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Educaplay-Assisted Gamification and Learning Interest in PAI: A Case Study at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah

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Abstract:

Lecture-dominated Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes can leave students passive. This qualitative descriptive-analytical case study examines Educaplay-assisted gamification in a Grade IX PAI class at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir Bogorejo, perceived changes in learning interest, and implementation factors. Observation, interviews, and documents from the PAI teacher, 15 students, the principal, and the deputy principal for curriculum were analyzed using the Miles-Huberman-Saldana model and triangulation. Interest was considered through enjoyment, curiosity, attention, engagement, and willingness to learn. The teacher planned Educaplay in the teaching module, used it in core activities, and evaluated through scores, observation, and reflection. Accounts and observations suggested greater attention, participation, discussion, and efforts to improve scores; these are perceived changes, not proven effects. Support included MGMP encouragement, teacher readiness, a smart TV, and Wi-Fi; constraints included one shared screen, unstable internet, and uneven digital skills. The study documents implementation processes and school-level conditions.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Information and communication technology has changed secondary students' learning habits. Familiarity with digital applications can make one-way explanation harder to sustain (Sidqi et al., 2025), so PAI teachers need engaging and relevant lessons (PAI teacher interview, September 2026).

Before Educaplay, PAI at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir Bogorejo mainly involved explanation, note-taking, textbook exercises, and memorization. Students listened passively and enthusiasm faded. This concern was notable in Grade IX, when academic demands increase and PAI is not an examination subject (PAI teacher interview, September 2026).

Sulaiman (2017) associated one-way PAI instruction with low motivation, while Sidqi et al. (2025) reported improved PAI outcomes after digital game-based quizzes. This study examines the teacher's use of Educaplay to support interest and participation.

Gamification applies game-design elements in non-game settings (Deterding et al., 2011), such as points, levels, challenges, and rewards (Jusuf, 2016). Landers (2014) argues that these elements influence learning through learners' behavior and attitudes. Sailer and Homner (2020) found positive cognitive, motivational, and behavioral outcomes, though some effects were less stable in rigorous studies. Outcomes also depend on design, duration, and context (Li et al., 2023); research commonly examines achievement, motivation, and engagement (Zainuddin et al., 2020).

Gamification requires alignment between game elements, objectives, teacher readiness, and infrastructure (Nabila et al., 2026). In PAI, teacher creativity matters (Samosir, 2024), and interactive activities have been linked to motivation and participation (Rahmania et al., 2023; Mahmubi & Homaidi, 2025). Educaplay offers quizzes, crosswords, and matching games (Nilasari & Mardiyah, 2026) and has been associated with engaging learning (Batitusta & Hardinata, 2024).

Hidi and Renninger (2006) distinguish situational interest, triggered by environmental features, from enduring individual interest. Self-determination theory links engagement to competence, autonomy, and connection with others (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Scores, retries, and group activities may support these needs, but momentary engagement does not establish lasting interest.

Achru (2019) describes interest through enjoyment, curiosity, attention, and participation. This study tracks five indicators: enjoyment, curiosity, attention, engagement, and willingness to learn, including readiness to retry and improve. Related studies found increased interest indicators with Wordwall and Problem Based Learning (Sarah et al., 2026) and more engaging digital gamification activities (Ni'mah et al., 2026).

Educaplay research has examined elementary students' interest (Wafiqni & Adelia, 2025), effectiveness among Madrasah Tsanawiyah students (Mannan et al., 2026), Fiqh in Madrasah Aliyah (Putri & Nadlif, 2026), and media development for Islamic Cultural History (Anwar & Jasiah, 2025). Nilasari and Mardiyah (2026) studied secondary PAI but did not trace interest through specific indicators.

This study documents planning through reflection, examines five indicators in Grade IX, and identifies school-level supports and constraints in a pesantren-based setting. It offers a process-oriented account rather than a statistical test of Educaplay's effects.

