REVOLUTIONIZING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF MOBILE GAMES IN TEACHING HADITH TO EARLY LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of mobile devices into daily life has led to a greater recognition of their educational potential, particularly among younger learners. This paper explores integrating mobile game-based learning into a Hadith education curriculum, exclusively designed for children between the ages of 4 and 6 years old. The study aims to exploit the captivating potential of mobile games to facilitate the dissemination of Hadith teachings in a way that appeals to the technologically savvy generation. By integrating gamification elements into the learning environment, the proposed mobile application aims to establish an engaging and fun learning environment that captivates children's attention and improves their comprehension and memory of Hadith. This approach is based on current instructional methods that promote interactive and learner-centered learning experiences. The research highlights the importance of mobile games as a significant educational tool, with the potential to revolutionise conventional learning methods and contribute to the wider discussion on technology-enhanced education. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the deliberate incorporation of technology can enhance the educational environment, thereby increasing the accessibility and enjoyment of religious studies for young students.

Keywords: Gamification, Hadith Education, Mobile Game-Based Learning, Religious Studies for Children, Technology-Enhanced Learning.

INTRODUCTION

In Islam, Hadith is one of the essential sources which provide Muslims with practical examples of how to live their lives according to Islamic teachings. Hadith known as second source of law in Islam after the Quran which provides the collection of statements and actions related to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) words and deeds. Hadith known as guidance that offer practical examples and explanations of Islamic principles and values that importance for understanding and

practicing Islam (Muhlis, et al., 2023). For example, the Quran instructs Muslims to pray five times a day. However, the Hadith provide details on how the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) performed these prayers, specifying the times and outlining what actions should be done or avoided.

Hadith education, which focusses on teaching and learning about the Prophet Muhammad's recorded statements and actions, has traditionally relied on rote memorisation methods. This traditional way of teaching and learning offers challenges, particularly for young learners who must focus on memorising the Hadith without understanding the context. The lack of contextual understanding can lead to disconnection between the memorized Hadith and meaningful lessons they convey, hindering early learners' engagement and long-term retention of the knowledge.

However, with the advent of technology, innovative approaches, such as the use of mobile applications or web-based interaction, have the potential to revolutionize religious education by making memorising Hadith more engaging and fun, especially for young generations. The use of this technology can provide Islamic knowledge that can be delivered widely and can be designed to specifically target groups, especially children.

Mobile has become an essential tool for many people nowadays, especially younger generations. An educational game is a type of educational teaching aid and tool in the form of games using a mobile platform which can stimulate human thinking by enhancing children's concentration, engagement and problem-solving (Rakimahwati, et. al., 2022). Children have been exposed to these electronic devices from an early age and they know how to use them as early as two years old. They can interact intuitively with touchscreen movements, just as they would play with a new physical toy.

iHadith is a 2D game developed using the Godot Engine. This game introduces young children to the basics of Hadith and its relevance to daily life, starting from activities such as waking up, getting ready, going to school, and ending with going back to sleep. It closely aligns with the children's daily routines to provide them with a deeper understanding and internalization content and context of Hadith. The source of the Hadith references is based on the syllabus provided by Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam, PASTI. In addition, the development of an attractive and interactive design, complemented by an avatar character to assist children in exploring the game, creates a learner-centred learning experience. Moreover, the iHadith game incorporates gamification elements to make teaching and learning more engaging and enjoyable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional hadith education has been known used primarily through the use of textbooks, memorization, and teacher-led instruction (Jaiyeoba & Osmani, 2024). In the past, students memorize Hadith through repetitive recitation, often guided by a teacher. This method has been effective in preserving the Hadith across generations. The talaqqi method, where students listen to their teachers recite and then repeat, is particularly prominent. This face-to-face interaction fosters a strong connection between the student and the material, although it can sometimes lead to disengagement if not varied adequately (Jaiyeoba & Osmani, 2024, Majid et. al., 2024).

Furthermore, these methods have been effective in imparting knowledge, but they often fail to capture the attention and engagement of young learners, particularly in the digital age. Young learners especially do not understand the content and context of hadiths due to the complexity of the language and the abstract nature of the teachings.

