



Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Creativity in Using Learning Media to Improve Student Achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

Andriani^{1*}, Basri¹, Lathifah Hanum¹

¹ Postgraduate Program, Islamic Religious Education Study Program, State Islamic Institute, Langsa, Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of the research are: 1). To analyze the ability of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in the use of learning media to improve student achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat. 2). To analyze the ability of PAI teachers in selecting appropriate learning media to improve student achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat. 3). To analyze the improvement of student achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat. The research method used is qualitative research of the field research type. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that: 1). PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat have fairly good ability in utilizing learning media, both in the form of visual, audio, and simple technology media. The use of these media can increase students' attention, understanding, and involvement in the learning process. 2). PAI teachers are able to adjust learning media to the characteristics of the material, students' conditions, and learning objectives. Varied media such as PowerPoint, animated videos, puzzle cards, and practice-based learning have proven effective in increasing classroom interaction and students' learning motivation. 3). Students' achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat has improved in academic aspects, religious behavior, and learning motivation. The academic scores of the PAI subject show a significant increase; students' religious behavior has improved, marked by increased discipline in worship and participation in religious activities; and students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation toward learning has also increased..

1. Introduction

The learning process in schools requires each teacher to demonstrate creativity in accordance with the subjects they teach, including Islamic Religious Education teachers. The creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers in the learning process aims to improve both the academic and non-academic achievements of students (Zubairi, 2023). SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is one of the schools that implements a well-structured educational curriculum. Every teacher, regardless of their subject area, is expected to possess a high level of creativity in order to enhance students' academic and non-academic performance. Such creativity can be observed in the learning activities conducted by teachers together with students, both inside and outside the classroom (Yansyah et al., 2025).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: andrianipasca@gmail.com

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According to the research findings of (In'am et al., 2022), the creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers in utilizing learning media to enhance students' learning quality at SMKN 1 Bandung Tulungagung and SMK Al Anwar Durenan Trenggalek involves the use of various instructional methods and media, including lectures, question-and-answer sessions, assignments, demonstrations, short cards, and *uswatun hasanah* (exemplary role modeling).

Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher in several junior high schools, many Islamic Religious Education teachers in rural areas demonstrate a fair degree of creativity, including those at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat. However, they tend to rely on conventional teaching media, such as lectures, and only occasionally employ more innovative learning media (Bakar et al., 2023). This situation arises due to the lack of training on the use of technology-based media, such as interactive multimedia, instructional videos, or digital learning applications like Google Classroom (Lubis et al., 2023).

Studies indicate that the creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers is often hindered by limited information and communication technology (ICT) skills, which are essential for creating engaging and relevant learning experiences aligned with 21st-century educational needs (Hoerudin et al., 2023). In rural areas such as Rantau Selamat, access to technological infrastructure such as computers, projectors, or stable internet connections is often limited (Qomar et al., 2024). These limitations restrict teachers from developing ICT-based learning media, such as interactive videos or learning applications, which have been proven effective in enhancing students' motivation and achievement (Firdaus et al., 2023). Research conducted in other schools also shows that insufficient facilities and infrastructure are among the main factors contributing to the low level of teacher creativity in utilizing learning media (Ridwan et al., 2024).

The learning media used by Islamic Religious Education teachers are often not adapted to the cultural and environmental context of students in Rantau Selamat, an area deeply rooted in Acehnese cultural values and rural life (Jasadijaya et al., 2023). For example, the use of generic learning media without incorporating elements of local wisdom such as Acehnese folktales or local Islamic values can reduce students' interest (Susanti et al., 2024). This, in turn, negatively affects students' learning motivation and achievement in Islamic Religious Education subjects (Alamuddin & Muslihun, 2024).

