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The Development and Implementation of Game-based learning for Tasawwur Islam Subject: Insights from Teachers and Classroom Integration

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
	This study explores the integration of game-based learning to enhance the teaching and learning of Tasawwur Islam, focusing on student engagement, motivation, and retention of complex Islamic concepts. Using a qualitative approach, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with nine Tasawwur Islam teachers, complemented by classroom case studies in six schools. FGDs provided insights into teachers' perspectives on the challenges of teaching abstract concepts, while case studies assessed the practical impact of gamification on student learning outcomes. The findings revealed that mobile-based games significantly improved student engagement, particularly among underperforming students (GALUS) who typically struggle with traditional teaching methods. These students, often kinesthetic learners, benefited from the interactive and movement-oriented nature of gamified tools. Furthermore, tools like Tarsia Istilah and Quizizz enhanced memory retention of Islamic terminologies. Gamified tools also provided real-time feedback, enabling teachers to adapt their instructional strategies continuously. However, while game-based learning offer many benefits, balancing these with traditional teaching methods is essential to ensure deeper conceptual understanding. This study contributes to the growing body of research on Islamic education by demonstrating the potential of game-based learning to create more interactive, engaging, and effective learning experiences. **Keywords:** Game-based learning (GBL), Tasawwur Islam, student motivation, student engagement, continuous assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of game-based learning (GBL) into educational contexts has gained substantial momentum as an innovative pedagogical approach that transforms passive learning into dynamic, interactive experiences (Subhash & Cudney, 2018; Acquah & Katz, 2020). Despite its growing popularity in various educational fields, its application in Islamic education, particularly Tasawwur Islam, remains relatively underexplored. The existing literature emphasizes the effectiveness of game-based tools in enhancing student motivation, engagement, and retention of knowledge (Chen, 2018), but there is limited research focusing on their implementation in Islamic educational contexts, where complex religious and philosophical concepts are often challenging to convey through traditional methods.

The unique demands of Tasawwur Islam, requiring students to understand intricate Islamic concepts and memorize extensive Arabic terminologies highlight a critical need for innovative teaching strategies that can make these abstract concepts more accessible (Andreani & Ying, 2019). Previous studies acknowledge the difficulties students face in traditional classroom settings, particularly in subjects that involve a high cognitive load, such as Islamic jurisprudence and theology. These challenges underscore the potential value of incorporating gamification into Islamic education to simplify complex topics and foster deeper student engagement (Aliff et al., 2014).

Moreover, while there is a growing interest in game-based learning in education, research specific to the impact of these tools on Islamic subjects, particularly Tasawwur Islam, is still in its infancy (Yusof & Mohamed, 2022). Current studies indicate that mobile platforms offer flexible, on-the-go learning experiences that can cater to diverse learning styles, providing an opportunity to engage students both inside and outside the classroom (Aziz & Nor, 2023). However, the need for research that explores how mobile-based games can be effectively integrated into Islamic pedagogy, while maintaining the subject's spiritual and moral integrity, remains largely unmet.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the potential of game-based learning to address the pedagogical challenges in Tasawwur Islam. By gathering insights from expert teachers through FGDs and analyzing empirical classroom data, this

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research seeks to provide practical recommendations for the design and development of mobile-based games in Islamic education, specifically tailored to enhance student engagement, motivation, and understanding of complex Islamic concepts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Game-Based Learning in Islamic Education

GBL has emerged as a transformative pedagogical tool across various disciplines, enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic performance by integrating interactive and immersive elements into the learning process (Subhash & Cudney, 2018; Acquah & Katz, 2020). However, the application of GBL in Islamic education, particularly in subjects like Tasawwur Islam, remains underdeveloped. Tasawwur Islam involves teaching deep, abstract Islamic concepts that can be challenging for students to comprehend through traditional teaching methods, such as lectures and rote memorization.

In Islamic education, game-based learning presents an opportunity to shift from passive, lecture-based instruction to more dynamic, student-centered learning environments (Aliff et al., 2014). Islamic pedagogy emphasizes both the transmission of knowledge and the internalization of values. GBL supports these dual objectives by offering interactive learning experiences that align with Islamic teaching methods, making abstract concepts more tangible and relatable for students. Research suggests that when game-based learning are designed in accordance with curriculum objectives, they can effectively enhance students' engagement and retention of religious knowledge (Yusof & Mohamed, 2022).

For example, interactive quizzes and role-playing simulations that replicate real-life ethical scenarios drawn from Islamic teachings help students develop a deeper understanding of Islamic principles while maintaining their engagement. Despite these benefits, GBL in Islamic education is still in its infancy. The abstract nature of Islamic subjects, including jurisprudence (fiqh) and theology, poses challenges in developing gamified content that balances educational rigor with engaging mechanics (Andreani & Ying, 2019).

Studies have demonstrated that integrating game elements such as rewards, competition, and immediate feedback into the learning process can significantly enhance student motivation, particularly for younger students or those struggling with conventional methods (Andreani & Ying, 2019). As the demand for digital educational tools grows, the flexibility of mobile-based platforms offers a promising avenue for incorporating GBL into Islamic studies. By designing gamified tools that combine educational content with engaging gameplay mechanics, teachers can make complex religious teachings more accessible and enjoyable for students.

