

Student Motivation in Islamic Education in the Digital Era: A Case Study in West Java

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the condition of student learning motivation, examine the utilization of digital technology, and identify various factors influencing learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for eighth-grade students at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari, Sumedang Regency, West Java, amidst the era of digital transformation. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with eight students and two teachers, then analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding stages. The results show that student motivation in PAI learning is diverse. Some students have strong intrinsic motivation arising from religious awareness and the need to understand religious teachings. Others are influenced by external factors such as the role of teachers, parental support, and peer environment. On the other hand, amotivation was also found in some students. The use of digital technology can increase student engagement and interest in learning. However, its effectiveness is highly influenced by the availability of facilities and the teacher's ability to integrate technology appropriately into the learning process. Nevertheless, students still view direct explanations from teachers as the primary source for understanding material. Thus, technology functions as a support, not a replacement for pedagogical interaction. This study concludes that optimizing PAI learning motivation in the digital era requires alignment between students' internal drive, innovative learning strategies by teachers, social environmental support, and technological infrastructure readiness.

Keywords: *Learning Motivation, Digital Transformation, Islamic Education, Learning Technology*

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has brought significant changes in the world of education, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. The presence of information and communication technology in madrasah environments opens opportunities to improve the quality of learning, but also presents challenges that have not been fully answered empirically. Digital technology can encourage student engagement and learning motivation through the presentation of material that is more interactive and relevant to their life context (Fatimah et al., 2024). On the other hand, it needs to be understood that the development of this technology does not only bring positive benefits. There are concerns about its negative impact on Islamic identity and moral values in Islamic education (Nugraha et al., 2023). This condition indicates a gap between potential and challenges, making the study of PAI learning motivation in the digital era important to research more deeply.

Learning motivation is an important aspect that determines the success of the learning process. Conceptually, motivation is understood as a psychological drive that directs individuals to initiate and maintain learning activities (Uno, 2023). In the perspective of Self Determination Theory (SDT), (Ryan & Deci, 2020) divide motivation into three categories: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. This concept is relevant in the context of PAI learning because the main goal of religious education is not only cognitive aspects but also the formation of students internal awareness in learning religion as part of worship. In the tradition of Islamic education, this is in line with the concept of *thalab al 'ilm* as a form of spiritual awareness in seeking knowledge (Muhaimin, 2012). Nevertheless, the implementation of such intrinsic motivation amidst the development of digital technology still requires empirical proof in the field.

A number of recent studies show that the use of digital technology in PAI learning has the potential to increase student learning motivation, although the results are not always consistent. (Harahap & Warman, 2025) explain that the use of digital media such as interactive videos and online learning platforms can increase student engagement, especially if adapted to the context of Islamic values. Similar research was presented by (Rukmini et al., 2025) which showed that digital technology can encourage learning motivation, but its effectiveness is influenced by students initial conditions and a supportive learning environment. In addition, (Mintasih et al., 2024) emphasize the importance of teachers digital competence in optimizing the use of technology in PAI learning. On the other hand, (Said, 2023) reveals that although digital technology can increase interaction, activity, and understanding of material, its implementation still faces obstacles, especially related to limited facilities and teacher readiness in managing technology based learning. Overall, several of these studies indicate that digital technology plays an important role in supporting learning, but has not fully explained the relationship between technology, the role of teachers, and environmental factors in shaping student learning motivation comprehensively, especially in the context of madrasahs in semi urban areas.

Based on this research, there are several research gaps that need to be filled. First, research on PAI learning motivation is still dominated by quantitative approaches, so it has not been able to explore students subjective experiences in depth. Second, the relationship between the use of digital technology, the role of teachers, and learning motivation has not been widely studied in an integrated manner. Some studies tend to discuss these variables separately. Third, environmental factors such as family support, peer influence, and religious values have not been analyzed comprehensively in a complete framework, especially in the context of madrasah tsanawiyah in semi urban areas. Therefore, this research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a case study design at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari, Sumedang Regency. The novelty of this research lies in the effort to integrate Self Determination Theory with the digital ecosystem perspective and Islamic education values, as well as revealing the phenomenon that although digital technology can increase learning motivation, students still consider direct explanations from teachers as the main factor in understanding the material.

