



# Optimizing Pedagogy through Gamification: A Scientific Approach to Enhancing Student Motivation in Madrasah

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## Abstract:

This research focuses on optimizing pedagogy through gamification as a scientific approach to increasing student motivation in madrasahs. This research aims to analyze the effectiveness of gamification elements in the learning process and how this can influence student motivation and engagement. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, where data is collected through in-depth interviews, class observations, and content analysis. Research findings show that implementing gamification significantly increases student motivation, primarily through the dynamic engagement generated by game elements such as challenges, point systems, and rewards. Students who engage in gamification-based learning show increased active participation and a greater desire to achieve academic goals. The implications of this research highlight the importance of integrating appropriate gamification elements in madrasah curricula to create a more interactive and motivating learning environment and the challenges that need to be considered regarding adapting gamification to diverse learning styles.

## INTRODUCTION

Optimizing pedagogy through Gamification is not just about incorporating game elements into the learning process but is also a scientific approach emphasizing student motivation's importance (Faiz et al., 2023; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023; Wulandari, 2021; Yanti et al., 2024). This is because Gamification creates a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment, which increases student engagement and encourages them to be more active in the learning process (Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024; Khotimah et al., 2024; Pakudu, 2024; Zuhdi et al., 2024). Many educational institutions have successfully implemented Gamification in their curriculum and seen significant results. For example, some schools and universities use game-based learning platforms, such as Kahoot! and Duolingo, to teach Lesson material (Fatimah et al., 2024). Data shows that students using this platform show increased motivation, better information retention, and higher class participation than traditional learning methods (Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Sucipto et al., 2023). Thus, Gamification is not

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just an addition to learning but has been proven to be effective in increasing student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes, making it an important strategy to implement in modern education.

Several previous studies related to this research theme are divided into at least four categories, (Mahmubi, 2024) Gamification significantly increases students' intrinsic motivation. Elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards make students more enthusiastic about participating and completing learning tasks. Second, (Mili et al., 2023) classes that use gamification methods have better academic results than classes that use traditional teaching methods. Third (Kusnadi & Azzahra, 2024), applying Gamification in learning increases the engagement of students who become more active in discussions, more enthusiastic in doing assignments, and show higher participation overall. Finally, (Srimuliyani, 2023) Gamification helps develop students' social skills, such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

From several research findings, the novelty of this paper lies in the integration of gamification, which is not only focused on aspects of motivation or learning outcomes but also on an in-depth analysis of how gamification can be adapted to various student learning styles and contexts (Bintang et al., 2024; Maulidia, 2023). This research will explore how gamification elements can be adapted to meet student's individual needs, including those with learning difficulties or unique learning preferences, which have yet to be widely addressed in previous research (Han et al., 2024). Apart from that, this research will also examine the long-term impact of Gamification on the development of students' critical thinking skills and creativity, which has yet to be the main focus of previous research.

This research analyzes how Gamification can be optimized in pedagogy to increase student motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. With a scientific approach, this research will evaluate the effectiveness of gamification elements in various learning contexts and how gamification adaptations can meet individual student needs (Liriwati, 2023; Rosa et al., 2024). The argument in this research is based on the need to develop more adaptive teaching methods responsive to different student learning styles (Bustan, 2024) (Redy Winatha & Ariningsih, 2020). Although previous research has demonstrated the benefits of Gamification in increasing motivation and learning outcomes, this research will fill the gap by examining how Gamification can be integrated in more depth to support a variety of learning styles and educational contexts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze and understand how gamification can be optimized in pedagogy to increase student motivation (Köhler, 2024), engagement, and learning outcomes. Case studies were chosen because they allow researchers to explore the application of gamification in various natural and complex learning contexts. This approach will provide deep insight into how gamification elements are effectively applied in different educational situations and how gamification adaptations can meet the needs of students' learning styles. With this approach, this research aims to reveal the dynamics and impact of gamification in comprehensively improving the quality of the learning process.

Participants in this research were selected using a purposive sampling

technique: selecting participants based on specific considerations and objectives. This technique is used because researchers need specific and in-depth data that can only be obtained from individuals who have knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic. This research involved 10 participants, including educators, students, and gamification developers. Participants were selected because they had direct experience with the application of gamification in education and diverse backgrounds in terms of position, education, and experience. Hopefully, This will provide comprehensive and relevant information on how gamification can be optimized in pedagogy. Selected participants meet specific criteria, namely that they have been actively involved in developing or implementing gamification in an educational environment. This diversity of backgrounds allows for in-depth exploration of the effectiveness and challenges of applying gamification in different contexts, as well as providing accurate and diverse insights into the impact of gamification on student motivation and learning outcomes.

