

Innovative Strategy of Role-playing Method in Islamic Religious Education to Increase Enthusiasm and Understanding of Students

Strategi Inovatif Metode Bermain Peran dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam untuk Meningkatkan Antusias dan Pemahaman Peserta Didik

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and moral values from an early age. However, instructional approaches in IRE remain dominated mainly by lecture-based methods, which tend to result in passive learning and decreased student engagement. This issue is particularly evident in Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools, where conventional teaching strategies often fail to stimulate students' interest, ultimately leading to low learning outcomes. To address this challenge, there is a need for innovative and participatory learning strategies, such as the role-playing method. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing role-playing as an instructional strategy to enhance student engagement and conceptual understanding in Islamic Religious Education. A qualitative case study approach was employed at SDIT Al-Halimiyah, Jakarta. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The data analysis involved three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that role-playing significantly increases active student participation, strengthens their understanding and retention of religious concepts, and fosters the development of confidence, empathy, and social awareness. Furthermore, students demonstrated higher enthusiasm and comprehension when learning was delivered through experiential and interactive methods. These results suggest that role-playing can be an effective alternative instructional strategy in Islamic Religious Education, promoting active learning and contributing to the overall quality of religious education at the elementary school level.

Keywords: Innovative strategy, Islamic Religious Education, role play, learning enthusiasm.

Abstrak

Pendidikan Agama Islam memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk karakter peserta didik. Namun, metode ceramah yang dominan sering kali menurunkan minat dan hasil belajar peserta didik. Di sekolah dasar Islam terpadu, sejumlah besar metode pengajaran pendidikan agama Islam, tidak menarik bagi peserta didik. Akibatnya, hasil belajar peserta didik dalam pembelajaran pai menurun. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan metode yang inovatif dan menarik, seperti bermain peran (*role-playing*). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pembelajaran inovatif dengan pendekatan bermain peran dalam meningkatkan antusias dan pemahaman peserta didik terhadap materi Pendidikan Agama Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus di SDIT Al-Halimiyah Jakarta dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dalam beberapa tahap yaitu kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan metode bermain peran mampu meningkatkan partisipasi aktif peserta didik, memperkuat pemahaman materi dan daya ingat, serta menumbuhkan sikap percaya diri, empati, dan kesadaran sosial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa metode bermain peran dapat dijadikan alternatif dalam pembelajaran aktif dan terbukti efektif pada mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam.

Kata Kunci: Strategi inovatif, pembelajaran PAI, bermain peran, antusias belajar.

1. Pendahuluan

Education is a collaborative effort that involves learners in achieving predetermined educational goals. The basic elements of education consist of educators, learners, and essential teaching materials (Pratama et al., 2023). The structure of education in Indonesia places great importance on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects that focus on developing students' spiritual, social, and intellectual abilities Malasari et al. (2024), because noble morals are one of the main factors that must be applied early on (Erni et al., 2024). Therefore, PAI learning aims to broaden the understanding of Islamic principles (Hayati et al., 2022). Conversely, if the learning approach in PAI remains dominated by a passive approach, then students tend to experience boredom and fail to achieve learning objectives (Solihat et al., 2024).

Thus, changes in PAI learning methods are needed to encourage increased learning Liansari and Untari (2020), and help students to participate in the learning process actively. Learners who show high interest in learning will appreciate every step and detail of teaching and learning activities with their educators. This is because the greater the enthusiasm for learning from learners, the greater the possibility of achieving extraordinary results. In other words, learners who are enthusiastic about learning will be more motivated and less likely not to achieve goals, because learners who are enthusiastic about the concept of learning will enjoy every stage of the learning cycle (Abwi et al., 2023). In effective education it is essential to use innovative and engaging learning strategies and methods, which emphasize the active participation of learners (Solihat et al., 2024). Therefore, educators should experiment with finding innovative learning methods and engaging learners' participation related to their learning plans (Azin, 2023).

