



Implementation of Digital Storytelling in Islamic Religious Education Subject (Islamic History) in Junior High Schools in Kebakkramat, Karanganyar

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the digital storytelling method in Islamic Religious Education learning on Islamic History material in State Junior High Schools in Kebakkramat, Karanganyar. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving three Islamic Religious Education teachers and five students as informants at State Junior High Schools 1, 2, and 3 Kebakkramat, Karanganyar. The data was validated by technique triangulation and source triangulation, then analysed through stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicated that the implementation of digital storytelling increased students' interest, motivation, and understanding of Islamic history material through interactive, creative, and contextual learning. Teachers utilised digital media such as Canva, educational videos, and interactive platforms to enrich the learning experience. Challenges faced included limited time, technological facilities, teachers' and students' digital literacy, and variations in learning interests. Creative classroom management strategies, adequate facility support, and digital literacy training were the keys to the successful implementation of this method. Digital storytelling has proven to be relevant to the demands of 21st-century learning, capable of internalising Islamic values, and has the potential to be an innovative alternative in teaching Islamic History.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education in Junior High Schools plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and personality (Sahuri, 2022). One of the important subjects in Islamic Religious Education is Islamic Cultural History, which teaches the historical journey of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his companions, and Islamic civilisation in various regions. Through learning Islamic Cultural History,

students are expected to understand and emulate Islamic values such as honesty, courage, tolerance, leadership, and a spirit of lifelong learning (Rusydi, 2021). However, in practice, the delivery of Islamic Religious Education related to Islamic Cultural History often faces classic obstacles: learning that tends to be one-way, memorisation-oriented, and with minimal use of interactive media.

Various studies have shown that conventional learning methods focused on lectures and assignments tend to leave students bored and disengaged from the learning process (Sherly & Pradikto, 2025). This results in low interest in Islamic history and a failure to internalise the moral messages contained in historical events. Some teachers still struggle to present Islamic Cultural History material in a contextual manner that is relevant to the needs and characteristics of today's students (Lubis et al., 2021).

In today's digital era and technological disruption, students are part of the digital native generation, namely a generation that was born and grew up in an environment full of information and communication technology (Mawarsih et al., 2024). They are more interested in visual, interactive, and technology-based learning (Putri, 2024). Therefore, the world of education is required to present a pedagogical approach that adapts to current developments, one of which is through digital storytelling. Digital storytelling is a technique for conveying information or stories by combining elements of verbal narrative, images, video, sound, and other digital effects (Choo et al., 2020). In the context of learning, digital storytelling is an effective medium for arousing student interest in learning, revitalising historical material, and building emotional and intellectual engagement with the content. Beno emphasised that this approach increases student motivation, deepens understanding, and helps students connect lessons to their own life experiences (Beno et al., 2022).

The application of digital storytelling in Islamic Cultural History learning opens up opportunities to package Islamic historical stories engagingly, engaging students' imaginations, and connecting them to contemporary contexts (Syaifulloh & Saepudin, 2025). Stories such as the Prophet Muhammad's struggle to spread Islam, the tolerance of the caliphs, and the glory of Islamic civilisation can be visualised in compelling digital narratives. This not only strengthens students' historical understanding but also instils spiritual and moral values more effectively (Puspitasari et al., 2025).

Furthermore, digital storytelling aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum policy (Rivani et al., 2021), which emphasises differentiated, project-based learning and the development of Pancasila student profiles. Digital storytelling provides space for students to actively create, collaborate, and think critically (Listiyanto & Maureen, 2021). Supported by simple technologies such as smartphones and presentation or video editing applications, both teachers and students can develop contextual and engaging learning media (Jundu et al., 2020).

However, the implementation of digital storytelling is certainly not without challenges, such as limited technological infrastructure, low teacher digital literacy, and a lack of training in innovative learning media (Panchenko, 2021). Therefore, research is needed to examine in-depth how digital storytelling is implemented in the field, particularly at the junior high school level.

