

Enhancing Engagement and Comprehension Through Joyful Learning in Qur'an and Hadith Education

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Abstract: This study explores the implementation of the joyful learning model to improve the quality of Qur'an and Hadith instruction at MAN Kotawaringin Timur, a senior Islamic high school in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining qualitative approaches – classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis – with quantitative student surveys and formative assessments. The findings reveal that joyful learning effectively increased student engagement and motivation. More than 90% of students agreed that game-based and collaborative activities made it easier to understand the material, while teachers observed higher participation and enthusiasm throughout the lessons. The average formative test score reached 84 out of 100, reflecting solid comprehension and active involvement. These results indicate that joyful learning fosters a dynamic, participatory, and meaningful classroom atmosphere that supports deeper understanding of Qur'an and Hadith lessons. The study concludes that joyful learning is a promising pedagogical approach for enhancing engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in Islamic religious education at the Madrasah Aliyah level.

Keywords: Joyful Learning; Qur'an and Hadith Education; Student Engagement

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan model pembelajaran yang menyenangkan untuk meningkatkan kualitas pengajaran Al-Qur'an dan Hadis di MAN Kotawaringin Timur, sebuah sekolah menengah atas Islam di Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia. Desain campuran (mixed-methods) digunakan, menggabungkan pendekatan kualitatif – pengamatan kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen – dengan survei siswa dan penilaian formatif kuantitatif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran yang menyenangkan secara efektif meningkatkan keterlibatan dan motivasi siswa. Lebih dari 90% siswa setuju bahwa aktivitas berbasis permainan dan kolaboratif memudahkan pemahaman materi, sementara guru mengamati partisipasi dan antusiasme yang lebih tinggi sepanjang pelajaran. Skor rata-rata ujian formatif mencapai 84 dari 100, mencerminkan pemahaman yang kokoh dan keterlibatan aktif. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran yang menyenangkan menciptakan atmosfer kelas yang dinamis, partisipatif, dan bermakna yang mendukung pemahaman

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yang lebih dalam terhadap pelajaran Al-Qur'an dan Hadis. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembelajaran yang menyenangkan merupakan pendekatan pedagogis yang menjanjikan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan, motivasi, dan hasil belajar dalam pendidikan agama Islam di tingkat Madrasah Aliyah.

Kata Kunci: Belajar dengan Gembira; Pendidikan Al-Qur'an dan Hadis; Partisipasi Siswa

Introduction

Learning in schools, including madrasahs, continues to be dominated by traditional methods such as lectures, question-and-answer sessions, and group discussions. While this approach helps teachers deliver material in a structured way, it often leads to monotonous and uninspiring learning experiences. Students tend to act as passive listeners, with limited opportunities to explore ideas, interact with peers, or develop creativity. Setyaningsih & Dayu (2022) note that the repetitive nature of assignments and the strong dominance of teachers reduce students' enthusiasm for learning. As a result, participation decreases, motivation declines, and the classroom environment becomes less conducive to achieving meaningful learning outcomes. In addition, the limitation of school facilities requires teachers to be more creative in delivering religious instruction (Anshari et al., 2023).

This problem is particularly evident in religious education, especially in Qur'an and Hadith classes at the Madrasah Aliyah level. Many students perceive Qur'an and Hadith lessons as rigid and text-heavy, focusing more on memorization than on understanding or reflection. Such perceptions make students less active and prevent them from connecting religious teachings with their daily lives. In reality, the essence of Qur'an and Hadith education is to cultivate deep understanding, internalize moral values, and shape Islamic character. If traditional teaching methods persist, these fundamental goals will remain difficult to achieve.

In response to these challenges, researchers and educators around the world have explored innovative learning approaches that promote engagement, collaboration, and enjoyment. One promising model is joyful learning, which emphasizes a fun, participatory, and meaningful learning experience. In Indonesia, Naziha & Fitriani, (2023) demonstrated that joyful learning reduces boredom and enhances student interest, while Ashfaq (2020), found that it improves both academic achievement and

emotional involvement. Similarly, Hayati et al. (2023) observed that joyful learning becomes more effective in dynamic environments—such as outdoor settings—where students can experience learning in a contextual and concrete manner.

