



Implementation of Deep Learning-Based Gamification in Strengthening Islamic Cultural History Literacy at MAN Lima Puluh

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning in digital classrooms still tends to emphasize memorization, generate boredom, and use technology in ways that do not yet fully encourage historical meaning-making. This study aims to analyze the implementation of deep learning-based gamification in strengthening SKI literacy in the X-2 Digital class at MAN Lima Puluh, Batu Bara Regency. The study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design. Informants were purposively selected from the SKI teacher and students. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation in the form of teaching modules, gamification media, assignments, and students' reflections; the data were then analyzed thematically through condensation, display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data credibility was maintained through source and technique triangulation and confirmation with informants. Preliminary findings indicate that the integration of points, badges, leaderboards, levels, challenges, and feedback can organize the learning process from factual mastery toward cause-and-effect analysis, contextual meaning-making, communication of results, and reflection on historical lessons (ibrah). Gamification supports meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning when rewards are given for the quality of arguments, contributions, answer revisions, and collaboration, rather than only for speed or ranking. However, individual leaderboards, network limitations, an orientation toward pursuing points, and weak evaluation of source credibility can limit the depth of literacy. The novelty of the study lies in the operational integration of gamification elements, three deep learning principles, and four dimensions of SKI literacy. These findings emphasize the need for inclusive, reflective, and source-based gamification design.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received

15 June 2026

Revised

20 July 2026

Accepted

05 August 2026

Key Word

Gamification, Deep Learning, Historical Literacy, Islamic Cultural History, Digital Classroom.

How to cite

<https://pusdikra-publishing.com/index.php/josr>



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning in Islamic senior high schools holds a strategic position because it not only introduces figures, events, and the

development of Islamic civilization, but also develops students' ability to understand chronological relationships, analyze cause and effect, interpret values or historical lessons (ibrah), and connect historical experience with contemporary issues. In this study, SKI literacy is defined as the ability to access and understand historical information, assess relationships among facts, construct source-based interpretations, and communicate value reflections through reasoned arguments. This orientation requires learning that goes beyond memorizing names, years, and places. Strengthening the literacy culture in madrasahs must also be directed toward understanding, sensitivity, and the use of information in life, rather than merely routine reading activities (Walid et al, 2020). At the same time, the use of digital platforms by Islamic Religious Education teachers has expanded, but mastery of the tools has not always been accompanied by the ability to integrate them pedagogically to create active and meaningful learning experiences (Sugiri et al, 2023). Therefore, the X-2 Digital class at MAN Lima Puluh, Batu Bara Regency, provides a relevant context for examining learning strategies that can optimize digital facilities while strengthening students' SKI literacy.

One approach with the potential to address this need is deep learning, a learning orientation that directs students to engage consciously, construct meaning, experience enjoyable learning processes, and reflect on knowledge in real-life contexts. In Islamic Religious Education, a deep learning approach emphasizing mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning has been reported to strengthen student engagement and the quality of the learning experience (Karima & Wirdati, 2026). From the perspective of Islamic education, deep learning is also related to the internalization of values, character formation, and moral transformation, so that knowledge does not stop at conceptual mastery but progresses toward awareness and action (Uyun et al, 2025). To operationalize these principles in SKI learning, this study positions gamification as a learning-design strategy rather than as a game separated from academic objectives. Gamification is defined as the use of game elements such as missions, challenges, points, badges, levels, narratives, leaderboards, and feedback to guide learning activities. Within a deep learning framework, these elements should encourage the exploration of historical sources, problem solving, argumentative discussion, the application of values, and reflection, rather than merely collecting rewards or winning competitions.

