER* FOR MOTIVATION AND ACTIVE LEARNING IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR NINTH GRADE STUDENTS AT SMP NEGERI 2 SUMBER, CIREBON REGENCY

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Abstract
This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of game-based Joyful Learning in enhancing students' motivation and learning activeness in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMP Negeri 2 Sumber, Cirebon Regency. A quantitative approach with a descriptive-associative design was employed to measure the effect of Game-Based Learning on both dependent variables. The research sample consisted of 76 ninth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, observations, and open interviews, and analyzed using MANOVA with SPSS version 25.0. The results revealed that game-based Joyful Learning had a significant and strong effect on students' learning motivation ($\eta^2 = 0.730$) and activeness ($\eta^2 = 0.754$). Multivariate analysis further confirmed a simultaneous significant effect (Sig. = 0.000) between both variables. The approach successfully fostered an interactive, enjoyable, and meaningful learning environment, encouraging students' cognitive, affective, and social engagement. This study concludes that game-based Joyful Learning is an effective strategy to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education in the digital era.
Keywords: Joyful Learning, Game, Motivation, Learning Activeness

Abstrak
Penelitian bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas penerapan Joyful Learning berbasis permainan terhadap motivasi dan keaktifan belajar siswa dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di SMP Negeri 2 Sumber Kabupaten Cirebon. Pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain deskriptif-asosiatif digunakan untuk mengukur pengaruh Game-Based Learning terhadap dua variabel dependen tersebut. Sampel penelitian terdiri atas 76 siswa kelas IX yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket, observasi, dan wawancara terbuka, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan uji MANOVA dengan bantuan SPSS versi 25.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Joyful Learning berbasis game berpengaruh signifikan terhadap motivasi belajar ($\eta^2 = 0{,}730$) dan keaktifan belajar siswa ($\eta^2 = 0{,}754$). Analisis multivariat juga mengonfirmasi pengaruh simultan yang kuat (Sig. = 0,000) antara keduanya. Pendekatan ini terbukti menciptakan suasana belajar yang interaktif, menyenangkan, dan bermakna, serta mendorong keterlibatan aktif siswa secara kognitif, afektif, dan sosial. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa Joyful Learning berbasis permainan merupakan strategi efektif dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran PAI di era digital.
***Kata Kunci**: Joyful Learning, Game, Motivasi, Keaktifan Belajar*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought major changes to the world of education, including Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning, which is now required to be more interactive and adaptive (Suaidi et al., 2025). Digital transformation has transformed teachers from mere conveyors of information to creative and innovative learning facilitators. The process of enjoyable learning or Joyful Learning has been proven to increase student motivation and active participation (Safitri et al., 2025). Game-based learning models such as Game-Based Learning (GBL) allow students to be emotionally and cognitively involved in learning activities. In the context of PAI, this approach has great potential to foster a love for Islamic values through positive learning experiences. In addition, digitization also helps expand access and create more flexible learning spaces (Erviana et al., 2025). Therefore, *Joyful Learning*-based PAI learning innovation is an urgent need in the 21st century education era.

Although many studies show the effectiveness of digital learning, its application in the context of PAI is still limited (Suaidi et al., 2025). Most studies focus on science and language, while spiritual and religious aspects have not been widely addressed through technological approaches (Safitri et al., 2025). Research by Nur and Uswah (2020) shows that Joyful Learning is capable of providing an interactive, inspiring, and enjoyable approach to increase students' enthusiasm and understanding (Sakinah & Hasanah, 2020). Similar findings were found in the research by Prasetyo et al. (2024), *Joyful Learning* with the help of Uno Stacko media was able to create a fun learning atmosphere and increase student participation (Prasetyo et al., 2024). Research by Efendi, Sujarwati, and Harahap (2025) shows that the Quizizz application is effective in increasing learning engagement, but does not explain how this media affects students' religious motivation (Efendi et al., 2025). On the other hand, digital literacy and independent learning have been proven to contribute to learning effectiveness, but have not been widely associated with the context of religious values (Sari et al., 2025). In addition, another challenge in the form of low teacher competence in integrating technology remains a major obstacle in schools (Erviana et al., 2025). PAI learning is often considered monotonous due to the lack of variety in media and interactive activities. Therefore, new research examining game-based Joyful Learning in PAI is urgently needed to bridge this gap.