2.2 Challenges in Traditional Learning Methods

Traditional teaching methods in Islamic education, including lectures, readings, and memorization, have been criticized for their inability to sustain student interest or foster deep understanding (Alkhawaldeh & Khasawneh, 2024). Subjects like Tasawwur Islam often present students with complex terminologies and abstract concepts, which make it difficult for them to stay engaged, especially when these concepts are presented in a text-heavy, passive manner.

Research shows that these traditional approaches are particularly ineffective for kinesthetic learners, who benefit from more interactive, hands-on learning experiences (Liu & Jeong, 2022). The challenge becomes even more significant when teaching abstract concepts in Islamic jurisprudence or theology, where students are not only required to memorize terms but also to apply them in ethical and legal contexts that may feel disconnected from their daily lives.

The GALUS students (those who fluctuate between passing and failing) often struggle in traditional learning environments due to a lack of motivation and engagement. Teachers in previous studies, including those in this research, have noted that students in the B40 category (low-income) face additional challenges in staying motivated during lessons that rely heavily on memorization and the use of Arabic terms (Ahmad & Rashid, 2021). The emphasis on rote learning leaves little room for interactive engagement, resulting in decreased performance and understanding.

Gamification offers a dynamic alternative by incorporating elements like interactivity, movement, competition, and collaboration into the learning process. These features not only transform the classroom experience but also make learning more enjoyable. Research indicates that students, particularly those struggling with traditional methods, benefit from the motivational and cognitive effects of GBL (Subhash & Cudney, 2018). For example, game-based assessments like interactive quizzes or role-playing scenarios help students better grasp and apply complex Islamic concepts in a more practical and engaging way.

In summary, gamification presents a promising solution to the challenges posed by traditional teaching methods in Tasawwur Islam. Incorporating competitive elements, interactive content, and real-time feedback allows teachers to create learning environments that are better suited to engaging students, particularly those in the GALUS category, who respond more positively to active learning environments (Ahmad & Rashid, 2021).

2.3 Theoretical Framework for Motivation in Game-Based Learning

2.3.1 Constructivism and Active Learning

The constructivist theory posits that knowledge is actively constructed through experiences and interactions with the environment rather than being passively absorbed. Theorists such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky emphasized the role of learners in actively engaging with their surroundings to build understanding (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of GBL, constructivism is highly relevant as it advocates for learning strategies where students engage in problem-solving, exploration, and reflection (All et al., 2021).

GBL aligns well with constructivist theory by creating dynamic, interactive learning situations. These environments allow students to build knowledge through hands-on experience, thus enhancing critical thinking and communication skills, which are essential in the 21st century (Wilkinson, 2016). Research, such as the studies conducted by Qian & Clark (2016) and Mad Noor Madjapuni & Jamaludin Harun (2019), highlights that constructivist-based games significantly improve student motivation and comprehension, particularly when dealing with complex concepts.

By incorporating game elements into PBBP, students are provided with opportunities to actively engage in their learning, enhancing problem-solving abilities and building confidence. This not only meets the requirements of modern education but also ensures that learning is relevant and meaningful for students (Wilkinson, 2016; Qian & Clark, 2016).

2.3.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Game-Based Learning

Motivation plays a crucial role in influencing student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly within GBL. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal desire to participate in an activity for its inherent satisfaction, such as enjoyment or fulfillment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In the context of PBBP, intrinsic motivation often stems from the enjoyment of gameplay, where students are motivated by challenges, puzzles, or exploration that provide immediate satisfaction (Malone & Lepper, 1987). Research shows that intrinsically motivated students tend to develop deeper understanding and retain knowledge for longer periods (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In contrast, extrinsic motivation involves engaging in activities for external rewards or to avoid punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In PBBP, extrinsic motivation can be fostered through leaderboards, badges, and rewards for achieving specific milestones (Hamari et al., 2016). While external rewards can encourage participation, studies caution that overreliance on extrinsic motivators may diminish intrinsic motivation over time (Lepper & Greene, 1978). Therefore, striking a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is critical to maintaining student engagement while ensuring they internalize learning content (Sulaiman, 2024).

Studies demonstrate that well-designed PBBP applications, which integrate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, can create richer and more impactful learning experiences. For instance, Wang (2019) showed that GBL applications combining intrinsic motivators with extrinsic rewards significantly enhance student engagement and academic achievement. Similarly, Tay (2021) found that incorporating motivational elements in gamified education improved student performance in continuous assessments. Balancing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is key to maximizing the effectiveness of GBL tools (Tay, 2021).

2.3.3 Summary of Theories

Both constructivism and the theories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation provide a strong theoretical foundation for applying GBL in 21st-century education. Constructivism emphasizes active learning, where students construct their own knowledge through interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). GBL supports this by creating dynamic learning environments that foster critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving (Wilkinson, 2016; Qian & Clark, 2016).

Additionally, understanding motivation theories helps explain how internal and external motivational factors can be used within PBBP to enhance student engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). When intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are combined effectively, PBBP can drive deep engagement, leading to improved understanding and academic performance (Hamari et al., 2016).