The questions are: (1) how Educaplay-assisted gamification is implemented in Grade IX PAI; (2) how students' interest is perceived to change across five indicators; and (3) which factors support or hinder it at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir Bogorejo.



Method (منهج)

This qualitative descriptive-analytical study (Bungin, 2017) observed the teacher's existing Educaplay practice in one Grade IX class (31 students) at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir Bogorejo. No intervention was made; findings were interpreted contextually, not statistically (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024).

Informants

Purposive informants (Sugiyono, 2019; Sari et al., 2025) included the PAI teacher, 15 students (five each from higher-, middle-, and lower-achieving groups), the principal, and deputy principal for curriculum.

Data Collection Period and Procedures

Data collection ran from July to September 2026: permission and preparation in July, four observations and document collection in August, and interviews, score records, and interpretation checks in September.

Four 80-minute PAI lessons were observed in August using a guide on lesson stages and five interest indicators. The researcher observed from the back, occasionally helped with devices, expanded notes the same day, and took permitted photos.

Semi-structured interviews covered implementation, evaluation, perceived changes, obstacles, school policy, MGMP, and facilities. Nineteen interviews comprised two with the teacher, 15 individual students after lessons, and one each with the principal and deputy principal. Interviews were in Indonesian at school and lasted about 35 minutes. Students wrote answers on printed sheets, with clarification as needed; adult interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed. Excerpts were translated into English.

Documents comprised the teaching module, Educaplay scores, grade records, and photographs (Moleong, 2017; Sari et al., 2025; Sugiyono, 2019); scores were described, not statistically tested.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the study, voluntary participation, and withdrawal rights. Institutional and school permission was obtained; adults gave written consent, and school consent and student agreement covered minors. Names were omitted, records secured, and permitted photographs showed no identifiable faces (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis

Analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's stages of condensation, display, and conclusion/verification (Miles et al., 2020; Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). The researcher coded transcripts, student answers, notes, and documents, using five interest indicators and codes for implementation and contextual factors. Categories were compared across sources and checked against records. Changes were treated as perceived, not measured, and required corroboration with observation.

Data Credibility

Credibility was supported by source and technique triangulation (Sugiyono, 2019; Moleong, 2017; Fikri et al., 2025), member checking with the teacher and three students, supervisor review, and an audit trail. The July–September setting and procedures help readers assess transferability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Result (نتائج)

Findings draw on classroom observations, interviews with the teacher, 15 students and one school leaders, deputy principal for curriculum affairs and teaching and score records. They cover implementation, perceived interest across five indicators, and contextual factors.

Implementation of Gamified Learning Using Educaplay in Islamic Religious Education for Grade IX Students at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir, Bogorejo

Before Educaplay, Grade IX PAI relied mainly on explanation, discussion, and memorization. The teacher adopted Educaplay to add interactive activities through three stages: planning, execution, and evaluation.

Planning

The teacher reviewed learning outcomes and objectives, including "Faith in the Last Day," and planned opening, core, and closing activities. Material became quizzes, crosswords, or matching games. The teacher prepared links, tested the smart TV and Wi-Fi, allocated about ten minutes for the game, and considered students' digital skills and available facilities.

The module used Educaplay for formative scores, observation of participation and cooperation, and end-of-lesson reflection. Scores were compared with the school's criteria for achieving learning objectives (KKTP) and informed later planning.

Execution

Lessons began with greetings, prayer, attendance, and apperception. After a brief explanation, the teacher displayed Educaplay on the smart TV. Students answered individually or in groups, took turns, retrieved wrong answers, viewed scores, and discussed responses while the teacher facilitated and corrected errors. A summary, evaluation, and reflection closed the lesson (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Implementation of gamified learning using Educaplay.

Evaluation

Scores helped check objectives and identify questions needing review. The teacher also assessed participation, cooperation, and engagement and used student reflection to plan reinforcement or a different game. The principal and deputy principal viewed digital media as an opportunity for more creative, interactive teaching.

