



Interactive Card Game Media to Improving Understanding of The Prophet's Morals at SD Negeri Kuning Atas

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the use of Islamic educational game media in the form of interactive cards in improving students' understanding of the morals of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in grade IV of SDN Kuning Atas. The background of this study is based on the need for a learning method that is more enjoyable, contextual, and in accordance with the characteristics of the cognitive development of elementary school students. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the type of Classroom Action Research (CAR) which is carried out in two cycles. Data collection instruments include observation, interviews, documentation, and Likert scale questionnaires to measure the level of students' understanding of morals before and after the action. The results of the study showed that in cycle I, student activity in learning was recorded at 52.4% and the average value of moral understanding reached 68.5. After improvements were made in cycle II, student activity increased to 85.7% and the average understanding of morals increased to 83.2. These data show that interactive card media can increase learning motivation, active participation, and students' understanding of moral values such as honesty, patience, and empathy. In conclusion, the use of Islamic educational game media based on interactive cards has proven effective in supporting the process of learning meaningful and enjoyable morals, and providing real contributions in shaping students' characters in accordance with the example of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This study recommends the use of a similar approach in Islamic Religious Education learning to support the strengthening of character education in elementary schools.

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Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) serves as one of the core subjects in the Indonesian national curriculum, particularly at the primary school level, where the formation of moral character and spiritual awareness is a central goal. Beyond the intellectual understanding of religious doctrines and practices, the real essence of IRE lies in the cultivation of noble values rooted in the life and character of Prophet Muhammad SAW.

In the framework of character education, Prophet Muhammad's exemplary conduct—his honesty, patience, humility, and compassion stands as the ultimate model for Muslim children to emulate from an early age.

The urgency to introduce and internalize the morals of the Prophet is emphasized in the Qur'an, where Allah declares: "And indeed, you (O Muhammad) are of a great moral character" (QS. Al-Qalam: 4). This divine statement highlights not only the perfection of the Prophet's character but also underscores the pedagogical responsibility of educators to embed those values in students' daily behavior. Yet, this ideal faces many practical challenges within the classroom, especially in the elementary education context, where students are still at a formative cognitive and emotional stage.

Conventional teaching methods in IRE, particularly those relying heavily on lecture and rote memorization, have often failed to resonate with the learning needs of children. These methods, although informative, tend to lack engagement, interactivity, and emotional resonance, resulting in a superficial grasp of moral values. Consequently, students may know about virtuous traits in theory but fail to apply them in real-life situations due to a lack of meaningful internalization.

At the fourth-grade level, children are generally within Piaget's concrete operational stage, where learning is most effective when it is tangible, visual, and activity-based. They need more than just verbal instruction they require experiences that stimulate their senses, emotions, and social skills. Games, stories, visual aids, and hands-on activities can serve as bridges between theoretical concepts and practical moral development. Therefore, there is a critical need for innovation in how Islamic morals are taught to children.

One promising approach is the integration of educational Islamic games into the learning process. These games serve a dual purpose: they entertain while also educating, ensuring that learning becomes both meaningful and enjoyable. Game-based learning has been widely recognized for its ability to enhance student motivation, focus, and comprehension. When designed with Islamic content, these games can foster moral reflection, decision-making, and positive behavior in a culturally and religiously relevant context.

In particular, the use of interactive card games presents a novel strategy to make the teaching of the Prophet's morals more dynamic and accessible. Interactive cards allow students to engage physically and mentally with content through visual prompts, group discussions, and scenario-based questions. Previous research (e.g., Astuti, 2021; Sari, 2019) has found that these tools help children better recall moral values, connect them with real-life experiences, and participate more actively in classroom discussions.

The current study investigates the effectiveness of such an interactive card game tailored to teach the morals of Prophet Muhammad SAW in a fourth-grade classroom at SDN Kuning Atas. The intervention aims to transform the teaching of IRE into a more student-centered, experiential, and character-driven process. The focus is not merely on transmitting religious knowledge but also on shaping students' behavior in alignment with the moral standards exemplified by the Prophet.