Beyond Indonesia, similar approaches have been developed globally. For example, **Finland's "phenomenon-based learning"** and **Japan's "lesson study"** emphasize curiosity, collaboration, and enjoyment as integral parts of knowledge construction. In the United States, research on **playful learning** and **game-based instruction** (e.g., Gee, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000) highlights that joy and intrinsic motivation significantly influence student persistence and learning outcomes. In Islamic contexts, scholars in Malaysia and Pakistan (e.g., Hassan & Ismail, 2019; Ashfaq, 2020) have also recognized that integrating creativity and emotional engagement into religious education helps bridge the gap between spiritual knowledge and modern learners' needs.

To interpret these dynamics, joyful learning can be theoretically grounded in Constructivism, Connectivism, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) views learning as an active process where students build meaning through social interaction and personal experience—aligning closely with joyful, collaborative learning activities. Connectivism (Siemens, 2005) expands this perspective by highlighting the role of digital networks, peer learning, and continuous knowledge sharing, which are essential for modern educational environments. Finally, SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a motivational foundation, explaining that joyful learning fulfils three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When students feel free to explore, capable of success, and connected with others, intrinsic motivation naturally increases. Together, these theories provide a robust framework for understanding why joyful learning enhances both engagement and comprehension.

At the policy level, recent educational reforms have encouraged teachers to act not merely as knowledge transmitters but as designers of meaningful learning experiences. Lutfi et al. (2024) and Malisi et al., 2023) highlight that teachers play a central role in shaping a generation that is academically strong, morally grounded, and globally competitive. Therefore, the exploration of new, humanistic, and student-centered pedagogies—such as joyful learning—has become increasingly urgent.

However, existing studies show that the application of joyful learning remains concentrated in elementary and junior high schools. For instance, Muhafid et al., (2023) examined the integration of Quizizz-based joyful learning in primary education as part of Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) initiative, while Alamsyah & Ahwa (2020) studied its use in Islamic education at the junior high level. Fachri et al., (2020) investigated its impact in vocational settings. Although these studies consistently report increased motivation and improved learning outcomes, their focus has largely been limited to younger learners and general subjects, often emphasizing the use of technology rather than pedagogical strategy.

This situation reveals a significant research gap. First, few studies have investigated the implementation of joyful learning in Madrasah Aliyah, especially in Qur'an and Hadith education. Students at this level require deeper comprehension of religious texts and more sophisticated analytical skills. Thus, learning strategies must maintain both intellectual depth and the sacred nature of the material while fostering enjoyment. Second, prior research has tended to focus on the effectiveness of models or media rather than on how teachers themselves design, adapt, and implement joyful learning strategies within real classrooms.

Based on this gap, the central research problem of this study can be formulated as follows: although joyful learning has proven effective in enhancing motivation and academic outcomes in various educational contexts, its application in Qur'an and Hadith learning at the Madrasah Aliyah level remains underexplored. There is limited understanding of how teachers develop and apply joyful learning strategies that balance enjoyment with the spiritual depth required in religious education.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine teachers' strategies in implementing joyful learning in Qur'an and Hadith lessons at MAN Kotawaringin Timur, Central Kalimantan. This site was selected because joyful learning is still rarely used at the Madrasah Aliyah level, particularly in religious subjects. Using a qualitative approach, the study explores teachers' experiences and perspectives in depth to generate contextual insights. The novelty of this research lies in its dual focus on (1) the upper secondary Islamic education context, and (2) teacher strategies rather than the effectiveness of media or models. Thus, it contributes theoretically by extending joyful learning scholarship into the field of Qur'an and Hadith education, and practically by

providing recommendations that teachers can use to enhance engagement while preserving religious authenticity.

The significance of this study appears in two dimensions. Academically, it enriches the global literature on joyful learning by situating it within Islamic secondary education. Practically, it presents an alternative pedagogical approach that combines intellectual rigor, emotional engagement, and moral formation—helping students connect Qur'anic and Hadith teachings with their daily lives. Ultimately, this study responds to the challenge that religious education is often seen as monotonous and less appealing to students. By exploring teachers' strategies for applying joyful learning at MAN Kotawaringin Timur, this research aims to develop a model of instruction that makes learning more active, engaging, and spiritually meaningful—bridging the gap between knowledge, emotion, and faith.

Research Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach by combining qualitative descriptive methods with quantitative techniques to investigate the implementation of joyful learning in Qur'an and Hadith lessons at MAN Kotawaringin Timur. The rationale for using a mixed-methods design was to obtain a comprehensive and triangulated understanding of the phenomenon. According to Creswell & Creswell (2023), integrating qualitative and quantitative data enables a richer interpretation of findings by combining the depth of qualitative exploration with the generalizability of quantitative measurement.