From the background, this research aims to answer the following research questions: (1) what is the condition of student learning motivation in Islamic education in the digital era? (2) how is digital technology utilized in Islamic Religious Education learning? (3) What factors influence student learning motivation in this context?. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of a more contextual concept of PAI learning motivation with technological developments. Practically, the results of this research are also expected to be a reference for teachers, madrasah principals, and policymakers in designing learning strategies that are adaptive to digital developments without neglecting the basic values of Islamic education.

As a reinforcement of the theoretical basis, this research uses Self Determination Theory proposed by (Ryan & Deci, 2020) as the main framework for understanding student learning motivation. This theory explains that intrinsic motivation can develop optimally if three basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In PAI learning, these three aspects are reflected in students opportunities to learn independently, be able to understand religious material, and have a good relationship with teachers and the learning environment. (Mendoza et al., 2023) found that digital learning platforms, when designed to offer choice and personalized feedback, significantly enhanced students' sense of autonomy and competence, thereby boosting intrinsic motivation in online courses. This is in line with Schunk's (2023) view that motivation plays an important role in determining the direction, intensity, and persistence of students in the learning process. (Rahman & Kholil, 2025) explored how digital Islamic resources, such as interactive Quranic apps and online tafsir, influenced the intrinsic

motivation of madrasah students, noting that accessibility and culturally relevant content were key drivers for deeper religious understanding and practice. Thus, learning motivation is not only influenced by factors within the student but also by how the learning process is designed and how social interactions occur in the classroom.

In the context of education in the digital era, this is reinforced by the (Antoninis et al., 2023), UNESCO report which emphasizes that the use of technology in education needs to be balanced with the quality of interaction between teachers and students. Technology cannot replace the role of the teacher but serves as a supporting tool to create more effective and meaningful learning. A meta-analysis by (Gao et al., 2024) revealed that while technology can facilitate learning, the quality of teacher-student interaction, including personalized guidance and emotional support, remained the strongest predictor of student engagement and motivation in blended learning environments. This is relevant to the focus of the research which not only examines the condition of student learning motivation but also analyzes the utilization of digital technology and the factors that influence it. Therefore, this literature review becomes the basis for understanding that PAI learning motivation in the digital era is formed through the interaction between students psychological factors, teachers learning strategies, and a supportive environment that are interrelated.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study strategy. This approach was chosen because the research objective focuses on an in depth understanding of the dynamics of PAI learning motivation in real learning situations in madrasahs. This research not only looks at results but also explores perceptions, subjective experiences, and student interactions with the learning environment amidst the development of digital technology. Case studies are considered appropriate because they can capture the complexity of phenomena that cannot be explained through quantitative data, especially when the variables studied are interrelated and influenced by context (Gao et al., 2024). The research design used is a single case study with a bounded unit of analysis, namely one research location with several main subjects in the form of students and teachers.

The research was conducted at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari, Sumedang Regency, West Java. The main instrument in this research was the researcher himself. The determination of research subjects used a purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of informants based on certain considerations, especially direct involvement in eighth grade PAI learning and the ability to provide information relevant to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2023). Research informants consisted of eight eighth grade students and two PAI teachers. The selection of students was based on variations in the level of learning motivation identified in the initial observation stage, so that it could represent motivational conditions from high to low. The number of informants was not determined from the beginning but followed the principle of data saturation, meaning the data collection process was stopped when the information obtained was repetitive and did not yield new findings.

