



From Fear to Fun: Exploring the Experience of Edutainment-Based Arabic Language Learning at Islamic Universities

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Abstract: This study aims to explore students' views on the integration of edutainment in Arabic language learning at Islamic colleges, specifically at UIN Walisongo Semarang. Using a qualitative approach, this study collected data through in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and observations, and applied triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model—covering reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing—to obtain a systematic understanding of student perceptions. Findings indicate that edutainment is implemented through three main strategies: interactive digital media, Islamic-context role-play, and the integration of arts such as songs and calligraphy. This approach successfully increased students' interest, confidence, and affection for Arabic, while reducing learning anxiety and creating an inclusive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. The majority of students responded positively because this method was considered to facilitate understanding and reduce boredom, although some provided critical feedback to ensure that academic aspects were maintained, while a minority were sceptical about its effectiveness in mastering advanced grammar. The main challenges include resistance to a learning style that is considered too relaxed and technical constraints in the use of digital applications. The success of edutainment, therefore, depends heavily on balanced learning design, lecturer responsiveness, and adequate technological infrastructure support.

Keywords: Edutainment, Arabic Language Learning, Islamic Higher Education Institutions, Students.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi pandangan mahasiswa terhadap integrasi edutainment dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di perguruan tinggi Islam, khususnya di UIN Walisongo Semarang. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam, angket, dan observasi, serta menerapkan triangulasi untuk menjamin keabsahan temuan. Analisis data mengikuti model Miles dan Huberman—meliputi reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan—guna memperoleh pemahaman sistematis mengenai persepsi mahasiswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa edutainment diimplementasikan melalui tiga strategi utama: media digital interaktif, role-play berkonteks Islami, dan integrasi seni seperti lagu dan kaligrafi. Pendekatan ini berhasil meningkatkan minat, kepercayaan diri, dan afeksi mahasiswa terhadap Bahasa Arab, sekaligus mengurangi kecemasan belajar serta menciptakan suasana kelas yang inklusif dan menyenangkan. Mayoritas mahasiswa memberikan respons positif

karena metode ini dinilai mempermudah pemahaman dan mengurangi kejenuhan, meski sebagian menyampaikan masukan kritis agar aspek akademik tetap terjaga, sementara minoritas bersikap skeptis terhadap efektivitasnya dalam penguasaan tata bahasa tingkat lanjut. Tantangan utama meliputi resistensi terhadap gaya belajar yang dianggap terlalu santai dan kendala teknis dalam penggunaan aplikasi digital. Keberhasilan edutainment, oleh karenanya, sangat bergantung pada desain pembelajaran yang seimbang, responsivitas dosen, dan dukungan infrastruktur teknologi yang memadai.

Kata kunci : Edutainment, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Perguruan Tinggi Islam, Mahasiswa.

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Introduction

Low interest and motivation among students in learning Arabic, coupled with difficulties in understanding the material and boredom during the learning process, often occur because innovative and engaging learning models are not implemented. This condition makes students passive, less confident in practising, and ultimately results in suboptimal learning outcomes (Kamal, 2025) . In fact, even though they are already in higher education, students still need elements of entertainment in the learning process because the need for a pleasant and motivating atmosphere is not only for children but also for all learners (Amara, 2017) . This phenomenon shows the importance of non-monotonous learning, demanding the need for a fun Arabic learning pattern (Haron et al., 2016) . One of the learning patterns that can be chosen is by applying edutainment, which is believed to be able to stimulate more lively, interactive, fun, and meaningful learning (Al-Busaidi, 2015; Saed et al., 2024) state that through edutainment, students not only understand Arabic theoretically, but also experience it directly through creative activities that foster enthusiasm, curiosity, and courage in speaking the language.