In conclusion, by supporting active learning and integrating both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, this study aims to develop effective teaching strategies that cater to the needs of modern learners, ensuring education is more interactive and student-centered (Wilkinson, 2016; Qian & Clark, 2016; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design that integrated Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and classroom case studies to explore the development and implementation of game-based learning in the teaching of Tasawwur Islam. These

methodological approaches were chosen to align with the study's objectives, which were to gain insights into teachers' perspectives on gamified tools and to evaluate the practical impact of these tools on student engagement and learning outcomes.

3.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

The FGD method was selected as the primary data collection tool due to its effectiveness in generating in-depth qualitative data from participants who share a common professional background. In this case, the participants were Tasawwur Islam teachers. FGDs were deemed particularly suitable because they facilitate open communication and allow participants to share their experiences, insights, and challenges in a collective environment, which is difficult to achieve in individual interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The group dynamic of FGDs encourages participants to build on each other's ideas, reflecting on their own practices while responding to their peers' perspectives, ultimately resulting in a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the topic under study (Morgan, 1996).

FGDs were essential in this study, as they allowed the researcher to delve into the shared challenges of teaching Tasawwur Islam and the potential for using game-based learning. The collaborative environment of FGDs provided participants the freedom to explore differing views, fostering discussions that highlighted common themes, such as student engagement, and challenges related to the integration of gamified tools in teaching complex Islamic concepts. This method was particularly effective in capturing teachers' everyday experiences, offering a more holistic perspective than could be obtained through quantitative methods alone (Barbour, 2007).

Additionally, the interactive nature of FGDs enabled the identification of areas of consensus and disagreement among the teachers regarding the practicality and effectiveness of game-based learning. The group format encouraged spontaneous discussions, resulting in richer insights into how teachers perceive and approach the use of gamification in the classroom. This method allowed the researcher to explore how teachers conceptualize student engagement and how gamification could enhance both teaching practices and student outcomes.

3.2 Sampling

Informant sampling was conducted through purposive sampling based on the service experience of nine Islamic Worldview (Tasawwur Islam) Teachers (GTI), referred to as GTI1 through GTI9, whose teaching experience ranged from 12 to 18 years across schools with varying performance backgrounds. These teachers, selected to ensure a diverse range of perspectives, were experienced in developing learning modules, actively involved in the use of digital technology in teaching and learning, and had prior experience in marking public examination papers.

The selection criteria also considered their involvement in curriculum development, student assessment, and their practical understanding of the pedagogical challenges associated with teaching Islamic subjects. By selecting teachers with varying levels of expertise, the study aimed to generate robust and informed insights into the integration of mobile-based learning tools. This diverse group of teachers enabled the study to explore different strategies used to engage students, particularly those categorised as GALUS (Gagal Lulus—students alternating between passing and failing), and to examine how gamification might address the varying needs of learners who struggle with traditional instructional methods.

3.3 Trustworthiness

Supporting data analyses from school good practice reports were used to reinforce the main findings (FGD). In addition, discussions with fellow SISC+ officers in the Humanities field and pedagogical coaching officers from the District Education Office were also considered.

3.4 Classroom Case Studies

In addition to FGDs, classroom case studies were conducted in six schools to provide empirical data on the practical application of game-based learning in Tasawwur Islam education. The case studies were crucial for assessing the effectiveness of gamified tools in improving student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. By combining the qualitative insights from FGDs with direct classroom observations, the study triangulated the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of both teacher perspectives and real-world classroom experiences.

The case studies involved using existing gamification platforms such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Tarsia Istilah. These platforms were integrated into Tasawwur Islam lessons to evaluate how interactive games enhanced the comprehension and retention of key Islamic concepts. The case studies also explored how these tools engaged GALUS students, who typically struggle to maintain attention in traditional settings. By observing the impact of gamification on these students, the study provided insights into how interactive learning tools can address academic disparities.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data gathered from FGDs were transcribed and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and themes. Thematic analysis was chosen as it offers flexibility in interpreting the qualitative data while providing a structured approach to identifying key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The major themes identified included the need for diversified learning tools, strategies for engaging underperforming students GALUS, and the role of interactive games in enhancing memory retention and assessment.

Similarly, data from classroom case studies were analyzed to determine how the use of game-based learning tools affected student engagement and learning outcomes. By integrating data from both FGDs and case studies, the study ensured a triangulated understanding of the research problem, grounded in both teacher insights and empirical classroom realities.

3.6 Analysis Procedures

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, without any modifications. Data coding was broken down into smaller units to identify patterns for theme development. Coding was carried out manually using colour-coding or symbolic marking techniques on the transcript. Meanwhile, the analysis procedures for good practice reports and school coaching reports served as supporting data to strengthen the FGD findings.

3.7 Triangulation

School documents and good practice reports were used to support the findings of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Additional data sources included assessment and achievement records, as well as guidance reports issued by officers to GTI from the Learning Sector of the Keramat District Education Office (PPD Keramat).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical protocols during the data collection process. All participants were provided with informed consent forms before participating in the FGDs, and the objectives and procedures of the study were explained in detail. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and all FGD sessions were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. These recordings were later transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the data (Smithson, 2000).

4. FINDING

Informants' Profiles

The study involved nine Tasawwur Islam teachers, each selected based on their expertise and extensive experience in teaching and assessment. These teachers, referred to as GTI1 through GTI9, bring diverse backgrounds, ranging from module development to academic evaluation, enriching the study with varied perspectives.

