

A Framework for Integrating Gamification Learning into The PAI Curriculum to Build The Spiritual Resilience of Generation Z

Fauziah Alfiyasin*, Rini Anggita, Sa'diatul Mar'ati, Siti Salma

Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. Hamka Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: fauziah.alfiyasin@uhamka.ac.id*, rini.anggita@uhamka.ac.id,
sadiatul.marati@uhamka.ac.id, siti.salma@uhamka.ac.id

Keywords:

Educational Gamification; Islamic Education Curriculum; Spiritual Resilience Development

Abstract

Gamification has gained increasing attention in education because it can enhance student motivation, engagement, and learning persistence. However, its application in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) remains fragmented and has primarily emphasized technical game elements rather than the development of spiritual resilience among Generation Z. This study aimed to synthesize existing evidence and formulate an integrative framework for incorporating gamification into the PAI curriculum within the Merdeka Curriculum. A qualitative descriptive systematic literature review was conducted using an integrative thematic approach and the PRISMA 2020 framework. Relevant national and international articles published between 2020 and 2025 were identified through Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, Google Scholar, and SINTA-indexed journals. The findings indicated that points, badges, levels, challenges, missions, and rapid feedback could strengthen motivation and engagement; however, these elements did not automatically foster spiritual resilience. Their effectiveness depended on alignment with spiritual objectives, reflective activities, moral decision-making, self-regulation, and teacher mediation. The proposed framework consisted of four layers: spiritual objectives, gamified activity design, pedagogical mediation, and spiritual resilience outcomes. The study concluded that value-oriented gamification could support faith development, moral resilience, worship consistency, and readiness to face digital pressures when implemented through meaningful reflection and appropriate pedagogical guidance across diverse PAI learning contexts.

INTRODUCTION

A synthesis of studies conducted over the past five years shows that research on gamification in learning, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), student engagement, and learning motivation, has developed significantly. However, most existing studies remain fragmented, emphasizing improvements in cognitive, affective, or engagement aspects of learning without integrating the spiritual dimension, which represents a primary objective of PAI learning. Meanwhile, studies on spiritual resilience have mainly developed from psychological, mental health, or character education perspectives and have rarely been connected to gamification-based learning design or the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in PAI subjects. In addition, existing systematic literature reviews have generally focused on the effectiveness of gamification

elements in improving motivation and learning outcomes but have not yet produced a conceptual model explaining how gamification elements can be systematically aligned with PAI learning outcomes, Islamic values, and indicators of Generation Z's spiritual resilience. Therefore, three main gaps are identified in the literature: (1) the absence of an integrative framework connecting gamification theory with PAI learning objectives based on Islamic values; (2) the lack of a conceptual model explaining the relationship between gamification and the development of spiritual resilience as a learning outcome; and (3) the limited synthesis integrating perspectives from learning technology, Islamic pedagogy, and Generation Z characteristics within the context of Merdeka Curriculum implementation. These gaps highlight the need to develop a framework for integrating gamification into the PAI curriculum based on empirical evidence and recent literature synthesis. Such a framework can serve as a conceptual reference for teachers, curriculum developers, and researchers in designing innovative and adaptive PAI learning approaches oriented toward strengthening students' spiritual resilience.

Based on the background, synthesis of empirical studies, and identified research gaps, this study formulated the following research problems: (1) how has research on the application of gamification in education developed over the past five years, particularly within the context of Islamic Religious Education; (2) how are gamification elements, the Merdeka Curriculum, and the development of Generation Z's spiritual resilience related based on available empirical evidence; and (3) how can a framework for integrating gamification into the PAI curriculum be developed through a synthesis of recent literature. Accordingly, this study aimed to systematically synthesize research findings on gamification, Islamic Religious Education, student engagement, learning motivation, and spiritual resilience and to develop a conceptual framework integrating these dimensions as a foundation for implementing PAI learning that is innovative and relevant to Generation Z characteristics. To achieve this objective, the study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines. This method was selected because it provides a systematic, transparent, and replicable procedure for identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing scientific literature while reducing potential bias. Compared with traditional literature reviews, the SLR approach based on PRISMA 2020 enables a more comprehensive synthesis of scientific evidence and supports the development of a conceptual framework with a stronger theoretical and empirical foundation for advancing PAI curriculum implementation in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on an integrative thematic review to develop a framework for integrating gamification into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum to strengthen Generation Z's spiritual resilience. The integrative thematic review approach was selected to synthesize empirical, conceptual, and pedagogical findings related to gamification, Islamic education, and students' spiritual development. The SLR method was applied to ensure a systematic, transparent, and reproducible research process and to support the development of a theoretically grounded conceptual framework. This approach was

relevant for identifying research patterns, exploring literature gaps, and determining directions for developing learning models aligned with Generation Z characteristics (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2022; Snyder, 2019).