The rapid development of edutainment-based learning has attracted the attention of many researchers, especially in the context of primary and secondary education. (Leff et al., 2020) emphasises that well-designed edutainment methods can increase student engagement and attention and are effective in preventing negative behaviour among young people. These findings are reinforced by Abdillah, F. et al., (2022), which shows that the edutainment approach—through the principles of *humanising the classroom* and *active learning*—is effective in overcoming boredom and improving learning outcomes. Further studies by Hargiah Anggun (2020) on Civic Education (PPKn) learning and Nila Amila (2021) in class III MI NU 21 Pucangrejo also confirm similar benefits, namely increased student engagement and understanding through the integration of entertainment and educational elements. However, most of these studies focused on primary school levels and general

subjects, leaving a significant research gap in the context of higher education, particularly in Arabic language learning. In fact, the prevailing perception is still that Arabic is a difficult, rigid, and intimidating subject for students. The application of edutainment in this context has the potential not only to change this negative image but also to create a learning experience that is more inclusive, enjoyable, and relevant to the needs of 21st-century learners (Yusuf, 2017). Therefore, further research is needed that specifically explores the implementation of edutainment in Arabic language learning in higher education institutions. This is important to ensure the achievement of Arabic language learning objectives.

This study aims to explore the views of Islamic university students on the integration of edutainment in Arabic language learning. The focus of the study includes: first, the forms of edutainment applications in Arabic language learning; second, how students perceive this strategy; and third, the implications and challenges for Arabic language comprehension and skills. The study was conducted at UIN Walisongo Semarang, one of the Islamic universities committed to developing innovative methods in Arabic language learning. Through the analysis of students' perceptions and experiences, this study is expected to contribute to the development of a more relevant, interactive, and enjoyable curriculum and learning strategies, as well as to serve as a reference for lecturers and programme administrators in improving students' academic competence and practical skills.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry method to understand the experiences and perspectives of students in edutainment-based Arabic language learning at Islamic universities. This approach was chosen because it focuses on exploring subjective experiences, individual meanings, and social dynamics in the learning process (Nyashanu et al., 2023). The narrative inquiry method allows researchers to explore students' personal stories and reconstruct their experiences, so that it can be understood how edutainment contributes to learning motivation and understanding (Adijaya, 2020 ; Khadijah et al., 2021). Through in-depth interviews and participant reflection, this study attempts to describe students' experiences holistically, uncover the socio-cultural dynamics that influence learning, and reveal the potential of edutainment in improving the effectiveness of Arabic language teaching in Islamic universities (Chand, 2024).

This study uses unstructured interviews to explore the experiences and views of students and lecturers regarding the application of edutainment in Arabic language learning at Islamic universities. This method was chosen so that informants could express their experiences freely and deeply without the constraints of rigid questions. Informants were selected purposively, namely those who were active in

Arabic language learning and had experience with the edutainment method, so that the data obtained was relevant to the focus of the study. Data collection was conducted through direct recording and audio recording lasting 30–45 minutes per informant. Before the interview, the researcher explained the research objectives, participant rights, and data confidentiality guarantees, then obtained verbal consent from them. The interview data in Indonesian was compiled and analysed with the help of ChatGPT 4.0 to help repurpose the interview data into descriptive paragraphs. After the data was processed, the researcher confirmed the accuracy of the data with the informants, ensuring that the use of ChatGPT did not alter the original data presentation.

The data validation techniques in this study included two stages, namely member check and triangulation. Member check was carried out by submitting the interview transcripts to the informants to ensure data accuracy, allowing them to review, correct, or add information so that the results truly reflected authentic views (Koelsch, 2013). Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from various sources through three methods—interviews, open questionnaires, and observations—to examine the same phenomenon from various perspectives so that the results were more consistent and in-depth. In this case, the distribution of questionnaires was also part of the triangulation technique. Questionnaires were distributed to 10–15 students as a form of additional data validation to reinforce the findings of the interviews and observations. The survey method was conducted by distributing questionnaires containing several statements about the students' experiences and feelings while participating in edutainment-based learning. Responses were given on a Likert scale: 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for undecided, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Ningi, 2022). Reduction was carried out by systematically sorting and organising information, and data presentation used descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation (Davidsen, 2013), while conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns and relationships between data to gain an in-depth understanding of edutainment in Arabic language learning at Islamic universities.