GTI1, with 14 years of teaching experience, has contributed significantly to both module development and academic assessment through script marking, showcasing a well-rounded expertise in pedagogy and evaluation. GTI2, with 12 years of experience, has played an active role in statewide module development, enhancing the educational resources for Tasawwur Islam. Similar to GTI1, GTI3 has 17 years of experience and is actively involved in both module creation and script marking, demonstrating his extensive involvement in multiple facets of teaching.

GTI4 brings 15 years of teaching experience. Though not involved in module development or innovation, his experience in script marking reflects his deep involvement in student assessment. GTI5, with 12 years of experience, is recognized as a Guru Cemerlang (Excellent Teacher) and has contributed to script marking, underscoring his expertise in both teaching and evaluation. GTI6, an innovator in teaching practices, has 13 years of experience and is distinguished for introducing creative approaches to Tasawwur Islam education.

With 14 years of experience, GTI7 specializes in academic evaluation through script marking, further reinforcing his role in the student assessment process. GTI8 is the most experienced among the group, with 18 years of teaching experience. While he has contributed to module development, he is not involved in innovation or script marking. Finally, GTI9, with 16 years of teaching experience, focuses primarily on script marking, which highlights his capability in assessing student performance effectively. The profiles of these informants, summarized in the table below, highlight the depth and breadth of experience they bring to this study.

Table 1: The Profiles of Informants

Informant	Years of Teaching Experience	Role in Module Development	Role in Innovation	Experience in Script Marking and Excelent Teacher
GTI1	14 years	Yes	No	Yes
GTI2	12 years	Yes	No	Yes
GTI3	17 years	Yes	No	Yes
GTI4	15 years	No	No	Yes
GTI5	12 years	No	No	Yes
GTI6	13 years	No	Yes	No
GTI7	14 years	No	No	Yes
GTI8	18 years	Yes	No	No
GTI9	16 years	No	No	Yes

4.1 The Need for Diversified Learning Tools

A significant theme that emerged from the FGD was the need for diversified learning tools in the Tasawwur Islam curriculum to enhance classroom engagement. Teachers expressed concerns that traditional materials, such as textbooks and lecture slides, are insufficient in capturing student interest, especially for those with varied learning preferences. GTI1 highlighted this issue, stating:

> *"Tujuannya adalah untuk menambahkan bahan ni aaaaa BBM, ABM dalam aktiviti di dalam kelas."*

> (translation quotes)

> "The aim is to add these materials, namely BBM (Teaching and Learning Materials) and ABM (Teaching Aids), to classroom activities."

[FGD/GTI1, para 003-004]

This statement underscores the necessity for interactive and dynamic tools that can better cater to the diverse learning needs of students. GTI1 further elaborated on the longevity and sustainability of gamified tools, remarking:

> *"Dan benda yang dihasilkan ini, boleh pakai sampai bila-bila selagi DSKP tidak berubah."*

> (translation quotes)

> "And this product can be used indefinitely as long as the DSKP (Curriculum and Assessment Standard Document) does not change."

[FGD/GTI1, para 006-007]

This suggests that once interactive tools are developed, they can be used over an extended period, as long as the curriculum remains consistent. Such tools provide a long-term solution to the engagement challenges present in Tasawwur Islam, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective in the future.
Additionally, GTI5 pointed out the potential for enhancing existing learning materials, stating:

> *"Salah satu aktiviti yang kita boleh buat, boleh buat penambahbaikan berdasarkan aplikasi sedia ada."*

> (translation quotes)

> "One of the activities we can do is to make improvements based on the existing application."

[FGD/GTI5, para 206-207]

This statement highlights the opportunity to build upon current applications and introduce more interactive, gamified learning experiences that go beyond passive learning. By doing so, teachers can create more engaging activities, allowing students to actively engage with complex Islamic concepts in a practical and enjoyable way.

These findings were further supported by case studies, where the use of interactive games such as "Mahjong" and "Jigsaw Puzzles" significantly improved student engagement and comprehension of complex Islamic terminologies. Teachers reported that students, particularly those who struggled with traditional methods, demonstrated a higher level of enthusiasm and understanding when interactive tools were introduced into their learning process. These interactive tools provided immediate feedback and opportunities for active participation, which helped students better retain key concepts and terminologies.

In summary, the integration of diversified learning tools, particularly those that are interactive and gamified, is essential for modernizing the Tasawwur Islam curriculum. These tools not only enhance student engagement but also provide long-term benefits by remaining relevant as long as the curriculum remains unchanged. By incorporating gamified applications and enhancing existing teaching tools, educators can offer more meaningful and effective learning experiences that address the diverse needs of students.

4.2 Engaging Underperforming Students GALUS

A significant challenge that arose from the FGD was the difficulty in engaging underperforming students, commonly referred to as GALUS (Gagal Lulus), who often alternate between passing and failing. Teachers reported that these students, particularly those from the B40 (low-income) group, struggle to stay focused in traditional classroom settings, especially in lessons that rely heavily on text-based content and rote memorization. GTI3 elaborated on this issue, stating:

> *"Kita tahu latar belakang murid kita yang B40 tu... Kemudian dia calon GALUS. Dan kemudian, kita tahu aaa macam yang kita dah maklum (mereka) daripada golongan murid-murid yang pertengahan dan belakang."*

> (translation quotes)

> "We know the background of our B40 students... Then, they are borderline candidates (GALUS). And after that, we understand, as we've mentioned, they are from the middle and lower-performing student groups."