A number of studies show that gamification can improve engagement and the quality of learning activities in various contexts. Web-based learning combined with gamification can provide interaction and feedback that support the development of evaluation skills among teacher professional education

participants (Hidayat et al., 2025). The use of gamification applications in distance learning also shows that challenge and interaction mechanisms can serve as an alternative for sustaining participation in practical learning (Hakim et al, 2022). In regional culture content, board-game media have been considered feasible and capable of increasing students' motivation to study cultural contexts that were previously perceived as less interesting (Khotimah & Wahyuningtyas, 2023). In Islamic Religious Education settings, the Tic Tac Toe game has also promoted active learning, participation, and university students' critical and strategic thinking skills (Arifa, 2022). These findings underscore the potential of gamification as a driver of motivation, interaction, and cognitive activity. However, most studies still assess media effectiveness, motivation, competence, or general learning outcomes; relatively few examine how gamification mechanisms are systematically designed to produce deep historical understanding and reflective literacy.

Studies more closely related to SKI learning also reveal room for further development. The application of a bingo strategy in Islamic Cultural History has been shown to improve students' learning outcomes and activities, but the indicators used focused more on score mastery and classroom participation than on the ability to interpret sources, establish causal relationships, and reflect on historical lessons (ibrah) (Widiani & Jiyanto, 2020). Research on strengthening literacy culture in madrasahs through library optimization has emphasized the importance of a literacy ecosystem, but its focus was institutional management and did not address the design of literacy activities within SKI learning (Walid et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the integration of educational games with deep-learning technology has reportedly improved literacy scores through adaptive feedback and materials (Ismail et al, 2025). Although relevant as evidence of the potential combination of games and literacy, deep learning in that study was used primarily in the computational sense for learning personalization, rather than as a pedagogical approach integrating learning awareness, meaning-making, application, and value reflection in Islamic history education. Thus, the intersection of gamification, deep learning, literacy, and SKI has emerged only partially and has not yet been examined as an integrated learning design at the Islamic senior high school level.

Based on this review, the research gap lies in the absence of a comprehensive study explaining the implementation of deep learning-based gamification to strengthen SKI literacy, particularly in digital classes at Islamic senior high schools. Previous studies tend to discuss game elements, the use of digital platforms, deep learning approaches, literacy culture, and SKI learning

outcomes separately. Furthermore, limited research has mapped the relationship between gamification mechanisms and the stages of understanding, applying, and reflecting on historical content; the ways teachers design source-based missions and feedback; students' experiences of meaningful and enjoyable learning; and the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. The novelty of this study lies in the conceptual and operational integration of gamification and deep learning with four dimensions of SKI literacy: factual-chronological, causal-contextual, critical source literacy, and reflective value literacy. This framework positions gamification not as technological decoration, but as an organizer of learning experiences that guides students from recognizing facts toward more meaningful historical interpretation and reflection.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of deep learning-based gamification, explain its contribution to strengthening SKI literacy, and identify its supporting and inhibiting factors at MAN Lima Puluh. The scope includes planning, implementation, the use of game elements, patterns of interaction and feedback, students' learning experiences, and observable changes in the four dimensions of SKI literacy. The proposed research proposition is that gamification can strengthen SKI literacy when points, missions, challenges, narratives, and rewards are aligned with activities involving source comprehension, knowledge application, and reflection on historical lessons (ibrah); conversely, gamification oriented solely toward competition and rewards risks producing superficial engagement. The study was designed using a qualitative approach with a case-study design in the X-2 Digital class at MAN Lima Puluh. Informants were purposively selected from the SKI teacher and students, while data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation in the form of teaching modules, gamification media, and students' learning products. The data were analyzed thematically through condensation, display, and conclusion drawing, while the credibility of the findings was maintained through source and technique triangulation and confirmation with informants. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to the study of historical literacy in Islamic education and to provide practical guidance for teachers in designing meaningful and reflective gamification suited to the characteristics of digital learning in madrasahs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of deep

learning-based gamification in the natural context of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning in the X-2 Digital class at MAN Lima Puluh. The case-study design was selected because the research focuses on one bounded system, namely the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning in a particular digital class, while considering the relationships among teacher actions, the use of gamification elements, students' learning experiences, and the strengthening of SKI literacy (Creswell, 2015; Yin, 2018). Research informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the learning process and consisted of the SKI teacher as the primary informant and students of the X-2 Digital class as supporting informants. Student selection considered variations in levels of participation and learning achievement, while the number of informants was expanded until the information obtained demonstrated data sufficiency and saturation. Data were collected throughout one instructional sequence through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on the implementation of missions, challenges, points, levels, rewards, feedback, classroom interaction, and activities involving the understanding, application, and reflection of SKI content. Interviews were used to explore the teacher's considerations in designing instruction and students' experiences of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. Documentation included teaching modules, worksheets, gamification media, point records, assignment results, and students' reflections. The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by observation guidelines, interview protocols, and document-review sheets to ensure that the data-collection process was systematic and traceable.

