

Managing the Adoption of Digital Comic Media in *Fiqh* Learning: Managerial Conditions Shaping Effectiveness in an Islamic Secondary School

Walid*, Syamsul Rijal

Universitas Islam Madura, Indonesia

*Email Corresponding author: mazzwalidwijaya@gmail.com

Abstract

Digital media now shapes how *madrasah* teach abstract religious content, yet most studies treat comic-based media as a design problem and overlook how a school actually manages its adoption. This study examines how MA (*Madrasah Aliyah, Islamic senior high school*) Taman Baru Palenggiyan Kedungdung Sampang manages the use of digital comic media in the *Fiqh* subject, focusing on both the effectiveness of the practice and the factors that support or hinder it. The research used a qualitative case study design. Data came from in-depth interviews with six purposively selected informants, namely the head of *madrasah*, the teacher, and four students, and were reinforced through classroom observation and documentation. Analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman and relied on source triangulation to verify each claim. The findings show that the medium's success depended less on the comic itself than on three managerial conditions working together: leadership provisioning, the teacher's shift toward facilitation, and structured time management. Student participation rose noticeably, though gains in understanding remained uneven because setup time and differences in visual literacy limited some learners. These results imply that *madrasahs* seeking to benefit from digital media must invest in leadership and instructional management, not merely in the technology, since the medium rewards good management and exposes the cost of its absence.

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital media into religious education has become a pressing concern for *madrasah* seeking to keep abstract legal content accessible to a generation raised on visual technology. *Fiqh* occupies a strategic place in the *madrasah* curriculum because it governs the practical rules Muslims follow in daily life, yet its conceptual and rule-based character often leaves students disengaged when it is delivered through lecture alone (Graham, 2025; Meerangani et al., 2025; Minalla, 2023). In response, schools have begun adopting visual formats such as digital comics, which pair narrative and illustration to make legal concepts easier to grasp (Garcia, 2025; Lee et al., 2022; Rizzi et al., 2023). National data reinforce the urgency of this shift, since the Indonesian

Ministry of Education reported that internet penetration among secondary-age students exceeded 75% by (Haramain & Afiah, 2022; Patterson et al., 2022; Rinaldi et al., 2022), signaling that visually mediated learning is no longer optional but expected. For a *madrasah* in a district such as Sampang, the question is therefore not whether to adopt such media but how the institution manages that adoption effectively.

Research on digital comics in Islamic education has grown quickly, and three concerns dominate the recent literature. A first and largest cluster centers on development and feasibility, exemplified by qualitative work showing that digital comics are a viable and engaging medium for teaching Islamic values at the primary level (Riza et al., 2025). A second concern situates media adoption within school leadership, where Amar and Eleyan (2022) demonstrated across 442 principals that a principal's technology leadership significantly shapes teachers' technology integration. A third concern examines how leadership manages the adoption process itself, as Guo et al. (2024) found in a case study where a principal's instructional leadership drove a school-wide technological reform. Read together, these themes establish that media effectiveness is bound up with institutional management rather than with the artifact alone.

Despite this progress, a clear gap remains at the intersection of these themes. The media-development literature demonstrates that digital comics work but treats the school as a neutral backdrop, while the leadership literature demonstrates that principals matter but draws chiefly on large surveys or on secular, Western, and higher-resource settings. Almost no study examines how a specific *madrasah* manages the adoption of digital comic media in *Fiqh* as a connected chain running from leadership provisioning through teacher facilitation to the management of instructional time. This study addresses that gap, and its novelty is threefold: it reframes digital comic adoption as an object of educational management rather than of media design, it grounds that reframing in an under-studied rural Islamic secondary school, and it surfaces the managerial conditions under which such media succeed or fall short.

The purpose of this study is accordingly to examine how MA Taman Baru Palenggiyan manages the implementation of digital comic media in the *Fiqh* subject, with attention to both the effectiveness of that implementation and the factors that support or constrain it. By tracing the managerial chain that enables adoption, the study extends the media-development literature beyond questions of feasibility and complements the leadership literature by showing how instructional leadership operates in a concrete *madrasah* setting rather than in aggregate survey data. This focus carries both academic and practical relevance, since it offers scholars a management-centered account of media adoption and offers *madrasah* leaders a grounded picture of what effective implementation actually requires. In doing so, the study speaks to the wider concern of how Islamic educational institutions can translate technological opportunity into genuine instructional improvement.