> [FGD/GTI3, para 100-103]

This statement highlights the unique challenges faced by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who often require more innovative and engaging learning strategies.

Additionally, teachers noted that many GALUS students are kinesthetic learners who benefit more from active, movement-based learning environments rather than static, text-heavy lessons. GTI2 emphasized this, explaining:

> *"Murid tasawwur ni err kebanyakannya murid hujung kelas, murid yang tidak berminat untuk belajar, errr yang mana mereka ini tergolong dalam kalangan murid yang kinestetik... yang tak boleh duduk diam... aaa yang tak boleh duduk diam... yang tidak boleh baca buku... yang tidak boleh buat kerja tulis .... jadi dia kena ada pergerakan."*

> (translation quotes)

> "These Tasawwur students are mostly those at the lower end of the class, students who are not interested in learning, who belong to the kinesthetic group... they can't sit still... yes, they can't sit still... they can't read books... they can't do written work... so they need to have movement."

> [FGD/GTI2, para 055-060]

This statement underscores the importance of creating interactive learning environments that cater to the physical and hands-on learning preferences of these students.

The need for adapting teaching strategies to better engage these students was also highlighted by GTI4, who remarked:

> *"Kena pastikan keperluan game kita ini adalah untuk memenuhi keperluan murid GALUS, murid yang lemah."*

> (translation quotes)

> "We need to ensure that our game is designed to meet the needs of GALUS students, those who are academically weak."

> [FGD/GTI4, para 158-160]

This reflects the recognition among teachers that game-based learning tools are effective in providing the necessary engagement strategies for GALUS students, allowing them to participate more actively in the learning process.

4.3 Enhancing Conceptual Understanding and Memory Retention:

A prominent theme that emerged from the FGD was the difficulty students face in memorizing complex Islamic concepts and terms, many of which are in Arabic. This challenge negatively impacts their performance in exams and overall understanding of the subject matter. GTI8 highlighted this issue, stating:

> *"Subjek Tasawwur Islam ni terlalu banyak istilah yang perlu diingati oleh para murid. Jadi para murid kita ni memang sangat handallah dalam mengingati sampai terlupa ingat dia tu. Ok, jadi aaa kami memikirkan aa beberapa masalah (murid) yang sukar untuk mengingati istilah dan masalah murid yang aaa alergik dengan menghafal. Ok dan masalah aaa*

apa, takut dengan ayat-ayat yang panjang. Aaa kalau kata soalan istilah tu, dia jawab tapi mungkin separuh. Jadi tak dapat markah full."

(translation quotes)

"The subject of Tasawwur Islam has too many terms that students need to remember. So, our students are very skilled in remembering to the point where they sometimes forget what they've memorized. Ok, so we are thinking about some problems (students) face, like difficulty in remembering terms and those who are 'allergic' to memorization. Ok, and there's also the issue of students being afraid of long sentences. For example, if the question involves terms, they might answer but only partially, which means they don't get full marks."

[FGD/GTI8, para 270-276]

This illustrates that students often feel overwhelmed by the vast number of terms they need to memorize, and some are even "allergic" to memorization tasks, leading to incomplete answers in exams and reduced marks.

Teachers agreed that game-based learning could offer a solution by providing students with a more interactive and less stressful way to memorize and understand these terms. GTI7 emphasized the objectives of incorporating games into learning:

"Objektif aa kita punya permainan ni aa ialah murid dapat mengingat fakta dengan cepat dan seronok eekk. Aaa kemudian yang kedua murid dapat gambaran keseluruhan yang akan mereka murid."

(translation quotes)

"The objective of our game is for students to quickly and enjoyably remember facts. Secondly, it allows students to get an overall picture of what they are learning."

[FGD/GTI7, para 246-247]

By making learning enjoyable and enabling students to grasp the overall picture of what they are studying, games can enhance both the speed and retention of learning.

Similarly, GTI3 noted the importance of games in helping students master terminology:

"Ok…yang ketiga membantu menguasai istilah."

(translation quotes)

"Ok... thirdly, it helps students master the terms."

[FGD/GTI3, para 104]

The repetitive nature of games aids memory retention, as GTI8 explained:

"Permainan ni murid akan ulang ulang-ulanglah lama-lama dia akan ingat secara tak langsung. Minda separa sedar dia akan tangkap beberapa istilah. Sekurang-kurangnya istilah tu dapatlah."

"In this game, students will repeat the content over and over, and eventually, they will remember it subconsciously. Their subconscious mind will catch on to some of the terms. At the very least, they will grasp the terms."

[FGD/GTI8, para 320-323]

Through repeated exposure in a fun and engaging context, students subconsciously absorb and remember key terms. Certain topics within Tasawwur Islam are particularly challenging to teach and learn due to their abstract nature. GTI3 expressed this difficulty:

"Untuk keperluan, aaaaa em aaa sebenarnya kenapa nak guna tu, sebab saya yakin semua orang tahu soalan tu susah kan… aaaa saya yakinlah aaa.... sebab dalam Tasawwur Islam pun kita susah nak terangkan kepada murid-murid kita tentang aaa tajuk muamalat dan rasa nak lari lari dari tajuk itu, tapi kena ajar juga lah kan."

