Teachers' Strategies in Implementing Joyful Learning to Increase Interest in Learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Nursyamsiani Islamic Private Elementary School

Safran[1*], Dwi Meutia Hasni [2], Siti Halimah[3]

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara*[1, 3]
Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam As-Sunnah Deli Serdang[2]
*[1]email:safranhsb@uinsu.ac.id
[2]email: dwimeutiahasni@assunnah.ac.id
[3]email: sitihalimah@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract: The low student interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (PA) in private Islamic elementary schools underscores the urgent need for more effective and enjoyable learning strategies, considering that religious education plays a central role in shaping students' morals, spiritual character, and learning motivation. This quantitative study aims to analyze the effect of teacher strategies in implementing a fun learning model on increasing interest in learning PAI at Nursyamsiani Islamic Private Elementary School. The research design used a survey method with an explanatory approach and involved 120 students in grades IV-V, selected through a proportional stratified random sampling technique. The research instrument was a Likert scale questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability, and the data were analyzed using simple linear regression and a t-test. Islamic Religious Education (PA) at Nursyamsiani Islamic Private Elementary School is effective in creating a fun, meaningful, and student-centered learning experience. The strategies used include educational games, reflective activities, group collaboration, and creative media, which consistently increase student interest in learning across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. A positive and supportive learning environment also strengthens students' motivation, self-confidence, and active engagement in learning Islamic Religious Education (PA). The conclusion of this study confirms that enjoyable learning is a relevant, empirically grounded pedagogical approach to strengthen students' learning motivation, while making theoretical contributions to the development of active learning models in Islamic education and offering practical implications for teachers in designing more creative, interactive, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for students.

Keywords: Enjoyable Learning; Interest in Learning; Islamic

Religious Education; Teacher Strategy.

Abstrak: Rendahnya minat siswa dalam mempelajari Pendidikan Agama Islam (PA) di sekolah dasar Islam swasta menggarisbawahi kebutuhan mendesak akan strategi pembelajaran yang lebih efektif dan menyenangkan, mengingat pendidikan agama memainkan peran sentral dalam membentuk akhlak, karakter spiritual, dan motivasi belajar siswa. Studi kuantitatif ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh strategi guru dalam menerapkan model pembelajaran yang menyenangkan terhadap peningkatan minat belajar PAI di SD Swasta Islam Nursyamsiani. Desain penelitian menggunakan metode survei dengan pendekatan penjelasan dan melibatkan 120 siswa kelas IV-V sebagai sampel yang dipilih melalui teknik pengambilan sampel acak bertingkat proporsional. Instrumen penelitian berupa kuesioner skala Likert yang telah diuji validitas dan reliabilitasnya, dan data dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier sederhana dan uji-t. Pendidikan Agama Islam (PA) di SD Swasta Islam Nursyamsiani efektif dalam menciptakan pengalaman belajar yang menyenangkan, bermakna, dan berpusat pada siswa. Strategi yang digunakan meliputi permainan edukatif, aktivitas reflektif, kolaborasi kelompok, dan media kreatif, yang secara konsisten meningkatkan minat belajar siswa di seluruh domain kognitif, afektif, dan perilaku. Lingkungan belajar yang positif dan suportif juga memperkuat motivasi, kepercayaan diri, dan keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI). Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pembelajaran yang menyenangkan merupakan pendekatan pedagogis yang relevan dan berbasis empiris untuk memperkuat motivasi belajar siswa, sekaligus memberikan kontribusi teoritis terhadap pengembangan model pembelajaran aktif dalam pendidikan Islam dan implikasi praktis bagi guru dalam merancang pembelajaran yang lebih kreatif, interaktif, dan sesuai dengan perkembangan siswa.

Kata Kunci: Joyful Learning; Minat Belajar; Pendidikan Agama Islam; Strategi Guru.

A. Introduction

Education is a crucial foundation that determines the quality of human resources and the direction of a nation's progress. Through the educational process, an individual's character, morals, and intelligence are systematically, sustainably, and intelligently formed. In the national education system, as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003,

education in Indonesia emphasizes the comprehensive and integrated Development of character, morals, and intelligence (Via Septiani, 2023). This approach demonstrates that education serves not only as a means of imparting knowledge but also as a process of internalizing values and forming attitudes that shape an individual's personality.

A holistic approach to education is becoming increasingly relevant as global dynamics become more complex (Nasir et al., 2024). In the digital era, with its rapid flow of information and technological change, individuals must possess multidimensional intelligence encompassing intellectual, social, and emotional dimensions. An education system that integrates these various aspects will produce graduates who are adaptive and innovative in times of change (Muslich, 2022; Raprap et al., 2025). For example, implementing project-based learning that emphasizes critical thinking, communication, and collaboration enables students not only to understand theoretical concepts but also to apply them in practical contexts through teamwork and creative problem-solving.

