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Fun Learning Model: Mere Entertainment or an Innovative Solution for Optimizing Children's Intelligence in the Era of Modern Islamic Education?

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A B S T R A C T

Modern Islamic education faces the challenge of globalization, which demands innovation in the learning process to make it more engaging, interactive, and relevant to the times. One approach increasingly developed is fun learning, a learning model designed to be enjoyable while maintaining educational and religious values. This study aims to analyze whether fun learning is merely entertainment or an innovative solution for optimizing children's intelligence in the era of modern Islamic education. The method used is library research by reviewing books, scientific journals, articles, and relevant educational documents. The results show that fun learning has a positive impact on children's intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social intelligence. This approach fosters learning motivation, enhances conceptual understanding, and strengthens students' religious character through creative and contextual methods. In conclusion, fun learning is not merely entertainment but an innovative learning strategy aligned with Islamic values and effective in optimizing children's intelligence potential in modern Islamic education.

1. Introduction

Children's education in the modern era faces increasingly complex challenges, both in terms of technological development, changes in societal mindsets, and the diverse needs of learners (Darmawan, 2024). Amidst these dynamics, learning is required not only to focus on the transfer of knowledge but also to emphasize the holistic development of children's intelligence. One approach that has recently gained significant attention is fun learning, a learning concept that emphasizes a pleasant, interactive, and creative atmosphere (Ariani & Wulansari, 2024). The question arises: is fun learning merely a form of entertainment for children, or can it serve as an innovative solution to optimizing children's intelligence in modern Islamic education?

Islamic education, as one of the education systems, has a broader vision than merely acquiring knowledge. Its primary goal is to shape individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and of noble character mulia (Jannah et al., 2024). Therefore, learning approaches in Islamic education need to consider spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual aspects. Within this context, the concept of fun learning becomes highly relevant to examine, as it presents a form of learning that is not rigid but still rich in values and meaning. If applied appropriately, fun learning can serve as an effective medium to integrate modern knowledge with Islamic values.

The concept of fun learning stems from the assumption that children learn more effectively when placed in an enjoyable environment. According to (Majid & Rofiq, 2025), monotonous and pressure-filled learning often leads children to lose motivation and even develop negative attitudes toward schooling. Conversely, a cheerful atmosphere, filled with creative and interactive activities, allows children to engage emotionally, making the learning process more meaningful. In the framework of Islamic education, fun learning is not merely entertainment but can be employed as a strategy to instill religious values while enhancing children's intelligence from an early age.

Modern Islamic education requires curriculum design and learning strategies that are relevant to contemporary developments. Fun learning can be integrated with classical Islamic methods such as talaqqi, muroja'ah, and scholarly discussions (Basri et al., 2024). For instance, Qur'anic instruction can be delivered through educational games, interactive multimedia, or simulations that both challenge and delight children. Thus, Islamic education is no longer perceived as rigid but adaptive to the needs of the younger generation without losing its essential substance.

The intelligence referred to in this context is not limited to intellectual intelligence but also encompasses emotional, spiritual, and social intelligence. Islam emphasizes the importance of balance between knowledge and morality (Masturin et al., 2021). Fun learning can contribute to nurturing these multiple intelligences. For example, through group activities, children learn to cooperate, manage their emotions, and internalize values such as honesty and responsibility. Hence, fun learning can become a medium for developing multidimensional intelligence within the framework of modern Islamic education.

Nevertheless, some argue that fun learning tends to be oriented only toward entertainment without adequate depth of material. This criticism must be addressed critically, as improper implementation of this concept may indeed result in a loss of substance in learning. Therefore, (Farhan et al., 2022) emphasize that the design of fun learning in modern Islamic education must consider comprehensive learning objectives not merely to entertain children, but also to provide meaningful knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the formation of strong morals in line with Islamic teachings.