This study aims to analyze the application of game-based Joyful Learning on student motivation and learning activity in PAI learning. Through the use of interactive media, learning is expected to create an active and enjoyable classroom atmosphere (Efendi et al., 2025). This approach not only aims to improve cognitive learning outcomes but also to foster enthusiasm and discipline among students in understanding religious values. In addition, this study seeks to support the digital transformation of education oriented towards strengthening character and spirituality (Suaidi et al., 2025). Referring to the results of a review by Safitri et al. (2025), *Game-Based Learning* has been proven to be effective in increasing student engagement and motivation across subject areas. This study also places the role of teachers as creative facilitators who are able to utilize

technology pedagogically (Erviana et al., 2025). Overall, this study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the development of a PAI learning model that is relevant to the demands of the digital era. Based on previous empirical findings, Game-Based Learning has been proven to have a positive effect on increasing student motivation and learning outcomes (Safitri et al., 2025). Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis that the application of game-based Joyful Learning has a significant level of effectiveness on the motivation and learning activity of PAI students. This approach is believed to be able to change students' perceptions of PAI to be more positive, interactive, and meaningful. The use of interactive technology can foster a sense of healthy competition and increase enthusiasm for learning. In addition to cognitive aspects, this approach is also expected to foster spiritual and social awareness through contextual learning. Thus, PAI learning is not only a means of transferring knowledge, but also a vehicle for shaping religious character. This hypothesis emphasizes the importance of integrating technology, motivation, and Islamic values in creating a fun and meaningful learning experience (Suaidi et al., 2025).

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive-associative design to measure the effectiveness of the game-based Joyful Learning approach on student motivation and learning activity in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subjects. The quantitative approach was chosen because this study relies on the processing of numerical data through statistical techniques, so that it is able to describe trends, relationships, and the level of effectiveness between research variables. The descriptive-associative design was used to describe the conditions of student motivation and learning activity, as well as to analyze the relationship and influence of the game-based Joyful Learning approach on these two variables. This research is classified as non-experimental (ex post facto) because it does not provide direct treatment as in a pure experiment. Data were collected based on actual conditions after the Joyful Learning approach was implemented in the students' learning environment. The research population was all ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Sumber, Cirebon Regency, with a sample size of 76 students from classes IX D and IX G selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was carried out using a Likert scale questionnaire, observation, and open interviews so that the research findings were not only quantitative but also provided a contextual description of the students' learning process. Data analysis was performed using SPSS Statistics version 25.0. Before the main analysis was conducted, the research instruments were tested for validity and reliability. The validity test was performed using the *Product Moment Pearson* correlation, where the statement items were declared valid if the calculated $r \geq r$ table at a significance level of 5%. The reliability test used the Cronbach's Alpha technique and was declared reliable if $\alpha \geq 0.60$. Furthermore, a MANOVA analysis prerequisite test was conducted, which included: a normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov, a linearity test using the Test for Linearity, and a covariance homogeneity test using Box's M Test. The data was declared to meet the assumptions if the significance

value was greater than 0.05. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the level of student motivation and learning activity through the calculation of averages and intervals with categories of very high, high, medium, low, and very low. After that, MANOVA analysis was conducted to test the effectiveness of the game-based Joyful Learning approach simultaneously and partially on student motivation and learning activity. MANOVA was chosen because it is capable of analyzing two dependent variables simultaneously and provides an overview of the strength of influence through the effect size value (Partial Eta Squared). The results of the statistical analysis were used to determine the level of effectiveness of the Joyful Learning approach in increasing student motivation and learning activity. Thus, this study is expected to provide empirical evidence that the application of game-based Joyful Learning can create PAI learning that is more interesting, meaningful, and encourages active student involvement in cognitive, affective, and social aspects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that the game-based Joyful Learning approach has a significant effect on student motivation and learning activity in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) classes. These findings can be explained through various educational theories and previous studies that form the conceptual basis of this research.