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design using the SLR method. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on exploring concepts, identifying integration patterns, and constructing a pedagogical framework related to gamification in PAI learning. The SLR procedure followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework, consisting of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion stages. The PRISMA framework was used to enhance transparency in article selection, minimize potential bias, and ensure that the reviewed articles were relevant to gamification, Islamic education, and Generation Z's spiritual resilience (Page et al., 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2019; Fauzi & Pradipta, 2023).

The data sources consisted of national and international academic articles published between 2020 and 2025. National articles were obtained from journals indexed in SINTA 1–3, while international articles were retrieved from Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar databases. The publication period was selected to capture recent developments in gamification, digital pedagogy, and spiritual education related to Generation Z. The search keywords included “gamification learning,” “Islamic education,” “PAI curriculum,” “spiritual resilience,” “Generation Z,” “digital learning,” and “game-based learning.” Boolean operators, including AND and OR, were applied to refine the search strategy and identify relevant articles (Rahim & Hamzah, 2021; Kalogiannakis et al., 2021; Yusuf & Arifin, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis findings in the document show that over the past five years, studies on gamification have shifted from a technical focus to a more mature pedagogical approach, particularly in the context of Islamic education. Gamification is now regarded as a teaching strategy that emphasizes increasing motivation, engagement, and endurance in learning, rather than merely the use of points, badges, or leaderboards. International research also supports this development, affirming that gamification can increase participation and create meaningful learning experiences when linked to clear learning objectives (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2024; Biabdillah et al., 2025; Saleem et al., 2022; Kalogiannakis et al., 2021).

Based on the data in the document, the application of gamification in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is one of the effective approaches for increasing students' enthusiasm and engagement. This strategy is considered particularly relevant for Generation Z, who tend to respond more readily to learning approaches that are visual, interactive, digital-based, and fast-paced and dynamic. This tendency is consistent with global findings that digital-native generations have a strong preference for learning that offers interactivity and real-time feedback (Nurhayati & Fathurrohman, 2025; Hidayat & Khotimah, 2022; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019; Toda et al., 2020; Mariana Amelda et al., 2024).

Evidence in the document shows that the application of gamification in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) generally makes use of platforms such as Quizizz, Kahoot, Wordwall, and other interactive media. The use of these tools contributes to increased learning motivation and creates a more dynamic classroom atmosphere, in line with international findings indicating that elements of competition, rapid feedback, and challenges can increase student engagement (Rahman, 2021; Pratama & Setyaningrum, 2022; Zainuddin et al., 2020; Sailer et al., 2021; Saleem et al., 2022).

However, the document also highlights that the influence of gamification on religious achievement in PAI is not always consistent and varies depending on context. This finding supports international review results indicating that gamification tends to be more effective at increasing motivation than at improving cognitive or affective religious outcomes without appropriate design (Nugroho et al., 2021; Biabdillah et al., 2025; Ruiz et al., 2024; Hidayat & Khotimah, 2022; Amri, 2025).

Analysis of the document shows that the effectiveness of gamification in PAI is strongly influenced by the quality of the learning design. Game elements can have a maximal impact when their application is aligned with clearly defined learning objectives. This relationship between design and objectives is also emphasized by several international studies, which state that overly mechanistic gamification only produces short-term motivation (Sailer et al., 2021; Hamari & Koivisto, 2019; Saleem et al., 2022; Ruiz et al., 2024; Indriyani et al., 2025).

Data from the document show that gamification research over the past five years has shifted from a focus on “effectiveness” to the question of “how gamification functions in a particular context.” This shift reflects progress in research as well as the need to identify the gamification elements best suited to the characteristics of PAI learning. Global findings also show a similar pattern in gamification studies across various educational contexts (Toda et al., 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2024; Saleem et al., 2022; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019).