Observations in various schools indicate that students often show low interest in PAI lessons due to monotonous and less interactive teaching methods (Kharismatunisa, 2023). At SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, this problem may be exacerbated by the limited variety of instructional media, causing students to become passive, less engaged in discussions, and less serious in completing assignments. Research has shown that the use of appropriate learning media, such as interactive videos, can increase student participation up to compared to conventional media (Sawaluddin et al., 2022).

PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat may also face challenges in attending professional development training focused on creativity and the effective use of instructional media. The lack of access to training based on the Merdeka Curriculum or educational technology further hinders teachers' ability to design innovative learning activities (Parhan et al., 2021). Literature suggests that well-structured training programs can significantly enhance teachers' competencies in utilizing learning media to support student achievement (Ramdani et al., 2021).

In Islamic Religious Education, student achievement is not only measured by cognitive aspects (exam scores) but also by affective aspects (attitudes) and psychomotor aspects (religious practice skills) (Sari et al., 2022). However, PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat may find it difficult to design learning media that equally support these three dimensions. For instance, media that focus solely on theoretical delivery without involving practical worship activities or moral value discussions can limit students' holistic learning outcomes (Fasya et al., 2023).

This study examines the classroom learning processes at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, specifically focusing on teachers' creativity, their ability to convey material, and their selection of suitable learning medium to enhance student accomplishment. Moreover, the proficiency of teachers in mastering and employing learning media, long acknowledged as a vital instructional tool, is sometimes neglected. The researcher plans to undertake a study named "The Creativity of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Utilizing Learning Media to Enhance Student Achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat."

2. Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research prioritizes a comprehensive grasp of a specific issue or event. This investigation was executed by gathering data and information directly from the research site. This study employs a learning strategy method. The learning strategy approach examines the inventiveness of Islamic Religious Education teachers in utilizing learning media to improve student performance. This method emphasizes the analysis of how PAI educators create and employ learning material as a fundamental component of the instructional tactics executed in the classroom. This study aims to examine how creative learning practices, utilizing various and novel media by PAI teachers, can substantially enhance students' academic performance.

The research was carried out in SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, situated in Bayeun, Gampong Bayeun, Rantau Selamat District, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province. The researcher selected this school based on first observations that corresponded with the identified research issues. This study utilizes two categories of data sources: primary data and secondary data. The key data sources include the principal, vice principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and two students from SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat. Secondary data sources denote information acquired indirectly via intermediary channels or secondary references. This research employs data collection approaches such as observation, documentation, and interviews. The data analysis process encompasses data reduction, data visualization, and conclusion formulation. Upon concluding the research, the investigator validated the data's accuracy through the triangulation method.

3. Results

3.1 The Ability of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teachers in Using Learning Media to Improve Student Achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat are capable of utilizing learning media as a means to enhance students' academic achievement. The findings of this study are presented based on three main indicators: (1) the teachers' creativity in developing learning media, (2) the frequency of media use, and (3) the relevance of the media to the PAI learning materials. The presentation of these findings aims to provide a comprehensive overview of PAI learning practices at the school and their relationship with students' academic performance.

The creativity of PAI teachers falls into a fairly good category, although several limitations remain. Teachers are able to utilize simple yet effective learning media such as PowerPoint presentations, Islamic educational videos, worksheets, and religious practice aids to support the learning process. This level of creativity aligns with Sanjaya's view, which states that creative learning media can bridge the gap between abstract concepts and observable realities for students.

The use of simple but effective media demonstrates teachers' awareness that learning media should not merely serve as supporting tools, but as innovative instruments to enhance students' motivation and understanding. This finding is consistent with constructivist learning theory, which

emphasizes the importance of presenting meaningful learning experiences through a variety of media.

Nevertheless, limitations related to time, facilities, and technological proficiency remain major challenges. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by Rohman, who found that teachers' creativity in developing learning media is often constrained by limited technological skills and insufficient school facilities. Therefore, continuous training and professional mentoring are essential to help teachers improve the diversity and quality of the media they employ in the learning process.