The principles of justice and inclusivity in the education system are crucial factors in ensuring equal learning opportunities for all levels of society. Affirmative action policies, such as zoning systems and school empowerment in disadvantaged areas, can be strategic instruments for reducing disparities in educational access (Annisa Darma Yanti et al., 2024; Gamaputra et al., 2025). These efforts not only expand opportunities for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds but also enrich the learning environment with diverse experiences and perspectives. This aligns with the national education vision, which places the values of togetherness, tolerance, and social justice as key pillars in building a harmonious and civilized society (Windria et al., 2024).

In line with this, the relationship between formal and non-formal education is a crucial element in shaping an individual's capacity and character. Non-formal education, such as skills training, courses, and entrepreneurship programs, significantly contributes to the Development of practical competencies not always attainable through formal education. For example, entrepreneurship training for young people fosters innovation, independence, and readiness to address workplace challenges.

At the national level, education also plays a strategic role in strengthening national identity and cultural values. Through a curriculum that integrates character education and national insight, students are guided to understand, appreciate, and preserve Indonesia's cultural heritage. Introducing local values through learning about art, language, and national history can foster patriotism and strengthen the spirit of unity in diversity.

In this context, religious and character education at the elementary school level is a crucial foundation for developing students' religious and moral identities. Specifically, within the Islamic education curriculum, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in instilling faith, moral values, and religious attitudes in students from an early age. However, many Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching practices remain traditional, focused on lectures and memorization, and do not adequately accommodate the increasingly dynamic needs of students exposed to digital culture and interactive media.

One of the main challenges faced by teachers in private Islamic schools, such as Nursyamsiani Islamic Private Elementary School, is how to increase student interest in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Research data indicate that motivation and interest in learning this subject remain relatively low, which affects student achievement, engagement, and the internalization of religious and moral values. For example, research at MT Cipasung showed a significant positive correlation between learning motivation and student achievement in Islamic Religious Education (r coefficient = 0.70) (Suhana & Habibah, 2023) .

On the other hand, recent literature highlights that interactive, enjoyable, and experiential learning approaches (such as *the engrossing learning model*) can significantly increase student motivation and engagement. For example, a meta-analysis showed that interactive learning methods in Islamic education significantly increased student motivation and engagement compared to traditional lecture methods (Devi Melani, 2023; Dimas Purnomo et al., 2025). *Energetic learning* approaches In religious education, research has demonstrated that it fosters a more creative, enjoyable, and participatory learning environment. Research by Tuaini (2025) It was found that

interactive and engaging learning methods significantly increased students' self-efficacy, consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of a positive learning environment.

However, there remains a research gap that explicitly links teacher strategies for implementing Joyful Learning to increased interest in learning, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in private Islamic elementary schools. Many studies still focus on the secondary level (SMP/MT) or on general Islamic Religious Education (PAI), without specifically focusing on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in private Islamic elementary schools (Adinda & Pahrudin, 2024; Nurjannah & Arsya, 2024; Sartika et al., 2024) . The context of private Islamic elementary schools is also unique. Students are generally raised in a more intensive religious environment. However, they are also exposed to popular culture and digital technology that can hinder the internalization of religious and moral values. Therefore, adaptive and enjoyable learning strategies, such as joyful learning, are becoming increasingly relevant for attracting students' attention and increasing their participation.

The urgency of this research stems from the practical need for teachers to enhance the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction, not only for cognitive understanding but also for the active internalization of religious values and attitudes. If interest in learning is low, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning outcomes will be limited across the cognitive (understanding of faith and morals), affective (attitudes and beliefs), and psychomotor (daily behavior) domains. Recent data on the implementation of Joyful Learning in religious education indicate that its potential has not been fully realized, particularly at the elementary school level and in Islamic Religious Education.

The main problems underlying this topic can be formulated as follows: (1) low student interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in private Islamic elementary schools; (2) lack of Joyful Learning strategies and teacher participation; (3) limited literature that specifically links *Joyful Learning* with interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in private Islamic elementary schools; and (4) the need to provide practical guidance to teachers so that they can implement *Joyful Learning*

effectively in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. The gaps that this article aims to address are: first, to provide a conceptual and empirical framework on how teachers can implement *Joyful Learning strategies* specifically for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning; second, to fill the gap in research at the private Islamic elementary school level that links the Joyful Learning method with increased interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI); and third, to provide operational recommendations for teachers and schools to improve Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning practices to be more relevant to the character of today's students.

