



## The Effectiveness of PAI Learning Innovation through Game Integration and Ice Breaker according to the principal of SMAN Central of Lombok.

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#### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning innovations through the integration of games and ice breakers in State High Schools of Central Lombok Regency. By adopting a qualitative approach, this research involves in-depth interviews with school principals as well as observations on the implementation of these innovations in the classroom. The results show that the integration of games and ice breakers in PAI learning not only increases students' interest and motivation, but also creates a more interactive and fun learning atmosphere. The principal stated that this innovation has succeeded in reducing student boredom in the learning process and increasing their engagement. In addition, the results of the evaluation showed a significant increase in understanding of the teaching material. This study recommends the application of similar innovations in other schools to improve the quality of PAI learning.*

#### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas inovasi pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) melalui integrasi permainan dan ice breaker di SMA Negeri Kabupaten Lombok Tengah. Dengan mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan kepala sekolah serta observasi terhadap pelaksanaan inovasi tersebut di kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi permainan dan *ice breaker* dalam pembelajaran PAI tidak hanya meningkatkan minat dan motivasi siswa, tetapi juga menciptakan suasana belajar yang lebih interaktif dan menyenangkan. Kepala sekolah mengemukakan bahwa inovasi ini berhasil mengurangi kejenuhan siswa dalam proses pembelajaran dan meningkatkan keterlibatan mereka. Selain itu, hasil evaluasi menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman materi ajar yang signifikan. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penerapan inovasi serupa di sekolah lain untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran PAI.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is an important part of the national education system in Indonesia, because it plays a role in shaping the character and morals of students. However, one of the challenges that is often faced is maintaining students' interest and involvement in PAI lessons, especially when the material presented tends to be theoretical and requires a deep understanding. To answer this challenge, innovation in learning methods is urgently needed. One approach that can be applied is the integration of games and *ice breakers* in PAI learning, which aims to create a fun and interactive learning atmosphere.

The integration of games and *ice breakers* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is very necessary because it can increase student engagement, reduce stress, and encourage cooperation and communication between students (Sukmawati & Junaidi, 2020). This approach creates an interactive and fun learning atmosphere, which helps students be better prepared to receive the subject matter (Sari, 2021). In addition, games allow for contextual learning that is relevant to daily life, improve information retention, and form a positive attitude towards lessons (Hidayati, 2019). Thus, the use of games and ice breakers not only enriches the learning experience, but also supports the achievement of more effective and comprehensive PAI educational goals.

The results of research related to the effectiveness of the use of games and *ice breakers* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning show a significant impact on student motivation, participation, and understanding. Here are some previous studies that are consistent with our study. Research by Nasution (2019) found that the integration of educational games in PAI learning can significantly increase student motivation. In his research conducted in Junior High School, the use of games such as religious quizzes and Qur'anic verse puzzles succeeded in increasing students' interest in learning materials, especially in the subjects of faith and fiqh. By using a more fun approach, students are more actively involved in the learning process and show higher enthusiasm. Suyadi (2018), research shows that *ice breakers* play an important role in increasing student engagement during the PAI learning process. *The ice breakers* used, such as simple games or quick quiz questions about Islamic history, successfully break the ice at the beginning of the lesson and make students more active during the class. As a result, more students engage in class discussions, ask questions, and participate in group activities. Another study by Yusuf and Sugandi (2019) conducted at Madrasah Aliyah found that educational games increased students' understanding of complex PAI materials, such as Islamic faith and history. In this study, the use of *role play* games to understand the historical events of the prophet succeeded in making students remember and understand the events better compared to the conventional lecture method. Students who engage in games show a better understanding of the content of the material and are able to relate religious concepts to everyday life.

Rahman (2016) researched the use of *ice breakers* in several elementary schools and found that this method is very effective in overcoming boredom and improving students' concentration. In the context of PAI learning, teachers often use *ice breakers* in the middle or at the beginning of a lesson to help students regain focus after long pauses or when they start to lose attention. The study shows that simple *ice breakers*, such as Islamic word games or light physical movements adapted to religious contexts, successfully keep the classroom atmosphere alive and make it easier for students to concentrate. Research by Kurniasih (2017) revealed that the use of games in PAI learning not only improves religious understanding, but also trains social skills and cooperation between students. Through group games, such as Guess the Verse or other group games, students learn to communicate, work together, and solve problems collectively. This is in line with Islamic values that emphasize the importance of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect. Research conducted by Nurul Huda (2020) in elementary schools shows that simple games such as Word Search with the theme of Islamic words are very effective in helping students recognize and understand religious terms. At the secondary school level, research by Wulandari (2019) confirms that interactive games, such as technology-based quizzes with

Islamic content, help students better understand abstract topics such as the attributes of Allah or the afterlife.