Kebakkramat, Karanganyar, as a region with a strong Islamic education base, has great potential for developing innovative Islamic Religious Education learning. Schools in this region have begun to recognise and implement digital approaches, but little is known about their effectiveness, especially in the context of Islamic History learning. This research is important to explore the process of implementing digital storytelling in junior high schools, assess the extent to which this method can increase student engagement, and identify obstacles and support in the field.

Against this backdrop, this research is highly relevant and significant. This research not only contributes to the development of innovative learning media but also reflects on the readiness of Islamic Religious Education schools and teachers to face the challenges of 21st-century education. The results are expected to serve as a reference for teachers, schools, and educational policymakers in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning that is contextual, enjoyable, and meaningful for students.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding and describing in depth the process of implementing digital storytelling in Islamic Religious Education learning, specifically in Islamic History material. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the study is to explore the experiences, perceptions, and direct practices of teachers and students in the application of digital media in the context of Islamic history learning. Through a qualitative approach, researchers can capture the socio-pedagogical dynamics that occur in the classroom, including challenges and successes in implementing the method (Beazidou, 2026).

The research was conducted in three educational units, namely State Junior High School 1 Kebakkramat, State Junior High School 2 Kebakkramat and State Junior High School 3 Kebakkramat, all of which are located in the Kebakkramat District, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java. The selection of these three schools was done purposively with the consideration that all three are state schools that have a Computer Information Technology-based learning development policy and have begun to implement a digital approach in the learning process, including in Islamic Religious Education subjects.

The informants in this study consisted of 3 Islamic Religious Education teachers and 5 students who participated in Islamic History learning with a digital storytelling approach. At State Junior High School 1 Kebakkramat, researchers interviewed 1 Islamic Religious Education teacher and 2 students from grade VIII who had participated in learning using digital media. Meanwhile, at State Junior High School 2 Kebakkramat, informants consisted of 1 Islamic Religious Education teacher and 2 students from the same class. At State Junior High School 3 Kebakkramat, informants consisted of 1 Islamic Religious Education teacher and 1 student. All informants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the learning activities that were the focus of this study.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were semi-structured, using pre-developed guidelines, but still provided flexible space for informants to openly share their experiences and perspectives on Islamic Religious Education. Interviews with teachers focused on digital storytelling implementation strategies, the media used, student responses, and challenges faced in the learning process. Meanwhile, interviews with students focused on their perceptions of the media used, the extent to which they felt it helped them understand the material, and their experiences during the learning process.

In addition to interviews, researchers also conducted direct observations of the Islamic Religious Education learning process in the classroom, particularly when teachers used digital media to present Islamic history material. These observations aimed to directly observe teacher-student interactions, the media used, the level of student engagement, and the general learning atmosphere. During the observations, researchers systematically recorded data in field notes and documented several learning activities through photos and videos with the school's permission.

Documentation techniques were used to supplement data from interviews and observations. The collected documents included lesson plans, digital storytelling media files used by teachers (such as instructional videos and visual presentations), student assignments, and documentation of classroom learning activities. This data served as supporting evidence and additional sources of information to strengthen the field findings.

To ensure data validity, researchers applied triangulation techniques, namely source and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from teachers and students, while technical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation (Wardatun & Khadavi, 2025). Thus, the resulting data were credible and can be scientifically justified.

In general, this research process was conducted in three stages: pre-fieldwork (literature study, instrument development, and permitting), fieldwork (data collection), and analysis and reporting. The

entire process adhered to ethical research principles, including obtaining school approval, maintaining the confidentiality of informants, and involving voluntary informant participation.

