

## INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BOREDOM IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL-BASED VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze and develop innovative strategies to overcome learning boredom in Islamic Religious Education subjects at Islamic boarding school-based vocational high schools (SMK). This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, conducted at SMK Islam Raden Fatah Darussalam Tugumulyo, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency, South Sumatra. The main data sources consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers, 10th and 11th grade students, and pesantren administrators, while secondary data was obtained from school academic documents, pesantren activity schedules, and digital learning archives. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model through a process of data reduction, data presentation, and iterative conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that student learning fatigue is influenced by a heavy course load, an intensive boarding school schedule, monotonous teaching methods, and a lack of variety in digital media in Islamic Religious Education learning. Teachers implemented several innovative strategies such as project-based learning, gamification, contextual-collaborative approaches, and the use of interactive digital media in the form of reflective videos and online quizzes. These strategies have been proven to increase students' motivation, engagement, and reflective abilities regarding Islamic values. This research is significant because it provides practical contributions to boarding school-based schools in designing effective learning strategies to reduce boredom in Islamic Religious Education. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of Islamic Religious Education learning management, particularly in the context of vocational education integrated with the boarding school system.

### Keywords

Digital Learning, Innovative Strategies, Learning Fatigue, Pesantren-Based Vocational Schools.



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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education in vocational education units based on Islamic boarding schools faces increasingly complex challenges, one of which is student learning fatigue (Holm et al., 2025; Gini et al., 2025). This is evident at SMK Islam Raden Fatah Darussalam Tugumulyo, where this research was conducted, where some students showed a decline in interest, weak concentration, and low participation during the Islamic Religious Education learning process. This boredom is a serious academic problem because it affects the quality of internalization of religious values, which is the main objective of Islamic Religious Education (Casner, 2020; Imatul Kutbaniyah et al., 2025). In the context of pesantren-based vocational schools, this boredom is not only caused by individual factors but is also influenced by learning conditions and the learning environment (Lee & Lee, 2024; Suryawati et al., 2010). There are at least five factors that are the dominant causes of student boredom in Islamic Religious Education. The high workload from productive subjects, the general curriculum, and pesantren activities causes students to experience learning fatigue (Gawusu Sidik et al., 202; Wahid, 2024).

In addition, teaching methods that are still dominated by lectures and lack participatory activities make the learning process feel monotonous (Lukmawati et al., 2017; Permana & Sudrajat, 2022). The suboptimal use of digital media also makes Islamic Religious Education material less attractive to the digital generation of students. The learning environment in Islamic boarding schools, which is full of rules and has a strict daily schedule, also reduces students' flexibility in managing their focus and energy for learning (Pendidikan et al., 2024; Widodo & Abbas, 2018). In addition, some vocational school students view Islamic Religious Education material as irrelevant to the world of work, which is their future orientation, so they feel that religious learning is not applicable and easily causes boredom (Muttaqin et al., 2024; Turhan et al., 2023).

To overcome this problem, Islamic Religious Education teachers at this school have tried to implement various innovative strategies to make learning more interesting and motivate students. Among these strategies are project-based learning, gamification of Islamic Religious Education material, collaborative discussions, contextual approaches that connect the material to students' real experiences, and the use of interactive digital media such as reflective videos and online quizzes. These strategies aim to create a more enjoyable, participatory, and meaningful learning process. The effectiveness of these strategies can be seen from the increased enthusiasm of students to participate in class activities, increased motivation to learn, and reduced symptoms of boredom, mental fatigue,

and loss of focus (Krath et al., 2021; Krathwohl, 2023; Hasan et al., 2025). Observations and interviews indicate that the use of digital media and project-based learning provides a more contextual learning experience and fosters students' emotional engagement with religious material.