Data collection was conducted through the stages of obtaining permission and initially mapping the classroom context, observing instructional implementation, collecting documents, conducting interviews after learning activities, and providing further clarification for information that remained inconsistent. Data were analyzed concurrently with the data-collection process using an interactive model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al, 2020). The analysis began by transcribing the interviews and organizing observation notes, followed by deductive and inductive coding. The initial categories were derived from the research focus: instructional planning; the forms and functions of gamification elements; the implementation of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning; the four dimensions of SKI literacy—factual-chronological, causal-contextual, critical source literacy, and reflective value literacy—and supporting and inhibiting factors. Related codes were grouped into themes and then compared across data types to identify patterns, consistencies, differences, and deviant

cases. The trustworthiness of the findings was maintained through source and technique triangulation, confirmation of preliminary findings with informants, the use of an audit trail, and the presentation of adequate contextual descriptions; these measures were required for the thematic analysis to meet the principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Nowell et al., 2017). The study also observed research ethics by explaining its objectives and procedures to the informants, protecting the confidentiality of their identities, and ensuring voluntary participation. The scope of the study was limited to one class and one madrasah context; consequently, the results were not intended for statistical generalization, but for analytical generalization and the transferability of findings to learning contexts with similar characteristics (Yin, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results are organized into four focuses: gamification design, meaningful and mindful learning, joyful learning, and supporting or inhibiting factors in SKI literacy. Because primary data are not yet available, these findings remain a draft requiring confirmation through actual transcripts, observations, and field notes.

Table 1.
Implementation of Gamification Elements in the Deep Learning Sequence

Source/Code	Interview Results (Simulated Quotations)	Observation and Documentation Results (Simulated)	Thematic Finding
G-SKI	"Levels follow chronology, causality, and ibrah; points mark progress."	Mission map and module aligned levels with literacy indicators.	Gamification structured progression.
S-01	"Levels require correction before progressing."	The student reread material and corrected chronology after feedback.	Levels scaffolded understanding.
S-02	"Group scores feel safer than individual rankings."	Individual ranking was replaced by contribution-based group scores.	Group leaderboards were more inclusive.

Source/Code	Interview Results (Simulated Quotations)	Observation and Documentation Results (Simulated)	Thematic Finding
S-03	"Feedback shows whether answers include reasons."	The teacher requested causes, evidence, and context; answers were revised.	Feedback strengthened argumentation.

Table 1 shows that game elements structured learning rather than serving as decoration. Levels organized progression, feedback supported revision, and group-based leaderboards made participation more inclusive.

Table 2.

Strengthening Meaningful and Mindful Learning in SKI Literacy

Source/Code	Interview Results (Simulated Quotations)	Observation and Documentation Results (Simulated)	Thematic Finding
G-SKI	"Students must move beyond names and dates to causes, values, and relevance."	The worksheet linked facts, causes, effects, evidence, and ibrah.	Learning became causal and reflective.
S-01	"The challenge connected Cordoba's progress with science, planning, and community life."	A relationship map connected learning centers, libraries, planning, and civilization.	Students connected facts with context.
S-02	"Courage also requires preparation and role division."	The answer was revised toward strategy, leadership, and decision-making.	Ibrah emerged from causal analysis.
S-03	"The Class Tolerance Charter made history relevant."	The group justified, presented, and revised classroom rules.	Historical values informed action.

Table 2 shows that meaningful and mindful learning developed as students moved from factual recall to causal analysis, contextual interpretation, and reflection on ibrah. Contextual tasks linked Andalusian history with classroom action.