In the primary school system, PAI education in Indonesia includes four subject matters: fiqh, akidah akhlak, Al-Qur'an Hadith, and SKI (History of Islamic Culture) (Sallima & Romadlon, 2023). One practical and appropriate learning method is role-playing (Rosadi & Wulandari, 2024). Role-playing techniques can help educators overcome learning challenges to expand learners' understanding of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in the practice of worship and understanding of religious beliefs, because PAI is a subject designed to prepare students to live in society by instilling ethics, morals, and good character (Sallima & Romadlon, 2023). In the classroom, learners actively participate in role-playing activities, which can be tested and evaluated for lessons learned by learners. This strategy evaluates the mastery of roles in situations and the depth of learning methods (Dupai et al., 2020). Moreover, this method can help learners build confidence when applying for their roles (Khadafi et al., 2025).

The researcher indicated the application of the role-playing method in the implementation of PAI learning at Al-Halimiyah Islamic Elementary School in Jakarta. Therefore, the researcher is interested in specifically examining the innovative strategy of the role-playing method in Islamic education at SDIT Al-Halimiyah Jakarta to increase learners' enthusiasm and understanding. This study aims to analyze the use of the role-playing approach in educational practice and evaluate learners' learning outcomes in terms of understanding and enthusiasm.

2. Literature Review

The role-playing method is one of the active learning approaches that emphasizes students' involvement in a simulated situation designed to represent real or hypothetical social conditions. Fannie Shaftel and George Shaftel define roles and role-playing as "a performative educational paradigm in which participants, either individually or collectively, play predetermined roles that

generally contain social implications.” In this regard, role-playing serves as a strategy for problem-solving through the implementation of a series of structured activities (Cahyani et al., 2023).

Role-playing is not merely a recreational activity, but rather a pedagogical method with clear structure and objectives. Similar to physical games, role-playing has specific learning targets, rules, and elements of entertainment that can spark students’ enthusiasm. Although conducted within the classroom setting, this method allows students to step out of their everyday reality and imagine themselves in situations or roles different from their usual experience. In this context, the role-playing method encourages students to think reflectively and empathetically toward the various social roles they portray.

In principle, role-play is a learning activity aimed at introducing students to real-life roles. Within the context of Islamic Religious Education, this becomes highly relevant as many Islamic teachings emphasize social values, ethics, and interpersonal interaction. Therefore, role-playing can be a strategic medium for introducing Islamic values through contextual situations closely related to students’ daily lives (Cahyani et al., 2023). By incorporating dialogue and theatrical exercises, this method enables students to engage directly in speaking practices, thereby creating an engaging and enjoyable learning atmosphere (Rokmanah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, active student involvement in role-playing provides an opportunity for deeper internalization of the learning material. This active participation impacts not only cognitive mastery but also contributes to the development of affective understanding and attitudes. Research by Hayati et al. (2022) demonstrates that the role-playing method significantly improves student learning outcomes, particularly in the subject of Islamic Cultural History. These findings indicate that a learning approach involving active student participation facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Nevertheless, to ensure that the learning process runs effectively and optimally, effective communicative interaction between teachers and students is essential. Additionally, the role of learning media becomes crucial in creating a meaningful and conducive learning environment. In this regard, Fitri and Putra (2022) highlight the importance of metacognitive strategies that support students’ thinking abilities, including through the role-playing approach which demands reflection and evaluation of every action performed within the learning scenario.

Thus, previous studies have shown that role-playing is not only an engaging learning method but also enhances student enthusiasm, critical thinking skills, and understanding of the learning material, including in Islamic Religious Education. Innovations in its implementation strategy are essential to prevent the method from becoming monotonous and to ensure its continued relevance to contemporary educational needs and the diverse characteristics of students.

3. Research Methods

This research employs a qualitative methodology with a descriptive analytical approach, focusing on the implementation of role-playing as an innovative method in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to enhance students’ enthusiasm and understanding. The study was conducted at SDIT Al-Halimiyah Jakarta, specifically in the fourth-grade class, where the role-playing method was integrated into religious learning activities. This approach allows researchers to explore in-depth how the role-playing method is applied in a real classroom setting, emphasizing contextual analysis over generalization. Analysis enables researchers to focus on events or issues within a limited scope, thereby allowing a more thorough investigation of the phenomena occurring in a specific educational environment (Fitri & Haryanti, 2020).