**Table 1. Research Informants**

Participants	Gender		Informant
	Male	Female	
Deputy Head of Curriculum	1	-	Zaky Al Yamani, M.Pd
Homeroom teacher	1	-	Atok Fadholi, ST
Teacher	1	-	Fitria Hasanah, S.Pd
Student	1	1	Febri, Dimas
Gamification developer	1	1	Fathul Qorib, M. Hum
Amount	6	2	

This case study collected data through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with educators, students, and gamification developers to gain a comprehensive perspective on the application of gamification in pedagogy. Observations were conducted in classrooms and learning environments that implemented gamification to see the interaction between gamification elements and student responses. The research location is located on Jl. Raya Besuk Kidul No. 247, Besuk Kidul, Kec. Besuk, Kab. Probolinggo, East Java. In addition, data was collected from online learning platforms and gamification applications used in the research to analyze how gamification elements were implemented and received by students.

This research's qualitative data analysis technique refers to the Miles and Huberman (1994) in (Han et al., 2024) method, which consists of four main steps. This research analyzes how gamification can be optimized in pedagogy to increase student motivation and learning outcomes. The first step is formulating a clear research objective, which in this case is to understand the application of gamification in an educational context and its impact on student engagement. The initial data analysis stage involves data collection through in-depth interviews, observations, and content analysis. The data is taken from classroom interactions and the gamification platform used. The second step is data reduction, where the researcher summarizes, selects, and focuses on critical elements relevant to the research theme. This process aims to distill information and present a clear picture of the effectiveness of gamification in increasing student motivation and learning outcomes. The third step involves presenting the data through narrative text, which organizes and presents the findings in descriptive form to provide in-depth insight into how gamification is implemented

and accepted in educational settings. The final step is conclusion drawing, which involves data synthesis to conclude how gamification can be optimized in pedagogy. Data validity is guaranteed through data triangulation and review by cross-referencing information from various relevant sources and theories to ensure consistency and accuracy of research findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research examines the application of gamification in pedagogy to improve student motivation and learning outcomes, focusing on four main aspects: dynamic engagement, adaptive motivation, educational interactivity, and cognitive effectiveness. The results of this study reveal how various gamification elements, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, influence students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. The discussion will outline the positive impact of gamification on students' intrinsic motivation and learning outcomes, as well as the challenges faced while implementing gamification in various educational contexts, including the suitability of gamification elements with student learning styles and curriculum needs.

### Dynamic Engagement

Dynamic engagement includes active interactions between students and teachers and learning materials that suit students' needs and interests. Creating an interactive and adaptive learning atmosphere makes students feel more involved and motivated to learn. This method involves various strategies, such as project-based learning, group discussions, and technology facilitating active student participation. When students feel directly involved and see the relevance of the material to their lives, they tend to be more motivated to achieve better learning outcomes. These findings emphasize the importance of adapting teaching methods to increase student motivation and achieve optimal educational outcomes in madrasas. As stated by Atok as, the class teacher, "the use of project-based learning and group discussions allows students to participate more actively and feel that what they learn has relevance in their daily lives." Additionally, appropriate use of technology can facilitate better engagement, making the learning process more exciting and enjoyable.

The informant's statement above shows that dynamic involvement in education focuses on active interaction between students, teachers, and materials tailored to students' needs and interests. This approach creates an adaptive learning atmosphere where students feel more engaged and motivated (Nasaruddin et al., 2024) (Khairudin, 2023). Methods such as project-based learning, group discussions, and the use of technology have been proven to increase participation and the relevance of the material for students (Hasan et al., 2023). This ultimately supports better learning outcomes, as stated by the class teacher, who emphasized that this method makes the subject matter more meaningful in students' daily lives and makes the learning process more enjoyable.