By involving school principals as the object of interviews, this study offers a more strategic and institutional perspective in evaluating the effectiveness of the integration of games and *ice breakers* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. While previous studies have tended to focus on the point of view of teachers or students, this research provides novelty through the views of school principals, who have an important role in overseeing and supporting the implementation of educational innovations throughout the school. Principals not only see the direct impact of innovation in the classroom, but are also able to assess how the method contributes to the formation of school culture, academic achievement, and the development of students' overall character and social skills. This perspective provides broader insights into the long-term success of educational innovation, covering managerial and policy aspects of schools that have rarely been explored in previous research.

Thus, this study argues that the approach through principal interviews results in a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the effectiveness of innovative learning methods, while introducing novelty in research objects that offer a strategic perspective for the sustainability of educational innovation at the school level.

## METHODS

Research on the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning innovations through the integration of games and *ice breakers*, according to the principal of SMAN Lombok Regency, uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the experience and views of school principals regarding the implementation of these innovations in their schools. In this study, the population studied consisted of 17 principals of State High Schools, and of these, a sample of 10 principals was randomly taken. The random selection of the sample aims to provide an equal opportunity for each principal to get involved, so that the data obtained can be representative of the population as a whole.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with selected principals, using semi-structured interviews to give respondents the freedom to share their views and experiences. This activity will be held on September 10-24, 2024. The questions asked were focused on the effectiveness of learning innovations through games and *ice breakers*, as well as their impact on the learning process of PAI. After data collection, the analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques, which included transcription of interviews, data coding, and identification of key themes that emerged from the principal's answers. This analysis aims to explore their views and experiences in depth and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the innovations implemented.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the researcher triangulation of sources by comparing the results of interviews with document data and observations in the field. Thus, the results of the study are expected to provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of the effectiveness of PAI learning innovations through the integration of games and ice breakers. In order to support this methodology, some of the references used include a book by Creswell (2014) which discusses the design of the research, and the work of Fatchiya (2020) which explains qualitative research methods. Patton (2015) also provides guidance on qualitative research and evaluation, which is the basis for the data analysis process in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is an urgent need in the era of globalization and rapid technological development. With challenges and dynamics that continue to change, conventional teaching methods are no longer adequate to meet the needs of modern students. According to Mulyasa (2017), educational innovation must include changes in

approaches, strategies, and learning methods to be more relevant to the context of the times and able to attract students' interest. Therefore, the implementation of various new learning models that are more interactive and technology-based is becoming increasingly important.

One of the innovations that can be applied is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in PAI learning. The use of digital media, such as videos, elearning, and mobile applications, can enrich students' learning experience. Sari (2020) noted that by utilizing ICT, teachers can present teaching materials in a more interesting and interactive way. Additionally, online platforms allow students to study independently and access a wider range of learning resources, which can improve their understanding of the teaching material.

Project-based learning methods are also an effective innovative approach in PAI. Through the project, students can engage in practical activities related to religious teachings, such as social activities or community service. Hidayah and Hidayati (2019) stated that project-based learning not only helps students understand religious concepts, but also develops critical, creative, and collaborative skills. By applying this method, students learn to apply religious values in real contexts, thereby increasing the relevance of religious teachings in daily life.

Another innovation that can be applied is a thematic approach in PAI learning. This approach relates PAI material to a variety of other subjects, so that students can see the connection between religion and other aspects of life. According to Nasution (2021), thematic learning helps students understand religious teachings in a broader context, making it easier for them to relate religious values to their life experiences. This approach also encourages collaboration between teachers from various disciplines, thus creating a holistic learning environment.

Overall, PAI learning innovations are very important to improve the quality of religious education in Indonesia. By applying technology, project-based methods, and thematic approaches, teachers can create a more engaging and relevant learning experience for students. Therefore, support for educational innovation must continue to be increased, both from the government, educational institutions, and the community, so that PAI learning can meet the expectations and needs of students in this modern era.