Changes in the Learning Interest of Grade IX Students in Islamic Religious Education After the Implementation of Gamified Learning Using Educaplay at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir, Bogorejo

The five indicators below reflect teacher and student accounts corroborated by observation. They represent perceived changes in this class, not measured effects.

Condition before Educaplay

Before Educaplay, lessons centered on listening, notes, and textbook exercises. Although students could follow the material, repetition bored some of them. After its introduction, students showed more attentiveness, participation, and enthusiasm during activities.

Enjoyment

Students found PAI more enjoyable when they played, faced challenges, viewed scores, and tried to improve, consistent with research linking interactive gamification to motivation and engagement (Rahmania et al., 2023; Ni'mah et al., 2026).

Curiosity

Students more readily asked questions when challenges were difficult, and game presentation made some memorized content easier to grasp, consistent with reports on Educaplay engagement (Batitusta & Hardinata, 2024).

Attention

The teacher and observations indicated stronger focus while students tried to complete challenges. Activities, feedback, and interaction made the lesson livelier, although the evidence primarily concerns attention during the game segment.

Engagement

The teacher reported that quieter students began speaking, discussing, and helping peers. Questions, turn-taking, and joint answer-seeking shifted the lesson toward active participation, similar to patterns in other gamified classrooms (Mahmubi & Homaidi, 2025).

Willingness to Learn

Scores and opportunities to retry encouraged students to persist and aim for better results. However, this willingness was linked to game feedback and does not by itself demonstrate lasting interest in PAI.

Learning Outcome Scores

Recorded scores provide supplementary documentary evidence and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' learning outcome scores before and after using Educaplay

NO	NAMA SISWA	SEBELUM												SESUDAH												NILAI STS	NILAI SAS
		Juli			Agustus			September			Oktober			November			Desember										
1	ACHMAT WAHYU SINILIH	75	75	76	76	77	77	77	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	82	82	82	78	79		
2	AHMAD IQBAL SOBRIN	75	75	75	76	76	76	77	77	77	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	76	79		
3	AHMAD PUTRA PRASETYO	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	76	76	76	76	76	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	80	80			
4	AHSAN NUR DAFFA	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	82	82	83	84	85	85	88	80	82			
5	ALIVIA KULZUM ISNAENI	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	82	82	82	82	84	84	85	86	87	88	90	85	88			
6	APRILIA MUZALIFA RESTA	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	82	85	88	88	85	88			
7	AZIZA MIFTA AULIA	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	82	82	82	82	82	83	83	83	85	88	80	85			
8	ANANG RIZKI AGUNG WIDOD	77	77	77	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	82	82	82	79	80	80			
9	HILDA AURELLIA SALSABILA	77	77	77	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	83	83	85	88	82	85			
10	ILHAM ALI FAHMI	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	82	82	85	85	85	85	87	87	88	89	90	86	90			
11	KHULAFATUN NADIYYA	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	80	83	85	85	80	84	84			
12	KLUK NAFISA LAUNA ZAH	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	83	78	80			
13	MAHMUD NUR ROHMAN	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	78	79	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	81	81	81	82	82	82	79	80		
14	MIFTAHUR RAHMA	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	83	83	83	84	85	86	80	82			
15	MUHAMMAD AZKA ARYANA	75	75	75	75	76	76	76	77	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	77	80			
16	MUHAMMAD ROHMAD FAIZA	75	75	76	76	76	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	82	82	78	80			
17	NAJWA NUR LATIFAH	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	85	85	85	86	86	87	88	88	90	80	80		
18	ARENDRA WAHYU PRATAM	76	76	76	77	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	76	80	80			
19	NISRINA AZKIYATUS ZAHRO	76	76	76	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	80	83			
20	OKTAVIANA NURUL KHUSNA	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	81	82	84	85	86	86	87	88	88	90	90	91	86	88			
21	PAREL DWI SAPUTRO	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	82	82	82	80	80			
22	YANO CAHYA PUTRA APRILI	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	81	82	76	80			
23	RIFKI HUDA RISMAN	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	81	83	85	88	78	80			
24	SAHAL MAHFUD ARDHA	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	81	81	82	83	85	80	82			
25	SELLA ADIMAS PONTA	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	82	82	83	85	82	85			
26	SITI LATIFAH GRESIANA	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	82	83	85	80	82	82			
27	HTI NAIMATUR RISTIK ANAH	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	82	83	85	80	82			
28	JRYATAMA NURIWAN PUTR	77	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	80	80	82	82	84	81	85	85			
29	UHB MU'IZZUL HILMI	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80	80	80	83	83	85	85	85	88	79	80			
30	YELA DINDA RAHAYU	77	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	82	85	80	82	82			
31	OLLA REVANIA ZIVA ASSAR	77	77	77	77	77	78	78	78	78	78	78	79	79	79	80	80	80	81	82	85	78	80	80			