The implementation of fun learning in modern Islamic education can also be aligned with the principles of tarbiyah, which emphasize nurturing, guidance, and

character formation. Teachers play a central role in designing fun learning strategies that remain consistent with Islamic values (Millah & Agustin, 2024). For instance, the use of educational games enriched with stories of the Prophets, science experiments connected with Qur'anic verses, or discussion methods that sharpen children's critical reasoning. Thus, fun learning is not merely entertainment but an effective tool for bringing children closer to religious teachings while enhancing their intelligence. In today's digital era, children grow up accustomed to interacting with technology from an early age. This presents both challenges and opportunities for Islamic education. Technology-based fun learning, such as interactive learning applications, Islamic animated videos, or religiously themed educational games, can be used to stimulate children's learning interest (Zulfa et al., 2024). By combining technology with Islamic values, learning can become more engaging, relevant, and beneficial to children's cognitive and spiritual development.

The urgency of developing innovative learning models becomes increasingly evident when considering previous research. (Rajab & Ibrahim, 2025) demonstrated that fun learning significantly enhances elementary school students' learning motivation. (A. A. Putri & Subiyantoro, 2022) found that integrating fun learning into Islamic Religious Education improved students' religious understanding and fostered positive attitudes toward religion. Meanwhile, (Prada et al., 2025) affirmed that fun learning influences not only children's intellectual intelligence but also their emotional and social intelligence. These findings reinforce the notion that fun learning plays an important role in fostering children's holistic intelligence in line with the mission of Islamic education.

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that fun learning holds great potential in optimizing children's intelligence, especially in the era of modern Islamic education. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine more deeply whether fun learning is merely a form of entertainment or, in fact, an innovative solution for enhancing children's intellectual development within modern Islamic education.

2. Methodology

This study employs the literature review method (library research). A literature review is a research approach conducted by collecting, reading, analyzing, and interpreting various references relevant to the research topic (Pringgar & Rizaldy, 2020). The sources used in this study include books, scientific journals, academic articles, and educational documents discussing the concept of fun learning, strategies of modern Islamic education, as well as the influence of innovative learning on the development of children's intelligence. The findings of this literature review will be presented in a descriptive-analytical form. The descriptive approach is used to explain in detail the concept of fun learning, the design of modern Islamic education with this approach, and its implementation in the context of children's education.

Meanwhile, the analytical approach is employed to examine the relationship between theory and practice, to critique the perspective that views fun learning as mere entertainment, and to evaluate its potential as an innovative solution in modern Islamic education. Thus, this research does not only provide a theoretical understanding of fun learning and its relevance to Islamic education but also offers a critical analysis that presents a new perspective on optimizing children's intelligence. The findings are expected to contribute both academically and practically, particularly to the development of Islamic learning strategies that are more creative, enjoyable, and meaningful in the modern era.

3. Results and Discussion

The Concept of Fun Learning in Modern Islamic Education

Fun learning, literally derived from two English words fun meaning enjoyable, and learning meaning education can be simply defined as a learning process designed in a joyful, comfortable, and pressure-free atmosphere, so that learners feel happy and motivated to engage in every stage of the learning activity (Pangestu et al., 2022). In this approach, the classroom is not merely a space for delivering material but transforms into an educational, interactive, and inspiring arena for learning.

The concept of fun learning in modern Islamic education can be outlined as follows:

1. Joyful, Creative, and Interactive Learning
   The concept of fun learning emphasizes a learning atmosphere filled with joy and creativity. Teachers do not merely deliver content but also act as facilitators who create an interactive environment (Layyinah, 2017). Methods such as illustrated stories, Islamic quizzes, role-playing, or Islamic songs make children enjoy the learning process. In this way, children not only acquire knowledge but also gain meaningful experiences that sharpen their emotional and social intelligence.

2. Integration of Islamic Values into Learning Activities
   Fun learning in modern Islamic education is not merely entertainment but also a medium for instilling religious values. Group games can be used to nurture ukhuwah (brotherhood), Qur'an memorization competitions with simple rewards can motivate children's love for the Qur'an, while trade simulations train honesty in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet. In this approach, every joyful activity remains rooted in Islamic teachings. Fun learning aligns with the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

   اللَّهُمَّ يَسِّرْ وَلَا تُعَسِّرْ، وَبَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوا

   "Make things easy and do not make them difficult; give glad tidings and do not drive people away." (Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim). This principle emphasizes that education should cultivate happiness, not pressure. Thus, fun learning in modern Islamic education serves as a strategy to achieve the vision

of insan kamil the ideal human being who is not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually, emotionally, socially, and morally mature.

