

Gamification of Iqra' to Strengthen Religious Literacy of Migrant Children

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General Background: Education for Indonesian migrant children abroad often faces limitations in access, resources, and teacher availability, which weakens their religious literacy. **Specific Background:** At the Indonesian Education Center (PPWNI) Klang, Malaysia, the ability of children to read hijaiyah letters is hindered by monotonous methods and low motivation. **Knowledge Gap:** Previous studies have shown the effectiveness of gamification in general and formal education, but little research has examined its integration with the Iqra' method in non-formal migrant contexts. **Aims:** This study investigates how gamification can be applied in Iqra' learning for migrant children and evaluates its impact on motivation, discipline, participation, and literacy skills. **Results:** Using a qualitative case study with 30 students and one teacher, the findings reveal that gamification elements—such as points, scoreboards, challenges, and star rewards—improved attendance (from 70% to 90%), raised average scores (from 58 to 82), and enhanced confidence in reading aloud. **Novelty:** This research uniquely integrates gamification with the Iqra' method in a non-formal migrant setting with limited resources, demonstrating effectiveness without relying on digital technology. **Implications:** The study contributes theoretically by offering a community-based gamification model and practically by providing an enjoyable and replicable solution for strengthening religious literacy among migrant children.

Highlights:

- Gamification effectively boosts motivation, discipline, and literacy skills.
- Integrating Iqra' with gamification in migrant settings is novel.
- Simple, low-tech strategies can improve learning outcomes significantly.

Keywords: Gamification, Iqra' Method, Religious Literacy, Migrant Children, Non-Formal Education

Introduction

The phenomenon of education for Indonesian migrant children still presents complex problems, especially in the aspect of religious literacy. Migrant children generally face limited access to formal education, so religious learning is mostly conducted in community centers with minimal facilities.[1] This situation is exacerbated by the lack of educators, monotonous conventional

methods, and low motivation among learners. As a result, the ability to read hijaiyah letters often experiences delays, and their foundation in religious literacy becomes weak. In this context, alternative learning strategies are needed to create an enjoyable yet effective learning environment. Gamification emerges as one innovative approach that is relevant to meet this need.[2] Through the integration of game elements, gamification can enhance motivation, engagement, and creativity among learners. Several studies support this finding. Lovandri et al. showed that the application of gamification in Islamic Education learning in elementary schools has a significant effect on student motivation.[3] Another study conducted by Majid et al. emphasized that gamification of the hijaiyah letters is effective in improving the mastery of basic religious literacy at the early childhood education level. Even in a digital context, it proved that the development of Android-based media with gamification features of hijaiyah letters can enhance reading skills of the Qur'an among elementary school students.[4]

Based on this study, this research focuses on the utilization of gamification in Iqra' learning for Indonesian migrant children. The questions to be answered are: (1) how gamification can be applied in Iqra' learning in non-formal environments for migrant children, and (2) to what extent does gamification influence motivation, active participation, and reading skills of the Hijaiyah letters among students.[5] The aim of this research is to describe the implementation of gamification in Iqra' learning while also assessing its contribution to enhancing motivation and achieving religious literacy among migrant children. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in Islamic Education learning studies based on gamification, especially in non-formal contexts. Practically, this research provides an alternative learning model for educators in migrant communities to make the learning process more effective, interactive, and enjoyable. This research was conducted at the Malaysian Klang WNI Education Center, which is one of the non-formal education institutions for Indonesian migrant children.[6]

Theoretical Studies

Gamification Theory in Education. Gamification is the application of game elements in non-game contexts, including education. This concept emerged to address the challenge of low student motivation in the digital era.[7] Through points, badges, leaderboards, and leveling systems, students not only learn cognitively but are also affectively motivated to collaborate and engage. It emphasizes that gamification can enhance student involvement in both online and face-to-face learning. In other words, gamification is not merely entertainment, but serves as a pedagogical strategy to create meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences.[8]

The Iqra' Method Theory in Learning to Read the Qur'an The Iqra' method has long been used in learning to read the Qur'an in Indonesia and has proven to be effective, especially for young children. Its main principle is step-by-step learning (tadaruj), from the hijaiyah letters to word combinations, allowing children to read independently without having to spell.[9] There is an emphasis that the consistent application of the Iqra' method can significantly enhance children's phonetic abilities with Arabic letters.[10] Developing a digital-based Iqra' method makes it more interactive and suitable for the needs of the current generation. The integration of technology with this traditional method opens up great opportunities for more relevant learning. **The Concept of Religious Literacy** Religious literacy is not limited to the ability to read sacred texts, but also includes understanding, internalization, and practicing religious teachings in daily life.[11] In the context of Islamic education, religious literacy is often measured through three main indicators: cognitive (understanding of teachings), affective (internalization of values), and psychomotor (practice). Religious literacy should be strengthened with innovative learning approaches, one of which is gamification, so that it is not merely memorization but becomes a lasting learning experience. This is important, especially for migrant children who often face unequal access to formal religious education.[12]

Context of Education for Migrant Children Migrant children, especially those living abroad, often face barriers in accessing both formal and non-formal education. Language factors, the

environment, and limitations in learning media are the main challenges.[13] Recent research in Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsah shows that Indonesian migrant children need an adaptive, interactive, and non-monotonous learning approach. This situation is also evident at the Indonesian Citizens' Education Center (PPWNI) in Klang, Malaysia, which serves as a non-formal learning center for Indonesian migrant children. Therefore, PPWNI Klang is relevant as a case study location in this research.[14] Research Map and Study Gaps Several previous studies have discussed the effectiveness of gamification in general learning, the use of the Iqra' method to enhance the skills of reading the Qur'an, and the importance of religious literacy in shaping students' character. However, no research has been found that specifically integrates gamification with the Iqra' method in the context of migrant children. Meanwhile, migrant children face dual challenges: limited access to formal education and the need to strengthen religious literacy. Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap by offering the Iqra' gamification model as an innovative solution.[15]