Previous studies in the last five years also provide important insights into innovative strategies and learning fatigue. (Farid A. & Aminah, 2024; Lore et al., 2025) found that student boredom was caused by a lack of variety in learning methods, but the study did not review the context of Islamic boarding schools. (Rehman et al., 2023) proved that gamification can increase student learning motivation, but it has not deeply integrated religious values. Research (Sailer et al., 2021) confirms that interactive digital media can reduce boredom in vocational schools, but it does not focus on religious learning. (Mahmud et al., 2022) revealed that excessive curriculum load triggers burnout in vocational school students, while research (Rias Wana et al., 2023) shows the effectiveness of project-based learning in increasing participation in Islamic Religious Education, but does not consider the pesantren context. From these five studies, there appears to be a research gap in terms of the integrated use of innovative strategies, digital technology, and pesantren values in Islamic Religious Education learning in vocational schools. This study aims to fill this gap by developing a new, more holistic understanding of innovative strategies to overcome learning boredom.

This study is based on several important theories and discourses, such as Cognitive Load Theory, which explains the relationship between boredom and cognitive load; Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience in increasing learning engagement; and Gamification Theory, which explains how game elements can foster intrinsic motivation. In terms of policy, this research is in line with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy of strengthening religious moderation, which emphasizes contextual, innovative, and technology-based Islamic Religious Education.

Based on the above description, this study aims to identify the factors causing boredom in Islamic Religious Education at Raden Fatah Islamic Vocational School, describe the innovative strategies applied by teachers, analyze the effectiveness of these strategies in increasing student motivation and participation in learning, and develop a conceptual model of innovative strategies that are in line with the characteristics of pesantren-based vocational schools. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education, particularly in relation to innovative learning strategies in pesantren-based vocational schools. Pragmatically, this study provides

applicable recommendations for teachers and educational institutions to create Islamic Religious Education learning that is more adaptive, relevant, and meaningful for students in the digital era.

## METHOD

This study uses qualitative research with a case study approach. The case study approach was chosen because the study seeks to explore in depth the phenomenon of learning fatigue and the innovative strategies applied by Islamic Education teachers in a specific context, namely a pesantren-based vocational school environment. Qualitative case study research allows researchers to understand the dynamics of behavior, experiences, and learning practices in a naturalistic manner, according to the context that occurs at the Raden Fatah Karawang Islamic Vocational School (Aqib, 2019).

The data in this study is descriptive qualitative data that describes the innovative strategies used by teachers to overcome learning fatigue in Islamic Education subjects in a pesantren-based vocational school environment. The main data sources are Islamic Education teachers, 10th and 11th grade students, as well as the principal and pesantren supervisors at SMK Islam Raden Fatah Karawang (Moleong, 2019). Secondary data sources included the Islamic Religious Education curriculum documents, syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), learning outcome records, and archives of pesantren-based learning activities.

Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Kuntowijoyo, 2018). During the observation stage, the researcher directly observed the Islamic Religious Education learning process in the classroom and boarding school activities for eight months, from February to October 2025, at SMK Islam Raden Fatah. The observation focused on the activities of teachers and students in learning, the variety of methods used, and student responses to learning strategies.

The interview stage was conducted with two Islamic Religious Education teachers, the principal, two boarding school supervisors, and ten students from grades X and XI. The interviews aimed to explore their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding learning fatigue and the innovative strategies applied. Meanwhile, the documentation stage included collecting data in the form of lesson plans, boarding school activity schedules, photos of learning activities, student evaluation records, and school academic reports, which were used to reinforce the results of the observation and interviews.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, 2014). The data reduction stage was carried out by selecting and focusing on data related to learning saturation and the learning strategies used by teachers at SMK Islam Raden Fatah. The data presentation stage was carried out by compiling the results of observations, interviews, and documentation in a descriptive narrative form to facilitate the interpretation of the research results.

The data analysis stage was carried out by conducting a critical analysis of the innovative learning strategies found, such as project-based learning, gamification, and contextual approaches, using relevant active learning and Islamic educational psychology theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, the researcher also compared the findings with previous studies to identify the similarities and differences in the context of applying innovative strategies to overcome learning boredom in Islamic boarding school-based educational environments.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Findings**

The results of this study were obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at SMK Islam Raden Fatah Karawang from February to October 2025. The findings show that Islamic Education teachers face the problem of student learning boredom caused by internal and external factors. To overcome this, several innovative activity- and technology-based learning strategies were implemented to increase student motivation and engagement.