This action research is grounded in the belief that moral education should not only inform the mind but also touch the heart and guide actions. By incorporating interactive play into religious instruction, educators can foster a learning environment that is reflective, joyful, and impactful. The game serves as a medium to translate abstract virtues into concrete behaviors, encouraging students to internalize and apply these values in their daily interactions.

Furthermore, the study aligns with broader educational reforms in Indonesia, such as the Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (Strengthening of Character Education) and the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasize contextual, student-centered, and project-based learning. These frameworks recognize the importance of addressing students' holistic development cognitive, emotional, and spiritual—within the educational system. Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on innovative Islamic pedagogy, offering practical insights for educators seeking to cultivate ethical awareness among students. It underscores the significance of adapting teaching strategies to children's developmental stages and learning preferences. Through creative and contextualized learning tools like interactive card games, the teaching of the Prophet's morals can become not only more effective but also more enjoyable and deeply transformative.

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach with the specific method of Classroom Action Research (CAR). This methodology was selected due to its suitability for exploring and improving teaching practices through reflective cycles involving planning, action, observation, and reflection. The essence of CAR lies in the teacher-researcher's direct involvement in both implementing and evaluating educational interventions, with the goal of enhancing student learning outcomes and engagement.

The research design was guided by the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which emphasizes iterative cycles of inquiry and continuous improvement. Each cycle in this study consisted of four key phases: planning the instructional strategy, implementing the interactive card media in the classroom, observing student responses and behaviors, and reflecting on the effectiveness of the intervention to inform the next cycle. This structure allowed the researcher to systematically identify challenges, modify strategies, and measure progress over time.

The study was conducted at SDN Kuning Atas, involving a fourth-grade class with a total of 21 students, comprising 10 boys and 11 girls. These students represented the primary subjects of the study. The classroom teacher acted as a collaborator, working alongside the researcher to ensure smooth implementation of the intervention and to provide insights based on their day-to-day interactions with the students. This collaborative approach enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings.

The action research was conducted over two full cycles, with each cycle aiming to address the limitations observed in the previous one. In the first cycle, the researcher introduced the interactive card game as a tool for teaching moral values inspired by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Observations and assessments revealed moderate levels of student engagement and comprehension. Based on these findings, the instructional strategy was revised for the second cycle, resulting in significant improvements in student participation and understanding.

To collect data, the researcher employed multiple instruments to capture both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the learning process. Observation sheets were used to monitor student engagement during the game sessions, focusing on indicators such as active participation, responsiveness to game prompts, and the ability to relate the game scenarios to Islamic moral values. These observations were documented using structured checklists and detailed field notes.

In addition to observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students and the Islamic Education teacher. These interviews aimed to explore students' emotional and cognitive responses to the learning process, as well as to gather teacher insights regarding changes in student behavior and understanding. The use of open-ended questions allowed for deeper exploration of students' personal reflections and learning experiences.

Documentation also played a vital role in the data collection process. The researcher gathered supporting materials such as photographs of classroom activities, samples of student work (e.g., written reflections or game task sheets), and video recordings of the interactive sessions. These artifacts provided concrete evidence of student engagement and served as a basis for triangulating findings from other data sources.

To quantitatively measure changes in moral understanding, the researcher distributed a Likert-scale questionnaire to students before and after each intervention cycle. This questionnaire contained 10–15 items aligned with key indicators of Prophet Muhammad's moral traits—honesty, patience, humility, helpfulness, and responsibility. Students responded using a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," enabling the researcher to track shifts in students' attitudes and self-perceived moral comprehension.

Data analysis in this study followed a comparative and reflective process. Observation and interview data were coded and categorized into themes related to student engagement, understanding, and emotional involvement. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using average scores to identify changes between pre- and post-intervention results across both cycles. These results were then interpreted in light of the research objectives and existing literature.