The frequency of media use among Islamic Religious Education teachers varies considerably. Some teachers use learning media in almost every lesson, while others employ them only occasionally. This frequency of use appears to have a significant impact on student engagement: the more consistently media are used, the higher the students' learning motivation and participation.

This finding supports Hamalik's assertion that the intensive use of learning media can foster interest, strengthen understanding, and improve students' learning outcomes (Dwi Maghfirah, 2022). Therefore, maintaining and increasing the frequency of media use is essential to ensure that PAI learning remains engaging and not monotonous.

However, observations also revealed that digital media such as PowerPoint presentations and videos are used less frequently than simpler media, such as whiteboards, pictures, and worksheets. The primary causes are limited facilities and time constraints. This condition aligns with Sulastri's findings, which indicate that digital media usage among teachers remains uneven due to the more complex preparation required compared to conventional media.

The aspect of media relevance was also found to be fairly adequate. Teachers made efforts to align media with the learning materials for example, using illustrative images for the history of prophets, videos for worship practices, and diagrams for faith-related topics (aqidah). Relevant media have been shown to help students better understand abstract concepts and make the learning process more engaging.

The suitability of media with the characteristics of the material is a key factor in the success of the learning process. This finding corresponds with Arsyad's view that the effectiveness of instructional media largely depends on their relevance to learning objectives and students' abilities. Appropriate media use not only facilitates comprehension but also enhances students' retention of the material.

Nevertheless, this study also found that not all PAI teachers consistently adjust media according to the characteristics of the learning material. Some teachers still use general media without considering specific relevance. As a result, the potential of media to support student achievement has not been fully optimized. These findings highlight the importance of improving teachers' competencies in selecting and adapting instructional media to meet the needs of the learning process.

The three aspects examined in this study show a strong correlation with modern learning theories. Teachers' creativity supports the constructivist approach, which emphasizes innovation in creating meaningful learning experiences. The frequency of media use aligns with Dale's Cone of Experience, which underscores the importance of multisensory engagement. Meanwhile, the relevance of learning media corresponds with Mayer's Multimedia Theory, which highlights the alignment of media with learning materials and learner characteristics.

Therefore, the ability of Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat in utilizing learning media can be categorized as fairly good, though improvement is still needed. Continuous professional development, mentoring, and the provision of adequate learning facilities are strategic steps to enhance teachers' creativity, consistency, and relevance in media use.

Ultimately, these efforts are expected to contribute positively to improving students' academic achievement as well as strengthening their religious values.

Based on the three indicators teacher creativity, frequency of media use, and relevance of media to learning materials it can be concluded that the PAI teachers' ability in using learning media at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is adequate. The findings demonstrate genuine efforts by teachers to improve learning quality and student achievement. However, there remains room for development, particularly in terms of media variety, consistency in usage, and the selection of media that are more aligned with both the subject matter and students' characteristics.

Improving teachers' competence in these areas can be achieved through targeted training programs, ongoing mentoring, and the provision of more accessible and diverse learning media resources. Thus, learning media will not merely serve as instructional aids but as innovative and effective tools to support students' academic performance and character development.

3.2 The Ability of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Selecting Appropriate Learning Media to Improve Student Achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

The ability of Islamic Education teachers to select appropriate learning media at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat has proven to play an important role in improving students' academic achievement. The findings of this study reinforce learning theories which emphasize that the success of the teaching and learning process does not depend solely on the teacher's mastery of the subject matter, but also on the pedagogical strategies used in accordance with students' conditions. In this context, PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat have sought to implement learning media that are relevant to students' characteristics, vary the media used, and innovate by combining different approaches.

The research results show that PAI teachers are able to adapt learning media to the students' conditions, needs, and characteristics. This finding aligns with Arends' view, which emphasizes that effective learning is student-centered learning that takes into account individual differences.