(translation quotes)

"For the need, umm actually why we want to use it is because I'm sure everyone knows the questions are difficult, right... I'm quite certain... because even in Tasawwur Islam, it's challenging to explain topics like muamalat to our students, and it makes us want to avoid the topic, but we still have to teach it."

In such cases, game-based learning can simplify complex topics and make them more accessible to students.
Additionally, games serve as a valuable tool for assessing student understanding. GTI5 discussed using games to evaluate comprehension:

> *"Untuk menilai, menilai kefahaman murid… kita kena nilai pulak pemahaman murid kita nak buat macam mana. Jadi kita gunakan aplikasi sedia ada."*

(translation quotes)

> "To assess, to evaluate students' understanding... we need to assess their comprehension, so how do we do that? Therefore, we use the existing application."

> *"Untuk menilai kefahaman murid tentang apa yang kita dah ajar lepas tu."*

(translation quotes)

> "To evaluate the students' understanding of what we have taught afterward."

> *"Jadi, sebenarnya dekat situ kita boleh tahu diorang ni faham ke tak apa yang kita ajar sebelum tu. Itu ehhh… aa itu sebenarnya memang untuk menilai kefahaman sebelum kita buat latih tubi yang tadi. Kita punya aim ialah sebelum kita nak buat latih tubi untuk murid kita kan."*

(translation quotes)

> "So, actually, that's where we can find out whether they understand what we taught earlier or not. That... uh... it's really to assess understanding before we start the practice drills we mentioned earlier. Our aim is to evaluate before conducting the drills for our students, right?"

GTI6 also mentioned using games for reinforcement and assessment:

> *"Kami menggunakan game ini untuk pengukuhan murid atau aktiviti penilaian."*

(translation quotes)

> "We use this game for student reinforcement or as an assessment activity."

Similarly, GTI9 noted:

> *"Boleh dimainkan sebagai satu latihan pengukuhan."*

(translation quotes)

> "We use this game for student reinforcement or as an assessment activity."

These statements indicate that games are not only useful for teaching and memorization but also serve as effective tools for assessing students' understanding and reinforcing learning.

Classroom case studies supported these findings, with teachers reporting that students who used gamified tools like "Tarsia Istilah" and "Quizizz" were able to recall terms more easily and accurately. These tools facilitated memory retention by offering repeated exposure to key terms in an interactive format, allowing students to internalize the information more effectively. Teachers observed that the use of these games reduced the anxiety associated with memorization, making learning a more enjoyable and effective process.

In conclusion, integrating game-based learning into the Tasawwur Islam curriculum can significantly enhance students' conceptual understanding and memory retention. By providing an interactive and engaging platform for learning complex terms and concepts, games help alleviate the stress associated with memorization and make learning more enjoyable.

Additionally, they offer a practical means for teachers to assess comprehension and reinforce learning, ultimately improving students' academic performance.

4.4 Simplifying the Teaching of Complex Topics:

One of the recurring challenges identified in the FGD was the difficulty of teaching certain complex topics in Tasawwur Islam, particularly those related to Islamic jurisprudence (muamalat). GTI3 highlighted this issue, noting the struggles teachers face when trying to explain these abstract concepts to students. GTI3 stated:

> *"Untuk keperluan, aaaaa em aaa sebenarnya kenapa nak guna tu, sebab saya yakin semua orang tahu soalan tu susah kan... aaaa saya yakinlah aaa.... sebab dalam Tasawwur Islam pun kita susah nak terangkan kepada murid-murid kita tentang aaa tajuk muamalat dan rasa nak lari lari dari tajuk itu, tapi kena ajar juga lah kan."*

> (translation quotes)

> "For the need, umm actually why we want to use it is because I'm sure everyone knows the questions are difficult, right... I'm quite certain... because even in Tasawwur Islam, it's challenging to explain topics like muamalat to our students, and it makes us want to avoid that topic, but we still have to teach it."

<div align="right">[FGD/GTI3, para 096-099]</div>

This statement underscores how difficult it can be to break down complex topics like muamalat using traditional methods. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the abstract nature of Islamic financial principles and struggle to convey these ideas in a way that students can easily grasp. As a result, students can become disengaged or confused, further complicating the learning process.

The case studies demonstrated that game-based learning tools, such as role-playing simulations and interactive quizzes, helped simplify the teaching of these complex topics. For instance, role-playing games that mimic real-life scenarios allowed students to engage with Islamic financial principles more practically and tangibly. By simulating real-world financial transactions and ethical dilemmas, students were able to see the direct application of these abstract principles, transforming what was once a confusing concept into something more relatable and understandable.

This interactive approach not only made learning more engaging but also allowed students to develop a deeper, more concrete understanding of Islamic jurisprudence. Rather than relying on rote memorization or theoretical explanations, students were encouraged to actively participate in the learning process, applying what they learned to practical situations. This hands-on experience helped solidify their understanding of otherwise difficult topics, improving both their comprehension and retention.

Moreover, these game-based methods reduced the fear and anxiety often associated with learning complex subjects. By allowing students to experiment, make mistakes, and receive immediate feedback in a low-stress environment, gamification made the learning of muamalat and other complex topics less intimidating. As a result, students were more willing to engage with the material, and teachers found it easier to explain challenging concepts.