Mixed-Methods Design

The research adopted a Convergent Parallel Design, one of the standard mixed-methods designs described by Creswell & Plano Clark (2018). In this design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously, analysed separately, and then merged during interpretation to compare and corroborate results. This approach was selected because the study sought both to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and students qualitatively, and to measure levels of student engagement and motivation quantitatively. The concurrent collection of both data types allowed the researcher to cross-validate findings and identify points of convergence or divergence, thereby enhancing the study's validity.

Participants

The research site was MAN Kotawaringin Timur, a Madrasah Aliyah in Central Kalimantan purposively selected because the application of joyful learning in religious subjects at this level remains limited. Participants included three Qur'an and Hadith teachers, sixty Grade XI students, and two school administrators. A purposive sampling technique was employed following Patton (2002), ensuring that all participants were directly relevant to the study's objectives. Teachers were chosen based on their active implementation of joyful learning strategies in Qur'an and Hadith instruction. Students were selected from classes where these teachers applied joyful learning methods, thus providing authentic experiences to analyse. Administrators were included to provide institutional perspectives regarding curriculum policy and pedagogical innovation.

All participants were informed of the study's purpose and voluntarily consented to participate. The sample size for the quantitative strand ($n = 60$) was sufficient to perform descriptive and inferential analyses, while the qualitative data reached saturation through iterative interviews and observations.

Instruments

Data were gathered through four complementary instruments: observation, interview guides, documentation checklists, and questionnaires.

1. Observation followed Spradley's (1980) ethnographic procedures, capturing real-time learning activities, student engagement, and teacher strategies.
2. Semi-structured interviews, guided by Bogdan & Biklen (2007), explored teachers', students', and administrators' perceptions of joyful learning. Example questions included: "How do joyful activities affect student understanding of Qur'an and Hadith?" and "What challenges do you face in implementing joyful learning?"
3. Documentation (lesson plans, media, and reports) provided contextual support for observed practices and interview statements (Sugiyono, 2023).
4. Questionnaires were distributed to students to measure three constructs: (1) learning motivation, (2) enjoyment, and (3) comprehension during joyful learning sessions. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale and was adapted from validated educational survey models (Moleong, 2017). A pilot test was conducted

with 15 non-sample students to establish internal consistency, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, indicating good reliability. Example items included:

- a. "I feel more motivated to learn Qur'an and Hadith when the class uses games or interactive activities."
- b. "Joyful learning methods help me understand the material more easily." (A full copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.)

Data Analysis Process

For qualitative data, analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data from interviews and observations were transcribed, coded thematically, and categorized into emerging themes such as engagement, creativity, and affective response. Through iterative comparison, sub-themes were refined to reflect authentic participant experiences. Triangulation among observation, interview, and document data was used to strengthen validity and reliability.

For quantitative data, responses from student questionnaires were processed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis included means, percentages, and frequency distributions to summarize student perceptions. Since the study also sought to determine whether joyful learning improved motivation and comprehension, a pre-test/post-test design was applied to a subset of students. Statistical analysis employed a paired-samples t-test to measure significant differences in scores before and after the implementation of joyful learning. Results were interpreted at a 0.05 significance level to determine whether changes were statistically meaningful.

By combining qualitative and quantitative strands in a convergent parallel framework, this study achieved both depth and breadth in understanding how joyful learning is implemented in Qur'an and Hadith lessons. The qualitative component illuminated the pedagogical strategies and lived experiences of teachers and students, while the quantitative component quantified the effects of those experiences on student engagement and learning outcomes. Together, these complementary approaches provided a holistic picture of joyful learning in the context of Islamic education at MAN Kotawaringin Timur.

Result and Discussion

Implementation Phases of Joyful Learning

The implementation of the joyful learning model in Qur'an and Hadith education at MAN Kotawaringin Timur was carried out in three interrelated phases: the introduction phase, core activity, and closing reflection. The process combined game-based, collaborative, and reflective elements that together cultivated a participatory and meaningful learning atmosphere. Evidence was collected through classroom observation, interviews, documentation, and quantitative student responses.

Introduction Phase

At the introduction phase, teachers employed warm greetings, short motivational prompts, and ice-breaking activities. These activities encouraged a relaxed classroom environment where students felt emotionally prepared for the lesson. Quantitative survey data indicated that 87.5% of students agreed that this opening increased their interest in learning, while 81.3% reported improved focus and enthusiasm. As one student noted:

"Starting the lesson with a game or question makes me excited to learn and remember more easily."