The document also shows that gamification elements such as points, levels, badges, challenges, and rapid feedback align with the principles of flexibility and differentiation found in the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages exploration, active learning, and personal development, while gamification provides an activity structure that enables such differentiation (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2023; Kemdikbudristek, 2022; Zainuddin et al., 2020; Sari & Widodo, 2022; Kalogiannakis et al., 2021).

Within the context of PAI in the Merdeka Curriculum, gamification can be positioned in the exploration, formative practice, reflection, and project phases. The application of gamification-based challenges encourages students to actualize religious values in the context of daily life in a more tangible way. This is consistent with international practices that emphasize experiential learning for the internalization of values (Yulianti et al., 2024; Yusuf & Arifin, 2023; Mariana Amelda et al., 2024; Ruiz et al., 2024; Saleem et al., 2022).

The document emphasizes that spiritual resilience does not emerge automatically through gamification and requires reflective design as well as the cultivation of values. Other research shows a strong relationship between spirituality and psychological resilience; however, the contributing factors are more closely related to meaningful experiences than to mere game activity

(Sari & Widodo, 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Rahim & Hamzah, 2021; Mariana Amelda et al., 2024; Ilham, 2026).

Gamification elements can strengthen the formation of spiritual resilience when gamified activities are combined with value reflection, moral decision-making, and habitual good conduct (adab). Research also supports this through the concept of “reflective gamification” as an approach to enhancing resilience and self-regulation. This finding is consistent with the international literature on moral gamification (Indriyani et al., 2025; Sailer et al., 2021; Ruiz et al., 2024; Toda et al., 2020; Yusuf & Arifin, 2023).

The relationship between gamification and spiritual resilience in Generation Z is also evident in their learning style, which prioritizes digital relevance and depth of values. Research confirms that digital learning needs to link rewards with reflection, competition with collaboration, and academic achievement with spiritual experience. This finding is consistent with global studies on value-based learning for the digital generation (Ilham, 2026; Lee et al., 2021; Rahim & Hamzah, 2021; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Twenge, 2020).

The role of teachers is a critical link between gamification elements and spiritual resilience. The document emphasizes that teachers act as “mediators of meaning” in PAI gamification. Without value mediation, gamification risks becoming mere entertainment. This is reinforced by national and international research that positions teachers as the primary designers of gamified learning (Hidayat & Khotimah, 2022; Yulianti et al., 2024; Yusuf & Arifin, 2023; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019; Nugroho et al., 2021).

The document states that implementation obstacles, such as infrastructure and teachers' level of digital literacy, can reduce the effectiveness of gamification for spiritual resilience. Findings at the global level also show that system readiness is a determining factor for the sustainability of gamification, particularly in the context of religious education (Info, 2026; Amri, 2025; Nugroho et al., 2021; Saleem et al., 2022; Zainuddin et al., 2020).

The document concludes that a framework for integrating gamification learning must consist of four layers: spiritual objectives, gamified activity design, pedagogical mediation processes, and the final outcome of spiritual resilience. This model is consistent with integrative pedagogy theory, which emphasizes the relationship between activity structure, values of meaning, and character development (Journal & Social, 2024; Mariana Amelda et al., 2024; Ruiz et al., 2024; Indriyani et al., 2025; Yusuf & Arifin, 2023).

The spiritual objectives dimension focuses on strengthening faith, forming good moral character, and developing self-control abilities. The document affirms that these objectives should form the foundation of gamification in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) so that the learning process does not become mere entertainment. This finding is supported by literature on religious values in Islamic education (Nurhayati & Fathurrohman, 2025; Hidayat & Khotimah, 2022; Yusuf & Arifin, 2023; Sari & Widodo, 2022; Lee et al., 2021).

The design of gamified activities in the document includes mission elements, game levels, badges, and rapid feedback. These elements support the gradual progression essential for habit formation. Other research shows that mission and level structures can increase learning

persistence, while the ethical use of badges provides value reinforcement (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2024; Sailer et al., 2021; Saleem et al., 2022; Indriyani et al., 2025).