In conclusion, the integration of game-based learning tools such as role-playing and interactive quizzes into the Tasawwur Islam curriculum has proven to be an effective way to simplify the teaching of complex topics like muamalat. By providing students with practical, real-world applications of abstract concepts, these tools make learning more engaging and accessible, ultimately enhancing students' understanding and confidence in handling difficult subjects.

4.5 Continuous Assessment and Feedback:

The FGD revealed the potential of mobile-based games as tools for continuous assessment in the Tasawwur Islam curriculum. Both GTI5 and GTI6 emphasized the limitations of traditional assessment methods, such as exams and quizzes, in providing timely feedback. GTI5 noted:

> *"Untuk menilai, menilai kefahaman murid… kita kena nilai pulak pemahaman murid kita nak buat macam mana. Jadi kita gunakan aplikasi sedia ada."*

> (translation quotes)

> "To assess, to evaluate students' understanding... we need to assess their comprehension, so how do we go about it? Therefore, we use the existing application."

<div align="right">[FGD/GTI5, para 185-188]</div>

This statement reflects the growing recognition among teachers that traditional assessments often fail to offer immediate insights into student progress. Exams, while valuable, only provide feedback at the end of a learning period, which can limit

teachers' ability to address learning gaps as they arise. Mobile-based games, however, offer real-time feedback, allowing both teachers and students to monitor progress continuously. As GTI5 further explained:

> *"Untuk menilai kefahaman murid tentang apa yang kita dah ajar lepas tu."*
>
> (translation quotes)
>
> "To assess the students' understanding of what we have taught afterward."

[FGD/GTI5, para 191-192]

This real-time assessment allows teachers to adjust their teaching strategies as needed to ensure students grasp the material thoroughly. It also empowers students by providing them with immediate insights into their performance, enabling them to identify areas that need improvement without waiting for formal test results. GTI5 elaborated on the importance of this approach by stating:

> *"Jadi, sebenarnya dekat situ kita boleh tahu diorang ni faham ke tak apa yang kita ajar sebelum tu. Itu ehhh… aa itu sebenarnya memang untuk menilai kefahaman sebelum kita buat latih tubi yang tadi. Kita punya aim ialah sebelum kita nak buat latih tubi untuk murid kita kan."*
>
> (translation quotes)
>
> "So, actually, that's where we can find out whether they understand what we taught earlier or not. It's really to assess understanding before we start the drills we talked about. Our aim is to evaluate before conducting the practice drills for our students, right?"

[FGD/GTI5, para 201-204]

This ongoing evaluation helps teachers to intervene early and provides students with opportunities to practice and reinforce their understanding before moving on to more challenging topics.

GTI6 also highlighted the use of mobile-based games for reinforcement and evaluation purposes, explaining:

> *"Kami menggunakan game ini untuk pengukuhan murid atau aktiviti penilaian."*
>
> (translation quotes)
>
> "We use this game for student reinforcement or as an assessment activity."

[FGD/GTI6, para 210-211]

This approach allows teachers to assess student comprehension through interactive and engaging activities, rather than relying solely on formal exams. The use of games in assessments ensures that students remain actively engaged while being tested, thus reducing the pressure typically associated with traditional testing methods.

Case studies further supported these insights, demonstrating that game-based assessments, such as interactive quizzes and puzzles, provide students with immediate feedback on their performance. This approach not only helps students improve their understanding of the material through repeated practice but also alleviates the stress often linked to traditional testing. By offering instant feedback, game-based tools make it easier for students to internalize key concepts and correct misunderstandings on the spot.

Teachers also found that game-based assessments enabled them to evaluate student comprehension of complex concepts on a more frequent basis, ensuring that students remained on track throughout the course. Unlike traditional tests, which only offer a snapshot of student understanding at specific intervals, mobile-based games allow teachers to continuously monitor progress and adjust their teaching strategies in real-time. This ensures that students are constantly moving toward their learning goals and that any learning gaps are addressed promptly.

In conclusion, the use of mobile-based games for continuous assessment provides an innovative solution to the limitations of traditional testing. By offering real-time feedback, these tools not only reduce the pressure on students but also allow teachers to track student comprehension more effectively and intervene when necessary. This approach fosters a more dynamic and responsive learning environment, where both students and teachers benefit from ongoing, interactive assessments that support continuous improvement.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings from this study underscore the transformative potential of game-based learning in revolutionizing the teaching of Tasawwur Islam. These tools offer an interactive and engaging learning experience, effectively addressing many challenges

that teachers face, especially in engaging underperforming students (GALUS) and assisting students in retaining complex Islamic concepts. The incorporation of gamification into Tasawwur Islam lessons shifts traditional lecture-based instruction to a more dynamic, student-centered approach, aligning with research that emphasizes how interactive learning tools can significantly improve both student motivation and academic performance (Acquah & Katz, 2020; Chung et al., 2019).

The Need for Diversified Learning Tools (BBM)

The study highlights the need for diversified learning tools (BBM) to complement traditional teaching materials. Previous studies support this finding, demonstrating that integrating game-based learning (GBL) enhances student engagement and improves learning outcomes across a variety of subjects (Andreani & Ying, 2019; Giovannina et al., 2021). For example, Aliff et al. (2014) demonstrated that mobile-based games provide students with an interactive platform that caters to diverse learning styles, making complex Islamic concepts more accessible. However, critics like Kaya (2024) have raised concerns that over-reliance on gamification could risk oversimplifying content and detracting from deeper conceptual learning. In contrast, this study found that using interactive tools, such as Mahjong and Jigsaw Puzzles, not only improved student engagement but also enhanced comprehension of complex Islamic terms. The longevity of these tools, as mentioned by GTI1, suggests that they can remain relevant in the curriculum provided the DSKP (standard curriculum) stays consistent .