The central argument advanced here is that the effectiveness of digital comic media in *Fiqh* is conditional rather than automatic, depending on how a *madrasah* manages the provision of resources, the facilitation of learning, and the structuring of instructional time. Rather than measuring learning gains numerically, the study explores the lived managerial process through the accounts of those who enacted it, namely the head of *madrasah*, the *Fiqh* teacher, and students who experienced the change firsthand. Attending to their perspectives allows the analysis to capture not only what worked but also where and why the gains remained uneven across learners. This qualitative, management-centered focus sets the stage for the research method

described below, which details how the case was studied and how its evidence was gathered and analyzed.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case-study design, chosen because the research sought to understand how a single institution managed the adoption of digital comic media rather than to measure its effect numerically. The qualitative approach is often termed naturalistic because the inquiry is conducted in a natural setting, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument who interprets meaning as it emerges in context (Truman, 2023). A case-study design was appropriate here because the phenomenon of interest, the managerial process behind media adoption, is bounded to one *madrasah* and cannot be separated from its institutional conditions. The research was carried out at *Madrasah Aliyah* Taman Baru Palenggiyan, Kedungdung, Sampang, focusing on the implementation of digital comics in the *Fiqh* subject, specifically the *Muamalah* unit taught in grade XI. This design allowed the study to trace the connections among leadership decisions, teaching practice, and classroom outcomes as they actually unfolded in the field.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques to satisfy source triangulation: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Harrison et al., 2025; Zhang & Okazawa, 2023). Interviews were conducted with six informants selected purposively to represent the leadership, teaching, and student dimensions of the phenomenon, comprising the head of *madrasah*, the *Fiqh* teacher, and four students drawn from both active and passive categories, as summarized in Table 1. Participatory observation was carried out during *Fiqh* lessons in grade XI to record the classroom atmosphere, the teacher's management of interaction, and the constraints that surfaced during implementation. Documentation supplied the third strand of evidence and included the lesson plan, sample digital comic artifacts, photographs of classroom activity, and student evaluation sheets, each of which was used to corroborate what informants reported and what the researcher observed. Drawing on these three sources allowed the findings to rest on converging evidence rather than on any single account (Mtisi, 2022; Staras et al., 2025).

Table 1. Profile of research informants.

Code	Role	Interview focus	Date
KM	Head of <i>madrasah</i>	Policy and facility provisioning	August 12, 2023
G1	<i>Fiqh</i> teacher	Implementation and constraints	August 14, 2023
S1	Student (active)	Understanding and response	August 15, 2023
S2	Student (active)	Understanding and response	August 15, 2023
S3	Student (passive)	Learning constraints	August 16, 2023
S4	Student (passive)	Learning constraints	August 16, 2023

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (Miles, M., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2014), which proceeds through three concurrent activities: data condensation, data display, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. In the condensation stage, the interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were reviewed and coded to isolate the material relevant to the management of media adoption, and the coded material was then clustered into the three themes that organize the findings. In the display stage, the condensed data were arranged into thematic narratives and summarizing tables so that the relationships among leadership provisioning, teacher facilitation, and time management could be

examined side by side. Conclusions were drawn and verified through source triangulation, cross-checking each claim against the interview, observation, and documentary evidence, and particular attention was paid to the deviant case, since a divergent account was treated as a test of the emerging interpretation rather than as noise to be set aside. This procedure ensured that the conclusions reflected the convergence of multiple data sources while remaining honest about the variation the data contained.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study drew on six purposively selected informants to satisfy source triangulation: the head of *madrasah* (KM), the *Fiqh* teacher (G1), and four students spanning active and passive learners (S1–S4). Interview accounts were corroborated by classroom observation during the *Muamalah* unit in grade XI and by documentary evidence, including the lesson plan, sample comic artifacts, activity photographs, and student evaluation sheets. Consistent with the qualitative design, the analysis reports what informants said, what was observed in the classroom, and what the documents recorded, rather than measuring learning gains numerically. The findings are organized into three themes that trace how the adoption of digital comic media was managed at MA Taman Baru Palenggiyan, moving from the provisioning of facilities, through the repositioning of the teacher's role, to the management of instructional time and its constraints, with each theme interpreted through a management lens rather than a purely pedagogical one.