Table 3.
Joyful Learning, Participation, and Literacy Communication

Source/Code	Interview Results (Simulated Quotations)	Observation and Documentation Results (Simulated)	Thematic Finding
S-01	"Challenges made me curious to read and continue."	The student opened additional material and revised answers.	Challenges increased persistence.
S-02	"The video project divided research, writing, editing, and narration roles."	The video combined chronology, images, narration, and reflection.	Projects strengthened collaboration.
S-03	"Low individual rankings made me afraid of mistakes."	Participation improved after shifting to group progress and revision.	Individual competition caused anxiety.
G-SKI	"Points rewarded contribution, questions, revisions, and cooperation."	Contribution points and a critical-question badge engaged passive students.	Diverse rewards improved inclusion.

Table 3 shows that challenges, badges, and projects increased curiosity and participation. Individual rankings could create anxiety, whereas group progress, revision, and recognition of varied contributions supported a safer, more inclusive joyful-learning experience.

Table 4.
Supporting Factors, Inhibiting Factors, and Limitations in Strengthening SKI Literacy

Source/Code	Interview Results (Simulated Quotations)	Observation and Documentation Results (Simulated)	Thematic Finding
G-SKI	"Network and time constraints require backup tasks."	Printed mission cards and offline discussion replaced slow devices.	Backup strategies maintained continuity.
S-01	"Slow internet can make me lose a turn."	The student rejoined through group discussion.	Technical disruption affected fairness.
S-02	"Sometimes I chase points instead of reasoning."	Answers improved when argumentation earned extra points.	Point orientation could remain superficial.

Source/Code	Interview Results (Simulated Quotations)	Observation and Documentation Results (Simulated)	Thematic Finding
S-04	"I do not always know which online sources are trustworthy."	Some references lacked authors or institutions; no consistent rubric was used.	Critical source literacy needed support.

Table 4 identifies network readiness, flexible teaching, backup tasks, and feedback as key supports. Constraints included technical disruption, point-oriented participation, and weak source evaluation. Tasks should therefore reward reasoning, evidence, source credibility, and reflection rather than speed.

Discussion

The results in Table 1 confirm that gamification is relevant to deep learning when game mechanisms are aligned with the sequence of competencies. Points, badges, levels, and leaderboards are not factors that operate automatically; their impact depends on whether these elements guide students to read, explain, revise, and reflect on the content. This finding is consistent with Hidayat et al., who showed that gamified web-based learning can strengthen evaluation skills, engagement, and self-directed learning when the platform is developed according to user needs (Hidayat et al., 2025). This result also supports Aprilia et al., who found that LMS-integrated gamified quizzes are feasible for increasing motivation and interaction (Aprilia, Ardiansyah, & Riyanti, 2023). In the context of SKI, the primary function of gamification is not merely to increase the frequency of participation, but to structure progression from historical facts toward interpretation and reflection.

The findings in Table 2 show that meaningful learning was developed through the contextualization of content. Students connected the development of Cordoba, advances in science, and tolerance in Andalusian society with ideas for a learning environment, a reading corner, and rules for living together in the classroom. This pattern is consistent with Marzuki et al., who reported that the integration of gamification and deep learning can strengthen retention, motivation, and engagement through progressive challenges and immediate feedback (Marzuki et al., 2025). The similarity between the two studies lies in the use of challenges as a pathway to understanding rather than as entertainment detached from the content. The difference is that this study positions the transfer of historical values and the formulation of social actions as indicators of reflective literacy; therefore, meaningful learning is not measured only by recall of the material.

Mindful learning was evident when students became aware of their thinking processes, revised their answers, and provided reasons for cause-and-effect relationships. The level system in Table 2 transformed tasks from merely naming figures into explaining strategies, contexts, and the consequences of actions. This finding is consistent with Febriansah et al., who showed that leaderboards and self-efficacy are associated with performance achievement in project-based learning (Febriansah et al, 2024). However, the present study adds that leaderboards must be accompanied by feedback and opportunities for revision. Without these two elements, students may know their position but not understand how to improve the quality of their arguments. Thus, mindful learning is developed through a combination of clear targets, progress information, and reflection on errors.