### **PAI Learning Innovation through Game Integration and *Ice Breaker***

Innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is increasingly needed to improve the quality of education that is more relevant and attractive to students. PAI is often considered a rigid and serious subject, which can lead to a lack of interest and motivation for students to learn. Therefore, the application of more interactive and fun approaches, such as game integration and ice breaker, becomes an effective solution. According to Zainuddin (2020), PAI learning innovations can create a better and relevant learning experience for students, as well as encourage them to be actively involved in the learning process.

Educational games are one of the effective methods to increase student involvement in PAI learning. By using games, students can learn in a more fun and engaging way, so that they can more easily understand the religious concepts being taught. Hidayati (2019) explained that games in the context of PAI not only function as a tool to convey material, but also to develop students' social and emotional skills. Well-designed games can facilitate interaction between students, help them learn to work together, and hone their communication skills.

In addition to games, the use of ice breakers is also very important in creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Ice breaker is a short activity that is done at the beginning of learning to melt the atmosphere and make students more comfortable. Sukmawati and Junaidi (2020) proposed that ice breakers can increase student participation and reduce the anxiety they may feel when entering the classroom. By creating a welcoming and supportive environment, students are better equipped to engage in more in-depth discussions and learning activities.

The implementation of this innovation also requires the active role of teachers in designing and implementing creative and interesting activities. Teachers need to have a good understanding of the characteristics of students and how to integrate games and ice breakers effectively in learning. Sari (2021) emphasized the importance of training for teachers to improve their skills in using interactive learning methods. Thus, teachers can create a more dynamic and enjoyable learning experience for students, so that PAI learning becomes more interesting and effective.

Overall, PAI learning innovations through the integration of games and ice breakers have great potential to increase student motivation and engagement. This approach not only makes learning more interesting, but also helps students understand and apply religious values in their daily lives. Therefore, the application of this method in PAI learning needs to be encouraged and expanded to achieve better educational goals.

### Application of Games and *Ice Breakers* in PAI Learning

Here are some examples of games and *ice breakers* that can be adapted for PAI learning:

1. Bible/Quran Puzzles: Students are divided into groups and given puzzles around stories in the Bible or the Quran.
2. Worship simulation: Students simulate prayer, fasting, or hajj to deepen their understanding of the correct worship procedures.
3. Interactive quizzes: Teachers can use online quiz apps to create engaging and competitive quizzes.
4. Chain stories: Students take turns telling Islamic stories they know.
5. Short plays: Students can create short plays that describe Islamic values.

The use of games and ice breakers in PAI learning provides several significant benefits:

1. Increase learning motivation. With a fun atmosphere, students are more motivated to follow lessons. They feel that learning is not only an obligation, but also something fun and dynamic (Kurniasih, 2017).
2. Facilitating the Understanding of Complex Matter. Games can help students understand abstract concepts in Islam, such as creed and fiqh, more easily. Through hands-on experience in games, students can relate theory to real practice (Yusuf & Sugandi, 2019).
3. Increase student engagement. Games and *ice breakers* encourage active participation of students, which makes them more involved in the teaching-learning process. Active students tend to have a deeper understanding of the material being taught (Suyadi, 2018).
4. Overcoming boredom and improving concentration. Learning activities that are only lectures often make students feel bored and lack focus. Ice breakers help break boredom and improve students' concentration before the core material is delivered (Rahman, 2016).

While game integration and ice breaker have many benefits, there are some challenges that need to be overcome:

1. Limited Time. The use of games and *ice breakers* requires a sufficient allocation of time, while lesson hours are often limited. Teachers need to plan well so that this activity does not reduce the time for the delivery of the main material.
2. Teacher Readiness. Not all teachers have the skills and readiness to apply this learning method. Therefore, training and mentoring are needed for teachers so that they can develop creativity in creating relevant educational and *ice breaker* games .
3. Conformity with the Material. Not all PAI materials can be delivered through games or *ice breakers*. Therefore, teachers must be selective in choosing materials that are suitable to be integrated with this method, so as not to reduce the sacredness or seriousness of the religious material taught.

### **The Effectiveness of PAI Learning Innovation through Game Integration and *Ice Breaker* according to the Principal of SMA Negeri Central Lombok Regency**

There are 17 State High Schools in Central Lombok Regency. From the 17 Public Schools, we got 10 respondents who were randomly selected for us to interview in depth regarding the Effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovation through Game Integration and *Ice Breaker*. Here are the results of the interview:

"The integration of games and *ice breakers* in PAI learning has been proven to increase students' interest and motivation. We saw that students were more active in participating in the classroom after this method was implemented." This was revealed by Dr. H. Wildan, M.Pd. Principal of SMAN 2 Pujut. The application of this method has increased students' interest and motivation. He notes that after using this approach, students become more active in participating in class, which suggests that a fun learning atmosphere can encourage their engagement.