Data collection in this study was carried out through three complementary techniques. First, semi structured interviews were conducted individually with all research informants. Interview guidelines were prepared based on the research focus, then tested for readability before use so that questions could be well understood by respondents. Second, passive participant observation was carried out during the PAI learning process to directly observe the level of student engagement and the patterns of interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. Third, documentation study was carried out by examining various documents such as

learning tools, teacher notes, and other supporting documents to strengthen data validity through triangulation.

Data analysis was performed by adopting an adaptive grounded theory model through three coding stages. The first stage was open coding, which is the process of identifying and labeling units of meaning emerging from interview data. The second stage was axial coding, which is grouping these codes into categories based on conceptual relationships found. The third stage was selective coding, which is integrating the formed categories into main themes in accordance with the research focus. The analysis process was carried out repeatedly and reflectively by comparing field data and theoretical frameworks until a complete and consistent understanding of the phenomenon under study was obtained.

Data validity was ensured through the application of source triangulation and technique triangulation, so that the data obtained could be compared and verified. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from students and teachers, while technique triangulation was carried out through a combination of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, the researcher also applied a member checking process, which is re confirming the findings to informants to ensure data suitability. Furthermore, ethical aspects of research such as informed consent to informants and maintaining the confidentiality of informant identities were fulfilled before data collection was carried out. Thus, the research process not only produced valid data but also upheld ethical aspects in its implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This research reveals student learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in eighth grade at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari in the era of digital transformation. Qualitative data analysis yielded three central themes that answer the three research questions in an integrated manner: the condition of learning motivation, the utilization of digital technology, and the factors influencing PAI learning motivation. These three themes are discussed integratively below.

Student Learning Motivation Conditions in PAI Learning

The PAI learning motivation found in the research subjects was heterogeneous and included three categories as presented in Table 1. Most students showed strong intrinsic motivation, stemming from enthusiasm for Islamic content, intellectual satisfaction, and awareness to deepen religious teachings. Others were extrinsically motivated through the figure of the teacher, parental support, and cooperation with peers. A small number of students were in a state of amotivation, following learning merely as a fulfillment of formal obligations without meaningful involvement.

Table 1. PAI learning motivation conditions

Motivation Theme	Category	Finding Description
Intrinsic Motivation	Enthusiasm and intellectual satisfaction, personal interest in PAI lessons	Students learn PAI because they want to understand religion, increase faith, and feel direct benefits in daily life
Extrinsic Motivation	Teacher figure, parental support, and peer influence	Learning spirit increases when teachers deliver material in an interesting way, parents

		provide active encouragement, and peers invite cooperation
Amotivation	Formality, no active involvement	A small number of students follow learning merely because PAI is a compulsory subject in school, without meaningful learning drive

Source: results of interview data analysis, 2026

Utilization of Digital Technology in PAI Learning

The utilization of digital technology in PAI learning at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari occurs in three different patterns of conditions and implications, as summarized in Table 2. In general, students positively welcome the use of digital media such as YouTube videos and internet based applications because they make learning more visual and interesting. Teachers note that playing videos from trusted sources contributes to an increase in learning enthusiasm, especially for material that requires demonstration of worship practices.

Table 2. Patterns of digital technology utilization in PAI learning

Utilization Pattern	Supporting Conditions	Implications for Motivation
Technology as an attraction (videos, applications, YouTube)	Adequate internet infrastructure and devices	Increases initial engagement and interest in material
Technology as a complement to teacher explanation	Teachers integrate digital media pedagogically	Deepens understanding, especially in worship practice material
Technology hindered	Limited internet and mobile phone ownership	Technology effectiveness decreases, students without access fall behind in digital learning experience

Source: results of interview data analysis, 2026

Factors Influencing PAI Learning Motivation in the Digital Era

PAI learning motivation is not determined by a single variable but is the result of interrelated interactions between internal and external factors that work synergistically. The table below summarizes the dimensions of factors, their indicators, and their role in learning motivation.