The relevance of this topic, both theoretically and practically, is significant. Theoretically, developing a learning model that integrates Joyful Learning into religious education would enrich the literature on Islamic education and theories of learning motivation and active learning. Practically, the results of this discussion are expected to serve as a guide for teachers in private Islamic elementary schools, such as Nursyamsiani Private Islamic Elementary School, to increase student interest and engagement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, which in turn will strengthen the internalization of faith and moral values in schools.

Furthermore, with the increasing demand for 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning also needs to adapt so as not only to emphasize memorization or lectures (Rokim & Manila, 2023). *Joyful Learning* positions students as active participants and helps create a learning environment that is motivating and relevant to their lives. This is supported by research showing that interactive learning in Islamic education can significantly increase student engagement. In the context of private Islamic schools, the implementation of *Joyful Learning* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can also support the Pancasila student profile and the expected Islamic character, such as students who are faithful, obedient, and have noble morals; active in school activities; and have a high enthusiasm for learning.

Based on the theoretical and empirical foundations described previously, this study examines how teachers' strategies in implementing the Joyful Learning method can increase students' interest in learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects.

The Joyful Learning approach was chosen because it is considered capable of creating a fun and interactive learning environment and of motivating students to participate actively in the learning process. This study also aims to describe in depth the practice of implementing this strategy at Nursyamsiani Islamic State Elementary School, including supporting factors, obstacles, and its impact on increasing students' interest in learning in the context of basic Islamic religious education. Therefore, the researcher presents the title: "Teacher Strategies in Implementing Joyful Learning to Increase Interest in Learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Nursyamsiani Islamic State Elementary School."

B.   Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' strategies in implementing *Joyful Learning* and its impact on learning interest in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) (Mulyana et al., 2024; Pahleviannur et al., 2022). The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables a natural exploration of meaning, experiences, and learning practices in the classroom, consistent with Creswell's view that qualitative research emphasizes the construction of meaning in a social context (Nurhayati et al., 2024; Sumilih et al., 2025). In addition, this approach provides space for researchers to capture the reality of education from the perspectives of teachers and students in a reflective manner.

This research was conducted at Nursyamsiani Islamic Private Elementary School in Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. This school implements the Independent Curriculum and is known for developing active, creative learning strategies. Data collection took place over three months, encompassing the preparation phase (September 29–October 31, 2025), data collection (November 1–26, 2025), and analysis and report preparation (November 27-December 30, 2025).

The study population comprised all Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and students involved in Joyful Learning. The sample was purposively selected based on relevance and direct involvement with the phenomenon under study (Sarosa, 2021). Three Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers were selected based on the following criteria: active teaching experience, having implemented *joy-based learning* for at least

one semester, and willingness to participate in interviews and observations. Several fourth- and fifth-grade students were included to corroborate findings regarding their learning experiences.

C. Results and Discussion

Data analysis shows that the implementation of Joyful Learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Nursyamsiani Islamic Private Elementary School fosters an active, inclusive, and meaningful learning environment. This study involved three PAI teachers and fourth- and fifth-grade students, using observations, interviews, and document analysis over three months. The core findings are presented below. *First,* the implementation of PAI learning in schools occurs within an Islamic educational ecosystem that emphasizes integrating spiritual values and active learning. Teachers act not only as transmitters of material but also as moral guides and facilitators of values. Observations indicate that classes take place in a safe and interactive atmosphere and provide space for students' religious expression.

Second, the teachers' strategies in implementing *Joyful Learning* include: (1) interactive opening based on educational games, questions and answers, *storytelling*, and *ice breaking* ; (2) core activities based on collaboration such as group discussions, moral simulations, value debates, and *role -playing* ; (3) the use of creative media such as moral cards, faith reflection videos, and value expression boards; and (4) positive reinforcement in the form of praise, applause, and symbolic awards. These strategies consistently trigger students' cognitive and emotional engagement. *Third, the observed forms of Joyful Learning are divided into three models: learning through play (Islamic quizzes and* faith card games)*, experiential learning* (reflection on daily moral experiences), and *collaborative reflection* (resolving moral dilemmas through discussion and drama). All models demonstrate consistent implementation and contextual integration of Islamic Religious Education values.