Facility Provisioning as a Precondition for Adoption

At MA Taman Baru Palenggiyan, the use of digital comics in the *Muamalah* unit did not begin in the classroom but in a managerial decision about resources. The adoption rested on policy support and provisioning by the *madrasah* rather than on an isolated teacher initiative, beginning as a teacher's proposal that leadership chose to endorse and then equip. This sequence matters because it locates the origin of the innovation at the intersection of a teacher's instructional need and a leader's willingness to fund it. The managerial chain that made adoption possible, from the initial proposal to the point where classroom use became feasible, is presented in Figure 1.

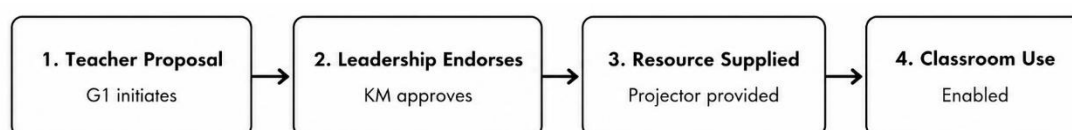


Figure 1. Managerial decision chain enabling the adoption of digital comic media.

Figure 1 makes clear that classroom use was the last link in a chain, not its starting point, and that each preceding link was a managerial act rather than a technical one. The head of *madrasah* did not merely permit the innovation; he converted a teacher's request into a funded provision by supplying the projector, which is the decisive step that separates an approved idea from an operational one. This distinction is analytically important because many media initiatives stall precisely at the provisioning link, where endorsement is granted but resources never follow. The head of *madrasah* described this stance directly:

"Yes, the madrasah strongly supports teachers who want to innovate. When the Fiqh teacher proposed teaching with digital comics, we immediately prepared a projector for use in the classroom. The hope was that students would not grow drowsy from listening to lectures all the time." (KM, August 12, 2023)

Once the facility was in place, day-to-day delivery became straightforward, a point the *Fiqh* teacher confirmed:

"Access was actually easy. I simply connected my phone to the classroom projector. The comic file was already in PDF form, so when we covered the Muamalah chapter, sale transactions or usury, I could display the story on the front screen for the students to read together." (G1, August 14, 2023)

Read together, these accounts place the provisioning of learning resources at the leadership level rather than treating it as a teacher's technical chore. The alignment between the leader's policy support and the teacher's instructional need was what allowed adoption to proceed, and the lesson plan's explicit allocation of time for projector and comic use confirms that the provision was formalized rather than improvised. Without this managerial groundwork, the initiative would have stalled before reaching the classroom. The effectiveness of digital media was therefore settled first at the level of resource decisions, well before any learning process unfolded among students.

The Teacher's Shift Toward Facilitation

Within the same Grade 11 sessions, the medium's arrival changed how the teacher managed instruction, moving him from a sole transmitter of content toward a director of discussion. This shift was deliberate rather than incidental, involving a reordering of the lesson and a repositioning of the teacher within the room, and it was felt by students as closer, more responsive guidance. The change is best understood as a contrast between two managerial postures, the conventional lecture posture and the facilitation posture that the medium invited. To make that contrast explicit before turning to the testimony, the observed differences across four dimensions of classroom management are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Shift in the teacher's managerial role before and after digital comic adoption.