"I strongly support the use of this innovative method. Students not only learn theory, but also can experience real experiences related to religious teachings, so that learning becomes more meaningful." Mrs. Sry Sumiati, M.Pd. Principal of SMAN 1 Kopang emphasized that this innovative method provides students with a more meaningful learning experience. By linking theory with practice through games, students not only understand the material, but also feel the values taught in a real-life context. This helps them internalize religious teachings better.

"After implementing educational games and ice breakers, the interaction between students and teachers has become better. Students are more open to asking questions and discussing PAI materials." Mr. H. Lalu Mahsun, S.Pd. Principal of SMAN 1 Batukliang Utara highlighted the increase in interaction between students and teachers after the use of educational games and *ice breakers*. He observed that students were more open to asking questions and discussing about PAI materials, which contributed to a more collaborative and communicative classroom atmosphere. This good interaction is important in learning to build a strong relationship between students and teachers.

"This innovation has created a more pleasant classroom atmosphere. Students seem to be more excited and do not feel burdened with the subject matter being taught." Mrs. Baiq Napsah, S.Pd. Principal of SMAN 3 Praya noted that the classroom atmosphere became more pleasant after the application of this innovative method. Students seem more excited and do not feel burdened with the subject matter being taught. This positive atmosphere is important for creating a conducive learning environment, where students feel comfortable exploring their knowledge.

"I believe that fun learning methods like this are very helpful for students in understanding religious concepts. It is easier for them to remember and apply the values taught." In the view of the Mazhab, S.Pd. Principal of SMAN 1 Jonggat, the fun learning method is very helpful for students in understanding religious concepts. Through interactive learning experiences, students can more easily remember and apply the values taught in daily life. This shows that PAI learning can be done in an interesting and relevant way for students.

"With games and *ice breakers*, students feel more comfortable in class. This helps reduce their anxiety when facing an exam or during a presentation." Mrs. Baiq Budiati, M.Pd. highlighted another advantage of using ice breakers, namely reducing students' anxiety. With a more comfortable classroom atmosphere, students feel more confident when facing exams or presentations. This is very important in supporting students' mental and emotional development, especially in the context of learning that is often considered stressful.

"This integration is very effective in building cooperation between students. Through group games, they learn to support and respect each other." Mr. Zulkarnain, S.Pd. Principal of SMAN 1 Janapria highlighted the importance of cooperation and mutual support among students through group games. This suggests that this method focuses not only on the academic aspect, but also on the development of important social skills.

"One of the advantages of this innovation is the increase in information retention. Students who are actively involved in games tend to remember the teaching material better than

traditional learning methods." Mr. Akhmad Husni, M.Pd. Principal of SMAN 1 Pringgarata talked about how students who are actively involved in games tend to remember more information than with traditional methods. This suggests that a more interactive approach can improve students' long-term comprehension and memory.

"We also see an increase in student learning outcomes. After the application of this method, the average score of the PAI exam has increased significantly." Then Sahbin, M.Pd. Principal of SMAN 1 Praya Timur observed a significant increase in student learning outcomes. This shows that this method also has a positive impact on their academic performance, which can be measured through better test scores.

"This innovation not only makes learning PAI more interesting, but also helps students develop important social and emotional skills in daily life." H. Lalu Muhammad Amin, Principal of SMAN 1 Praya Tengah emphasized that this innovation not only makes learning more interesting, but also helps students develop important social-emotional skills. This shows the long-term benefits of this method to the personal development of students.

Here is a **table** summarizing the key insights from the interviews with the principals of State High Schools in Central Lombok Regency regarding the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning innovations through game integration and ice breakers.