After data collection, analysis was conducted following the stages developed by Miles and Huberman (Annisa & Mailani, 2023), namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Interview data were transcribed, selected, and categorised into main themes according to the research focus. Next, the data were presented in descriptive narrative form, demonstrating the interrelationships between themes, and were compared between informants and schools. Conclusions were drawn inductively, based on data patterns and trends that emerged in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative of Teachers Interview Results at State Junior High School 1

In an effort to increase the effectiveness and appeal of Islamic Cultural History learning, teachers at State Junior High School 1 Kebakkramat Karanganyar have begun integrating digital storytelling methods into their teaching and learning activities. Mrs C, an Islamic Religious Education teacher at the school, revealed that the use of digital media such as Canva, learning videos, and content from YouTube has succeeded in making learning more colourful and less monotonous. She believes that Islamic Cultural History tends to be boring for students if only delivered conventionally, because many students easily fall asleep during the lesson. With digital storytelling, learning becomes more enjoyable, effective, and able to arouse student enthusiasm. Students appear to understand the material better, feel happy, and consider the learning more meaningful. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Smeda et al. (2014), which stated that the digital storytelling method is effective in conveying Islamic Religious Education learning messages to students. However, Mrs C noted that not all students have the same interests, especially those who are not used to participating in religious activities such as *majelis taklim*.

In her implementation, Mrs C began by searching for and processing materials from various sources such as textbooks, student worksheets, and web browsers. She adapted the content to suit students' needs and presented it in an engaging visual format using Canva or educational videos. However, challenges still arose, such as the material being too broad for junior high school students, and students getting bored easily, lacking focus, or failing to take notes. To address this, she implemented icebreakers such as clapping, focus exercises, and games like snowballs to keep the classroom atmosphere lively and students actively engaged.

Meanwhile, Mr N also applies a varied approach to teaching Islamic Cultural History. He tries to encourage students to create concept maps and conduct presentations, even though students often do not fully understand the material. He believes that digital storytelling methods are actually more effective than lectures, but are often hampered by technical aspects such as access and device management. During the learning process, he strives to create a conducive classroom atmosphere, provides feedback, and reviews the material using regional languages to facilitate student understanding. In addition, he also utilises interactive media such as Quizizz to evaluate student learning outcomes.

One of the challenges Mr N faces is student cell phone use, which, while permitted during digital learning, isn't always used efficiently. He addresses this by increasing supervision and developing a personalised approach to students. He recognises that learning can become less conducive when students become bored, so he frequently provides practice questions to prevent students from relying solely on online materials. He also noted that because the time allocated for history lessons in Islamic Religious Education is limited to one hour, students' understanding of the material is not optimal.

Overall, both speakers agreed that digital storytelling has a positive impact on the learning of Islamic Cultural History, although challenges remain, both technical and time-consuming, as well as varying student interests. However, with creative strategies and approaches, this method is considered capable of enriching students' learning experiences and fostering interest in Islamic history. This aligns with research conducted by Yang, which found that digital storytelling enhances student engagement and enhances critical thinking skills (Yang & Wu, 2012).

Narrative of Teachers Interview Results at State Junior High School 2

The results of the interview with a teacher at State Junior High School 2 Kebakkramat, Mr I, were almost the same. Teachers at State Junior High School 2 Kebakkramat revealed that they use various methods in teaching Islamic Religious Education, such as interactive lectures, group discussions, and project presentations. However, on several occasions, they have also tried implementing the digital storytelling method in teaching Islamic History, which they said provided a very positive and interesting experience. This is in line with research conducted by Zamhariroh et al. (2025), which stated that the application of the storytelling method to students in classroom learning was able to attract positive student responses.

This method is considered effective in increasing student enthusiasm because they are not merely passive listeners but are also directly involved in the creative process of creating digital stories. Students are asked to create short videos, visual presentations, or audio narratives about historical events or Islamic figures, which has had a positive impact on their understanding of the historical flow and context. Although it requires additional time and effort in media preparation and technical guidance, teachers believe the results are well worth it, as learning becomes more interactive and meaningful.