Teachers use simple and gradual lecture methods for students whose understanding is still low, as well as discussions and group work for more active students. This proves that PAI teachers have applied the principle of differentiated instruction, which accommodates differences in learning styles, abilities, and interests so that learning becomes more meaningful. The suitability of the learning media has been shown to increase students' motivation, engagement, and understanding, although there remain challenges in the form of significant differences in students' abilities within a single class. These challenges indicate that teachers need to improve their diagnostic assessment skills to understand students' initial conditions so that learning strategies can be more precisely targeted.

The use of varied learning media by PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is one of the indicators of learning effectiveness. The study's findings show that teachers who consistently use a variety of media such as lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, case studies, and educational games are able to create a more dynamic and interactive classroom atmosphere. This is consistent with Sanjaya's view that media variation can prevent boredom, foster learning interest, and facilitate more comprehensive mastery of competencies. (Faizah, 2020)

However, the study also found that some Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat still tend to rely repeatedly on the lecture method, especially when facing time and facility constraints. This condition indicates the need to enhance teachers' capacity in classroom and time management so that the use of varied media can be implemented consistently. Without such variation, the learning process risks becoming monotonous and may decrease students' learning motivation.

The innovation of PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat in combining various learning media demonstrates a creative effort to improve the quality of instruction. The use of a combination of short lectures, group discussions, simulations, interactive quizzes, and media such as videos has proven effective in increasing students' active, critical, and collaborative engagement. This approach aligns with theories that emphasize the importance of social interaction and collaboration in constructing knowledge.

Nevertheless, such media integration innovations remain limited to teachers who possess higher levels of experience and creativity. Other teachers tend to be reluctant to try new approaches due to constraints in resources, preparation time, and mastery of teaching techniques. Therefore, improving teacher competence through training, workshops, and collaborative teacher forums constitutes a strategic step to strengthen instructional innovation at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat.

3.3 Improving Student Achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

Achievement in this context is not only viewed from academic outcomes, but also includes changes in students' religious behavior and learning motivation. Based on findings from three main indicators academic scores, religious behavior, and learning motivation an in-depth discussion can be presented as follows.

There has been an improvement in students' academic performance in Islamic Education (PAI) subjects, particularly in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). The average scores increased significantly by 5–10 points and consistently exceeded the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). This phenomenon can be explained through learning theory, in which students actively construct their understanding through direct experience. The use of creative media such as group discussions and worship practice simulations has transformed the learning process from rote and abstract into contextual and applicable learning.

Learning media such as worship practice videos serve as powerful visual aids that help students understand the steps and underlying philosophy of worship practices that might be difficult to explain verbally (Nurhuda et al., 2023). The teachers' consistency in using these media monitored through quizzes, assignments, and periodic observations creates a structured and supportive learning environment. However, findings of achievement disparities among students indicate that, although the approach is generally effective, it still needs to be complemented with differentiated learning strategies and additional guidance to reach students with more personal learning styles or those who initially struggle (Huda et al., 2024).

The most distinctive aspect of this research is the internalization of Islamic Education (PAI) values, as reflected in changes in students' religious behavior. The increase in worship discipline, moral awareness, and participation in religious activities shows that PAI learning at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat has successfully achieved its objectives in the affective (attitudinal) and psychomotor (skills) domains going beyond the cognitive domain alone.

This success can be directly linked to the implementation of simulation and interactive discussion media. Worship simulations (such as practicing congregational prayer in class) serve as a safe rehearsal or practice, building students' muscle memory and confidence to perform it in real life (Guntur Talajan, 2022). Meanwhile, discussions on moral values encourage students to engage in critical thinking, analyze issues from a religious perspective, and relate them to the context of their daily lives. This process aligns with the theory of value internalization, in which values are not instilled through indoctrination but are developed through reflection, dialogue, and real-life experiences. The support of the school environment through religious activities and the role of teachers as models also act as catalysts that accelerate the internalization process.