Table 1 records scores for all 31 students. "Sebelum" covers July–September before Educaplay; "Sesudah" covers October–December during its use. The final columns give mid-semester (STS) and end-of-semester (SAS) scores. Before use, most scores were about 75–81; December scores reached about 82–91, STS about 76–86, and SAS about 79–90. Since records were only described and other influences were uncontrolled, they do not prove that Educaplay caused the increase.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Gamified Learning Using Educaplay for Islamic Religious Education at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir, Bogorejo

Implementation was supported by school policy, teacher readiness, student enthusiasm, and available technology, but constrained by facilities and connectivity.

Supporting Factors

The principal and deputy principal supported digital media, encouraged MGMP participation, and urged teachers to apply what they learned, supporting the PAI teacher's use of Educaplay.

Other supports were teacher readiness, smart TVs and Wi-Fi, a 31-student class, a close teacher-student relationship, and games matched to learning objectives.

Inhibiting Factors

Only one smart TV was available, and boarding-school rules prohibited student phones, so students took turns or worked in groups. Internet was unstable, especially in bad weather, and digital skills varied.

The teacher prepared games and instructions and grouped students to sustain participation. Digital media can complement PAI methods when adapted to available facilities.



Discussion (مناقشة)

Implementation of Gamified Learning Using Educaplay in Islamic Religious Education for Grade IX Students at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir, Bogorejo

The teacher's planning, execution, and evaluation aligned with the principle that game elements should serve learning objectives rather than entertainment alone (Nabila et al., 2026). Farhan and Yanto (2025) reported benefits from Kahoot in another subject, but neither study establishes effects in this class, where outcomes were not statistically tested.

The teacher matched Educaplay features to the topic: "Match Up" pairs concepts, while "Froggy Jumps" offers a competitive quiz (Nilasari & Mardiyah, 2026). Effective use still depends on instructional design, teacher readiness, and infrastructure (Mahmubi & Homaidi, 2025; Nabila et al., 2026).

The teacher opened with greetings, prayer, and prior-knowledge activation, explained the material, then led Educaplay via smart TV. Students answered and discussed with scores and retries, as reported elsewhere (Fernanda et al., 2024; Batitusta & Hardinata, 2024). Here, one shared screen required turns and group work.

Evaluation combined scores, observations, and reflection to guide reinforcement (Ni'mah et al., 2026; Mahmubi & Homaidi, 2025; Pristiana, 2022). This extends studies focused on Educaplay effects (Wafiqni & Adelia, 2025; Mannan et al., 2026; Putri & Nadlif, 2026), but does not independently assess evaluation quality.

Changes in the Learning Interest of Grade IX Students in Islamic Religious Education After the Implementation of Gamified Learning Using Educaplay at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir, Bogorejo

Observations and accounts suggested increased enthusiasm, attention, and participation compared with lecture- and exercise-based lessons, consistent with interactive PAI gamification research (Sarah et al., 2026).