Table 1. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Say.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[c]
Corrected Model	Y1 Learning Motivation	4186.745a	20	209.337	7.417	.000	.730	148.331	1.000
	Y2 Learning Activity	5921.821b	20	296.091	8.410	.000	.754	168.196	1.000
Intercept	Y1 Learning Motivation	271772.509	1	271772.509	9628.553	.000	.994	9628.553	1.000
	Y2 Learning Activity	228377.581	1	228377.581	6486.564	.000	.992	6486.564	1.000
Game	Y1 Learning	4186.745	20	209.337	7.417	.000	.730	148.331	1.000

	Motivation								
	Y2 Learning Activity	5921.821	20	296.091	8.410	.000	.754	168.196	1.000
Error	Y1 Learning Motivation	1552.413	55	28.226					
	Y2 Learning Activity	1936.429	55	35.208					
Total	Y1 Learning Motivation	423100.000	76						
	Y2 Learning Activity	361871.000	76						
Corrected Total	Y1 Learning Motivation	5739.158	75						
	Y2 Learning Activity	7858.250	75						

a. R Squared = ,730 (Adjusted R Squared = ,631)

b. R Squared = ,754 (Adjusted R Squared = ,664)

c. Computed using alpha = ,05

The Effect of the Game-Based Joyful Learning Approach on Learning Motivation

The findings show that the game-based Joyful Learning approach has a significant and very strong effect on student learning motivation ($\eta^2 = 0.730$). This is in line with motivation theories that emphasize the importance of psychological aspects, positive emotions, and meaningful learning experiences. According to Keller's ARCS model (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction), learning motivation increases when students receive attention, feel that the material is relevant, have confidence, and gain satisfaction during learning (Herianto & Wilujeng, 2021). The Joyful Learning approach, which utilizes interactive games such as Kahoot, Quizizz, or other educational games, has been proven to attract students' attention and build the relevance of the material to their experiences. Vroom's Expectancy Theory also states that motivation arises when students believe that learning efforts will result in achievements that are valuable to them (Vroom,

1964). In the context of this study, educational games provide immediate feedback in the form of scores, rewards, and recognition, thereby strengthening students' expectancy–instrumentality–valence in learning. In addition, Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan) explains that motivation will grow when the learning environment fulfills the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. *Joyful Learning* has been proven to create a more pressure-free atmosphere, increase self-confidence, and encourage social interaction among students, so that students' intrinsic motivation can grow optimally (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, the research findings showing high student learning motivation are consistent with the theoretical basis that learning that is fun, interactive, and provides positive emotional experiences will increase student engagement and internal drive.

The Effect of the Game-Based Joyful Learning Approach on Learning Activity

The results of the Test of Between-Subjects also show that the game-based Joyful Learning approach has a very strong effect on student learning activity ($\eta^2 = 0.754$). This finding reinforces the constructivist theory, which states that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through meaningful learning experiences. Piaget asserts that cognitive development occurs through a process of assimilation and accommodation that requires students' active involvement in learning activities. Educational games allow students to observe, try, explore, and adjust their knowledge schemes independently. Vygotsky, through his theories of the Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding, explains that learning is more effective when there is social interaction and collaborative support. Game activities that require group work, discussion, and healthy competition are in line with these principles of social learning (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Bruner also emphasizes the importance of discovery learning, which is the process of learning through direct discovery and exploration. Educational games in PAI, whether through interactive quizzes, card games, or worship simulations, provide students with opportunities to discover concepts actively and enjoyably (Bruner, 1966). Field findings from observations and questionnaires support these theories. Students appear to be more courageous in asking questions, answering, working together, and showing initiative during the learning process. The lively classroom atmosphere, positive teacher-student interactions, and the use of game media support the improvement of students' physical, mental, and social activity in PAI learning.