The oral transmission of Hadith continues to be a fundamental aspect of the learning process. Students often participate in classroom environments where the instructor provides explanations to elucidate the context and relevance of each Hadith. Traditional settings that emphasize passive listening may fail to stimulate critical thinking and active participation among students. Without opportunities for interaction or hands-on activities, learners may struggle to connect with the material meaningfully (Syihabudin, 2022). This method emphasizes understanding over rote memorization but can struggle to maintain engagement among younger learners who may find lengthy discussions tedious.

Repetitive methods like rote memorization can become monotonous, leading to disengagement. Rote memorization of hadiths without proper understanding can lead to disengagement and a lack of real comprehension among students (El-Sattar, 2016, Sarlan et al., 2016). This approach can be dry and uninspiring, especially for young learners. Young learners often thrive on variety; thus, relying solely on traditional memorization techniques may not be sufficient to sustain their interest.

Other barriers include the limited access to comprehensive hadith education resources tailored for young children, as well as the challenge of maintaining their attention and interest throughout the learning process (El-Sattar, 2016). Young learners may find it challenging to see the relevance of Hadith in their daily lives if not contextualized properly by educators. When educators fail to connect teachings with present-day matters or personal experiences, students may perceive the material as outdated or irrelevant (Qāri', 2022). Limited interactive and engaging methods of learning, coupled with the abstract nature of hadith teachings, have contributed to the difficulties in effectively educating young children about Islamic principles and values.

Children aged 4 to 6 years go through major cognitive and developmental changes that affect their learning ability, specifically their attention span, memory recall, and cognitive processing skills (Marks, 2023). At this stage, children exhibit a strong desire for exploration, discovery, and play-based learning (Alotaibi, 2024). Their short attention spans and preference for interactive engagement require teaching methods that can captivate their interest and maintain their focus. Integrating technology such as mobile applications or interactive online platforms can provide diverse learning experiences that resonate more with today's generation.

Mobile games can play a significant role in the cognitive and developmental changes experienced by children aged 4-6 years, particularly in enhancing memory, language, and social skills (Marks, 2023). These games can provide interactive and engaging platforms that support learning and development in various domains (Alotaibi, 2024). The integration of mobile games into educational strategies can be beneficial, as they offer a flexible and accessible medium for children to develop essential skills.

The integration of mobile devices into educational contexts has gained significant momentum in recent years, with numerous studies highlighting the potential benefits of mobile learning (Yusro et al., 2022., Sarlan et al., 2016). These studies have demonstrated the ability of mobile applications to facilitate the learning of Islamic teachings, including Hadith, interactively and engage learning experiences, particularly for younger audiences. Similarly, the incorporation of game-based learning has been shown to effectively enhance learner motivation, knowledge retention, and overall academic performance (Yusro et al., 2022).

Incorporating interactive storytelling, multimedia elements, and gamification features into mobile applications can significantly improve the learning experience for young children. Interactive narratives that follow characters through adventures illustrating Hadith teachings can align with children's cognitive abilities and enhance retention through contextual learning (Sarlan et al., 2016). Similarly, the use of colourful animations and audio recitations of Hadith can engage multiple senses, which research suggests can enhance memory retention in young children. (El-Sattar, 2016., Sarlan et al., 2016).

By integrating these features into the design of mobile games, developers can create an immersive and effective learning experience that caters to the developmental needs of young learners, fostering their understanding and retention of Islamic principles. The implementation of gamification elements, such as point systems, badges, and rewards for completing tasks (Dahalan, 2022) or memorising Hadith, can further motivate children by providing tangible goals and recognition for their achievements (Rahman et al., 2018). The balance between learning, game attributes, and learning activities is crucial in designing effective educational mobile games for young learners.

Storytelling elements where children can follow characters through adventures that illustrate the teachings of various Hadith can enhance retention through context and align with their cognitive abilities to understand narratives (Kamarazaman, et., al 2021). Storytelling can serve as an effective learning tool, as it allows children to engage with the content in a more meaningful and relatable manner (Hamzah et al., 2019., Sarlan et al., 2016).

Additionally, the utilization of colourful animations and audio recitations of Hadith can engage multiple senses and significantly enhance memory retention in young children, as supported by research (Hamzah et al., 2019., Sarlan et al., 2016., El-Sattar, 2016). By creating a visually appealing and aurally stimulating mobile game environment, developers can captivate young learners and foster their engagement with the educational content, ultimately enhancing their understanding and retention of Islamic principles.

