

## Strategy to Increase Creativity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teachers in Utilizing Information Technology (IT)-Based Learning Media at State Junior High School 1 Kolaka

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### Abstract

*The background of this research is the importance of innovation in education in the digital age, where teachers are required to be highly creative in presenting lessons to enable more active and creative students. The primary focus of this research is to explore how the creativity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers can be enhanced through the use of Information Technology (IT)-based media. The problem formulation in this study is Creativity Enhancement Strategy: Islamic Religious Education teachers utilize IT-based learning media such as PowerPoint (PPT) and smartphones to create varied teaching materials. This strategy involves the use of creative applications such as Canva to design materials and CapCut or TikTok to document and publish student assignments. Forms of Creativity: Teacher creativity is manifested in two main forms, namely Ideas (unique thinking for learning solutions) and Products/Services (such as making explanatory videos, digital calligraphy, and educational content on social media). Impact and Constraints: The use of IT has been proven to increase student motivation and activeness in learning Islamic Religious Education, although there are still technical constraints in the form of unstable internet connections. This study employed qualitative methods with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students, and documentation. The study took place at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka. The focus of the study included strategies for enhancing teacher creativity and the forms of creativity generated during the learning process. This study concludes that the creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka is very important to motivate students to be more active and accelerate the achievement of learning objectives through the integration of relevant and innovative technology.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of human resources who are faithful, knowledgeable, and have noble morals. Education is understood as a conscious and planned effort to realize a learning process that allows students to develop their potential optimally, both in terms of religiosity, self-control, personality, intelligence, and social skills needed in community life (Ngongo et al., 2019; Muchtar, 2008). Education essentially aims to humanize humans so that individuals can develop naturally and optimally in accordance with their roles and responsibilities as human beings (Muchtar, 2008).

In the context of formal education, teachers are the primary actors determining the success of the learning process. Educational institutions will gradually be able to meet quality demands if teachers possess a high level of creativity in implementing learning. Teacher professional development through the education system, quality assurance, school management, and professional support are crucial factors in improving the quality of learning and achieving national education goals (Aqib, 2002). Similarly, education in the modern era cannot be separated from advances in digital technology, which demand innovation and renewal in the learning process to prevent stagnation (Ngongo et al., 2019).

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching, teachers' challenges lie not only in mastering religious material but also in presenting learning creatively and contextually, keeping pace with current developments. Teacher creativity in utilizing technology as a learning medium is a crucial principle for making learning more varied, engaging, and enhancing student engagement (Zabidi, 2020). The teacher's role is no longer limited to conveying information, but rather as a facilitator capable of creating effective learning by considering the characteristics and differences in student learning styles (Dewantara et al., 2021).

The normative basis for the use of learning tools in Islam can be found in the Qur'an, specifically Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1–5, which emphasizes the importance of reading, learning, and developing knowledge as the foundation of education (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2006). M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation explains that the command to *iqra'* is not only interpreted as reading written texts, but also collecting, studying, and understanding various realities of life. In addition, the concept of *qalam* is understood as a symbol of all tools that function to document and transmit knowledge between generations (Shihab, 2002). This interpretation confirms that the use of information technology in learning is in line with Islamic educational values as long as it is used for educational purposes and character building.

Although the use of information technology in learning is increasingly widespread, conditions in the field indicate that not all Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers can creatively optimize technology-based learning media. Many teachers still use technology only as a tool to deliver material, without developing innovative, student-centered learning strategies (Zabidi, 2020). Limited technological competency and a lack of professional development are obstacles to optimizing IT-based learning media (Kalalo et al., 2022). This situation indicates a gap between the potential of technology as a learning medium and the learning practices that occur in the classroom.

The scientific novelty of this article lies in its focus on strategies for enhancing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' creativity in utilizing information technology-based learning media based on Islamic educational values. Unlike previous studies that focused more on media use or student learning styles, this article positions teacher creativity as a key factor in the successful integration of technology into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning (Zabidi, 2020; Dewantara et al., 2021).

The research problem stems from the fact that the use of information technology-based learning media in schools has not been fully accompanied by teacher creativity in designing and implementing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. This low level of teacher creativity in utilizing technology has the potential to hinder the creation of innovative and meaningful learning for students (Kalalo et al., 2022).