Managerial dimension	Before (lecture method)	After (digital comic method)
Teacher position	Fixed at the front, transmitting content	Circulating, guiding individual students
Lesson sequence	Continuous lecture and note-taking	Read, discuss, then teacher-prompted consolidation
Student participation	Largely passive reception	Active questioning and discussion
Classroom climate	Low willingness to ask questions	Reduced hesitation; students ask freely

Table 2 shows that the change was not confined to a single behavior but reshaped four connected dimensions of how the class was run, which is why it registers as a managerial shift rather than a mere change of tool. The move from a fixed frontal position to circulation, in particular, altered the teacher's relationship to individual students, allowing him to detect and address confusion as it arose rather than lecturing past it. The teacher described the reordering of his lesson in these terms:

"My role clearly changed. I used to do all the note-taking and lecture from start to finish. Now I play the comic first and let them read and discuss for a while. Only afterward do I prompt them, 'So, from that story, is the contract valid or not?' My position is much more about steering the discussion." (G1, August 14, 2023)

Students experienced this repositioning as a form of individual support that lowered the barrier to asking questions:

"Learning became more enjoyable. The teacher no longer only wrote on the board. Whenever we were confused by the image of usury in the comic, he would walk over to our desk and explain it in detail. We were no longer embarrassed to ask." (S1, August 15, 2023)

Observation reinforced these accounts, since the teacher was seen moving around the room to guide students who struggled to read the on-screen text, and during discussion students raised their hands more readily than under the lecture method. This observed rise in participation is, in qualitative terms, the most direct evidence of deepening engagement available in the data, though it should be read as heightened involvement rather than as a measured gain in comprehension. Taken together, the evidence indicates that the medium's success lay not in the medium itself but in the teacher's capacity to manage classroom interaction across the four dimensions in Table 1. The comic supplied the raw material, yet its pedagogical value emerged from how the teacher paced reading, discussion, and consolidation while cultivating a climate in which students felt safe to speak, which reframes the innovation as an act of instructional management rather than a technological upgrade.

Time Management and Its Principal Constraints

The gains described above were real but conditional, and the conditions became visible in how instructional time was managed. Technical preparation consumed a nontrivial share of the lesson, attention sometimes drifted from the legal text toward the imagery, and a subset of students found the visual format an obstacle rather than an aid. These constraints are not merely a list of complaints but a set of characteristics with identifiable sources and consequences, each of which a manager of instruction would need to anticipate. The characteristics of the observed constraints, together with their evidentiary source and their effect on learning, are set out in Table 2.

Table 3. Characteristics of the constraints affecting digital comic implementation.

Constraint	Source of evidence	Managerial characteristic	Effect on learning
Equipment setup time	Observation; G1	Approximately 10 minutes lost to setup; 3-minute interruption from screen flicker	Reduced time available for reading and discussion
Attention drift to imagery	G1; S2	Students focus on pictures over legal text	Weak recall of <i>Fiqh</i> rulings when questioned
Insufficient reading time	S2	Text too long to finish within the session	Incomplete engagement with the material
Visual-literacy barrier	S3 (deviant case)	Narrative and small embedded text obscure the core ruling	Preference for direct instruction; understanding not improved

Table 2 clarifies that the constraints operated at two levels, the logistical and the cognitive, and that a purely technical fix would address only the first. The setup time and the flickering projector are logistical characteristics that stronger preparation routines could contain, whereas the attention drift and the visual-literacy barrier are cognitive characteristics rooted in how students process combined image and text. The teacher was candid about the logistical drain and the divided attention it produced:

"The obstacle lies in equipment setup and time. Mounting the projector, connecting to the internet from my phone, and occasionally troublesome cables all eat up a fair amount of time. Beyond that, students sometimes enjoy the funny images so much that they lose focus on the Fiqh legal text." (G1, August 14, 2023)

An active student corroborated the effect of compressed time on comprehension:

"Sometimes the time felt too short to read all the text from beginning to end. Many of my friends only laughed at the pictures, but when asked about the Fiqh ruling they forgot, because they had not paid attention to the dialogue text." (S2, August 15, 2023)

The evidence, however, was not uniformly favorable, and one passive learner reported a contrasting experience that the analysis retains rather than sets aside:

"Honestly, I prefer being taught directly or using the textbook. In the comic the story sometimes meanders first, and I get confused about which core ruling to look for, because the text is small and tucked into the pictures." (S3, August 16, 2023)

This deviant case is significant because it marks a limit to the medium's reach, showing that for some students the visual style obscured the conceptual core rather than illuminating it. Read against Table 2, the finding confirms that effectiveness hinges on structured time management across every stage, from equipment setup through reading, discussion, and concept consolidation, while acknowledging that time management alone cannot resolve the cognitive barrier. Taken across the three themes, the study's central pattern is therefore a conditional one: digital comic media improved engagement and participation where the managerial conditions were met, namely leadership provisioning, skilled facilitation, and disciplined time management, yet the improvement was not evenly distributed, a reading consistent with the evaluation sheets that recorded progress alongside several students who had not yet reached mastery. The medium, in short, did not guarantee understanding on its own; it rewarded good management and exposed the cost of its absence.

Discussion

The first contribution of this study is to relocate the success of digital comic media from the medium itself to the managerial decisions that precede its use. The literature on instructional media has long argued that visually rich formats raise attention and motivation, as Rahayu et al. (2023) and Bacon (2024) both hold that comics translate abstract or complex content into forms students grasp more readily. The findings at MA Taman Baru are consistent with that claim, yet they add a condition those accounts leave implicit: none of the medium's pedagogical potential materialized

until the head of *madrasah* converted a teacher's proposal into a funded provision. What the media-effects literature treats as a property of the format, this study shows to be contingent on a prior act of resource allocation by school leadership. The medium did not teach; the management of the medium did.

That relocation places the study squarely within the field of educational management rather than instructional technology, and it sharpens a point that instructional-leadership scholarship often states in general terms. Research on school leadership tends to describe the principal as a supporter of instructional improvement, but it rarely specifies the mechanism through which that support becomes operational. The evidence here identifies the mechanism precisely: endorsement alone changes nothing, whereas endorsement joined to provisioning creates the conditions under which a teacher can act. Hatch and Clark (2021) and Thobela et al. (2023) note that effective media use depends on careful planning, and the lesson plan's explicit allocation of time for projector and comic use confirms that the provision was formalized. The head of *madrasah* thus functioned less as a cheerleader for innovation than as the manager of its enabling conditions, which is a more demanding and more consequential role than the supportive-principal image usually conveys.

The second theme extends this managerial reading into the classroom, where the teacher's shift from lecturer to facilitator emerges as an act of instructional management rather than a change of tool. The rise in student participation that the observation recorded aligns with the motivational gains reported by Ho et al. (2023), but the mechanism differs from a simple media effect. Participation rose because the teacher reordered the lesson into reading, discussion, and consolidation, and because he left the front of the room to guide students individually. In other words, the comic created an opportunity, and the teacher's management of interaction turned that opportunity into engagement. This distinction matters for practice, since it implies that supplying schools with digital media will not by itself change classroom dynamics unless teachers are prepared to manage the interaction the media invite.

The third theme supplies the study's most distinctive contribution by refusing to present the innovation as an unqualified success. Mayer's principle that excessive or poorly structured multimedia can overload students' cognitive processing is borne out by the data, most clearly in the passive learner who found the comic's small embedded text and meandering narrative an obstacle to locating the core ruling (Mayer, 2024; Silaj et al., 2024; Zhao & Mayer, 2025). Set beside the logistical drain of setup time, this cognitive barrier explains why the gains in engagement were real but uneven. Rather than smoothing over that unevenness, the analysis treats it as a finding in its own right, and it is here that the deviant case earns its place: a single dissenting account exposes a limit that a chorus of favorable quotes would have concealed (Rudi, 2023). The honest reporting of that limit is what allows the study to say something more precise than "the medium worked."

Synthesizing the three themes yields the study's central claim, expressed in the conditional model shown in Figure 2. The model reads the effectiveness of digital comic media not as an inherent property but as an outcome contingent on three managerial conditions working together: leadership provisioning, teacher facilitation, and structured time management. When those conditions hold, the medium is put to work and engagement rises; when a constraint route intervenes, whether the logistical loss of setup time or the cognitive barrier of visual literacy, the gains fail to distribute evenly

across students. The dashed constraint path in the figure is the model's analytical heart, because it captures the tension the fieldwork surfaced and refuses to resolve it artificially.