The pedagogical mediation process includes engagement, self-regulation, and meaning-making. The document emphasizes that value mediation is the key to building spiritual resilience. This is consistent with spiritual constructivism theory, which states that meaningful learning occurs through reflection and by connecting experience with particular values (Rahim & Hamzah, 2021; Sari & Widodo, 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Yulianti et al., 2024; Nurhayati & Fathurrohman, 2025).

The final outcome of spiritual resilience includes moral resilience, consistency in worship, and readiness to face pressures from the digital world. The document shows that the appropriate application of gamification can strengthen the habituation of values through a gradual rhythm of activities. The global literature also affirms the importance of digital-spiritual habituation for the generation growing up in the digital era (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Twenge, 2020; Rahim & Hamzah, 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Indriyani et al., 2025).

The framework formulated in the document is contextual to the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility and student-goal-based learning. A gamification model integrated with values can strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly in the dimensions of faith and noble character (*akhlakul karimah*). This finding is consistent with national literature on the integration of values in digital learning (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2023; Maulidina & Bhakti, 2023; Sari & Widodo, 2022; Yusuf & Arifin, 2023; Info, 2026).

Overall, the framework described in the document offers a significant conceptual contribution to designing PAI learning that is relevant to Generation Z with a spiritual orientation. This finding is supported by both global and national literature, which emphasizes the importance of value-related gamification design to ensure the sustainability of the learning process's long-term impact (Ruiz et al., 2024; Biabdillah et al., 2025; Amri, 2025; Indriyani et al., 2025; Mariana Amelda et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that integrating gamification into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum required more than simply adding points, badges, levels, challenges, and rapid feedback. Based on a systematic synthesis of literature published between 2020 and 2025, gamification primarily supported student motivation, engagement, and learning persistence, while its contribution to Generation Z's spiritual resilience depended on value-oriented pedagogical design. This study proposed a four-layer conceptual framework consisting of spiritual objectives, gamified activity design, pedagogical mediation, and spiritual resilience outcomes. Within this framework, teachers functioned as mediators of meaning by connecting game-based activities with reflection, moral decision-making, self-regulation, and the habituation of positive behaviors. The framework's alignment with the flexibility and differentiated learning principles of the Merdeka Curriculum made it relevant for strengthening faith development, moral resilience, worship consistency, and readiness to face pressures in digital environments.

Future research should empirically validate the proposed framework through experimental, quasi-experimental, longitudinal, or design-based studies across diverse educational levels and regional contexts. Researchers should develop and validate measurable indicators of spiritual resilience and examine which combinations of game elements, reflective activities, teacher mediation, and assessment strategies contribute to sustained behavioral and spiritual outcomes rather than short-term motivational effects. Comparative studies should also investigate differences in students' digital access, teachers' digital competence, school infrastructure, and sociocultural backgrounds. In addition, future investigations should examine potential risks, including excessive competition, dependence on external rewards, digital distraction, and superficial representations of religious values. Such research would provide further evidence regarding the framework's effectiveness, limitations, and practical requirements before broader implementation in PAI learning contexts.

REFERENCES

- Amri. (2025). Efektivitas media berbasis gamifikasi dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam: Sebuah evaluasi empiris. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*.
- Biabdillah, et al. (2025). Transformasi digital dan tantangan kognitif dalam gamifikasi pembelajaran. *International Journal of Educational Technology*.
- Fauzi, M., & Pradipta, A. (2023). Penerapan PRISMA dalam Systematic Literature Review bidang teknologi pendidikan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*.
- Fitriyah, L., & Wardani, K. (2023). Integrasi elemen gamifikasi pada Kurikulum Merdeka untuk meningkatkan fleksibilitas belajar. *Jurnal Inovasi Kurikulum*.
- Hamari, J., & Koivisto, J. (2019). Why do people use gamification services? An empirical study on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. *International Journal of Information Management*.
- Hidayat, R., & Khotimah, N. (2022). Peran guru PAI sebagai mediator makna dalam pembelajaran berbasis digital. *Jurnal Studi Islam dan Kontemporer*.
- Ilham, M. (2026). Membangun resiliensi spiritual Generasi Z di era disrupsi digital. *Jurnal Psikologi Islam*.
- Indriyani, S., et al. (2025). Gamifikasi reflektif dan pengembangan moral dalam pendidikan karakter keagamaan. *Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Islam*.
- Info. (2026). Kesiapan infrastruktur digital dalam implementasi kurikulum keagamaan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Kebijakan Pendidikan*. (Catatan: Mohon periksa kembali nama penulis asli untuk sitasi "Info, 2026")
- Journal & Social. (2024). Pedagogi integratif: Menghubungkan teknologi, nilai, dan karakter anak didik. *Journal of Social and Educational Studies*. (Catatan: Mohon periksa kembali nama penulis asli untuk sitasi "Journal & Social, 2024")
- Kalogiannakis, M., Papadakis, S., & Zourmpakis, A. I. (2021). Gamification in science education. A systematic review of the literature. *Education Sciences*.
- Kemdikbudristek. (2022). Panduan Pembelajaran dan Asesmen Kurikulum Merdeka. Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi.
- Koivisto, J., & Hamari, J. (2019). The rise of gamification: A review of uses, effects, and interfaces. *International Journal of Information Management*.
- Lee, J., et al. (2021). Spirituality and psychological resilience among digital natives: A global perspective. *Journal of Religion and Health*.