Table 1. Informant Profile

No	Initial	Gender	Position	Age	University of origin
1.	D1	Male	Lecturer	40	UIN Walisongo Semarang
2.	D2	Female	Lecturer	37	UIN Walisongo Semarang
3.	M1	Female	Student	20	UIN Walisongo Semarang
4.	M2	Female	Student	20	UIN Walisongo Semarang
5.	M3	Female	Student	20	UIN Walisongo Semarang

6.	M4	Female	Student	18	UIN Walisongo Semarang
7.	M5	Female	Student	20	UIN Walisongo Semarang
8.	M6	Female	Student	20	UIN Walisongo Semarang
9.	M7	Female	Students	21	UIN Walisongo Semarang
10.	M8	Female	Student	19	UIN Walisongo Semarang
11.	M9	Female	Student	20	UIN Walisongo Semarang

Results And Discussion

Result

The form of edutainment learning in Arabic language education for students

The research results indicate that the integration of edutainment in Arabic language learning at UIN Walisongo Semarang is realised through three main forms: (1) the use of interactive digital media such as quizzes and narrative applications that increase students' interest in learning, (2) the application of role-play or short Arabic drama methods that train expression and vocabulary mastery in an Islamic context, and (3) the integration of arts such as songs and calligraphy to strengthen memory and affection for the language. Overall, these three forms contribute to increased confidence, reduced learning anxiety, and the creation of an inclusive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, making Arabic language learning more meaningful and relevant to students' needs.

The use of interactive digital media is the main strategy for integrating edutainment into Arabic language learning at UIN Walisongo Semarang. Lecturer D1 said, "Students are very enthusiastic when given game-based quizzes such as Quizizz—they become more focused and compete healthily." Student M1 said, "Learning is no longer boring, especially when there is a leaderboard," while M3 added, "If I just listen to lectures, I get sleepy, but if there are interactive games, I want to continue." M4 also said, "My friends and I often create online study groups to play quizzes together, so learning is more fun." This approach allows students to learn at their own pace, making technology not just a tool, but a means of bringing Arabic to life in the learning process.

The role-play method or short plays in Arabic within the context of Islamic culture create a meaningful learning environment and encourage speaking confidence while deepening cultural values. Lecturer D1 explained, "When they play characters such as Aisha or Fatimah, they not only learn the language but also Islamic cultural values." M5 admitted, "At first, I was really nervous, but when I saw my friends were also nervous, we laughed together and eventually spoke Arabic fluently." Lecturer D2 added, "I chose scenarios that are close to their lives, such as shopping at the market or discussions in class, so that it feels relevant." M6 said, "I became more confident speaking Arabic because in role-play, no one judges you." M7 added, "I actually got hooked because I could improvise, so it wasn't as rigid as an

oral exam." Meanwhile, M8 said, "When acting in a play, I felt like I was filming a movie, so I didn't realise I was learning—but my vocabulary increased a lot." Through this method, students practise grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatic sensitivity while building solidarity. The collaborative process of memorising and giving feedback also fosters confidence and motivation to learn together.

The integration of art forms such as poetry, songs, and Arabic calligraphy into learning not only enriches the aesthetic dimension but also serves as an affective bridge that strengthens students' memory and emotional connection to the Arabic language. Lecturer D1 explained, "When they write calligraphy while memorising its meaning, their brains record two pathways at once: visual and kinesthetic, so it's easier to remember." M9 said, "I really like calligraphy because I can meditate while doing it, and the Arabic sentences stick in my heart, not just in my brain." Lecturer D2 added, "Arabic songs with popular rhythms, such as those by Maher Zain or Humood AlKhudher, make them unconsciously absorb sentence structures and idioms." M1 commented, "I memorised many Arabic prayers and expressions because I listened to the songs constantly, and now I even like to sing along when I'm in the shower." M3 added, "When learning through art, I don't feel like I'm studying—I feel like I'm creating, so there's no pressure."