The primary aim of this study is to provide concrete solutions to the challenges faced by educators and learners during the learning process. Rather than pursuing broad generalizations, this research seeks to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how the role-playing method affects classroom dynamics, particularly in fostering student engagement and comprehension in Islamic teachings. To capture a holistic view of the learning situation, the researcher conducted classroom observations, interviews, and documentation reviews. Observations were used to monitor student attendance, track participation, and evaluate the success of the learning strategies employed during the implementation of role-playing activities.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with Islamic education teachers to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions regarding the planning, implementation, challenges, and outcomes of using role-playing in their instructional practices. The interview questions were designed to explore various dimensions of the role-playing method, including its impact on students' affective and cognitive domains. Additionally, the interviews provided an opportunity for educators to reflect on their teaching practices and how the introduction of an interactive method like role-playing reshaped their classroom interactions. Data from the interviews enriched the observational findings and provided triangulated perspectives on the effectiveness of the role-playing strategy.

To strengthen the reliability and credibility of the data, the researcher also collected supporting documentation. These included lesson plans that integrated role-playing components, student worksheets, evaluation results, and the actual role-play scripts used in the classroom. By analyzing these documents, the researcher was able to validate findings from the observations and interviews, thus ensuring a more robust interpretation of the research data. The documentation further helped illustrate how well the method was planned and structured by the educators, and how it aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the IRE curriculum.

Data analysis in this study followed a systematic process involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, following the qualitative analysis model. As described by [Fiantika et al. \(2022\)](#), this process is essential to simplify complex qualitative data into meaningful categories that can lead to insightful conclusions. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying the raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documents. The refined data were then organized and presented in narrative form, allowing the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among the various elements of the teaching and learning process.

Through this methodological approach, the research aims to offer practical implications for improving instructional strategies in Islamic Religious Education, particularly by promoting more interactive, innovative, and student-centered learning environments. The role-playing method, as applied in this context, is expected to not only enhance students' enthusiasm and participation but also improve their conceptual understanding of Islamic values and teachings. The results of this study are anticipated to serve as a meaningful contribution for educators seeking alternative methods that align with contemporary educational demands and learners' psychological needs in religious learning.

4. Results and Discussion

Before implementing the role-playing method, it is important to start learning activities and develop lesson plans that integrate educational aspects. These plans ultimately aim to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. This is based on the analysis of findings derived from the collection and examination of qualitative data obtained through interviews and observations conducted by researchers.

Based on an interview with Mr. DA, an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) educator for grade four at SDIT Al-Halimiyah Jakarta. Before applying this method, some students during this lesson looked bored, uninterested, and even unwilling to engage in learning delivered through the lecture method. Therefore, an innovative and interesting approach is needed to overcome this problem, especially in PAI through the role-playing method (Solihat et al., 2024). Then this school supports PAI learning by using a very effective and appropriate learning approach. Learners show great enthusiasm and are actively involved in class discussions. According to Mr. DA's experience, PAI is a subject that some learners are interested in. Mr. DA uses the role-playing method at the beginning of each semester of PAI lessons. This method is considered very useful for early semester material, especially when the material requires practice. The main purpose of this lesson is to increase learners' enthusiasm and understanding of what they will learn in PAI.

Classroom observations showed that learners were engaged, happy and actively involved in the lesson. The educator starts the lesson by giving an overview of the material to be covered and the context of the role play. Furthermore, learners are divided into small groups based on the tasks given by the educator. The materials applied in the role-playing method include zakat, qurban, prayer, and patience. The learners looked enthusiastic and understood what they were acting out. In addition, learning in the classroom is much more dynamic compared to the use of the lecture method. Learners collaborated in small groups, engaged in discussions, and practiced the roles assigned to them. This shows an increase in communication, collaboration, and a sense of responsibility among learners.

Educators provide solutions and motivation when learners face obstacles and encourage them to be confident. Some learners were initially shy and reluctant to take on their roles, but gradually adjusted and tried to engage in the role-playing method. In addition, the role-playing approach makes it easier for learners to think critically and understand the material rather than just memorizing it. Most learners understand basic aspects that can be seen from principles outside the classroom, such as the meaning of patience and responsibility, thus showing that real and contextualized learning is taking place.