The steps for implementing digital storytelling are carried out systematically, starting with material planning, introducing the concept of digital storytelling to students, assigning tasks within groups, producing digital stories, and then presenting and evaluating them. Teachers also use various supporting media such as Canva, YouTube or self-made learning videos, and devices like laptops and smartphones. Evaluation is based on historical content, creativity, teamwork, and the delivery of Islamic Religious Education messages.

However, implementation faced several challenges. These included gaps in students' technical abilities, limited school facilities, and time constraints. To address these challenges, teachers provided brief initial training, used simple and lightweight applications, and developed a flexible schedule to ensure a pleasant and unhurried process. Students were also divided into heterogeneous groups to support each other, particularly with technical aspects.

Students' responses to this method were very positive. They appeared more enthusiastic and engaged, and were able to better understand Islamic history material. Student participation increased because they felt the learning was more relevant, creative, and applicable. Teachers even noted a significant change in students' learning interests, especially after the lessons were linked to meaningful stories from the Quran, Hadith, and the history of the companions.

Narrative of Teachers Interview Results at State Junior High School 3

The results of an interview with the Islamic Religious Education teacher at State Junior High School 3 Kebakkramat, Mr A stated that in the Islamic History subject, digital technology has begun to be used, especially in telling Islamic history. He argued that students' understanding would be different when hearing and seeing stories digitally rather than just listening to lectures from teachers, evidenced by the assignment after the digital storytelling broadcast; students got a higher average class score than assignments after using the lecture method. The school has provided digitalisation supporting technology in learning in the form of laptops and LCDs, so teachers must be smart in utilising them.

Student responses were also more positive, with students more motivated to pay attention to the screen rather than engaging in casual conversation. The storytelling method using digital tools makes students more enthusiastic about listening. This research is supported by Kalsum & Taufiq (2023), which stated that students were more motivated in learning and did not give up because digital storytelling was more engaging to listen to.

Narrative of Students Interview Results

From interviews with students at State Junior High Schools 1, 2, and 3 Kebakkramat, researchers concluded that they experienced a significantly different learning experience when teachers used digital storytelling in teaching Islamic history. Previously, they had only listened to lectures and read textbooks, which sometimes felt boring. However, with digital storytelling, the classroom atmosphere became more

lively. Students could view images, videos, and animations that visualised important events such as the Battle of Badr, the Hijrah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the stories of the Prophet's companions.

Students felt more engaged and engaged because this method was interactive and fun. This is in line with research conducted by Musthofa et al. (2025), which stated that the digital storytelling method is more enjoyable because it is interactive, thus making students more active in learning. One of the things they liked most was the visualisation of the lesson material, which made history feel more real and easier to remember. Some students felt as if they were part of the story, which helped them better understand the context of the events.

However, students also provided feedback that the video or story length was sometimes unbalanced, with some being too short or too long. They suggested additional explanations after the videos to deepen their understanding of complex historical events.

As a concrete example, one student reported that studying the Battle of Badr through digital storytelling provided a clearer picture of the battle conditions, the strategies used, and the characters involved. This made it easier for him to understand and remember the material compared to simply reading the text in a textbook.

CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that the implementation of digital storytelling in Islamic Religious Education (Islamic History) learning at SMP Negeri 1, 2, and 3 Kebakkramat had a positive impact on student interest, motivation, and understanding. This method was able to create a more interactive, creative, and meaningful learning environment than conventional methods, making it easier for students to remember and understand history material. Teachers could utilise various digital media such as Canva, educational videos, and interactive platforms to enrich the learning process.

However, the implementation of digital storytelling still faces challenges, such as limited learning time, technological facilities, digital literacy, and varying student interests. With creative classroom management strategies, the use of relevant media, and adequate support facilities, digital storytelling has the potential to be an effective approach to internalising Islamic values while improving the quality of Islamic history learning in line with the demands of 21st-century education.

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