

LEARNING ABOUT ISLAMIC THROUGH PLAY WITH EDUCATIONAL ISLAMIC GAMES IN THE NONTHABURI MUSLIM COMMUNITY THAILAND

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ABSTRACT This community service activity was motivated by the limited use of interactive learning media in Islamic education for elementary school students in the Muslim community of Nonthaburi, Thailand. This situation highlighted the need for more engaging learning innovations tailored to the characteristics of the students. This activity aims to introduce Islamic educational games as an alternative learning medium, foster interest in learning Islam through a play-based approach, and inspire the community to implement more innovative teaching methods. The method used is Game-Based Learning through introductory sessions, demonstrations, and guidance on the use of Islamic educational games for elementary school students at Thammislam Foundation School in Nonthaburi, Thailand. Data was collected through observation, field documentation, and informal discussions during the activity. The results showed that students responded positively to the use of Islamic educational games. The participants' enthusiasm was evident in their active engagement during the activity, their participation in completing various game challenges, and their interest in the Islamic content presented. In addition to providing a more interactive and enjoyable learning experience for students, this activity also provided educators with insights into the use of game-based learning media in Islamic education. Islamic educational games have the potential to serve as an alternative learning medium capable of supporting the study of Islam in a more engaging and meaningful way for elementary school students in minority Muslim communities. Follow-up activities are recommended to strengthen the use of Islamic educational games through more sustained mentoring and training for educators and the local community.

KEYWORDS: *Game-Based Learning; Islamic Education; Muslim Minority; Thailand.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Muslim community in Nonthaburi, Thailand, is one of the Muslim minority groups living in urban areas outside the predominantly Muslim region of southern Thailand (Wildan, 2022). As a minority group living amidst the cultural and value dominance of the Buddhist majority, this community faces real challenges in preserving its identity and ensuring the continuity of Islamic education for their children (Mazza et al., 2024). The need for relevant, engaging, and accessible approaches to Islamic education has become increasingly urgent, particularly for elementary-aged children who are in the formative phase of character and religious identity development (Muzakki et al., 2024).

Thailand has a Muslim population of approximately 7.5 million, or about 12% of the total population, with the majority residing in the southern region. Meanwhile, other Muslim communities are scattered across major cities, including the Nonthaburi region near the capital, Bangkok (Mania, 2024). In the educational context, Thailand's Muslim minority communities actively strive to sustain the teaching of Islamic values to their youth despite the national formal education system being rooted in the majority culture (Harahap & Rajab, 2022). Recent research on Islamic education in Thailand indicates that one of the main challenges is maintaining children's interest and engagement with Islamic studies in a culturally unsupportive environment (Monica et al., 2024).

Islamic religious education for elementary school-aged children plays a crucial role as the foundation for character, faith, and moral development (Rhamadani & Suniarti, 2026). Kartika et al., (2023) emphasize that instilling religious character values from an early age through creative Islamic Religious Education (IRE) significantly contributes to the holistic development of a child's personality. Furthermore, Rodiyah et al., (2023) state that Islamic religious education and moral education for elementary school children are essential foundations for building strong character and a solid identity, particularly for children growing up in minority environments.

Issues observed in the field indicate that the Islamic teaching methods currently used in the Nonthaburi community are still dominated by conventional approaches such as rote memorization and one-way lectures. These approaches are insufficient in sparking children's enthusiasm, particularly in environments with limited Islamic cultural support. Elementary-aged children, by nature, learn most effectively through active, enjoyable activities that provide hands-on experiences (Waruwu & Helsa, 2025). Maemunah & Kusmiyati, (2025), in their study on game-based learning, state that game-based learning operates through intrinsic motivational mechanisms that foster curiosity, perseverance, and deep engagement among students.

Various studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Game-Based Learning (GBL) approach in the context of Islamic religious education. Fakhrunnisaa & Mardawati, (2023) found that educational games significantly enhance students' motivation to learn Islamic Education (PAI) in elementary school. Zainuddin et al., (2023) developed game-based learning materials for PAI content, and the results showed a very positive response from students. Furthermore, Safroni & Hidayah, (2024) confirmed that gamification-based Islamic education learning strategies have been proven to enhance students' learning motivation. Based on these empirical studies, this community service activity was designed to introduce and demonstrate Islamic educational games to children in the Nonthaburi Muslim community as a solution to the challenges in Islamic education faced by the community.