Tabel 1. The Interview Result Summarize

No	Principal/School	Key Insights	Impact/Benefits
1	Mr. Dr. H. Wildan, M.Pd. (SMAN 2 Pujut)	Integration of games and ice breakers increases students' interest, motivation, and class participation.	Students are more engaged and active in learning.
2	Mrs. Sry Sumiati, M.Pd. (SMAN 1 Kopang)	Students experience meaningful learning by connecting theory to practice through games.	Enhances internalization of religious teachings and understanding of values.
3	Mr. H. Lalu Mahsun, S.Pd. (SMAN 1 Batukliang Utara)	Improved student-teacher interaction and collaboration in discussing PAI materials.	Better classroom communication and collaborative atmosphere.
4	Mrs. Baiq Napsah, S.Pd. (SMAN 3 Praya)	Creates a pleasant classroom atmosphere where students are excited and not burdened by the subject matter.	Supports a conducive and comfortable learning environment.
5	Mr. Mazhab, S.Pd. (SMAN 1 Jonggat)	Fun methods improve understanding, memory, and application of religious concepts.	Interactive experiences enhance retention and practical application of values.
6	Mrs. Baiq Budiati, M.Pd.	Ice breakers reduce students' anxiety during exams and presentations.	Builds confidence and supports emotional well-being.
7	Mr. Zulkarnain, S.Pd. (SMAN 1 Janapria)	Group games foster cooperation and mutual respect among students.	Encourages teamwork and social skills development.
8	Mr. Akhmad Husni, M.Pd. (SMAN 1 Pringgarata)	Students involved in games retain information better compared to traditional methods.	Improves long-term comprehension and retention of material.
9	Mr. Lalu Sahbin, M.Pd. (SMAN 1 Praya Timur)	Significant improvement in student learning outcomes (e.g., exam	Academic performance is positively impacted.

No	Principal/School	Key Insights	Impact/Benefits
		scores).	
10	Mr. H. Lalu Muhammad Amin (SMAN 1 Praya Tengah)	Develops social-emotional skills alongside making PAI learning more engaging.	Benefits students' personal development and emotional intelligence.

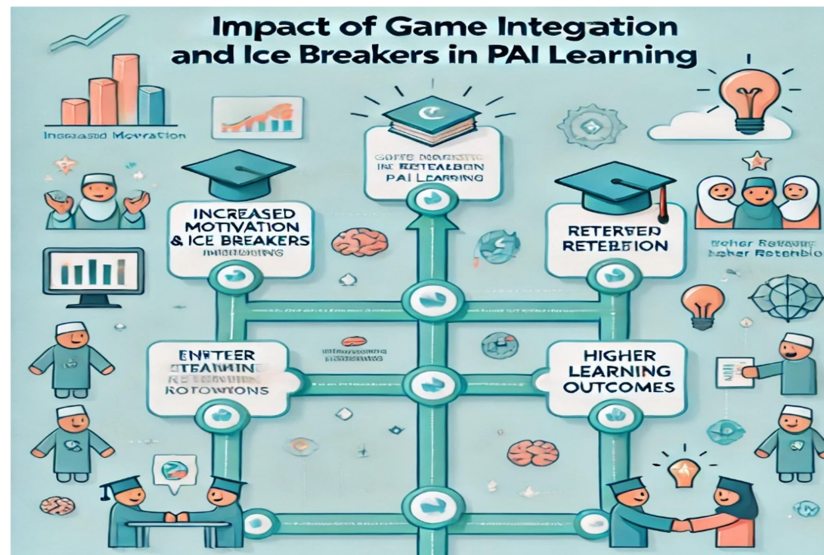


Figure 1. Flowchart Impact of Game Integration and Ice Breaker in PAI Learning

From the above analysis, we can conclude that the integration of games and *ice breakers* in PAI learning has a wide impact. These innovations not only help improve student engagement in the classroom, but also contribute to the development of social, emotional skills, as well as improved learning outcomes. Principals consider that this method is very effective in creating a more interesting and productive learning atmosphere, and relevant to the needs of students today.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the integration of games and ice breakers in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMAN Lombok Central Lombok Regency has proven to be effective in improving the quality of learning. Through in-depth interviews with principals, the study found that these innovations not only improved student engagement in the classroom, but also contributed to improved learning outcomes, information retention, and the development of students' social and emotional skills.

The principal's view, as the object of the interview, provides a different strategic perspective from previous studies. They see that this method is able to build a positive learning culture, increase cooperation between students, and reduce boredom in PAI learning which is often considered monotonous. In addition, this innovation plays a role in building character skills that are in line with the goals of education based on the Pancasila Student profile.

By emphasizing the managerial perspective of school principals, this study provides novelty in evaluating the effectiveness of innovative learning methods, which are not only seen from the perspective of students or teachers, but also from the institutional level. This study concludes that the integration of games and ice breakers is an approach that has the potential to be adopted more widely in PAI learning, in order to create a more dynamic learning atmosphere and support the holistic development of students.



Therefore, the results of this study recommend the application of this learning innovation more widely, with the support of school principals as educational leaders who play an important role in ensuring the success and sustainability of this method in schools.

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