

Teachers' Reflections on the Use of Animation Media in Teaching Islamic Religious Education at SMP Rahmat Islamiyah Medan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: January 27, 2025 Revised: March 16, 2025 Accepted: April 13, 2025 Available Online: May 30, 2025</p> <p>Keywords: Teacher Reflection; Animation Media; Islamic Education; Phenomenology; Teaching Experience.</p> <p>Please cite this article: Setiawan, H. R., & Maysarah, M. (2025). Teachers' reflections on the use of animation media in teaching Islamic Religious Education at SMP Rahmat Islamiyah Medan. <i>Integrasi: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora</i>, 3(2), 107–118.</p>	<p>This study aims to explore teachers' reflections on the use of animation media in teaching Islamic Religious Education at SMP Rahmat Islamiyah Medan. The research employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, where data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that the use of animation media has a positive impact on student engagement, understanding of religious concepts, and creates a more engaging learning atmosphere. Teachers also faced challenges related to technological readiness and limited resources. Nevertheless, they believe that animation media effectively helps convey Islamic teachings in a more visual, interactive, and contextual manner. The study recommends enhancing teacher training in digital media usage and developing animation content aligned with the Islamic Education curriculum.</p>
	ABSTRAK
	<p>Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi refleksi pengalaman guru dalam menerapkan media animasi dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di SMP Rahmat Islamiyah Medan. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan media animasi memberikan dampak positif terhadap keterlibatan siswa, pemahaman konsep keagamaan, dan suasana pembelajaran yang lebih menarik. Guru juga mengalami tantangan dalam hal kesiapan teknologi dan keterbatasan sumber daya. Namun, secara keseluruhan, guru merasa bahwa media animasi mampu membantu menyampaikan nilai-nilai ajaran Islam secara lebih visual, interaktif, dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan peningkatan pelatihan guru dalam penggunaan media digital serta pengembangan konten animasi yang sesuai dengan kurikulum PAI.</p>
Page: 107-118	This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

A. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a pivotal role in shaping students' moral, spiritual, and ethical values. It is not merely concerned with the transmission of religious knowledge, but also focuses on internalizing Islamic principles into students' character and everyday behavior (Zuhairini et al., 2019). In this regard, the role of IRE is foundational in forming individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually grounded.

In the current digital era, educators face increasing challenges in delivering IRE effectively. Students categorized as digital natives are generally more engaged when learning experiences are visual, interactive, and technology-based, rather than passive and conventional (Prensky, 2001). This shift in student preferences necessitates that teachers integrate technology and media innovations into their teaching practices to remain relevant and effective.

One of the promising solutions to enhance student engagement in IRE is the use of animation-based learning media. Animation allows abstract religious concepts to be visualized in an attractive and relatable way, thereby improving students' understanding and retention of the subject matter (Arsyad, 2021). Through the use of visual narratives, animation can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-life application.

For example, stories of the prophets, procedures of worship (ibadah), and lessons on morality can be illustrated through animated media that stimulates student interest and participation. These digital illustrations help bring to life content that may otherwise be difficult for young learners to grasp through text alone (Mayer, 2009). Consequently, animation not only serves as a teaching aid but also becomes a means of cultural and religious storytelling.

Numerous studies support the positive impact of animation on students' learning outcomes, including their motivation, comprehension, and classroom engagement (Sungkono, 2020). However, the effectiveness of such media is largely influenced by

how it is implemented by teachers. The ability of educators to reflect critically on their use of technology is key to maximizing its benefits.

Teacher reflection is an essential component in professional development. It enables teachers to evaluate their instructional strategies, adapt to students' needs, and continuously improve their practices based on real classroom experiences (Schön, 1983). Reflection fosters a deeper awareness of teaching effectiveness and promotes a thoughtful integration of technology in pedagogy.

At SMP Rahmat Islamiyah Medan, animation-based media has recently been introduced as part of efforts to modernize IRE instruction. The school is actively integrating digital technology into its curriculum to respond to the diverse and dynamic learning styles of its students. This presents an opportunity to study the practical application of such media in a real educational setting.

Despite the growing implementation of animation in Islamic education, there remains a gap in research specifically examining teachers' reflective experiences with this media. Understanding how teachers interpret and respond to the process of integrating animation is crucial for developing best practices and supporting their professional growth.

To address this, the present study adopts a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is suitable for capturing the lived experiences and personal meanings that teachers attach to the use of animation in their classrooms (Creswell, 2016). This qualitative approach allows for rich, detailed exploration of subjective realities in educational contexts.

This research aims to explore teachers' reflections on using animation media in IRE teaching, including their motivations, perceived benefits, encountered challenges, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. The study seeks to go beyond surface-level observations and delve into the deeper cognitive and emotional processes involved in educational innovation.