3. Learning by Doing and the Use of Islamic Technology
   The principle of learning by doing, according to (Novianti et al., 2022), emphasizes that children learn through direct experiences. For example, discipline is instilled through the practice of congregational prayer, while honesty is fostered through trade simulations. In addition, the use of Islamic-based technology, such as memorization applications, interactive videos, and Qur'an-based educational games, makes learning more relevant to children's lives, which are now closely tied to the digital era.

Modern Islamic Education Design Based on Fun Learning

1. Integrated Objectives (Academic, Moral, and Spiritual)
   The design of learning in modern Islamic education is not solely directed at cognitive achievement but also at strengthening children's morals and spirituality. Every learning objective should cover four main domains: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), psychomotor (skills), and spiritual (relationship with Allah). For example, in teaching mathematics, the teacher not only trains children's logic but also connects it with zakat practices or Qur'anic verses related to calculations. In this way, children learn while instilling faith-based values, making the learning process meaningful and perceived as an act of worship.

2. Contextual Organization of Learning Materials
   Learning materials should be structured to align with children's daily lives and realities. Children will more easily understand and remember lessons when they are linked to real-life experiences (Hayyun et al., 2025). For instance, when teaching about cleanliness, the teacher relates it to the hadith "cleanliness is part of faith." Similarly, when discussing nature, the teacher emphasizes Qur'anic verses (ayat kauniyah) that highlight Allah's greatness. By providing relevant contexts, children perceive the lesson not merely as theory but as practical guidance for life.

3. Creative and Varied Use of Learning Media
   Learning media play a crucial role in the design of fun learning. Teachers are required to be creative in selecting media suited to children's learning styles visual (pictures, Islamic comics, animated videos), auditory (songs of supplication, Qur'anic recitations), and kinesthetic (card games, puzzles, puppets) (Yuliana et al., 2023). The use of diverse media helps children stay focused, motivated, and engaged without feeling bored. Furthermore, Islamic-based media can serve as a means of value transmission, such as through animated stories of prophets that emphasize honesty or patience.

4. Collaborative and Participatory Learning Activities
   Children tend to be more enthusiastic when actively involved in learning activities. Therefore, the design should emphasize cooperation, discussion, and

group projects (Yuliana et al., 2023). For instance, students may work together to create a poster with the theme "Preserve Our Mosque," or write a short story about an experience of honesty. Such collaborative activities not only train social skills but also foster a sense of brotherhood, tolerance, and responsibility. Thus, fun learning not only produces knowledge but also shapes Muslim personalities capable of living harmoniously within society.

Implementation of Fun Learning in Modern Islamic Education

1. Interactive Storytelling with Islamic Values
   Storytelling is one of the most effective strategies in children's education. Through interactive storytelling, teachers not only narrate the stories of prophets or companions but also engage children by asking questions, encouraging responses, and predicting the storyline (R. D. Putri & Yuliyanti, 2025). For example, when telling the story of Prophet Ayyub's patience, the teacher may ask children to provide examples of patience in their daily lives. This strategy makes learning more dynamic, enjoyable, and simultaneously instills Islamic moral values.

2. Islamic Role Play or Drama
   Role play provides children with direct experiences to better understand Islamic values (Firahmatika & Afandi, 2025). Children may portray the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as an honest merchant or act as companions who were generous. By engaging in role play, children do not only listen to stories but also experience emotionally what it means to live according to Islamic teachings. This activity also fosters public speaking confidence, empathy, and social skills.