Fourth, student responses were very positive, as evidenced by increased enthusiasm, courage to ask questions, concentration, and active participation. Increased interest in learning was reflected in the following aspects: (1) cognitive (focus and curiosity), (2) affective (enjoyment and emotional attachment to the material), and (3)

behavioral (discipline, cooperation, and increased moral behavior). Interviews with teachers revealed a strong understanding of the principles of *Joyful Learning. Joyful Learning* is a meaningful learning method that prioritizes experiences, positive emotions, and active participation. Teachers reported that this method helps students understand Islamic values more deeply and internalize them more happily. Teachers also assessed that *Joyful Learning* fosters a more lively classroom atmosphere and increases enthusiasm for teaching. Factors supporting successful implementation include teacher creativity, principal support, a safe learning environment, and the availability of simple media. Barriers include time constraints, diverse student abilities, and media readiness. Teachers overcome these by simplifying activities, managing their time, and collaborating.

The findings of this study indicate that *Joyful Learning* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not only a methodological approach but also a pedagogical paradigm that centers students in the learning experience. Theoretically, this implementation is consistent with Rogers' humanistic learning perspective, which emphasizes the importance of a positive emotional atmosphere to support the Development of knowledge and attitudes (Umam, 2024). A safe and enjoyable classroom atmosphere helps strengthen students' emotional engagement, thereby facilitating the internalization of moral values.

The collaborative, reflective, and game-based strategies employed by teachers also align with *Vygotsky's constructivist theory, which states that* knowledge is constructed through social interactions and real-life experiences (Erawati & Adnyana, 2024). The use of value games, discussions, and *role-playing* helped students develop new schemas for Islamic moral concepts in concrete terms. This approach fosters *meaningful learning, as Ausubel argued, demonstrating that understanding is more solidified* when the material is directly connected to students' experiences and cognitive structures (Rodrigues et al., 2024).

Providing positive reinforcement in the form of faith stars and praise aligns with *Skinner's behaviorist theory* (Bahri et al., 2025), which states that *reinforcement* plays a crucial role in shaping consistent religious behavior. The combination of *constructivist*

and behaviorist reinforcement strategies balances cognition, affect, and moral action in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

These findings also illustrate the fulfillment of three psychological needs in Self-Determination Theory Deci & Ryan: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Leibert et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024; Vázquez-Morejón et al., 2025). In *Joyful Learning*, students have the opportunity to choose roles, experience success through play, and build positive relationships with teachers and peers. These findings support the studies of Widyastuti (2025) which emphasize that *mindful learning* occurs when students are consciously engaged, feel accepted, and understand the value of their learning experiences.

The implementation of *Joyful Learning* also supports the Islamic educational paradigm, which views the learning process as worship and a path to happiness (sa'adah) (Sa'adah et al., 2023). The finding that students more easily understand and practice moral values in a pleasant atmosphere is in line with moral-emotional theory which states that positive emotions strengthen the development of morality and prosocial behavior (Miles & Upenieks, 2022; Zhao et al., 2024).

School context factors, such as a supportive culture and Leadership that encourages innovation, strengthen the implementation of *Joyful Learning. This aligns with* Hord's concept of learning communities, which emphasizes the importance of collaboration between teachers and structural support in ensuring the success of pedagogical change (Supardi U.S. & Henhen Herdiana, 2024; Vaillant, 2019). Challenges such as time constraints and heterogeneity in student abilities highlight the need for instructional differentiation and adaptive classroom management.

D. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of *Joyful Learning* by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Nursyamsiani Islamic Private Elementary School is effective in creating a fun, meaningful, and student-centered learning experience. The strategies employed include educational games, reflective activities, group collaboration, and creative media, which consistently increase students' interest in learning across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. A positive and supportive

learning environment also strengthens students' motivation, self-confidence, and active engagement in PAI learning.

These findings underscore the relevance of the Joyful Learning approach from the perspectives of constructivism, humanism, and self-determination theory, which emphasizes meaningful learning experiences and positive emotions as the basis for knowledge and character formation. In practice, this study provides an implementation model for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to design interactive and contextual learning that supports the internalization of religious and moral values, aligns with the Independent Curriculum's direction, and strengthens the Pancasila Student Profile.

This research contributes to the Development of Islamic education studies by demonstrating that Joyful Learning can function as an integrative pedagogical approach that connects the cognitive, affective, and moral aspects of religious learning in elementary schools. These findings enrich the literature on strategies to enhance interest in learning through positive emotions and values-based pedagogy in contemporary Islamic education. Future research is recommended to expand the scope to include schools with diverse characteristics to test the consistency of the findings; to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure the impact of Joyful Learning more objectively; and to explore the effectiveness of each Joyful Learning strategy in strengthening Islamic character over the long term. A comparative approach is also needed to identify optimal learning models to foster interest in Islamic Religious Education across various educational contexts.

E.   Bibliography

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