In summary, the research methodology was designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how interactive card games could enhance moral education in an elementary Islamic Education context. By combining classroom action research with a range of data collection techniques, the study was able to produce reliable and contextually grounded findings. This methodological rigor supports the overall aim of the research: to offer a practical, enjoyable, and character-building approach to teaching Islamic morals through innovative media.

Result

The implementation of interactive card game media in teaching the morals of Prophet Muhammad SAW yielded significant improvements in both student participation and comprehension. The study was conducted in two cycles, each carefully designed and evaluated based on observation, student feedback, and learning outcomes. The results demonstrated a notable transformation in classroom dynamics, where previously passive students became more engaged, responsive, and reflective in their learning.

In the first cycle, the interactive card game was introduced for the first time during Islamic Religious Education lessons. Despite initial enthusiasm, many students struggled to fully understand how to connect the game content with the moral values being taught. Observation data showed that only 52.4% of students actively participated during group discussions and game activities. The majority of students were still dependent on teacher guidance and hesitant to express their thoughts.

The results from the Likert-scale questionnaire administered after the first cycle further confirmed these observations. The average score of students' understanding of the Prophet's moral values was 68.5, which fell below the minimum mastery criterion (KKM) set at 75. Students could recognize terms such as "honesty" and "patience," but they had difficulty applying these values in specific contexts or explaining them in their own words. Teachers also noted that students were still adjusting to the new learning format.

Based on these findings, the second cycle focused on refining instructional strategies, including clearer instructions, enhanced card content, and more structured group roles. The teacher provided additional modeling on how to relate game scenarios to moral values, and students were encouraged to share personal experiences reflecting

the Prophet's traits. These adjustments were designed to deepen the connection between gameplay and real-life moral applications.

The impact of these improvements was evident in the second cycle results. Observation data revealed a substantial increase in student engagement, with 85.7% of students actively participating in class activities. Students demonstrated greater confidence in expressing their understanding of moral concepts, and they engaged more willingly in discussions. There was a visible shift in the classroom atmosphere—from teacher-centered to learner-centered, where students took ownership of their learning.

In terms of cognitive outcomes, the average score from the post-intervention questionnaire in cycle two rose to 83.2, exceeding the expected standard. Students were able to not only recall the Prophet's characteristics but also discuss them with more clarity and apply them in hypothetical situations. For example, many students could explain what honesty looked like in school life and how patience could be practiced during conflicts with peers.

Interviews with several students confirmed that the game made learning more enjoyable and meaningful. Many expressed that they preferred this method over traditional lecturing because it allowed them to learn through play and discussion. A few students mentioned that they started to reflect on their own behaviors and tried to imitate the Prophet's traits, such as speaking kindly, being fair during group work, and helping others without being asked.

Feedback from the classroom teacher also supported the effectiveness of the media. The teacher observed that students became more responsive, communicative, and emotionally connected to the subject matter. The use of visual elements in the cards helped students remember the values better, and the collaborative gameplay fostered a spirit of teamwork, empathy, and respect among the students.

In addition to moral comprehension, the intervention fostered social and emotional learning (SEL). Students practiced turn-taking, active listening, and constructive feedback, which are essential components of both Islamic values and 21st-century skills. The interactive card game not only conveyed information but also cultivated a learning environment conducive to character development.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the use of Islamic educational games based on interactive cards is highly effective in enhancing students' understanding of Prophet Muhammad's moral teachings. The combination of play, discussion, reflection, and visual learning appealed to the developmental stage of fourth-grade students. It succeeded in transforming abstract moral concepts into practical, relatable actions, and instilled a deeper sense of moral awareness in students' everyday behavior.

Discussion

The results of this study clearly indicate that the use of interactive card games in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) significantly enhances students' understanding and internalization of Prophet Muhammad's moral values. These findings align with the original working hypothesis that the incorporation of interactive, student-centered media into the learning process can lead to improved engagement and moral comprehension among elementary school students. The effectiveness observed in this study supports the broader educational principle that learning must be adapted to the cognitive and emotional development of learners, especially in early education.