From a cognitive perspective, this aligns with Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2011) and the Affective Filter Hypothesis, both of which suggest that positive emotional states lower extraneous cognitive load and enhance learning efficiency. In the context of Qur'an and Hadith education—where lessons are typically text-heavy and formal—ice-breaking activities serve to reduce anxiety and prepare the brain for information processing. This phase also triggered schema activation, connecting prior knowledge to new material (Zakiyyah et al., 2022; Puspita, 2023). Emotional comfort and social interaction thereby functioned as priming mechanisms that increased readiness and attention.

Cognitive and Social Dimensions in Core Activities

The core learning phase applied an innovative, gamified approach using the Uno Stacko game, customized with Qur'an and Hadith-related questions. Students drew coloured blocks labelled with prompts such as "Meaning of the Verse," "Hadith Interpretation," or "Moral Application." Each group was required to answer questions collaboratively before continuing the game. The format encouraged cooperative

competition and distributed leadership within student teams. This method balanced the elements of play, competition, and content mastery. Because it is an effective method that provides structured support through self-management training and academic mentoring to form better learning habits (Ghani & Surawan, 2025). Teacher observations confirmed that even students who were typically quiet or hesitant became active participants. As one teacher noted:

"By turning the lesson into a game, I noticed that even quiet students wanted to participate. It becomes a group activity, not just individual learning." (Interview, Qur'an Hadith Teacher, May 20, 2024)

Overall, the learning process encouraged collaboration, enthusiasm, and deeper engagement among students. Many participants reported that learning through games made the material easier to understand and strengthened teamwork within their groups. The average formative test score of 84 out of 100 indicates that the joyful learning approach effectively enhanced both comprehension and motivation.

From a theoretical standpoint, the effectiveness of joyful learning in this study can be explained through Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2011). The Uno Stacko activity transformed abstract religious concepts into concrete, multisensory experiences that facilitated the construction of knowledge. When students physically interacted with the game materials, discussed meanings, and received immediate feedback, they engaged in embodied cognition, which deepened conceptual understanding (Sharma et al., 2025). The multisensory nature of the task—combining visual, tactile, and verbal stimuli—helped balance intrinsic and extraneous cognitive load, resulting in better retention and reduced fatigue.

According to Vygotsky's social constructivism, learning occurs through interaction within a Zone of Proximal Development, where peers support each other's progress through dialogue and shared problem-solving. This was clearly visible in the classroom: students assisted one another in recalling Qur'anic verses and explaining the meaning of hadiths. Rather than functioning as passive recipients of knowledge, they became co-constructors of meaning, demonstrating a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education. Teachers also confirmed that student engagement increased

significantly after joyful learning was introduced. One Qur'an-Hadith teacher remarked,

"Even the shy students were eager to join the game. They started explaining verses to each other, which rarely happened before."

Such observations illustrate that joyful learning enhanced not only comprehension but also students' self-confidence, cooperation, and communication. The game-based structure also aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes three core psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as drivers of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the Uno Stacko sessions, autonomy was supported because students made their own decisions during play; competence was reinforced through feedback and the excitement of answering correctly; and relatedness was developed through collaborative teamwork and peer encouragement. These three needs combined to generate intrinsic motivation, leading to sustained engagement and deeper learning outcomes.

Additionally, joy itself acted as a cognitive amplifier. Positive affect triggers dopamine release in the brain, improving concentration, creativity, and long-term memory consolidation (Sholikhah, 2022). Enjoyment in learning, therefore, is not merely an emotional by-product but a neurocognitive mechanism that enhances the encoding and retrieval of information. These findings align with those of Arafat & Pali (2021) and Hanani & Yuliastutik (2023), who demonstrated that joyful learning strategies—especially gamification and collaborative tasks—significantly improve student motivation, participation, and retention. The current study expands upon their work by providing a theoretical explanation for *why* joyful learning is effective: it optimizes both cognitive and emotional engagement through structured, socially interactive experiences.

Reflection and Metacognitive Development

In the closing phase, students engaged in reflective discussions where they shared what they had learned and how they felt during the lesson. Teachers provided feedback that emphasized both academic understanding and moral lessons drawn from the Qur'an and Hadith. During this stage, students expressed a deeper awareness of the values contained in the material and a stronger connection between what they studied and their daily lives. This stage can be analysed using Metacognitive Learning

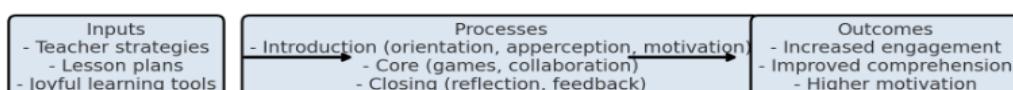
Theory, which highlights learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes. Reflection allowed students to internalize the meaning of Qur'anic verses and hadiths, linking them with personal experience and ethical application. From the perspective of Islamic education, this phase corresponds to *tadabbur*, the act of contemplating and internalizing divine messages. As one student expressed:

"When we talk about what we learned at the end, I understand more clearly how to apply the lesson to real life."