Integrating mobile game-based learning into a Hadith education curriculum for young learners aged 4-6 can significantly enhance engagement and retention of Islamic teachings. By employing structured design methodologies like ADDIE, incorporating interactive storytelling, and gamification elements, in learning environments, educators can create a rich educational experience tailored to the cognitive development stages of young children.

METHODOLOGY

The ADDIE model is a well-established framework that provides a structured approach to the systematic design and development of educational technologies and content. This approach involves five key phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Each phase ensures that the educational solution is carefully planned, tested, and refined to meet the learning objectives effectively. By following the iterative process, developers can create learner-centered game mobile application that address specific educational needs while maintaining the standard of quality and usability.

Figure 1: ADDIE model

a) **Analysis phase.**

In the analysis phase, preliminary data are collected using a survey from Islamic kindergarten teachers (PASTI) to gain insights into the learning needs and preferences of young children aged 4-6 and identify specific Hadith topics suitable for their age group. In this phase, also perform an in-depth examination of the relevant academic literature, utilizing appropriate keywords to gain insights into the cognitive abilities, interests, and preferred learning styles of the target young learners. Keywords such 'Islamic education', 'hadith', 'mobile gaming', 'gamification', 'game-based learning', 'mobile learning', 'early childhood development' and 'educational design' can help uncover relevant research findings and best practices that can inform the subsequent phases of the design and development process.
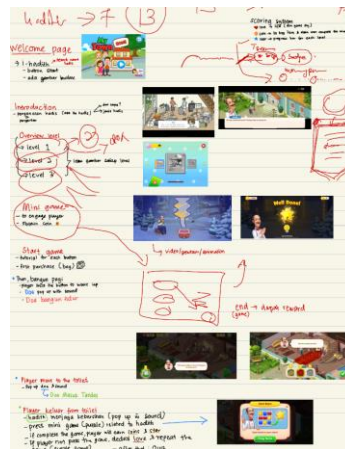
b) **Design phase.**

Figure 2: Design Phase

During the design phase Figure 2, the instructional plan is developed based on insights from the analysis stage. This involves setting specific learning goals, choosing appropriate learning strategies, structuring the content, designing the layout and planning and creating game concepts that incorporate Hadith content in a fun and interactive way. Additionally, mood boards and storyboards are created to visualize the overall mobile game concept and interactive elements. This ensures the user interface designs are visually appealing and age-appropriate. The selection of a suitable virtual avatar character is also determined in this phase. The arrangement and layout of gamification features are planned to align with the developmental needs and preferences of young children. Furthermore, the selection of appropriate colours and fonts for the target age group of 4-6 years is also decided upon in this phase Create game concepts that incorporate Hadith content in a fun and interactive way. This includes defining learning objectives, game mechanics, and user interface designs that are visually appealing and age-appropriate. In this phase, the software tools used are Canva and Procreate.
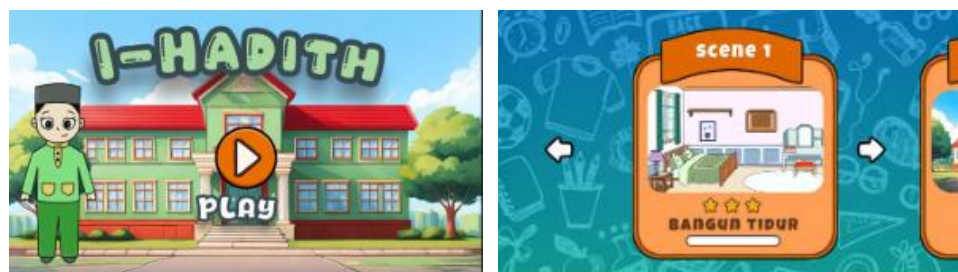
c) **Development phase**.

Figure 3: Development phase

In the development phase as shown in Figure 3 above, the actual mobile game prototype is created based on the design specifications. This involves coding the software, creating the animated visual assets, recording the audio narration of Hadith, and integrating the various game elements. The specific development tools used in this phase included Godot Engine and Procreate, which were used to create and design the game assets. In this phase, the storytelling technique is utilized to present Hadith in a narrative format that captures children's attention.