The findings from the observations are in line with the interviews, which show that innovative role-playing strategies increase learners' enthusiasm for learning and strengthen their understanding of Islamic education materials. This strategy will be an effective tool to improve learners' cognitive, emotional and social abilities.

According to Joyce and Weil, the purpose of the role-play learning strategy paradigm is to inspire learners about sociological ideals and offer them the possibility to find their identity in society. This strategy enhances collaboration, communication, and perception of events in the learning process. The application of role-playing often requires the emotional involvement of the players and the audience in realistic scenarios. It is expected that competent individuals will analyze their emotions, understand prevailing perspectives, values, and attitudes, develop the capacity and focus on overcoming various obstacles and articulate the essence of the problem, which can manifest in various forms (Rokmanah et al., 2024).

4.1. Implementation of Role Play Method in Islamic Religion

Learning methods are a fundamental aspect of education, and educators must focus on helping learners understand classroom learning. An educator must ensure that the right approach is used to acquire materials and skills (Nusaibah et al., 2021). In this context, media serves as a facilitator that enhances learners' academic learning experience, particularly in Islamic Religious Education. Subjects that require practical engagement include ethics, morality, Islamic ethics, and Islamic history and culture. The role-playing strategy enables learners to understand and

empathize with different perspectives and apply various attitudes. This approach allows learners to analyze and differentiate human behavior and apply their knowledge to real life in the future (Cahyani et al., 2023).

Before applying the role-playing method, educators must develop a lesson plan that includes several learning strategies that are appropriate to the subject matter. After developing the lesson plan, the next step is to formulate a role-playing methodology for the material, which can be applied to strategy, narrative design, learner placement, and evaluation of learners' readiness to participate in role-playing activities (Miskiyyah & Nihayah, 2024). The rules of role-playing are explained by R. Shaftel and George Shaftel as follows: In implementing the role-playing approach, the initial stage involves educators in establishing a context that encourages learners' involvement in role-playing activities. In the second stage, the educator sets specific tasks, and learners are encouraged to accept and carry out the responsibilities assigned to them. In the third stage, actors organize the sequence of actions to be performed to portray their characters and design a set of scenarios that can be presented in the form of unscripted dialogue. In the fourth step, preparation should also include the next phase, when the audience can influence the actors' behavior. Third, learners embody the characters they have chosen. The fifth phase ends at this point, allowing for conversation and/or evaluation, depending on the participants and observers. Participants engage in collaborative investigation and constructive criticism aimed at assessing the performance. Sixth, facilitate opportunities for students to exchange experiences and draw conclusions from the role play.

In implementing this, the first step that educators must take is to motivate and build students' confidence by providing role-playing guidance (Miskiyyah & Nihayah, 2024). Based on an interview with Mr. DA, he first explained the material and concept of the role to be played, Next, students are divided into small groups and given tasks based on a predetermined scenario. Examples of material to be acted out include procedures for performing the Hajj pilgrimage, slaughtering sacrificial animals, zakat, prayer, sincerity, and patience. This allows students to understand the specific objectives of PAI learning through practical experience.

Mr. DA acknowledged that this methodology is more effective than lectures in improving learners' understanding, making it a very appropriate approach. By assuming a role that is directly performed by learners, their retention and understanding of the subject matter will improve. The concept of combined knowledge implies that this methodology can encourage learners to actively engage in the learning process, making it less boring and more interesting. Mr. DA as an educator, stated that this strategy is very suitable for subjects such as fiqh, aqidah akhlak, and Islamic history and culture (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam*).

This strategy has received a very positive response from the learners. They show strong motivation due to their active involvement in learning activities. Learning is not one-sided, and learners experience greater relaxation and spontaneity. Educators also noted that the role-playing approach fosters creativity in learners' interactions, thus boosting their confidence and improving their understanding of the material.

4.2. Evaluation and Effectiveness of the Role-playing Method in Enhancing Learners' Enthusiasm and Understanding

Educators act as guides or mentors in planning learning activities for students (Solihat et al., 2024). Success in the learning process stems from well-organized learning methods that include educational objectives, connections, strategies, models, and media related to role-playing (Husnaeni et al., 2023). Based on an interview with Mr. DA, learners gave positive and constructive feedback on the application of the role-playing learning method. However, some

learners showed a lack of cooperation during role-playing activities conducted by other groups. To improve understanding, educators conduct learning outcomes assessments by asking learners to summarize the lesson, answer questions, and do exercises related to the material being discussed.