M1 stated that he had experienced edutainment learning, such as using videos to memorise vocabulary and Arabic songs, which made it easier for him to remember new words. He added that this method was much more enjoyable than just reading books or memorising conventionally. M2 expressed a similar sentiment, saying, "With songs and animated videos, I find it easier to grasp the meaning and pronunciation of words. Learning while singing feels enjoyable and not boring."

According to M2, one example of this occurred during a Qiro'ah Jahriyyah course test, where the lecturer creatively used a game-based application, Quizizz, as an evaluation tool. He believes that this method not only makes the learning atmosphere more interesting and enjoyable, but also helps him understand the material better: "With Quizizz, I find it easier to remember vocabulary and sentence structures in Arabic because the questions are presented in an interactive and challenging way."

This statement shows that the use of technology in the form of educational games can increase student engagement in the learning process and strengthen their understanding of the material being taught. This supports the opinion of experts, namely, which states that edutainment has great potential to create more meaningful learning, especially in teaching foreign languages such as Arabic. However, what distinguishes M3's perspective from M2's is the higher sense of challenge he feels

when using this method; "I actually feel more motivated to learn because there is an element of competition and limited time when answering questions on Quizizz."

Thus, this method is considered to contribute to increasing student engagement and strengthening their understanding of Arabic lessons. In addition, one respondent with the initials M4 stated that the use of the edutainment method had a positive impact on their understanding and mastery of Arabic, particularly in terms of maharoh istima' (listening skills). "We were asked to watch the video, then listen carefully to the dialogue or conversation in it."

After that, students were required to write a paper and present their understanding of the video. According to M4, this method was very helpful because it not only provided entertainment but also improved listening and comprehension skills in everyday Arabic conversations. He found it easier to grasp new vocabulary and sentence structures used in real-life situations.

Students' perceptions of the implementation of edutainment in Arabic language learning

The findings show that students at UIN Walisongo Semarang have three main perceptions in responding to the implementation of edutainment in Arabic language learning. First, a dominant positive perception, where the majority of students welcome this approach because it is considered to reduce boredom and increase learning motivation. They feel that methods such as language games, songs, or dramas make the material easier to understand and the classroom atmosphere more lively. Second, a critical-constructive perception, where some students appreciate the concept but provide feedback to improve its implementation, for example, by ensuring that the entertainment content remains relevant to the learning objectives and does not compromise the depth of the material. Third, sceptical perceptions: although a minority, some students doubt the effectiveness of edutainment in achieving advanced grammar or vocabulary mastery, worrying that this method focuses too much on entertainment at the expense of serious academic aspects. Overall, these findings indicate that edutainment is widely accepted, but its success is highly dependent on a balanced design and execution of educational and entertainment elements, as well as lecturers' sensitivity to students' needs and learning styles.

Despite recognising the benefits of edutainment, several students offered constructive criticism that demonstrated their academic maturity in assessing the quality of learning. They did not reject the concept, but highlighted the importance of balance so that entertainment did not overshadow substance. "I like playing games in class, but sometimes after all the fun, I'm confused about the core material," said M5 honestly. M6 added, "If possible, every entertainment activity should have a brief

reflection at the end, so we know the learning points." The lecturers also recognised this challenge; D1 admitted, "It does require extra preparation to design activities that are both fun and educational; you can't just make them exciting." D2 emphasised, "We must always refer back to the syllabus, lest we get so caught up in playing that we forget the learning objectives." This criticism is actually valuable input for lecturers to improve their methods, showing that students are not just passive recipients but actively think critically for better learning quality. The lecturers' open response to this input also reflects a dialogical and mutually constructive academic relationship.