The objectives of this community service activity are: (1) to introduce engaging and contextually relevant Islamic educational games to elementary school-aged children in the Nonthaburi Muslim community, Thailand; (2) to foster enthusiasm and a love for learning Islam through a play-based approach; and (3) to inspire the community to adopt a sustainable game-based learning approach in their informal Islamic education.

2. METHOD

This community service activity was held at the Thammislam Foundation in Nonthaburi, Thailand, and involved elementary school children aged 7–12. The activity took place on April 21, 2026, in Nonthaburi, Thailand. The approach used was a live demonstration of Islamic educational games, in which the service team introduced, demonstrated, and guided the children in playing various types of educational games imbued with Islamic values.

The method used in this activity was Game-Based Learning (GBL). GBL is a learning approach that integrates game elements—such as challenges, rewards, competition, and feedback—into the learning process to enhance students' motivation and engagement (Fakhrunnisaa & Mardawati, 2023). This approach was chosen due to its alignment with the learning characteristics of elementary school-aged children, who are active, imaginative, and experience-oriented. Hui & Mahmud, (2023) emphasize that GBL consistently has a positive impact on students' cognitive and affective domains across various educational levels.

The conditions prior to the activity's implementation indicated that children in this community had never been exposed to interactive, game-based Islamic learning materials. The religious education they had received up to that point was informal and conventional. Therefore, the expected

outcomes of this activity are an increase in children's enthusiasm for Islamic learning and the inspiration for the community to independently adopt the GBL approach.

Data collection during the activity was conducted through participatory observation and field documentation. The service-learning team directly observed and recorded expressions, verbal responses, levels of engagement, and the dynamics of interactions among participants throughout the activity. Additionally, qualitative feedback was obtained through informal conversations with the children and community leaders after each activity concluded. This documentation method aligns with the qualitative observation-based community service approach commonly used in similar studies (Muzakki et al., 2024).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Early History of the Muslim Community in Nonthaburi, Thailand

The community service activity was conducted at the Thammislam Foundation School in Nonthaburi, Thailand, focusing on elementary school students participating in Islamic education classes. Based on field observations and interactions with foundation administrators, Islamic education has not yet widely adopted diverse teaching methods; instead, instruction primarily consists of verbal instruction and the use of textbooks. The use of learning media whether digital or non-digital that is interactive remains limited. This situation indicates a need for learning media that is more engaging and better suited to the nature of elementary school-aged students.

Children at this age tend to have a strong interest in play and exploration, so a learning approach is needed that can integrate educational and recreational elements in a balanced way. Furthermore, as a Muslim minority community in Thailand, efforts to preserve Islamic education require innovations that can increase students' interest in religious material. Therefore, introducing Islamic educational games is considered an appropriate choice to help make the learning process more engaging and meaningful.

3.2 Implementation of an Introductory Activity on Islamic Educational Games

The activity began with an introduction to Islamic educational games for the participants. The outreach team explained the purpose of the media, how to play the games, and the Islamic content they contained. At this stage, the students appeared enthusiastic and showed curiosity about the learning media being introduced. After the introductory session ended, the students were given the opportunity to play the games directly while being guided by the team. Throughout the activity, the students consistently followed the instructions provided, explored the various resources available,

and discussed with the facilitators whenever they felt there was material or a part of the game they did not yet understand. The interactions that took place demonstrated that game-based learning media can create a more dynamic learning environment and encourage greater student participation.