Thus, joyful learning fostered metacognitive awareness and spiritual reflection, achieving not only intellectual comprehension but also emotional and moral engagement. Reflection reinforced self-efficacy and helped transform religious knowledge into meaningful personal understanding—an essential aim of *tafaqquh fi al-din* (deep religious understanding). Reflection, as part of joyful learning, not only strengthens comprehension but also develops metacognitive awareness. Sholikhah (2022) and Sharma et al. (2025), reflective practices in joyful learning contexts enhance critical thinking and long-term retention.

To summarize the findings, a thematic model of joyful learning was developed to show how different components work together to improve Qur'an and Hadith learning in Madrasah Aliyah. The model explains the transformation from inputs to processes and finally to outcomes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Model of Joyful Learning Implementation in Qur'an and Hadith Lessons



In this model, the inputs—such as teacher strategies, lesson plans, and joyful learning tools—are applied through teaching processes that include the introduction, core activities, and closing stages. These processes then lead to positive outcomes, including higher student engagement, better understanding of the material, and stronger learning motivation.

Impact on Student Engagement and Motivation

The joyful learning model was effective in creating a stimulating and inclusive classroom atmosphere. Most students reported feeling actively engaged and found that collaborative activities greatly supported their learning experience. Mustopa et al., (2019), Azwar, (2024) and Kayyali, (2025) similarly argue that joyful learning establishes a cheerful atmosphere that enhances student focus. Sa'adah (2022) confirmed this specifically in Qur'an and Hadith subjects, finding that joyful learning increases both motivation and academic achievement.

In this study, the use of ice-breaking activities and games successfully boosted intrinsic motivation. This aligns with Hapsari (2023), who emphasized that a pleasant and relaxed classroom climate can strengthen students' motivation to learn. Success in the learning process is greatly influenced by a conducive learning atmosphere and student motivation (Aida et al., 2025). Therefore, the combination of joy and play in Qur'an and Hadith learning can significantly enhance student engagement and enthusiasm.

Effect on Critical Thinking and Learning Outcomes

The Uno Stacko activity encouraged students to apply their knowledge actively rather than recall information passively. This playful questioning process promoted reasoning, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Musbhirah et al., (2018) and Azzajjad & Ahmar (2025), also observed that joyful learning enhances participation and critical thinking because students are cognitively challenged in an enjoyable setting. Furthermore, the reflection and feedback sessions allowed students to think about their learning progress and identify areas for improvement, supporting metacognitive development. This is consistent with Nurbaiti et al., (2022) who found that joyful learning improves learning outcomes, particularly in critical thinking. According to Aulia & Surawan, (2025), the implementation of Joyful Learning has succeeded in creating a fun, interactive, and supportive learning environment.

Sustaining Student Interest and Reducing Boredom

Boredom is a common problem in traditional Qur'an and Hadith lessons, which often rely on teacher-centered lectures. However, the joyful learning model helped maintain students' attention and enthusiasm throughout the lesson. The integration of

play and competition reduced fatigue and prevented disengagement. Nurbaiti et al., (2022) also found similar results in Fiqh education, where joyful learning reduced boredom and improved outcomes. This suggests that the approach can be effectively applied across different Islamic education subjects.

Increased Learning Motivation

Student motivation improved significantly, with 91% of students expressing a preference for joyful learning. This finding supports studies by Prinotama et al., (2019) and Fachri et al., (2020), who reported similar motivational benefits across various education levels. In this study, motivation was not only extrinsic—arising from games and group activities—but also intrinsic, as students felt their opinions were valued during reflection and feedback. This sense of appreciation and active involvement made learning more meaningful.

Barriers and Challenges in Implementation

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified. Teachers noted that managing time within standard class periods was difficult, as game-based learning required more preparation and longer activities. Some teachers also struggled at first to organize and facilitate games effectively. Lutfi et al., (2024) emphasized that teacher readiness and professional development are essential to sustain innovative methods like joyful learning. Without proper training, teachers may find it challenging to balance creative approaches with curriculum requirement. Nevertheless, when implemented successfully, joyful learning methods—through ice-breaking, mind mapping, creative presentations, and interactive quizzes—can create a lively and participatory classroom environment (Lutfi et al., 2025).

Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide several important implications for teachers, curriculum designers, and education policymakers. In teaching Qur'an and Hadith, joyful learning can help create a more engaging and meaningful classroom atmosphere. For curriculum development, religious education programs should include joyful-learning activities such as Qur'an-based games, storytelling, and role-play. These activities make learning more interesting while still maintaining academic

and spiritual depth. Teachers also need training in creative and interactive teaching methods. Professional development programs should help teachers design and manage playful lessons that encourage student participation without losing focus on learning objectives.

School administrators should provide time, materials, and support for these activities, since joyful learning often requires more preparation and class time than traditional lessons. In assessment, teachers can combine tests with performance-based evaluations, group work, and reflections to measure both understanding and participation. At the policy level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and madrasah authorities should include joyful-learning competencies in teacher certification standards, so that innovative teaching methods are officially recognized. Overall, joyful learning is not just entertainment—it is a sustainable and effective teaching approach that can improve motivation, understanding, and the overall quality of Islamic education.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged in interpreting the findings of this study. First, the research was conducted in a single institution, MAN Kotawaringin Timur, which limits the generalizability of the results to other schools or cultural contexts. Second, the sample size for interviews and classroom observations was relatively small, possibly constraining the diversity of perspectives and experiences captured. Third, there is the possibility of a Hawthorne effect, whereby participants—both teachers and students—may have demonstrated increased enthusiasm or engagement simply because they were aware of being observed.

Fourth, the quantitative data relied primarily on self-reported responses, which can be subject to bias, particularly social desirability or respondent interpretation. Finally, the study focused on short-term learning **outcomes** and did not measure long-term retention, attitudinal change, or the deeper moral and spiritual internalization of Qur'anic and Hadith values. Recognizing these constraints is essential for methodological transparency and for positioning the study as a preliminary but valuable step toward a more comprehensive understanding of joyful learning in Islamic education.

Directions for Future Research

Future research on joyful learning in Qur'an and Hadith education should pursue several important directions to extend and deepen the present findings. First, multi-site comparative studies across various madrasahs and provinces are recommended to assess cultural and institutional variations in the implementation of joyful learning. Such comparative research would strengthen the external validity of findings. Second, longitudinal research is needed to examine the long-term effects of joyful learning on students' Qur'anic literacy, moral behaviour, and spiritual development. By observing learners over extended periods, researchers can determine whether improvements in motivation and comprehension persist beyond the immediate classroom context.

Third, employing an experimental design, such as controlled pre-test and post-test approaches, would allow for a more rigorous measurement of causal impacts on student motivation and academic performance (Aida et al., 2025). Fourth, future studies should explore digital joyful learning by integrating gamified online platforms, mobile applications, or augmented reality tools into Qur'an and Hadith instruction (Muhamid et al., 2023). Such innovations could expand accessibility and sustain engagement in hybrid or remote learning environments. Fifth, teacher cognition studies should be conducted to explore educators' perceptions, readiness, and challenges in applying joyful learning. Understanding teachers' beliefs and pedagogical orientations can inform professional development programs and institutional support structures.

Finally, neurocognitive analyses—such as attention tracking, emotional analytics, or eye-movement studies—could offer empirical insight into how joy influences memory, focus, and information processing at the neurological level. Pursuing these research directions will help to refine the joyful learning approach into a more empirically grounded and pedagogically sustainable framework for Islamic education, bridging traditional values with contemporary educational science.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the joyful learning model effectively enhances Qur'an and Hadith instruction at MAN Kotawaringin Timur by fostering a lively, engaging,

and meaningful learning environment. The integration of games, ice breaking, collaboration, and reflection encouraged students to become more active, motivated, and able to grasp the material more easily. Both qualitative and quantitative data confirmed that students preferred this method over conventional instruction due to its ability to reduce boredom, increase concentration, and stimulate critical thinking.

The main contribution of this research lies in demonstrating that joyful learning can bridge the traditional divide between the “seriousness” of religious education and the “enjoyment” of modern pedagogy. By proving that Qur'an and Hadith learning can remain spiritually profound while being dynamic and enjoyable, this study offers a pedagogical model that redefines how Islamic education can cultivate both intellectual depth and emotional engagement. Teachers and schools are therefore encouraged to adopt and adapt joyful learning as a sustainable approach to building active, creative, and spiritually grounded learners.

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