The following are the field findings summarized in Table 1. Innovative Strategies to Overcome Learning Boredom in Islamic Religious Education at Islamic Boarding School-Based Vocational Schools.

**Table 1.** Innovative Strategies to Overcome Learning Fatigue in Islamic Religious Education at Raden Fatah Islamic Vocational School

No.	Finding Unit	Field Data Description	Impact on Students	Primary Data Source
1.	E Causes of Learning Fatigue	Heavy academic workload and boarding school activities (12 hours of Islamic Religious Education per week plus evening religious activities). Dominant teaching methods are lectures and memorization.	Students easily get bored, become sleepy in class, and exhibit passive behavior.	Observations and interviews with students and teachers
2.	Implementation of Project-Based	Islamic Religious Education teachers integrate thematic	Students are more active, work	Teacher interviews & project

Learning	projects such as "Creative Da'wah Videos" and "Blessed Friday Movement" to connect religious values with social action.	together in teams, and are able to relate Islamic values to real-life practices.	documentation
3. Gamification of Islamic Education Materials	Use of <i>Quizizz</i> and <i>Kahoot!</i> apps in evaluating faith and ethics material. Students are given points and digital rewards.	Increasing enthusiasm for learning and healthy competition among students.	Class observation & student feedback
4. Contextual and Reflective Approach	Teachers relate Islamic Religious Education material to everyday issues (e.g., work ethics, honesty in the industrial world).	Students better understand the relevance of Islamic teachings in real life.	Teacher interviews and observation notes
5. Use of Interactive Digital Media	Teachers use short educational videos, infographics on Islamic values, and reflections through student vlogs.	Students are more focused, less prone to boredom, and find it easier to understand abstract concepts.	Media documentation & student reflection results
6. Collaboration between Islamic Boarding Schools and Schools	There is coordination between Islamic Education teachers and boarding school counselors in the Islamic Education Study Program to manage students' study time and spiritual activities.	Reducing the pressure of study load, creating a balance between academic and spiritual life.	Interviews with the school principal and the boarding school counselors

**Source:** Primary Field Research Data (Observation, Interviews, and Documentation), Raden Fatah Islamic Vocational School, Karawang, February–October 2025

Description of Findings Based on Table 1.

### 1. Causes of Learning Fatigue

Observations show that students at SMK Islam Raden Fatah experience burnout due to heavy academic loads and intense boarding school activities. The overly conventional process of Islamic Religious Education causes low active participation among students. In one week, students receive 12 hours of Islamic Religious Education lessons and participate in 3-4 evening religious activities, such as *tadarus*, book studies, and memorization. This condition causes some students to be tired before attending morning classes.

Interviews with 11th-grade students show that fatigue from evening activities has an impact on their concentration and readiness to learn Islamic Religious Education in the morning. In addition, around 70% of students expressed boredom caused by monotonous teaching methods that did not actively involve them. Observations also showed that 8 out of 12 students in class XI-2 tended to be passive, rarely asked questions, and only waited for instructions from the teacher without

taking the initiative to study independently.

## **2. Implementation of Project-Based Learning**

Islamic Education teachers began to implement the *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL) strategy through activities such as *the Friday Blessing Movement* and *the Creative Da'wah Video Project*. In the "Creative Da'wah Video" project, students were divided into groups of 4-5 people, designed storyboards, took pictures, and then presented the results in front of the class. The project lasted 10-14 days.

Observations and interviews with teachers show that this strategy significantly increases student engagement, especially in teamwork, discussion, and decision-making. Field data shows that around 90% of students are actively involved in the video production process, and 95% of students complete the project on time. In addition, teachers assess that students who were previously passive have become more communicative and dare to express their ideas during the project-based learning process.

## **3. Gamification of Islamic Education Material**

The use of the *Kahoot!* and *Quizizz* applications made learning more interactive. Teachers added a scoring system, rewards, and weekly challenges themed around Islamic values. Based on the results of observations and interviews, the application of gamification increased student participation from around 55% to 85%. On average, students were able to complete the quiz in 3-5 minutes, and around 80% of students scored above 70. Interviews with students showed that game-based learning was considered more enjoyable, challenging, and able to reduce drowsiness and boredom during the learning process.