Engaging Underperforming Students (GALUS)

A significant challenge highlighted by the study was engaging GALUS students, particularly those who alternate between passing and failing. This aligns with existing literature, which shows that traditional methods often fail to cater to kinesthetic learners and students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Ahmad & Rashid, 2021; Nor Hadibah et al., 2022). GTI2 stressed that many GALUS students are kinesthetic learners who benefit more from movement-based, interactive learning environments, which was observed in this study through the use of mobile-based games. These findings are supported by research such as Rahman & Salleh (2022), which found that game-based learning tools offer kinesthetic learners the hands-on experience needed to engage actively in the learning process.

However, some studies caution that gamification may not lead to sustained engagement for all students, as over-reliance on external rewards could diminish intrinsic motivation (Armadi & Wan Muna Ruzzana, 2021). Addressing this balance is critical for maintaining long-term student interest, particularly among GALUS students, who may depend heavily on external motivators. Future research should explore how to balance intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to ensure that students continue to engage beyond the initial novelty of game-based learning (Sulaiman, 2024).

Enhancing Conceptual Understanding and Memory Retention

Mobile-based games were found to significantly enhance students' ability to retain complex Islamic concepts, a challenge often faced in Tasawwur Islam due to the Arabic terminology. The use of tools like Tarsia Istilah and Quizizz enabled students to repeatedly engage with key terms in a low-pressure environment, improving both retention and comprehension. This is consistent with studies by Bai et al. (2021), who found that game-based tools offer repeated exposure to content, facilitating better long-term memory retention. However, as Tsirulnikov (2021) notes, while gamified tools can improve short-term recall, the retention of deeper conceptual knowledge may require more structured reflection beyond gamification. Thus, integrating gamification with traditional reflective practices is essential to ensure comprehensive understanding beyond mere memorization.

Simplifying the Teaching of Complex Topics

Teachers, particularly GTI3, reported difficulty teaching abstract topics such as Islamic jurisprudence. This study demonstrated that gamification, through role-playing and interactive quizzes, helped simplify these topics by providing practical, real-life scenarios that students could relate to. This aligns with Low et al. (2023), who found that role-playing games improve students' ability to understand theoretical content by placing it in a real-world context. However, critics argue that while gamification simplifies learning, it may not develop the analytical skills needed for deeper topics like Islamic jurisprudence (Anderson et al., 2017). To address this, gamified tools should be complemented with in-depth discussions to ensure students not only engage with the material but also develop critical thinking skills.

Continuous Assessment and Feedback

The potential of mobile-based games to provide continuous assessment and real-time feedback was another key finding. Unlike traditional assessments, which offer delayed feedback, gamified tools provide immediate insights into student performance, enabling teachers to adjust their instruction accordingly. This finding is consistent with Huizenga et al. (2019), who noted that real-time feedback is essential for adaptive teaching strategies. However, while the formative assessment capabilities of these tools are widely supported, concerns remain about their rigor for summative assessments. Studies such as Sutherland et al. (2017) caution that while mobile games offer valuable day-to-day feedback, they may need to be used alongside more formal assessments to provide a comprehensive evaluation of student progress.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that game-based learning have the potential to significantly enhance the teaching and learning of Tasawwur Islam. By offering more interactive and engaging environments, these tools effectively address many challenges faced by teachers, particularly in engaging underperforming students (GALUS) and helping students retain complex Islamic concepts. The integration of gamification not only improves student motivation and memory retention but also provides teachers with real-time assessment tools that allow them to adapt their teaching strategies to meet student needs. However, while the benefits of these tools are clear, it is essential to balance game-based approaches with traditional methods to ensure students develop higher-order thinking skills alongside their motivation and engagement.

Moving forward, the success of gamification in Islamic education will depend on several factors. Teachers must receive adequate training and support to effectively implement these tools in the classroom, and there should be a focus on developing customized, context-specific gamified content that aligns with the curriculum of Islamic studies. Furthermore, to maximize the long-term benefits of gamification, it is crucial to combine interactive learning experiences with opportunities for reflection and deeper understanding, ensuring that students are not only engaged but are also developing critical thinking skills. Additionally, inclusive learning environments should be developed to cater to the diverse needs of students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (B40) and kinesthetic learners.

Lastly, future research should explore the long-term effects of gamification on student performance, motivation, and retention, ensuring that these tools remain relevant and effective in modern education. Longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into the sustained impact of game-based learning across different learning contexts. By refining and adapting gamified tools over time, educators can ensure that they continue to meet the evolving needs of students, offering meaningful and impactful learning experiences that enhance both engagement and academic outcomes.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This study is a case study that involves the process of data collection from informants. The sources or references in this study are obtained legally through academic databases, and no personal information from any party is used. In this regard, this study also adheres to research ethics and academic publishing standards, including honesty and proper acknowledgment of the original authors.

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Statement of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest.

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