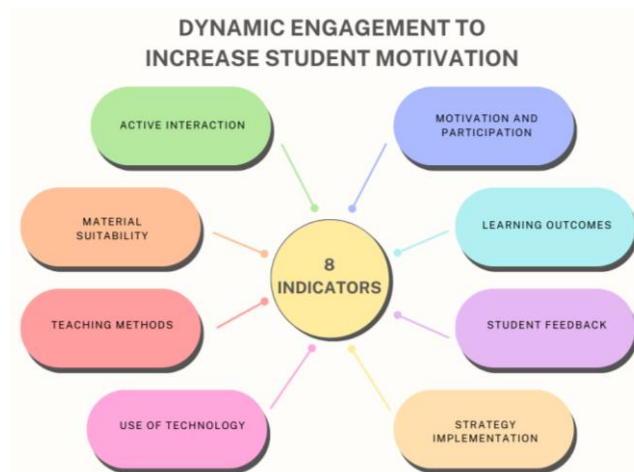


Figure 1. Dynamic engagement indicators

The figure 1, it can be understood that there are eight indicators of dynamic engagement findings. Dynamic engagement in education can be measured through various indicators, including active interaction, materials appropriateness, and teaching methods. Active interaction between students and teachers during the learning process, as well as student participation in class discussions and activities, is one of the main benchmarks (Mabnunah et al., 2024) (Ardiyanti et al., 2024). In addition, adapting teaching materials to students' needs and interests, as well as the relevance of the material to their daily lives is very important. Using methods such as project-based learning, group discussions, and technology integration also significantly increases student engagement (Novita Sari, Rifqy Alfiyan, and Article 2023). The level of student motivation can be seen from their enthusiasm and activeness in learning, which is then reflected in academic achievement and understanding of the material. Feedback from students regarding their learning experiences and implementation of teaching strategies also provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of this approach (Chalely et al., 2024; Sanjani, 2024). By evaluating these indicators, we can understand the extent to which dynamic engagement succeeds in increasing student motivation and learning outcomes.

### Adaptive Motivation

Adaptive motivation to increase student motivation in madrasahs shows that this approach efficiently creates a learning environment responsive to individual student needs (Ramadania et al., 2020). Adaptive motivation involves adjusting teaching strategies and learning techniques based on each student's abilities, interests, and needs (Munir et al., 2024). Providing appropriate challenges and supporting students' personal development significantly increases their motivation to learn (Boiliu & Messakh, 2024; Munian & Hasan, 2020). In addition, this method helps students develop self-confidence and better problem-solving skills because they feel capable of overcoming the challenges given (Hasanah et al., 2024; Rozi et al., 2023). These findings emphasize the importance of flexibility in teaching methods to achieve optimal learning outcomes and support the holistic development of students in madrasahs.

Table 2. Data from interviews regarding adaptive motivation

Informant	Statement	Code
Fitria	"By applying SMART principles, students not only understand what is expected of them, but also have concrete guidance for achieving it. This helps them feel more purposeful and focused in their learning efforts."	SMART Goals
Zaky	"In our efforts to increase student motivation, we place great emphasis on the importance of self-management skills. We teach techniques such as planning, time management, and relaxation, which help students overcome challenges and stress."	Self-Regulation Techniques
Fathul	"Providing constructive and positive feedback is an integral part of our approach. We focus on providing clear feedback and helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement."	Constructive Feedback
Dimas	"The learning environment here is very supportive, and it makes me feel more motivated to study. When my teachers and friends provide support and understanding, I feel more confident and enthusiastic to face learning challenges."	Supportive Learning Environment

The table 2, that the strategy effectively increases student motivation in madrasas. First, setting clear and measurable goals using SMART principles provides concrete direction in the learning process, helping students focus and feel directed. Developing self-management skills such as planning and relaxation techniques helps students cope with stress and stay motivated. Constructive and positive feedback is also essential (Santika et al., 2022)(Tampubolon, 2020). This feedback gives students an understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, increasing their self-confidence and encouragement to keep trying. Lastly, a supportive and inclusive learning environment plays a significant role (Indadihayati & Hariyanto, 2023). A positive environment makes students feel welcome and valued, encouraging them to be more connected and motivated to learn. These aspects work together to create a learning experience that enables students to reach their full potential.

### Educational Interactivity

Educational interactivity is an essential finding from optimizing pedagogy through gamification by actively involving students in the learning process, which can increase their motivation. Interactive methods, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and the use of technology, keep students more engaged and understand the material better. As stated by Fathul, "this active involvement encourages critical and creative thinking and helps students solve problems independently, which increases self-confidence and learning satisfaction." When students have the opportunity to contribute to learning, they feel valued and motivated to perform better. Additionally, Fitria added that "creating a dynamic and enjoyable learning environment is important to maintain interest and motivation in the long term." By implementing these strategies, madrasas can offer engaging learning experiences and support students in achieving their best potential.



With the informant's statement above, it can be concluded that interactive approaches in education, such as gamification, are very influential in motivating students. Active methods such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and the use of technology make students more involved and understand the material more deeply. This involvement stimulates critical and creative thinking and helps students solve problems independently, ultimately increasing their self-confidence and satisfaction with learning (Saragih et al., 2020). Creating a dynamic and enjoyable learning atmosphere is very important to maintain student interest in the long term (Indadihayati & Hariyanto, 2023). By implementing these strategies, madrasas can provide engaging learning experiences and support students in achieving their best potential.

### Educational Interactivity



Figure 2. Educational interactivity indicators

The figure 2, explains that the indicators of the effectiveness of educational interactivity in increasing student motivation in madrasas include several main aspects. Student engagement is measured by active participation in group discussions, collaborative projects, and other activities, indicating students' engagement in learning (Efendi & Sholeh, 2023). Comprehension of the material was assessed through an increase in test scores after implementing the interactive method, indicating the effectiveness of this approach (Solechan et al., 2023) (Fetra Bonita Sari, Risda Amini, 2020). Critical and creative thinking skills are evaluated based on the quality of the solutions produced in the project. Meanwhile, students' self-confidence and learning satisfaction are measured through surveys. Long-term interests and motivations are analyzed based on attendance and academic achievement data (Puspito et al., 2021). These indicators provide a comprehensive picture of how interactive methods influence student motivation and development.