Moreover, it investigates how teachers perceive the alignment between animation media and Islamic values. The integration of technology in religious education raises important questions about cultural appropriateness, content authenticity, and spiritual impact, which this research seeks to illuminate.

The study also contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic education reform in the digital age. It addresses the urgent need for pedagogical strategies that are both technologically responsive and spiritually rooted (Hefni, 2020). In this way, it helps educators balance innovation with religious integrity.

By understanding teachers' reflective experiences, stakeholders such as school leaders and policymakers can design more effective training and support programs for educators. Insights from this study may inform future developments in media-based Islamic education that are context-sensitive and teacher-informed.

Specifically, this study aims to: (1) describe teachers' experiences in utilizing animation media for teaching Islamic Religious Education; (2) analyze the challenges and strategies employed in the implementation process; and (3) interpret the reflective meaning teachers assign to the use of animation in reinforcing Islamic values.

B. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method. This approach was chosen because the primary objective of the study is to explore the subjective experiences of teachers in using animation media for teaching Islamic Religious Education. Phenomenology allows the researcher to understand teachers' lived experiences in a deep and reflective manner.

The subjects of this study are Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMP Rahmat Islamiyah Medan who have utilized animation media in their teaching process. Informants were selected using purposive sampling with specific criteria: actively teaching IRE and having at least one semester of experience using animation media.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews allowed teachers to share their reflections and experiences narratively. Observations were carried out during the teaching sessions to directly observe how animation media was applied in the classroom.

The data obtained were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, which consists of seven steps: reading all transcripts, extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing exhaustive descriptions, integrating results, and validating findings with participants (Colaizzi, 1978).

The credibility of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. The researcher cross-checked the interview results with observations and documents. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by presenting the findings to the participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of participants' identities and obtained written consent prior to interviews. All processes were carried out with respect, empathy, and openness to participants' experiences.

Through this methodology, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how teachers reflect on their use of animation media in IRE instruction, and how this impacts the effectiveness of learning and the development of Islamic values among students.

C. Results and Discussion

Research Findings

Based on in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers at SMP Rahmat Islamiyah Medan, it was found that the teachers showed great enthusiasm for using animation media in the classroom. They viewed it as an innovative approach

that could enhance student interest and diversify teaching methods beyond conventional practices.

Teachers admitted that when materials were delivered through animation, students became more focused and engaged. This was especially true for topics involving prophetic stories, pillars of faith, and moral teachings. The visual elements helped bridge abstract concepts into something more concrete and understandable.

During teaching, teachers found animation helpful in engaging passive students. Learners who typically remained quiet became more curious, asked questions, and participated in classroom discussions. Observations confirmed that animation created a lively and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

The use of animation was also perceived to promote contextual learning. Teachers could relate the animations to students' real-life experiences, such as honesty, empathy, and modeling prophetic behavior, which helped internalize Islamic values more effectively.

However, teachers encountered several challenges in implementation. Limited access to projectors, unstable internet connections, and reliance on electronic devices were recurring issues. Some teachers also struggled to find animation content that aligned with the Islamic curriculum and upheld authentic religious values.

To overcome these issues, teachers adopted practical strategies, including downloading videos outside class hours, editing animations to suit the context, and creating simple animations using applications like Canva or Powtoon. Collaboration with ICT teachers was also common to handle technical adjustments.

Through reflection, teachers realized that animation is more than a visual aid—it is a medium for da'wah that can emotionally and spiritually resonate with students. Teachers witnessed students becoming more morally sensitive after watching animations that portrayed exemplary behavior.

Teachers also found that interaction with students became more personal and communicative. The teaching process was no longer one-way but became more interactive and engaging, strengthening the teacher-student relationship.

Some teachers reported that students were motivated to learn independently. Many revisited the animation content at home or searched for related videos, which supported intrinsic motivation and character development.

Teachers' reflections also revealed changes in teaching styles—from teacher-centered approaches to more student-centered ones. Teachers acted more as facilitators and mentors, guiding students through experiences rather than just delivering information.

Animation also facilitated experiential learning. Watching animations allowed students to engage emotionally and cognitively, deepening their understanding of Islamic teachings through feeling and reflection.

Teachers agreed that animation delivered religious messages in a softer and more engaging manner. Students who were reluctant to participate in traditional lectures became more open when engaging with animated content.

In terms of character development, teachers observed improvements in student behavior. Some students became more polite and compassionate after consistently engaging with moral-themed animations.

Teachers noted that animation brought a fresh perspective to IRE lessons. However, they cautioned that content selection must be wise and aligned with Islamic principles to avoid misleading messages.