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze strategies for enhancing the creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers in utilizing information technology-based learning media at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka. The results are expected to provide

theoretical contributions to the development of technology-based Islamic Religious Education learning studies as well as practical contributions for teachers and schools.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of strategies for enhancing the creativity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in utilizing information technology-based learning media. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to interpret social phenomena in a naturalistic manner based on the meanings assigned by the research subjects in their natural context (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Elfrianto & Lesmana, 2022).

### **2.1. Research Design and Location**

The research design used was descriptive qualitative research, focusing on describing the actual conditions related to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher creativity and the use of information technology-based learning media. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka, Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The research subjects consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and students as supporting informants.

### **2.2. Research Procedures**

The research procedure is carried out in stages and systematically, including: (1) the research preparation stage with the preparation of instruments and determination of the research focus; (2) the data collection stage through observation, interviews, and documentation; (3) the data analysis stage simultaneously from the time the data is obtained; and (4) the conclusion drawing stage based on the verified analysis results.

### **2.3. Data Collection Sources and Techniques**

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through in-depth interviews and participant observation, while secondary data were obtained from school documents, archives, and relevant written sources. Data collection techniques included direct observation, face-to-face interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were used to observe learning activities and the use of IT media, while interviews were conducted to explore teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the learning strategies implemented (Makbul, 2021).

### **2.4. Research Instruments**

The primary instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher herself, supported by observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation. The observation guidelines were used to record learning activities, the interview guidelines were used to obtain in-depth data from informants, and documentation was used to supplement data not obtained through observation and interviews.

### **2.5. Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involves sorting and focusing data relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation is presented in descriptive narrative form for ease of understanding, while conclusions are drawn gradually through a verification process until valid and consistent findings are obtained (Miles & Huberman in Hadi, 2015).

## 2.6. Data Validity

Data validity was maintained through diligent observation, triangulation of sources and techniques, and cross-checking of interview and observation data. These steps were taken to ensure that research findings accurately reflect empirical conditions in the field.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Research Results

The results of this study were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation techniques conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka. The research focused on the creativity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in utilizing IT-based learning media. The findings indicate that teacher creativity plays a crucial role in creating an active and engaging learning environment. Teachers who utilize learning media in a varied manner are able to increase student attention, interest, and participation during the learning process.

Based on observations and interviews with the principal and vice principal, it was discovered that the use of engaging learning media can reduce student boredom in the classroom. Media such as whiteboards, PowerPoint presentations, instructional videos, and other IT-based tools help teachers deliver material more clearly and systematically. Students become more active, both in asking questions, answering questions, and taking notes.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers indicate that IT-based learning media, particularly audiovisual media, are highly effective in teaching Islamic Religious Education. The use of videos and PowerPoint slides, complemented by images and sound, can help students understand abstract material, such as Islamic beliefs and values. Furthermore, teachers utilize excerpts from the Quran, compiled by students in groups, to increase student engagement and curiosity.

The research findings also show that the use of IT-based applications, such as Canva and CapCut, has a positive impact on student engagement. Students not only passively receive material but are also involved in creating learning products, such as presentations and digital calligraphy. These activities encourage students to collaborate, be creative, and utilize technology positively in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. To clarify the research findings, the data findings are presented in the following table.

**Table 3.1 Islamic Education Learning Media and Student Responses at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka**

No	Instructional Media	Form of Utilization	Student Response
1	Whiteboard	Writing verses and explaining the material	Students take notes and pay attention
2	Power Point	Presentation of material accompanied by images and sound	Students actively read and answer
3	Learning videos	Video playback according to PAI material	Students are enthusiastic and ask questions
4	Excerpts from the Quran	Arranged in groups	Students discuss and are active
5	Canva App	PPT creation and calligraphy design	Creative and collaborative students

6	CapCut App/TikTok	Documentation and editing of assignments	Students are enthusiastic about producing products
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Source: Data from research observations and interviews

Table 3.1 shows that IT-based learning media, particularly audiovisual media and digital applications, elicited a more active response from students than learning that solely used lecture methods. Students demonstrated diverse engagement, from asking questions and answering questions, discussing them, to producing creative work.