Method

Types and Approaches to Research This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study, focusing on a specific phenomenon, namely the application of Iqra' gamification in the education of Indonesian migrant children at the Indonesian Citizens Education Center (PPWNI) in Klang, Malaysia. The case study was chosen because it effectively researches in-depth phenomena with rich information from a few cases, in accordance with Sinta-1 qualitative methodology literature / Journal of Science and Computer Education. **Location and Time of Research** The research was conducted at PPWNI Klang, Malaysia, a non-formal education center that serves Indonesian migrant children. The research period was set in June 2025, coinciding with the regular learning period, allowing for real-time observation of Iqra' gamification practices. **Research Subjects** Consisted of 30 migrant students (aged 7–12 years) actively participating in Iqra' gamification learning, as well as a supporting teacher. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique to ensure data relevance.

Instruments and Techniques for Data Collection Instruments: the researcher with observation guidelines, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Collection techniques: Participatory observation of the gamification learning practices in Iqra'. In-depth interviews with teachers and students to explore their experiences. Documentation in the form of field notes, photos, and video recordings of the learning process. **Research Procedure** Consists of: Preparation: research permission, instrument preparation, coordination with the management. Implementation: observation, interviews, documentation. Analysis & reporting: data processing, drawing conclusions, preparation of the final report. **Data Analysis** Using the interactive model of Miles & Huberman including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification. The process is iterative until saturation is reached. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation (students, teachers, documents), technique triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation), and member checks to ensure findings align with the informants' real experiences. Research ethics include obtaining consent from supervising teachers and students' parents. Students' identities are protected using initials. Data is used solely for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

The Implementation Process of Gamification Iqra' The application of gamification at the WNI Klang Education Center began with the use of simple media such as hijaiyah letter cards, scoreboards, and reward stars. Teachers set rules based on points, individual and group challenges, as well as a simple leaderboard on the blackboard. Rewards in the form of star stickers are given to students who successfully read fluently. This mechanism makes the learning environment more lively, competitive, and collaborative. Ahmad (a 10-year-old student) said, 'If I can, I want to earn a star as a reward. It makes me excited; I want to improve again tomorrow.' This testimony shows that simple rewards can trigger learning motivation.

Students' responses to Gamification Observations show significant increases in motivation and engagement. Attendance rates rose from an average of 70% to 90%. Children who were previously passive began to confidently read in front of the class. The accompanying teacher stated, (Saiful) "Usually, some are shy to read in front of others, but after there were points and games, almost everyone was willing to try." In addition to motivation, aspects of discipline also played a role. The gamification rules that impose point reductions for violations made students wait for their turns more orderly. This proves that gamification not only impacts interest but also influences learning attitudes. Changes in Iqra' Reading Ability The results of the pre-test and post-test strengthen the findings of the observations. The initial average score of 58 (sufficient category) increased to 82 (good category). Children who previously only recognized basic letters can now read syllables fluently. Classroom documentation shows students enthusiastically completing group challenges, showcasing a combination of cognitive and affective improvements.

The connection with the theory of gamification to enhance student motivation aligns with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theories. Intrinsic motivation arises from the enjoyment of learning, like playing games, while extrinsic motivation comes from rewards in the form of points and stars. This explains why student engagement increases after gamification is implemented. However, this research has an important difference. While previous studies focused on formal schools with relatively complete facilities support, this study places gamification in the context of migrant children in non-formal communities with limited resources. In fact, in such simple conditions, gamification proves effective because it can create a fun learning atmosphere without the need for high technology. This contextual difference presents gamification as a cross-situational learning strategy.

The Uniqueness of the Context of Migrant Children Migrant children face limitations in access to education and simple learning media. Gamification has proven to address these limitations by creating a fun learning atmosphere. Socio-cultural factors of the migrant community (solidarity, mutual cooperation, and a sense of togetherness) also strengthen the effects of gamification. Contribution and Novelty The novelty of this research lies in three main aspects: A non-formal context based on migrant communities, unlike research in formal schools. The integration of gamification with the Iqra' method, which is rarely studied in education gamification literature. A simple yet effective approach, proving that learning innovation does not always depend on digital technology. Thus, Iqra' gamification at PPWNI Klang has been shown to enhance motivation, engagement, discipline, and the ability to read hijaiyah letters in Indonesian migrant children. This success shows that gamification can be an effective strategy to address the limitations of educational facilities in migrant communities.

Conclusion

This study proves that the application of gamification in Iqra' learning for Indonesian migrant children in non-formal study centers effectively increases motivation, engagement, discipline, and the ability to read hijaiyah letters. This is evident from the increase in student attendance (from an average of 70% to 90%), the courage to perform reading, and the improvement in average learning scores from 58 (sufficient) to 82 (good). This successful strategy aligns with the theory of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2020), where game elements (challenges, points, and leaderboards) elicit motivation from within while also strengthening external drives through rewards. The uniqueness of this research lies in its context, namely the integration of the Iqra' method with gamification in a non-formal migrant children community that has limited resources. The main contribution of this research is theoretical (offering a community-based gamification model) and practical (providing an enjoyable alternative learning solution for Iqra' for migrant children).

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