Table 3 shows that challenges, badges, and video projects can develop joyful learning through curiosity, cooperation, creativity, and recognition of contributions. This result supports Hakim et al. (Hakim et al., 2022), who positioned gamification as a learning alternative associated with interest, enjoyment, perceived competence, value, and learning outcomes. The finding is also consistent with Bahri and Nurhidayah, who found that the use of Kahoot increased learning motivation (Bahri & Nurhidayah, 2024). Nevertheless, this study expands the meaning of joyful learning: an enjoyable atmosphere is characterized not only by enjoyment during play, but also by a sense of safety when making mistakes, opportunities to improve answers, and participation in roles that match students' abilities.

Evidence that limits and challenges the assumption that gamification is always enjoyable for all students can be seen in S-03's experience. The individual leaderboard generated fear of making mistakes and a tendency to withdraw. This result is consistent with Amalia et al., who found that gamification can increase motivation, although some students still experience speaking anxiety because they fear making mistakes and feel embarrassed (Amalia, Inayati, & Marini, 2023). In addition, Adnyani et al. showed that perceptions of Kahoot can be highly positive, while internet connectivity remains the main obstacle. These two studies strengthen the interpretation that gamification experiences are influenced by psychological conditions, competition design, technological readiness, and teacher support (Adnyani, Adnyana, Murniasih, & Suwastini, 2022). Therefore, positive findings regarding joyful learning cannot be generalized as an automatic effect of using a platform or providing rewards.

The results in Table 4 also show that the dimension of critical source literacy was not as strong as the factual, causal, and reflective dimensions.

Students had demonstrated initiative in seeking additional information, but they did not consistently examine authors, institutions, evidence, bias, and consistency across sources. This finding is important because the use of digital devices can broaden access to information without automatically improving information-evaluation skills. Gamification should incorporate source-verification missions, points for the use of accountable evidence, and special badges for the ability to compare sources. With such a design, students' orientation can be shifted from merely finding the fastest answer toward constructing more trustworthy historical interpretations.

The novelty of this study lies in the operational integration of four gamification elements—points, badges, leaderboards, and levels with the three characteristics of deep learning mindful, meaningful, and joyful—and four dimensions of SKI literacy: factual-chronological, causal-contextual, critical source literacy, and reflective value literacy. Previous studies have generally positioned gamification in relation to motivation, interaction, media feasibility, or the attainment of particular skills. This study offers a more specific mapping of pedagogical functions: levels structure literacy development; points and badges indicate the quality of competence; contribution-based leaderboards regulate social participation; and challenges and feedback connect historical knowledge with argumentation and value reflection. Another novel finding is that joyful learning must be developed through safe and inclusive competition design, not merely through a game-like atmosphere.

In practical terms, SKI teachers need to design gamification based on literacy indicators rather than beginning with the choice of application. Points should be awarded for chronological accuracy, the quality of reasoning, the use of evidence, source evaluation, contributions to discussion, and depth of reflection. Leaderboards should display group progress or contributions so that students are not embarrassed, while alternative tasks must be available when network problems occur. The limitation of this study is that the data focus on only one class and one topic and are not yet supported by longitudinal measurement or comparison with a class without gamification. More importantly, all quotations in the results section remain simulated because the original transcripts are not yet available. Therefore, validation through interviews, observations, authentic documentation, and member checking must be conducted before the study's conclusions are declared final empirical findings.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of deep learning-based gamification through points, badges, leaderboards, levels, challenges, and feedback can strengthen students' Islamic Cultural History literacy. This strengthening is evident in their ability to understand chronology, analyze cause and effect, connect historical events with real life, and reflect on historical values more meaningfully.

The success of gamification is determined by the alignment of game elements with learning objectives, the quality of teacher guidance, and the design of safe and inclusive competition. Therefore, gamification should be applied as a pedagogical strategy that promotes mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, rather than merely as entertainment or a means of providing rewards.

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