- Mariana Amelda, P., et al. (2024). Preferensi belajar Generasi Z dan implementasi experiential learning dalam pendidikan agama. *Jurnal Pedagogi Kontemporer*.
- Maulidina, R., & Bhakti, C. P. (2023). Penerapan kriteria inklusi dan eksklusivitas dalam kajian literatur pendidikan karakter digital. *Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling*.
- Nugroho, A., et al. (2021). Limitasi mekanistik dalam gamifikasi: Antara hiburan dan capaian kognitif pembelajaran. *Jurnal Teknologi Informasi Pendidikan*.
- Nurhayati, E., & Fathurrohman, M. (2025). Pembelajaran PAI interaktif berbasis nilai untuk generasi digital-native. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*.
- Page, M. J., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*.
- Pratama, R., & Setyaningrum, W. (2022). Pemanfaatan Quizizz dan Kahoot dalam asesmen formatif pembelajaran. *Jurnal Analisis Pendidikan*.
- Rahim, A. A., & Hamzah, M. I. (2021). Konstruktivisme spiritual: Metode refleksi nilai dalam pembelajaran berbasis game digital. *Jurnal Kurikulum dan Pedagogi Islam*.
- Rahman, A. (2021). Sintesis tematik kualitatif dalam kajian digital spirituality dan motivasi belajar. *Jurnal Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*.
- Ruiz, M., et al. (2024). Value-based gamification: Aligning game elements with long-term educational goals. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
- Sailer, M., et al. (2021). Contextual gamification: How game elements function in diverse learning environments. *Journal of Educational Psychology*.
- Saleem, A. N., et al. (2021). Gamification in Islamic education context: A review of pedagogical perspectives and moral reflection. *Journal of Islamic Studies in Education*.
- Saleem, A. N., et al. (2022). Systematic literature review on educational gamification: Trends, gaps, and future framework directions. *Educational Technology Reviews*.
- Sari, D. P., & Widodo, A. (2022). Menjaga ketahanan psikososial dan spiritual siswa melalui kurikulum yang fleksibel. *Jurnal Konseling Kebiasaan Adab*.
- Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2019). *Generation Z: A handbook for the digital generation*. Routledge.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*.
- Toda, A. M., et al. (2020). Theories behind gamification: A systematic mapping study on the pedagogical grounding of game elements. *Computers & Education*.
- Twenge, J. M. (2020). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy—and completely unprepared for adulthood*. Atria Books.
- Xiao, Y., & Watson, M. (2019). Guidance on conducting a systematic literature review. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*.
- Yulianti, K., et al. (2024). Implementasi pembelajaran reflektif berbasis nilai religius pada sekolah menengah. *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Pendidikan*.
- Yusuf, M., & Arifin, Z. (2023). Kerangka kerja integrasi teknologi-pedagogi berbasis Profil Pelajar Pancasila dalam PAI. *Jurnal Kurikulum Indonesia*.
- Zainuddin, Z., et al. (2020). Gamification in education: A systematic literature review on student engagement, intrinsic motivation, and learning outcomes. *Educational Research Review*.