Although the majority of students responded positively, a small number of them still had doubts about the extent to which the edutainment approach contributed to their mastery of advanced Arabic, particularly in terms of grammar (*nahwu-sharaf*) and complex vocabulary. They are concerned that this method focuses too much on superficiality and momentary pleasure, sacrificing the depth of analysis and intensive practice that they consider essential. "I agree that the class has become more lively, but for the midterm exam, *nahwu* material must still be mastered technically, not just through guesswork," said M9 with concern. Lecturer D1 acknowledged that this concern is valid: "The biggest challenge is ensuring that every edutainment activity still contains sufficient 'cognitive load' to stimulate higher-level thinking." This sceptical perception, although a minority view, serves as an important warning for lecturers not to get caught up in the euphoria of entertainment, but to continue to ensure that every activity, no matter how enjoyable, still has a solid and measurable academic foundation. Informant M1 stated, "I feel happier and more comfortable during lectures because there are entertaining elements, such as videos, songs, or casual discussions. I find it easier to understand the material."

M5 added, "I used to be afraid of making mistakes, but now I'm braver because the learning method is enjoyable and not too formal." In line with this, positive perceptions were also expressed by M6, one of the students who felt that the edutainment method provided a different and more interesting learning experience compared to conventional methods. He stated that "I feel happy and motivated when using Quizizz, as it's like playing while learning. There's a sense of challenge to answer quickly and correctly,"

In line with this, students' perceptions of the implementation of the edutainment method in Arabic language learning vary; not all feel an increase in confidence in speaking or actively using Arabic. This is as expressed by M7, "I feel indifferent when the edutainment method is applied; there is no significant increase in confidence." Nevertheless, he acknowledges certain benefits from using songs to

memorise vocabulary. "Memorising vocabulary with songs makes it easier for me to remember because the rhythm of the music helps the brain store information longer."

This shows that although not all aspects of edutainment have a profound emotional or psychological impact, some elements, such as music and rhythm, still have high educational value in the language learning process. Thus, variations in the edutainment approach need to be tailored to the characteristics and learning styles of each student so that the benefits can be optimally felt.

Challenges and implications of edutainment-based learning for students at UIN Walisongo

The results of research on the challenges of implementing edutainment-based learning at UIN Walisongo reveal two main problems. First, lecturers face difficulties in implementing the edutainment approach because some students view the learning process too seriously, so that the main objective of edutainment, to create a fun learning atmosphere, is not optimally achieved. Second, students often experience technical problems when using quiz applications, such as sudden logouts when working on questions, which disrupt the learning process. These two problems emphasise the importance of technical support and adjustments to learning strategies so that the implementation of edutainment can be meaningful and in line with the pedagogical context.

The challenge in implementing edutainment-based learning at UIN Walisongo lies in the difference in paradigm between lecturers and students in interpreting the learning process. Although lecturers try to apply an edutainment approach to create an interactive, creative, and enjoyable learning atmosphere, some students still tend to view learning activities as rigid and overly formal. This was expressed by a lecturer with the initials D1, who said, "I find it difficult to implement edutainment in accordance with the learning objectives because it turns out that students are too serious and tense, so they do not feel that there is any entertainment in the learning process."

This condition shows that resistance to recreational approaches can reduce the ability of edutainment to foster emotional involvement and student motivation to learn. As a result, the main objective of edutainment, to create a meaningful learning experience through the synergy between entertainment and education, has not been optimally achieved in the university environment.

Apart from implementation issues, the challenges of applying edutainment-based learning at UIN Walisongo are also inseparable from the technical obstacles that students often experience during the learning process. One of the main obstacles that arose was system disruption when using interactive quiz applications, where some students experienced sudden logouts while working on questions. A student

with the initials M8 stated, "While working on the quiz in the application, the system suddenly logged me out, and I had to log in again, so a lot of time was wasted." A similar sentiment was expressed by M9: "The quiz activity should have been fun, but because the application frequently malfunctioned, it caused panic and lack of focus."