Through deep reflection, teachers concluded that animation can be a powerful tool for values education, provided it is used with discretion and understanding. They recommended that schools offer professional development and provide access to quality media.

They also emphasized the importance of making reflective practice part of routine teaching. Regular reflection allowed them to evaluate strategy effectiveness and understand its impact on students' spiritual and cognitive development.

Overall, teachers felt that the integration of animation into IRE teaching brought significant positive changes in students' comprehension, motivation, and internalization of Islamic values.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that the use of animation media in teaching Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has a positive impact on enhancing students' motivation and understanding. This finding aligns with Arsyad (2021), who emphasized that visual media help students comprehend abstract content in a more concrete and engaging way.

Teachers acknowledged that animation allows them to deliver religious messages in a contextualized and relatable manner. This supports the theory of contextual learning, which highlights the importance of connecting instructional content with students' real-life experiences (Johnson, 2006).

The increased active participation observed among students also reflects constructivist learning theory, which posits that students build knowledge through meaningful and experiential learning processes (Vygotsky, 1978).

Animation was found to significantly contribute to the internalization of Islamic values such as honesty, compassion, and responsibility. This reinforces the idea that media can serve as an effective tool for instilling religious character (Hefni, 2020).

The emotional engagement of students during animation sessions indicates the presence of affective learning processes. According to Mayer (2009), effective multimedia learning stimulates both cognitive and affective domains, leading to better learning outcomes.

However, this study also revealed that the success of using animation is highly dependent on teachers' preparedness, both technically and pedagogically. Teachers must be able to select, manage, and reflect on media usage wisely.

Technical challenges such as limited infrastructure and access to appropriate content pose real barriers. Therefore, institutional support in the form of facilities and training is essential for successful implementation (Sugiyono, 2020).

Teachers' adaptive strategies—such as collaborating with ICT teachers and using simple animation tools—demonstrate initiative and creativity in overcoming resource constraints. This highlights the importance of reflective teaching as a component of professional competence.

Reflection after teaching was found to be a crucial element in improving instructional quality. Schön (1983) emphasized that reflective practitioners evaluate their actions to enhance future practice.

Teachers also reported that animation helped build closer relationships with students, as classroom dynamics became more relaxed and communicative. This is essential in creating a positive and humane learning climate.

The study supports the view that technology does not replace teachers but serves as a partner in strengthening learning processes, provided it is used wisely and contextually (Prensky, 2001).

Moreover, animation supports student-centered learning approaches by giving students space to express themselves, voice opinions, and engage actively in the learning process.

Teachers' experiences show that IRE is no longer limited to knowledge transmission but involves deep character and spiritual formation. Animation is an effective medium for conveying Islamic values in a heartfelt and meaningful way.

This study also found that students retained information better when it was delivered through animation, as both visual and auditory elements worked together to reinforce understanding (Mayer, 2009).

Beyond improved learning outcomes, animation also encouraged students to engage in self-directed learning outside the classroom. This supports the principle of lifelong learning, a key element in 21st-century education.

Teachers expressed that their reflection on animation usage led to new awareness about the importance of innovation grounded in Islamic values. Innovation, in this sense, does not abandon tradition but strengthens it through relevant approaches.

The findings imply the need for a curriculum and instructional design in IRE that systematically integrates digital media. Support from educational policymakers is vital in developing content and training teachers.

This study reinforces the importance of developing teachers' digital literacy and reflective pedagogy. Teachers must not only master religious content but also adapt it to the characteristics of digital-native students.

The research contributes to contemporary Islamic education literature that emphasizes integrative approaches between technology and religious values in the teaching-learning process (Hefni, 2020).

In conclusion, animation media has proven to be an effective tool not only in enhancing students' cognitive skills but also in strengthening their spirituality and Islamic character in a more contextual and touching manner.

D. Conclusion

Based on the findings and teachers' deep reflections, it can be concluded that the use of animation media in Islamic Religious Education has a positive impact on enhancing students' understanding of Islamic concepts, increasing learning motivation, and creating a more interactive classroom environment. Animation has proven to

transform abstract material into more concrete, enjoyable, and accessible content for learners.

Teachers utilized animation not merely as a visual aid, but as a medium of da'wah that engages students cognitively, affectively, and spiritually. The reflective practices of teachers revealed that animation supports the internalization of Islamic values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and the desire to emulate prophetic character.

However, the effectiveness of animation media depends greatly on teacher readiness, infrastructure availability, and institutional support. Therefore, continuous training, development of Islamic-themed animation content aligned with the curriculum, and systematic integration of animation in IRE learning are essential to achieve optimal educational outcomes.

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