The Simultaneous Effect of *Joyful Learning* on Motivation and Activity

Table 2. Multivariate Tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[d]
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.995	5031.683[b]	2.000	54.000	.000	.995	10063.366	1.000

	Wilks' Lambda	.005	5031.683[b]	2.000	54.000	.000	.995	10063.366	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	186.359	5031.683[b]	2.000	54.000	.000	.995	10063.366	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	186.359	5031.683[b]	2.000	54.000	.000	.995	10063.366	1.000
Game	Pillai's Trace	.982	2.654	40.000	110.000	.000	**.491**	106.177	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.177	3.722[b]	40.000	108.000	.000	**.580**	148.897	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	3.758	4.980	40.000	106.000	.000	**.653**	199.182	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	3.501	9.628[c]	20.000	55.000	.000	**.778**	192.561	1.000

a. Design: Intercept + Game
b. Exact statistic
c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.
d. Computed using alpha = ,05

The results of multivariate analysis show that the game-based Joyful Learning approach has a significant simultaneous effect on student motivation and learning activity, as evidenced by all multivariate statistics (Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root) that produce Sig. 0.000 (<0.05). The *Partial Eta Squared* values, which ranged from 0.491 to 0.778, show that the effect is strong to very strong.

Theoretically, this result is reasonable because motivation and activity are two aspects that influence each other. High motivation encourages students to be more actively involved, while learning activity provides positive emotional experiences that strengthen motivation. The Joyful Learning approach bridges the two by providing a learning atmosphere that is fun, safe, interactive, and rich in experience. This is in line with the principles of humanistic learning (Rogers), which emphasizes that a learning atmosphere that values students' feelings and experiences will increase their motivation and participation in learning (Rogers, 1994).

The findings of this study also support Positive Psychology theory, which states that joyful emotions strengthen memory, attention, and material retention (Hurlock in Mahmudah, 2025). In the context of PAI, this approach is in line with Islamic educational

values that emphasize the importance of gentleness, joy, and compassion in the educational process, as emphasized by classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali (Al-ghazali, 2014) and Ibn Khaldun (Khaldun, 2019). Thus, the findings of this study empirically reinforce modern educational theories and Islamic learning concepts, namely that enjoyable learning through educational games can increase motivation, activity, and the quality of learning holistically.

Relevance of Findings to Previous Research

The results of this study are consistent with the research by Kartini & Sriyanto (2023), which found that the use of *Quizizz* increases student engagement in learning (Kartini & Sriyanto, 2023). Research by Maulana et al. (2025) also shows that educational *games* increase student creativity and activity in PAI learning. This study reinforces these findings but provides a new contribution (novelty) because it examines two variables simultaneously (motivation and activity) in the context of PAI and uses MANOVA analysis to assess the effectiveness of education simultaneously, unlike previous studies that tended to only use pre-tests/post-tests or assess only one variable. Based on theory and empirical findings, it can be concluded that the *Joyful Learning* approach based on *games* is an effective learning approach to increase the motivation and learning activity of PAI students. This approach is in line with cognitive, humanistic, social, and positive psychology theories and has a strong foundation in Islamic pedagogy. Its statistically significant influence shows that this model is feasible to use and develop further in PAI learning at the junior high school level.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the game-based Joyful Learning approach has been proven effective in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning among ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Sumber in Cirebon Regency. Descriptively, the students' motivation and learning activity levels were in the high category, as indicated by significant average scores for each variable. The MANOVA analysis results confirm that the game-based approach has a significant effect, both partially and simultaneously, on student motivation (Y1) and learning activity (Y2). The Partial Eta Squared value, which is in the very strong category, shows that the application of game-based Joyful Learning contributes greatly to creating an interesting and stimulating learning experience and facilitating active student participation in PAI learning.

Theoretically, this study makes an important contribution to the development of PAI learning models by confirming that the Joyful Learning approach combined with game elements can simultaneously improve students' cognitive, affective, and social aspects. This strategy is relevant to the modern learning approach in the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes independence, active participation, and meaningful learning experiences. Practically, this research can be a reference for PAI teachers to design more creative learning that suits student characteristics, especially through the use of digital and offline educational games that can maintain student enthusiasm, collaboration, and

focus during learning. This study has several limitations, including the use of a non-experimental (ex post facto) design that does not allow full control of independent variables, so that causality can only be inferred based on perception data and statistical trends. In addition, the study was conducted in two classes in one school, so the generalization of the findings is still limited. The use of questionnaires as the main instrument also has the potential for student subjectivity bias. Therefore, further research is recommended using experimental or mixed methods designs, expanding the sample across schools, and adding performance-based assessment to provide a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of game-based Joyful Learning in PAI learning.

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