The use of Islamic educational games also encouraged student participation in the learning process. Students appeared enthusiastic when facing the various questions and tasks within the game. The learning atmosphere became more enjoyable because students were not merely passively listening to the material but were actively engaged by playing while learning. At the end of the activity, a brief discussion was held to gauge participants' feedback on the media used. Most students expressed positive impressions and felt that the learning experience was more engaging than what they typically receive. The enthusiasm and positive responses demonstrated during the activity indicate that Islamic educational games have the potential as an alternative learning medium that can support the teaching of Islam in a more interactive and enjoyable manner.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1. Media implementation activities: (a) Introduction to Islamic Educational Games for Participants; (b) Students Try Out Islamic Educational Games

3.3 Participation and Enthusiasm of the Participants

One of the key outcomes of this activity was the participants' excellent engagement throughout the learning process. The students' enthusiasm was evident from the start of the activity until the end of the session. Participants paid close attention to the explanations provided and actively tried to play the game. This active participation demonstrates that game-based learning media can create a more interactive learning environment. Unlike traditional learning methods that merely convey information, educational games allow students to engage directly in the learning process, so they are not merely listening to or receiving material but are actively involved in the learning activities.

This finding aligns with the results of research by Septiani & Jamaludin, (2025), which showed that the application of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in Islamic Religious Education can increase student engagement and strengthen their understanding of the material being taught. Additionally,

(Saskiah, 2023) stated that the use of educational games in Islamic Religious Education can boost students' motivation to learn and make them more active throughout the learning process.

3.4 Islamic Educational Games as an Engaging Learning Tool

The participants' enthusiasm during the activity demonstrates that Islam-based educational games have great potential to serve as a learning medium capable of capturing the interest of elementary school students. Games that combine visual elements, challenges, and immediate feedback make learning more enjoyable. Throughout the event, the students appeared enthusiastic and eager to tackle the challenges presented in the games. This indicates that game-based elements can naturally boost students' motivation to engage in the learning process.

Research conducted by Fitriyadi & Wuryandani, (2021) showed that the use of educational games can be an effective choice of learning medium. These games are not only capable of improving students' critical thinking skills but also help enrich the variety of learning media used in elementary schools. Similar findings were also reported by Rozi & Arini, (2022), who showed that educational game-based learning media can make the learning experience more exciting and increase student participation in the learning process. In this community service activity, Islamic educational games were not only used for entertainment but also to help students understand Islamic religious material in an enjoyable way through play-based activities.

3.5 The Impact of the Activity on Students and Educators

This community service initiative benefits both students and teachers. For students, using Islamic educational games provides a different learning experience compared to the conventional methods they had previously used. Students have become more diligent, pay closer attention to the lessons, and show great interest in the learning activities.

Meanwhile, for educators and community leaders, this activity provides insight into various educational media options that incorporate game-based concepts, enabling their application in the teaching and learning of Islamic education. The presence of interactive educational media serves as one means to enhance the variety of teaching methods employed.

The findings of Hajro & Subhi, (2023) study indicate that game-based learning methods successfully enhance creativity, learning motivation, and student engagement in Islamic Religious Education classes. Thus, introducing Islamic educational games to the Muslim community in Nonthaburi not only makes students enjoy learning but also opens opportunities to implement more innovative teaching methods aligned with technological advancements.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service activity, which involved introducing Islamic educational games at the Thammislam Foundation School in Nonthaburi, Thailand, has achieved its set objectives: introducing interactive Islamic learning tools, fostering students' interest in learning through a play-based approach, and providing alternative learning methods for the local community. The high level of student participation and enthusiasm during the activity demonstrates that Islamic educational games are well-received by participants and can create a more engaging and meaningful learning environment.

The Game-Based Learning method used in this activity was deemed suitable for the needs and characteristics of elementary school students, who tend to prefer play-based activities and learning through direct experience. Furthermore, this approach is also relevant to the challenges faced by the Muslim minority community in Nonthaburi in providing Islamic religious education that is engaging, contextual, and capable of sustaining students' interest in learning.

This activity benefits both students and educators. For students, Islamic educational games provide a more interactive learning experience and encourage active engagement during the learning process. Meanwhile, for educators and community leaders, this activity offers insights into the use of game-based learning media as an alternative to enrich Islamic religious education methods.

Future community service activities, it is recommended that more sustained guidance be provided through the regular development and use of Islamic educational games in learning activities. Additionally, training for teachers and community leaders on the implementation of Game-Based Learning is necessary to ensure the introduced media can be utilized optimally. Similar activities can also be expanded to other Muslim minority communities to support the development of Islamic education that is more innovative, engaging, and aligned with technological advancements.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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