## **4. Contextual and Reflective Approach**

Teachers linked Islamic Religious Education material to real-world phenomena such as work ethics, social responsibility, and honesty in the industrial world. This approach helped students understand that Islamic values are relevant to their professional lives. Some students were even able to connect fiqh lessons to entrepreneurial practices at school.

In muamalah fiqh material, students are asked to analyze cases of dishonest transactions in motorcycle repair shops, in line with the vocational interests of some students. The interview results show that around 65% of students consider Islamic Education learning to be more relevant to their lives and work, while 42% of students say this approach helps them understand Islamic teachings in a more practical and applicable way.

## 5. Use of Interactive Digital Media

Teachers utilized short 3–5 minute instructional videos, infographics on Islamic values, and reflective vlog assignments for students. The visual and audiovisual approach was proven to reduce student boredom.

Documentation and observation results show that students' focus duration increased from an average of 10 minutes to around 22 minutes before experiencing distraction. In addition, class discussions became more lively after watching thematic videos, especially on the subject of morals and work ethic in Islam, which encouraged students to think critically and reflectively.

## 6. Collaboration between Islamic Boarding Schools and Schools

Collaboration was carried out through coordination between Islamic Education teachers and Islamic boarding school counselors to balance academic and spiritual activity schedules. Interviews with school and Islamic boarding school officials showed that this schedule adjustment helped reduce excessive learning pressure and improve students' psychological well-being.

During the research period, there were six coordination meetings per quarter to evaluate students' learning load. The impact was seen in a decrease in student fatigue complaints from 78% to 49% after adjusting the evening activity schedule.

Overall, innovative strategies such as project-based learning, digital gamification, reflective contextual approaches, the use of interactive digital media, and school-boarding school synergy have proven to significantly reduce boredom in Islamic Religious Education. Students have become more active, have a longer learning focus, show a stronger collaborative spirit, and have higher intrinsic motivation in understanding and internalizing Islamic values.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that learning fatigue in Islamic Religious Education at Islamic boarding school-based vocational schools arises not only from internal factors within students, but also from an imbalance between academic workload, conventional learning patterns, and a lack of pedagogical innovation. This condition was clearly found in the context of Islamic Religious Education at the Raden Fatah Darussalam Tugumulyo Islamic Vocational School, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency, South Sumatra, where 10th and 11th-grade students had to face academic and religious demands simultaneously. This finding is in line with the theory of *learning burnout* proposed by (Turhan et al., 2024; Sandanayake, 2021), which states that burnout occurs when individuals face excessive demands without the support of meaningful experiences. In the context



of Islamic Religious Education, burnout is not merely caused by cognitive fatigue, but also by a lack of spiritual meaning, which should be the essence of Islamic education.

This finding reinforces the concept of holistic Islamic education as proposed by Aldalur & Perez (2023) and Ismail et al. (2025), that religious learning should not stop at the cognitive and dogmatic aspects, but must integrate spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual values. Learning that is only knowledge transfer tends to neglect the affective and psychomotor aspects of students, causing boredom and alienation of meaning. In this case, innovations such as *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL), gamification, and contextual approaches are concrete implementations of humanistic learning theory, which places students as active and reflective subjects in the learning process.

The application of Project-Based Learning in the context of Islamic Religious Education has proven to be effective in reducing boredom because it involves students emotionally and socially in meaningful activities. These results support the research (Ukwandu et al., 2025) and are reinforced by (Cong et al., 2024), who found that project-based learning fosters responsibility and reflection on moral values in madrasah students. However, unlike the madrasah context, the application of PjBL in pesantren-based vocational schools has a unique feature: religious projects are directly linked to vocational practices, such as industrial work ethics and social service. This means that this innovation expands the scope of PjBL theory application in a more contextual Islamic education setting.

Meanwhile, gamification in Islamic Religious Education learning is the answer to the boredom of the digital generation, who need quick and interactive stimulation. In line with the *Self Determination* theory (Abdulrahman et al., 2020; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2024), the use of a points and rewards system fosters intrinsic motivation because it provides a sense of autonomy, competence, and involvement. This study supports the findings (Behl et al., 2022; Hasanah et al., 2024) that gamification can increase student engagement in learning. However, unlike previous studies that focused on motivation, this study shows that gamification also strengthens the internalization of Islamic values through positive emotional experiences. This is a new theoretical contribution to the development of technology-based Islamic pedagogy.