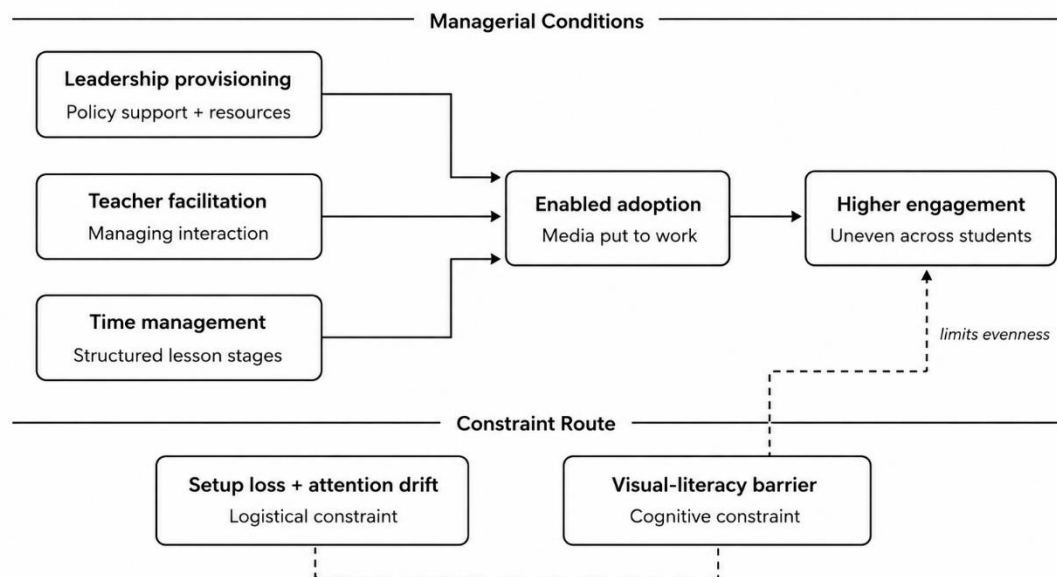


Figure 2. *Conditional model of digital media effectiveness through educational management.*

The specific contribution of this study, then, is a conditional model of media effectiveness grounded in educational management, one that names the enabling conditions and the constraint routes with equal candor. Against the prevailing tendency to attribute learning gains to the media themselves, the study argues that a digital medium succeeds only to the degree that a school manages its adoption, from the leadership decision to provision it, through the teacher's management of classroom interaction, to the disciplined structuring of instructional time. This reframing carries a modest but genuine implication for the broader aspiration toward transformative teaching and learning: transformation of practice at the classroom level is downstream of management at the institutional level, and media initiatives that neglect the managerial chain are likely to produce uneven results regardless of the medium's quality. For *madrasahs* and similar institutions, the practical lesson is direct. Investing in digital media without investing in the leadership, facilitation, and time-management capacities that make the media usable is an investment only half made.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the effectiveness of digital comic media in the *Fiqh* subject at MA (*Madrasah Aliyah, Islamic senior high school*) Taman Baru Palenggiyan was conditional rather than automatic, resting on the *madrasah's* capacity to provision resources, facilitate learning, and structure instructional time, with participation rising clearly while comprehension gains remained uneven across learners. Several limitations qualify these findings and should temper their transferability. The research examined a single *madrasah* through six informants over a short fieldwork window, so its account reflects one institutional context rather than a pattern that can be generalized to other schools. It also relied on interviews, observation, and documentation without measuring

learning outcomes directly, which means the reported gains describe engagement and perception rather than verified changes in understanding. Future research could address these constraints by studying several *madrasahs* comparatively, by combining qualitative accounts with pre- and post-test measures of comprehension, and by tracing implementation across a full semester to capture how managerial conditions evolve over time. Investigating other subjects and student populations would further test whether the conditional pattern identified here holds more widely.

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