Scores and feedback encouraged answering and self-checking, echoing gamification findings in PAI and Akidah Akhlak (Rahmania et al., 2023; Anshora & Triwoelandari, 2025; Ni'mah et al., 2026).

Games helped students revisit material, while peer discussion and questions increased, consistent with Educaplay and gamification studies (Batitusta & Hardinata, 2024; Mahmubi & Homaidi, 2025).

Interest appeared linked mainly to playing, scoring, and improving rather than demonstrably deeper appreciation of PAI content. This resembles situational interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Landers (2014) likewise stresses that game elements must connect meaningfully with instructional content.

Curiosity appeared as asking for help during difficult challenges, not independent exploration beyond the game. Attention centered on completing tasks and checking scores. Because the game lasted about ten minutes and was new to the class, sustained attention cannot be inferred and novelty may have contributed; outcomes may vary with duration (Li et al., 2023).

Discussion and peer help suggest scores and retries supported competence and group work relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy was limited by teacher-selected games and one screen; retrying was score-linked, so lasting subject interest cannot be inferred.

The findings align with reports of engaging PAI gamification (Rahmania et al., 2023; Mahmubi & Homaidi, 2025; Ni'mah et al., 2026; Sarah et al., 2026) and extend Educaplay research with indicator-level observations and school context. They cannot establish causality or effect size; results vary with rigor, design, duration, and context (Sailer & Homner, 2020; Li et al., 2023).

The evidence reflects in-class engagement, not enduring interest. It comes from four August observations and September 2026 interviews with the teacher and 15 students; the study did not assess independent PAI learning, other lesson types, or interest after novelty faded. Longer observation or lesson comparisons are needed.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Gamified Learning Using Educaplay for Islamic Religious Education at SMP Islam Matholiul Falah Nglengkir, Bogorejo

Implementation relied on teacher and student readiness and school support as well as media quality, despite technical constraints (school-leader interviews, September 2026).

Teacher readiness to align games with objectives and school support (MGMP, digital-media flexibility, smart TVs, Wi-Fi) facilitated use (Samosir, 2024; Nilasari & Mardiyah, 2026). Student enthusiasm also supported participation (Safitri et al., 2024).

Barriers included one smart TV, the phone ban, unstable internet, and varied digital skills. Advance preparation, instructions, supervision, and grouping helped; similar Wi-Fi and coordination problems have been reported (Pristiana, 2022).

A shared screen made feedback and retries teacher-mediated and potentially uneven (Fernanda et al., 2024; Batitusta & Hardinata, 2024). Group work may have encouraged discussion, but the phone ban restricted use to lesson time.

Unstable internet interrupted games and retries, requiring advance preparation; infrastructure and sustainability concerns are also noted by Pristiana (2022) and Nabila et al. (2026).

Some students needed more guidance, while skilled peers may have carried group tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The study did not compare interest by skill level. Implementation depended on teacher readiness, school support, and facilities.



Conclusion (خاتمة)

The Grade IX PAI teacher used Educaplay in three stages: planning objectives and suitable games in the module, using smart TV challenges individually or in groups after explanation, and evaluating through scores, observations, and reflection.

Students showed perceived gains in enthusiasm, attention, discussion, participation, and willingness to improve, largely in response to scores and challenges. This qualitative case does not establish causation, lasting interest, or generalizability.

Supports included MGMP encouragement, teacher readiness, smart TVs, Wi-Fi, and student enthusiasm. Constraints were one screen, the phone ban, unstable internet, and varied digital skills; preparation, instructions, and grouping helped address them.

Schools should strengthen connectivity and provide more devices. Teachers can diversify games and connect them to reflection on religious values. Mixed-methods or quasi-experimental studies across more classes could use standardized measures and longer follow-up to examine learning interest.

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