Assessment findings show that educators observed an increase in learners' understanding through the use of role-playing strategies. Learners showed increased expression and elaboration during discussions, reflecting increased confidence. This improvement was significant, as some learners had previously shown a lack of enthusiasm in the classroom before the introduction of this strategy.

Table.1. Recap of Before and After Using the Role Play Method

No.	Learner Name	Score Before	Value After	Description
1.	A	75	80	Improvement
2.	AN	85	90	Improvement
3.	AZ	77	85	Improvement
4.	CA	85	90	Improvement
5.	CF	85	95	Improvement
6.	DS	60	75	Improvement
7.	EDA	75	85	Improvement
8.	FN	77	95	Improvement
9.	FA	81	95	Improvement
10.	GP	70	88	Improvement
11.	HP	82	85	Improvement
12.	IA	75	88	Improvement
13.	IN	79	90	Improvement
14.	KZ	77	92	Improvement
15.	LR	80	95	Improvement
16.	MF	80	92	Improvement
17.	MA	85	90	Improvement
18.	NA	75	85	Improvement
19.	NS	79	88	Improvement
20.	RA	60	75	Improvement
21.	RNF	77	85	Improvement
22.	TA	80	92	Improvement

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that the learning outcomes of students at SDIT Al-Halimiyah Jakarta increased after the role-playing method was applied in Islamic Religious Education.

4.3. Challenges and Solutions in Implementing the Role-playing Method

Although this method is effective in learning Islamic Religious Education, some challenges and obstacles need to be addressed. Role-playing takes quite a lot of time and requires high imagination and creativity from both educators and students, some students are not focused, and not all material can be delivered through role-playing.

Another obstacle in using the role-playing learning approach is the difficulty in controlling students to be more obedient in following changes in learning methods. Therefore, students must be given direction first before continuing this process. As Mr. DA said in an interview, there are some challenges in the implementation, such as differences in learner concentration. Some learners

look serious and focused, while others joke around and pay less attention to the activities. To overcome this, educators provide motivation and encouragement at the beginning of the lesson to help learners develop the right mindset, use their imagination, and engage in role-playing, which is more challenging for time-constrained learning. Nonetheless, educators say that these difficulties do not reduce the effectiveness of this learning model.

For this strategy to be successful, educators should allow enough time and create simple and interesting scenarios to ensure that learners find it easy to follow. Agreement between educators and learners. According to Mr. DA, educators and learners should have an agreement to manage the class. Most importantly, schools need to train educators to be more creative in implementing this strategy.

Educator DA believes that role-playing is highly recommended for PAI learning because it effectively stimulates learners' enthusiasm for learning, creating a lively and interactive learning environment. Educators would like to further develop this innovation by combining these methods to make learners more enthusiastic, learning more effective, and instruction more varied.

5. Conclusion

The findings of research conducted at SDIT Al Halimyah Jakarta show that role-playing, an innovative approach in Islamic Religious Education, can improve students' engagement in learning and understanding. Role-playing, as it is called, relies on active participation. As a result, learners' involvement is more than just learning, making the learning experience more fun, interesting, and dynamic compared to passive learning.

The results of interviews with educators show that this strategy is very useful for various Islamic Education subjects, such as Fiqh, Aqidah Akhlak, and Islamic Cultural History. This strategy allows learners to actively participate in understanding and remembering the material provided by educators. Observation findings show that learners are willing to engage, collaborate in groups, and effectively teach the subject matter to other friends. Learning takes place in appropriate classrooms where learners demonstrate confidence, empathy, and social awareness. Learners' learning assessments show improved learning outcomes due to this method, which includes summary tasks, discussions, and practice questions.

In conclusion, the role-playing approach is an innovative and effective learning medium that can increase enthusiasm and understanding for Islamic education that is aligned with real life. Its continued use when linked with other media, such as educational games, is recommended to create a diverse learning environment and increase learner motivation.

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