Learning motivation is one of the main factors determining students' success in understanding and internalizing Islamic Education (PAI) materials. Based on the research findings at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, students' motivation is formed through two important aspects extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation both of which complement each other in promoting increased participation and academic achievement.

Extrinsic motivation increased from an average score of 3.5 to 4.2 (on a 1–5 scale). The factors driving this increase include the strategies of PAI teachers in providing rewards, such as additional grades, praise, and recognition of student achievements, along with school support through religious activities like congregational prayers, religious competitions, and the celebration of Islamic holidays.

These findings are consistent with views stating that extrinsic motivation is formed by external factors such as encouragement from others, rewards, and punishment. Similarly, according to Ahmad (2017), learning behavior can be strengthened through positive reinforcement for instance, gifts, praise, or recognition. Thus, teachers' strategies in giving rewards and the school's efforts to create a healthy competitive climate represent effective forms of reinforcement in enhancing students' learning motivation.

In addition to extrinsic motivation, the research findings show that students' intrinsic motivation also increased, rising from an average score of 3.2 to 4.0. Students demonstrated an interest in learning that originated from within themselves for example, by actively asking questions, connecting the material with personal experiences, and developing an awareness of the importance of understanding and practicing religious teachings.

This finding is consistent with the theory stating that intrinsic motivation arises when individuals possess curiosity, satisfaction in learning, and a psychological need for competence and self-development. In this context, students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat began learning Islamic Education) not merely to fulfill grade requirements, but due to an internal drive to deepen their faith, improve their character, and enhance the quality of their worshi

Moreover, intrinsic motivation encourages students to learn independently and continuously, as it is driven by an awareness of the importance of the knowledge being acquired. This is reflected in the students' growing enthusiasm, as they begin to ask deeper questions about worship and moral conduct in everyday life (Kustandi, 2021).

The study indicates that the combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation contributes significantly to improving students' participation and academic achievement. Extrinsic motivation serves as an initial trigger that activates the learning spirit, while intrinsic motivation functions as a more enduring driving force.

This finding aligns with perspectives that emphasize how human motivation is shaped by a combination of external needs (such as recognition and rewards) and internal drives (such as curiosity and the need for self-actualization). Thus, the success of PAI learning at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat occurs because teachers are able to integrate both motivational aspects in a balanced way.

In conclusion, the success of PAI learning at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat does not depend solely on reward strategies (extrinsic motivation), but also on the growth of students' interest and learning awareness (intrinsic motivation). The role of PAI teachers as facilitators and motivators is crucial in this success, particularly in integrating approaches that foster both types of motivation in a balanced manner.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussion presented in the previous chapters, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat have demonstrated adequate ability in utilizing various learning media, both conventional and modern. The media used not only help clarify abstract concepts in Islamic Education (PAI) materials but also foster students' interest, attention, and active participation in the learning process. With the use of varied media, the classroom atmosphere becomes more lively, interactive, and conducive, enabling students to understand the material more easily. This directly contributes to improving the quality of students' learning outcomes.
2. PAI teachers possess pedagogical sensitivity in selecting learning media appropriate to the nature of the material, students' cognitive development levels, and the learning context. The use of diverse media such as PowerPoint presentations, animated videos, puzzle cards, and practice-based learning has provided opportunities for students to participate actively, think critically, and internalize religious values more deeply. The suitability of the chosen media not only enhances learning effectiveness but also nurtures positive attitudes, independence, and a sense of responsibility in students' learning.
3. Improvements in students' achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat are evident in three main aspects: academic performance, religiosity, and learning motivation. Academically, students' scores in Islamic Education subjects have shown significant improvement following the implementation of media-based and varied learning approaches. In terms of religiosity, positive behavioral changes are evident, reflected in increased awareness of worship, participation in religious activities, and the application of moral values in daily life. Meanwhile, in terms of motivation, both intrinsic motivation (internal drive) and extrinsic motivation (external factors such as rewards and environmental support) have developed more positively.

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