3. Islamic Educational Games
   Games are an essential component of fun learning. In Islamic education, games can be designed with Islamic themes (Nengsih et al., 2025), such as daily prayer quizzes, hijaiyah letter puzzles, or board games about the pillars of faith. Games allow children to learn joyfully without feeling pressured, while reinforcing memorization and knowledge. Moreover, they teach sportsmanship, cooperation, and honesty during play.

4. Islamic Project-Based Learning (PBL)
   Project-based learning offers opportunities for children to gain deep understanding through hands-on experiences (Sihabudin & Sukandar, 2025). For instance, children may create simple calligraphy projects, write stories of Islamic role models, or organize a "Love the Qur'an" campaign within their school environment. Such projects foster critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and awareness of applying Islamic values in real life. With PBL, children not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also develop habits of practicing Islamic principles in daily life.

The Influence of Fun Learning on Children's Intelligence Development in Modern Islamic Education

1. Intellectual Intelligence (IQ)
   Through fun learning, children can more easily understand both academic and religious concepts. For instance, memorization of short surahs becomes easier through Islamic songs, while learning Islamic history becomes more engaging through interactive storytelling. Play-based and exploratory activities stimulate children's brains, thereby enhancing cognitive abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and memory retention.
   In addition, fun learning encourages children to think creatively when solving problems presented by the teacher. For example, in Islamic case-based quizzes, children are challenged to make decisions aligned with Islamic teachings. Such activities ensure that children not only memorize knowledge but also connect it with real-life applications, thereby strengthening logical and analytical reasoning.

2. Emotional Intelligence (EQ)
   Fun learning that emphasizes collaboration, discussion, and games helps children manage emotions, understand others' feelings, and build cooperation. For example, during Islamic group quizzes, children learn to control themselves when losing and to support their peers when winning. This nurtures empathy, patience, and respect values that align with Islamic teachings.
   Moreover, creative activities such as Islamic drama or role play allow children to express emotions in healthy ways. They can channel joy, disappointment, or pride through positive interactions. This is crucial for shaping Muslim personalities who can regulate emotions, communicate effectively, and maintain harmonious social relationships.

3. Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)
   One of the greatest impacts of fun learning in modern Islamic education is the enhancement of children's spiritual intelligence. Through joyful activities connected with Qur'anic verses, prayers, and prophetic stories, children internalize faith, worship, and morality more easily. For example, the "Guess the Prayer" game enables children to memorize daily supplications in an enjoyable way. Spirituality develops as children perceive religion as a source of joy rather than a burden.
   This approach allows children to experience meaningful spiritual engagement from an early age. For instance, in a role play of Prophet Ibrahim's story, children do not only hear about obedience but also experience it through enacted roles. Such practices deepen their love for Allah, strengthen faith, and foster intrinsic motivation to worship consistently.

4. Social Intelligence (Interpersonal Skills)
   Fun learning activities that are group based, such as role play or Islamic projects, train children to collaborate, communicate, and respect different opinions. For example, in a project to design posters on the theme "Love for Others," children learn to appreciate their peers' ideas, share responsibilities,

and present collective outcomes. This is particularly important in modern Islamic education, as it shapes Muslim individuals who can contribute positively to society.

Furthermore, social interactions in fun learning strengthen ukhuwah Islamiyah among students. When children engage in collaborative activities, such as an Islamic-themed treasure hunt, they not only work together to achieve goals but also cultivate a sense of brotherhood, tolerance, and solidarity. These values serve as essential foundations for nurturing a Muslim generation that is socially responsible and community-oriented.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that fun learning in modern Islamic education is not merely a form of entertainment, but rather an innovative strategy capable of optimizing children's intelligence holistically. Through creative instructional design and appropriate pedagogical strategies, fun learning has been proven to positively influence the development of children's multiple intelligences. From the intellectual aspect, children are able to understand learning materials more easily while enhancing critical thinking skills. From the emotional aspect, they learn to manage their feelings, collaborate, and build empathy. From the spiritual aspect, children grow closer to Islamic teachings through joyful learning experiences. Meanwhile, from the social aspect, they are trained to interact, respect differences, and foster ukhuwah (Islamic brotherhood).

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