Table 3. Factors influencing PAI learning motivation in the digital era

Factor Dimension	Indicator	Role in PAI Learning Motivation
Internal	Interest in PAI, religious awareness, academic ambition	Forms a stable motivational foundation resistant to external disturbances
External, teacher	Innovative methods, contextual material, engaging teaching style	Becomes a key determinant of active student engagement in learning
External, family	Parental encouragement, emphasis on religious values at home	Creates uniformity between home and school values, thereby strengthening motivation organically

External, social	Peer cooperation in PAI tasks	Fulfills the need for relatedness that supports the growth of intrinsic motivation
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Source: results of interview data analysis, 2026

DISCUSSION

Student Learning Motivation Conditions in PAI Learning

The conditions above can be explained through the framework of Self Determination Theory which views motivation as a continuum, ranging from internalized motivation to a state of no motivation. Some students show integrated regulation, namely learning because of the drive to understand and internalize the values of Islamic teachings personally. However, others are still in the amotivation stage, where learning is only carried out as a routine without meaningful involvement (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This condition shows that the internalization of Islamic values plays an important role in forming more stable intrinsic motivation compared to technical factors in learning. Research by (Nabila, 2025) shows that values such as sincerity, patience, and worship orientation in learning directly contribute to the formation of deeper intrinsic motivation in students. This process is highly dependent on how these values are presented in students learning experiences. In this case, the teacher's role becomes important as a mediator connecting values with students life contexts. From the perspective of Islamic education, this variation reflects different levels of awareness in seeking knowledge, ranging from worship orientation to merely fulfilling formal obligations. Therefore, strengthening intrinsic motivation is not enough through normative material delivery, but needs to be supported by relevant and meaningful learning strategies. This approach is in line with the concept of meaningful learning which emphasizes the importance of the connection between learning material and students' real experiences so that the values learned can be internalized more deeply (Santrock, 2011).

Utilization of Digital Technology in PAI Learning

A key finding emerging in this study is the presence of a contradictory phenomenon. Although digital technology can increase the visual appeal in learning, students still place direct explanations from teachers as the primary source for understanding material. This can be understood as technology not functioning as a substitute for pedagogical interaction, but rather as a support that enriches the learning process. This phenomenon can be explained through social cognitive theory which states that the modeling process from teachers has a stronger influence in shaping understanding compared to the use of passive media (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). In PAI learning, the teachers role is not only as a material deliverer but also as a role model who has pedagogical and theological values that cannot be replaced by technology. In addition, limited internet access and device ownership are still major obstacles indicating a digital divide in the learning process. The UNESCO report emphasizes that inequality in technology access is an important factor affecting the effectiveness of digital learning, especially in semi-urban areas with limited infrastructure. These results differ from research (Fatimah et al., 2024) which found that digital technology can encourage student engagement and learning motivation through the presentation of material that is more interactive and relevant to their life context. Thus, the effectiveness of technology utilization in learning is highly dependent on the conditions and context of each institution. A blended learning approach that still places the teacher as the main role in learning is considered most appropriate to be applied in this context.

Factors Influencing PAI Learning Motivation in the Digital Era

The teachers role in this research is not only dominant but also a key factor determining the quality of student learning motivation. Student engagement tends to increase when teachers are able to present learning that is relevant, communicative, and close to their lives. This condition is in line with Self Determination Theory, where when teachers create a warm, relevant, and responsive learning atmosphere, students needs for autonomy and competence are met, so

that extrinsic motivation transforms into more internalized regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, this finding does not mean that the teacher is the sole determinant. Compared to the UNESCO report which emphasizes the importance of educational system and infrastructure support, this research actually shows that in the madrasah context, the quality of interaction between teachers and students has a more direct influence on learning motivation. In the perspective of Islamic education, the relationship between teachers and students is not only instructional but also transcends pedagogical functions because PAI teachers act as murabbi who guide, shape character, and instill spiritual values in students. This role places the teacher as a figure who fosters a love for knowledge, which is in line with the deepest form of intrinsic motivation. This is supported by studies that affirm that teachers in Islamic education do not only function as knowledge transmitters but also as moral and spiritual guides who shape students' personalities holistically (Istiqomah, 2025).