In addition to demonstrating increased student engagement, the research also revealed a variety of student participation patterns in Islamic Religious Education learning. This engagement was demonstrated not only through the courage to ask questions, but also through student involvement in answering teacher questions, reciting verses from the Quran, compiling verse fragments, and taking notes on learning materials. This demonstrates that teachers' creativity in utilizing learning media can accommodate the differences in student characteristics and learning styles in the classroom.

The research also shows that the use of IT-based learning media encourages collaborative learning. When teachers assign group assignments, such as calligraphy or presentations using the Canva and CapCut apps, students engage in role-playing, discussion, and collaboration. These activities make the learning process livelier and more meaningful, as students not only receive information from the teacher but also actively construct knowledge with their group mates.

Furthermore, the research results indicate technical challenges in the use of IT-based learning media, particularly related to internet network stability. However, these challenges have not dampened teachers' and students' enthusiasm for utilizing IT media. Teachers continue to strive to adapt learning to existing conditions, either by combining IT and conventional media or by utilizing simple, easy-to-use media.

Thus, the overall research results indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers' creativity in utilizing learning media, both IT-based and non-IT-based, has a positive impact on the learning atmosphere and activity. Learning media is an important tool in bridging material delivery, increasing classroom interaction, and encouraging active student involvement in the Islamic Religious Education learning process.

### 3.2. Discussion

Based on the research findings in Subchapter 3.1, it can be concluded that the creativity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in utilizing IT-based learning media is a key factor in improving the quality of learning. This creativity is reflected in the teacher's ability to select and use media appropriate to the material and student characteristics, thus making learning more engaging and less monotonous.

Creatively used learning media can transform the learning process from passive to more interactive. This is evident in the increased student engagement in various ways, such as asking questions, answering teacher questions, discussing with peers, and taking notes on learning materials. This active participation demonstrates that students are not merely recipients of information but are actively involved in the learning process.

The use of audiovisual media, such as instructional videos and PowerPoint presentations, provides a more engaging learning experience for students. These media present Islamic Religious Education material more concretely and visually, making it easier for students to grasp abstract concepts, such as Islamic faith and values, which are difficult to grasp if presented solely through lectures.

In addition to improving understanding of the material, the use of IT-based media also plays a role in reducing student boredom during the learning process. Learning packaged with the aid of technology can create a more enjoyable and conducive learning environment, enabling students to be more focused and motivated to participate in Islamic Religious Education lessons.

Student involvement in creating learning products, such as calligraphy and digital presentations, demonstrates that teacher creativity impacts not only the delivery of material but also the development of student skills. These activities train students to work collaboratively in groups, think creatively, and use technology productively and responsibly.

Thus, this discussion confirms the interconnectedness of the research findings and discussion, where empirical data demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education teachers' creativity in utilizing IT-based learning media positively contributes to student engagement, understanding, and potential development. Therefore, teacher creativity in selecting and developing learning media needs to be continuously improved to optimally achieve the learning objectives of Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions conducted, it can be concluded that the creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers in utilizing IT-based learning media plays a very important role in supporting the success of the learning process at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka. Teacher creativity is reflected in the ability to develop learning ideas tailored to the characteristics of the teaching material as well as the conditions and needs of students. Furthermore, teachers are also able to combine the use of conventional media and information technology-based media appropriately, so that the learning process becomes more varied, not monotonous, and is able to create a conducive learning atmosphere.

The use of IT-based learning media, such as instructional videos, PowerPoint presentations, and various digital applications, has been proven to increase student engagement, interest, and understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials. These media help teachers present abstract material in a more concrete, visual, and understandable way. The presence of images, sound, and animations helps students focus and engage with the learning process, significantly increasing their engagement.

In addition to enhancing understanding of the material, teachers' creativity in utilizing learning media also encourages students to produce creative works or learning products. Through activities such as calligraphy and digital presentations, students are not only trained to understand the material but also develop collaboration skills, creative thinking, and the positive and responsible use of technology. These activities provide a more meaningful and relevant learning experience.

Thus, it can be concluded that the creativity of Islamic Religious Education teachers in utilizing IT-based learning media is a crucial factor in creating active, engaging, and meaningful learning. Teacher creativity not only impacts the delivery of material but also contributes to the development of students' overall potential and skills. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously improve teacher creativity in selecting and developing learning media to ensure optimal achievement of Islamic Religious Education learning objectives at SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka.

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