### Cognitive Effectiveness

Cognitive effectiveness plays a vital role in increasing student motivation in madrasas. A learning process that emphasizes students' active involvement in mental activities, such as problem-solving, critical analysis, and application of knowledge, has been proven to increase their interest and drive for learning. Cognitively engaged students tend to show increases in intrinsic motivation, encouraging them to study harder and maintain better learning outcomes. As explained by Atok, "Examples of cognitive effectiveness applied in the classroom, for example, in mathematics lessons, often provide problems that require deep thinking, not just routine problems that can be solved with formulas. By inviting

them to discuss and find solutions, become more active and enthusiastic about participating in lessons.” These findings emphasize the importance of developing learning strategies focusing on knowledge transfer and strengthening students’ cognitive abilities. In this way, madrasas can contribute significantly to creating a learning environment that supports students’ sustainable intellectual development and motivation.

From the informant’s statement above, it can be concluded that cognitive effectiveness significantly increases student motivation in madrasas. Learning that involves mental activities such as problem-solving, critical analysis, and application of knowledge has been proven to improve students’ interest and drive to learn. Cognitive engagement influences intrinsic motivation, encouraging students to study harder and achieve better results. This is illustrated by an example in mathematics lessons, where questions that require deep thinking replace routine questions, and group discussions trigger student activity and enthusiasm (Dwi & Maskuri, 2023) (Fahri et al., 2022). These findings emphasize the importance of learning strategies that strengthen cognitive abilities, not just transferring knowledge (S. Fatimah et al., 2022). With this approach, madrasas can create an environment that supports students’ sustainable intellectual development and motivation.

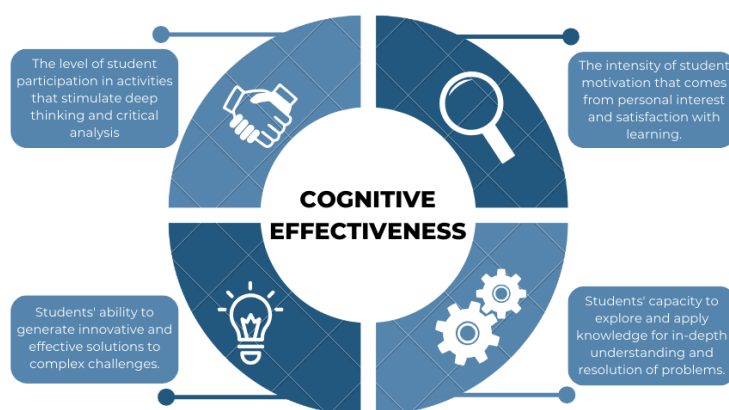


Figure 3. Indicators of cognitive effectiveness to increase student motivation

The figure 3, the indicators for assessing cognitive effectiveness in increasing student motivation include several essential elements. Cognitive Activation measures the extent to which students engage in activities that stimulate deep thinking, such as analysis and critical reflection, indicating their level of engagement in the learning process (Fitri et al., 2023) (Pabendon et al., 2024). Intrinsic Encouragement assesses student motivation from personal interest and satisfaction with the material, reflecting their enthusiasm to study harder. Solution Creativity evaluates students’ ability to generate innovative ideas and practical solutions to complex problems, illustrating their problem-solving skills. Lastly, Deep Analysis measures how students can explore and apply knowledge to deeply understand and solve problems (Hidayat & Martina, 2022). Together, these indicators provide deep insight into how cognitive approaches can influence student motivation and engagement in the learning process.



## CONCLUSION

This research highlights the potential of gamification as a powerful tool to enhance student motivation in madrasas. By incorporating game elements such as challenges, rewards, and healthy competition, educators can foster both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. The study reveals that when these elements are thoughtfully combined, they not only increase student participation but also lead to improved academic performance and active involvement in class. Thus, the application of gamification in pedagogical practices within madrasas can create a more dynamic and motivating learning environment, ultimately enhancing the quality of education.

The findings underscore the relevance of adapting gamification techniques, initially popular in the technology and business sectors, to Islamic education settings. This research expands the theoretical understanding of gamification by demonstrating its effectiveness in religious education, particularly in madrasas. The results emphasize the importance of understanding the unique needs and dynamics of students in these settings and adapting teaching methods accordingly. By integrating gamification into their curriculum, madrasas can create a more engaging and productive learning experience, which aligns with the evolving educational landscape shaped by digital technology.

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