The role of the family in the research results above is in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model which places the family as the closest environment that has the most influence in shaping a child's learning orientation (Santrock, 2021). The alignment between values instilled at home and values obtained at school forms a strong and consistent learning environment. Meanwhile, peer influence works through fulfilling the need for relatedness in Self-Determination Theory, namely the feeling of being accepted and being part of a learning group that encourages the natural development of intrinsic motivation. This is supported by research showing that social support from peers has a positive and significant relationship with student learning motivation, where the higher the support received, the higher the learning motivation (Rejeki et al., 2023).

The most theoretically valuable finding is the strengthening of value- and identity-based motivation in a number of students, namely learning PAI not merely for academic grades, but because they want to practice Islamic teachings in daily life. This orientation represents integrated regulation in Self Determination Theory, a condition where learning goals have merged with an individuals core identity and values (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the perspective of Islamic education, this condition shows a shift from knowledge mastery to the practice of values based on belief. This process is related to the formation of students' religious identity, where the stronger the internalization of Islamic values, the higher the intrinsic motivation in learning. This is in line with (Muhaimin, 2012) research which states that Islamic education is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects but also towards the formation of religious awareness that encourages students to make learning a part of worship and religious commitment.

These three themes can be formulated as an ecosystem model of PAI learning motivation that is interconnected. Optimal learning motivation arises when students internal drive receives support from teachers through the application of innovative and contextual learning methods. This condition is further strengthened when supported by a positive social environment, both from family and peers, as well as the utilization of digital technology adapted to students' needs and conditions. These four components do not work separately but influence each other and form a synergistic relationship. If one component is not met, the overall effectiveness in building student learning motivation will decrease. This finding develops Self-Determination Theory through the integration of religious values as a primary source of intrinsic motivation.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for eighth grade students at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari in the era of digital transformation is diverse and dynamic, formed from the interaction between internal and external factors. Most students have intrinsic motivation driven by religious awareness and the need to understand

Islamic teachings, while others are influenced by external factors such as the role of teachers, parental support, and the peer environment, and a small number are in a state of amotivation. The utilization of digital technology can increase students initial interest and engagement, but its effectiveness depends on the readiness of facilities and the teachers ability to integrate it appropriately. Findings also show that students still place direct explanations from teachers as the primary source of understanding, so technology functions as a support, not a replacement for pedagogical interaction. This finding confirms that PAI learning motivation in the digital era needs to be understood as the result of interaction between students psychological dimensions, learning strategies, and social environment, thereby enriching the study of learning motivation in the context of Islamic education while providing a practical overview of the importance of balance between technological innovation and teacher student relations in learning. Therefore, PAI learning needs to be designed contextually by integrating technology adaptively, strengthening the teachers role as the main facilitator, and involving the support of family and the social environment so that student learning motivation can develop more optimally. Theoretically, the findings of this study strengthen the relevance of the Self Determination Theory based motivation approach in the context of Islamic education, specifically that PAI students' intrinsic motivation develops through the fulfillment of needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness integrated with Islamic values. In addition, the results of this study enrich the study of learning motivation by placing religiosity as an important element in the formation of intrinsic motivation. Practically, teachers need to balance the use of technology with strengthening direct interaction, role modeling, and presenting relevant material, as well as involving family support as part of the learning environment. PAI learning needs to be developed more contextually by utilizing technology appropriately without reducing the teachers main role. Schools need to support infrastructure readiness and improve teachers digital competence. In addition, collaboration between schools and parents needs to be strengthened. Further research is suggested to broaden the subjects and use more diverse approaches so that the results are more comprehensive.

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