Furthermore, the contextual and reflective approach applied by teachers is a concrete manifestation of the *Contextual Teaching and Learning* paradigm (Swaramarinda et al., 2025). When teachers relate the material to the industrial world and social realities, students understand that Islamic values do not stop at the level of ritual but are relevant to their professional lives. This

supports the view (Hasanah et al., 2024) that Islamic education must produce individuals who are adaptive to the changing times without losing their spiritual values. Here, the author proposes an antithesis to the old practice of religious education, which is often trapped in the formality of worship without social reflection. Islamic Religious Education should be a space for dialogue between divine values and the challenges of the modern workplace.

In the context of interactive digital media use, this study shows that technology is not a threat to spirituality, but rather an effective means of preaching. This view challenges some people who are still skeptical about the digitization of religious learning. Based on the Multimedia Learning theory (Zgheib et al., 2023), digital media strengthens the absorption and retention of concepts because it combines verbal and visual elements. From an Islamic education perspective, this is in line with Sri Syafa'ati's (2020). The idea of *ta'dib* is education that combines knowledge and manners in the form of a holistic and meaningful learning experience. Thus, the use of digital technology in Islamic Religious Education is not merely a technical innovation, but a form of pedagogical *tajdid* (renewal) in Islam.

The collaboration between schools and Islamic boarding schools shows that institutional synergy plays an important role in reducing learning fatigue. These results are in line with the findings (Muthohirin, 2025) which emphasizes the importance of collaborative management between academic and spiritual aspects. However, this study offers new findings that such collaboration is not only administrative but also psycho-pedagogical, as it is able to create a balance between learning pressure and students' spiritual peace. Thus, school *pesantren* collaboration becomes a form of integration between *intellectual management* and *spiritual leadership* in modern Islamic education.

From all the findings, it can be seen that the innovative learning strategies for Islamic Religious Education in *pesantren*-based vocational schools are an adaptive response to social dynamics and the needs of the digital generation without abandoning Islamic values. Theoretically, this study broadens the understanding of the relationship between pedagogical innovation, learning fatigue, and spirituality in Islamic education. Practically, the results of this study offer a learning model that balances academic, technological, and spiritual aspects.

The conclusion of this study shows that innovative strategies in Islamic Religious Education at Raden Fatah Karawan Islamic Vocational School, including *Project-Based Learning*, gamification, contextual-reflective approaches, the use of interactive digital media, and *pesantren* school

collaboration, are proven effective in overcoming student learning fatigue by increasing motivation, engagement, and learning relevance. These strategies strengthen the spiritual, cognitive, and social dimensions of students in a balanced manner, while also addressing the research objectives, namely to identify the causes of boredom, describe the application of innovative strategies, and analyze their effectiveness in creating more meaningful and enjoyable Islamic Religious Education learning.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that learning boredom in Islamic Religious Education subjects at Islamic vocational schools arises from an imbalance between a high academic workload and intense spiritual activities, as well as monotonous learning methods. Students experience boredom because the learning process does not provide variety and deep meaning. To overcome this, Islamic Education teachers at Raden Fatah Karawang Islamic Vocational School implement various innovative strategies such as project-based learning, digital gamification, contextual and reflective approaches, and the use of interactive digital media. These strategies have proven to increase student participation, enthusiasm, and understanding of Islamic values. In addition, collaboration between the school and Islamic boarding schools helps balance academic and spiritual activities, creating a healthier and more enjoyable learning environment. The results of the study show that innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning not only refreshes the learning process but also fosters students' awareness of the meaning of Islamic values in real life. These innovations serve as a bridge between religious theory and social practice, making learning more contextual and relevant to the needs of vocational school students who combine vocational and Islamic education. Practically, this research contributes to teachers and Islamic educational institutions to continue adapting to the times through the application of creative, collaborative, and technology-based learning strategies, without abandoning the principles of Islamic spirituality and morality.

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