In the first cycle, the relatively low engagement and comprehension scores (52.4% and an average score of 68.5) highlighted the limitations of initial implementation and confirmed existing concerns in the literature about traditional IRE methods. Conventional approaches, such as lectures and rote memorization, often fail to stimulate the cognitive and emotional aspects necessary for true moral development (Suyadi, 2015). This study therefore reinforces previous critiques of passive learning environments and the urgent need for pedagogical reform.

The significant improvement in the second cycle—with student engagement rising to 85.7% and comprehension scores reaching an average of 83.2—demonstrates the transformative power of gamified learning tools. This finding is consistent with earlier studies by Prensky (2001), Yusuf (2020), and Wahyuni (2022), who emphasize that educational games can effectively merge learning with motivation, reflection, and collaboration. By stimulating students' senses and emotions, interactive games make abstract values such as honesty, patience, and empathy more accessible and relatable to young learners.

Furthermore, this study offers practical validation of constructivist learning theories, particularly Piaget's concept of concrete operational thinking. At this stage, children learn best through tangible, experience-based activities. The interactive card game utilized in this study exemplified how visual and kinesthetic learning methods could complement religious content, thereby making values education more meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

From a moral development perspective, this research also illustrates the importance of social interaction in internalizing ethical behavior. The group-based gameplay encouraged discussion, role-play, and peer modeling—all of which are essential for the affective dimension of learning. This supports Vygotsky's social development theory, which argues that social interaction is crucial in shaping higher-order thinking and moral reasoning in children.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the IRE classroom. As character education becomes an increasingly central component of national and global educational agendas, especially under programs such as Indonesia's Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (PPK) and the Merdeka Curriculum, tools like interactive moral card games offer scalable, low-cost solutions that are both pedagogically sound and contextually relevant. This media can be adapted not only for Islamic education, but also for teaching universal values in multicultural or secular settings.

Moreover, the use of interactive games in moral education has the potential to support broader socio-emotional learning (SEL) goals. Skills such as empathy, cooperation, emotional regulation, and ethical decision-making—observed as byproducts of the intervention—are critical for students' holistic development in the 21st century. These outcomes suggest that game-based moral learning should be considered as a core pedagogical strategy, rather than a supplementary activity.

While the results are promising, this study is not without limitations. The sample size was limited to a single class at SDN Kuning Atas, and the intervention was conducted over a short period (two cycles). Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of such interventions, and examine whether the moral behaviors learned through gameplay are sustained over time and reflected in real-life decision-making.

Additionally, future studies might investigate how technology-enhanced versions of interactive games (e.g., mobile apps or augmented reality tools) compare with physical card games in terms of effectiveness and student preference. The integration of parent and community involvement in reinforcing moral lessons outside of school also offers a rich avenue for further research.

In conclusion, this study contributes strong empirical evidence to the field of Islamic pedagogy and character education. It validates the use of interactive educational games as an effective means of promoting moral development in young learners. The success of this approach highlights the need for continued innovation in teaching methods, greater emphasis on experiential learning, and sustained support for character-building initiatives in primary education settings.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the use of Islamic educational media in the form of interactive card games is an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing students' understanding and internalization of Prophet Muhammad's moral values in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Through a two-cycle classroom action research process, it was evident that student engagement, motivation, and comprehension significantly increased when learning activities were integrated with game-based media. These results affirm that character education can be both joyful and impactful when aligned with students' developmental

needs and learning styles. In the first cycle, students demonstrated moderate levels of participation and understanding, indicating the need for a more structured and interactive approach. By refining the instructional design in the second cycle—incorporating clear moral scenarios, group collaboration, and reflective discussion—students became more actively involved and emotionally connected to the learning process. The final results surpassed the expected learning standards, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings support previous research on the effectiveness of educational games in promoting active learning and moral reasoning. They also reinforce theoretical frameworks that emphasize experiential, visual, and social learning in childhood education. Importantly, this study contributes to the growing body of Islamic pedagogy by offering a practical and scalable model for character-based learning that is grounded in Islamic teachings and modern educational principles.

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