Throughout the development process, the designers and developers work closely to ensure the final product aligns with the intended learning objectives and engages the target audience. Interactive elements, such as touch-based interactions, are carefully integrated to provide a seamless and immersive gaming experience for young learners. Gamification elements show in Figure 4, such as reward systems, points, badges and progress tracking are also implemented to motivate and engage children throughout the learning journey.
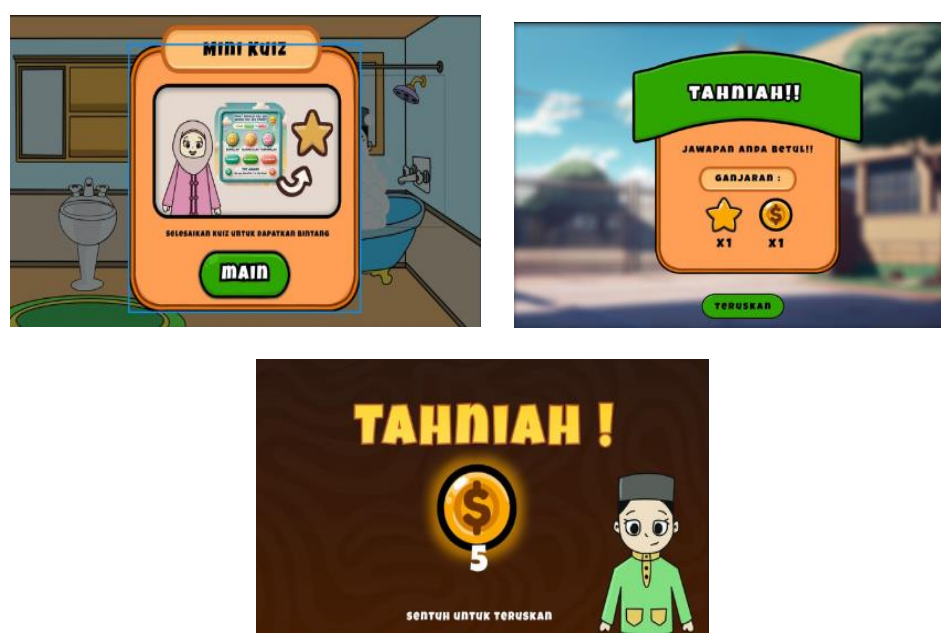

Figure 4: Gamification elements

d) **Implementation phase**.

The implementation phase involves the actual deployment and testing of the mobile game application in real-world settings, such as Islamic kindergartens. For this project, Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam (PASTI) will be the primary site for research and evaluation, where the mobile game will be introduced to the target learners. The mobile game will be launched in a classroom setting to observe how children engage with the application and assess its effectiveness in enhancing their understanding and retention of Hadith. Implementing the application allows for the observation and assessment of the users' ability to navigate and engage with the interactive features of the mobile game.

e) **Evaluation phase**.

In the evaluation phase, data will be collected through various methods to assess the effectiveness of the mobile game in enhancing young learners' understanding and retention of Hadith. These methods include conducting pre- and post-tests to measure changes in knowledge and comprehension, as well as gathering qualitative feedback from both children and their teachers through interviews and focus groups.

The game will be launched in a classroom setting, ensuring that children have access to devices and understand how to navigate the game. Observation and assessment will be conducted to look at the children's ability to navigate the game and engage with the content. Insights gained from these observations and assessments will be instrumental in refining the mobile game to better cater to the learning needs and preferences of the target audience of young children aged 4-6 years old.

The evaluation phase is crucial in understanding the impact of the mobile game on the target audience and identifying areas for improvement. The data collected during the evaluation phase will be analysed to assess the effectiveness of the mobile game in achieving the intended learning objectives. This includes measuring improvements in children's knowledge and understanding of Hadith, as well as their engagement and motivation to learn.

By following the ADDIE framework, the design and development of the mobile game can be systematically and rigorously executed, ensuring that the final product effectively caters to the needs and preferences of young learners aged 4-6 years old.

CONCLUSION

Designing a mobile game for young learners aged 4-6 years old to engage with Hadith teaching and learning offers a promising approach to fostering Islamic education. This project seeks to develop a mobile game that leverages interactive storytelling, visual and audio stimuli, and gamification elements, tailored with the cognitive development and learning preferences of young children. By aligning the content with their daily life activities, the game aims to make learning Hadith meaningful and relatable to their life. The use of the ADDIE framework as a methodology

ensures a systematic and evidence-based process for the design, development, and implementation of the game. Additionally, the incorporation of interactive storytelling enhances the game's ability to capture the attention and imagination of young learners, making Hadith teachings both engaging and memorable through dynamic narratives.

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