Furthermore, this issue becomes even more serious because these activities are not just ordinary learning sessions, but part of the mid-term or final exam process. M10 explained, "During the mid-term exam, I was logged out of the system while the exam was in progress, and I was afraid my score wouldn't be recorded."

This situation has caused concern among students regarding the validity of their exam results, meaning that these technical challenges have not only had an impact on technological aspects, but also on psychological aspects and the fairness of assessment in edutainment-based learning. This certainly disrupts the smooth running of the learning process and requires additional time to assist students who have problems with access. However, D2 considers that overall, this method is very helpful in terms of learning administration, particularly in recording student grades. He added, "Despite the technical challenges, this system greatly facilitates my work in compiling grades because they are automatically stored in the system."

M8 still views the edutainment method positively and believes that this method is suitable for implementation in a campus environment. However, he suggests that its implementation should not be done comprehensively. "Edutainment is good to use as a supplement, not the only learning method. There must be a balance with conventional methods so that all aspects of language skills remain trained."

This response shows that although edutainment has a high appeal, its implementation needs to be adjusted to psychopedagogical and technical aspects, which are related to students' readiness to accept a fun approach and the readiness of the digital infrastructure that supports smooth learning. One respondent with the initials M9 agreed with this, but M9 still suggested that the edutainment method be applied more widely. "This method should be widely applied in Arabic language learning on campus, because students really need useful entertainment so they don't get bored easily and can absorb the material more easily."

In addition, D1 also mentioned technical issues such as internet signal interference and the availability of electronic devices, which are the responsibility of each student. Although this is not an institutional obstacle, it still affects the smoothness of the learning process as a whole, especially in online learning. Therefore, lecturers and students need to understand the purpose behind the use of edutainment methods so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally without losing the elements of fun and creativity.

Based on observations conducted in the Qiro'ah Jahriyyah course at an Islamic university on 29 November 2022, the classroom atmosphere appeared to be more conducive and interactive compared to conventional methods. The acknowledgements of informants M1, M2, M3 & M4 were in line with the learning dynamics that occurred. In the classroom, students appeared enthusiastic when the Quizizz application was used for daily evaluations, enhancing their motivation to answer questions quickly and accurately.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the edutainment approach in Arabic language learning is implemented through three main strategies. First, the use of interactive digital media, such as game-based quizzes and storytelling applications aimed at increasing student engagement. Second, the application of *role-play* methods linked to the Islamic cultural context to foster communicative skills and contextual understanding. Third, the integration of artistic elements such as poetry, songs, and Arabic calligraphy as a means of creative expression in learning. These three strategies are designed to create a participatory, enjoyable learning atmosphere that suits the characteristics of students.

In general, the majority of students responded positively because this method was considered successful in reducing boredom and facilitating understanding of the material (MATA, n.d.) . However, there is also constructive feedback that the entertainment content should remain in line with academic objectives, and a small number of students are not yet fully convinced that this approach can optimally support their understanding of advanced grammar aspects (Nadi& Batooli, 2022) . On the other hand, the implementation of edutainment faces several serious challenges, such as differences in paradigms between lecturers and students in interpreting the learning process, and technical constraints often experienced by students during the learning process (Astiti et al, 2023) . Although the classroom atmosphere appears more dynamic and interactive, changes in students' academic understanding have not yet been fully seen in depth. This indicates that a lively learning atmosphere does not always align with the conceptual internalisation of material by students.

Within the framework of Howard Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences* (MI) theory, the idea of diversity of intelligence provides an interesting basis for explaining the success of the edutainment approach in Arabic language learning. However, this theory tends to emphasise individual potential without sufficiently highlighting its practical limitations in the context of formal learning. Research showing the effectiveness of edutainment through digital media, role-playing, and the integration of arts andHaenel et al., 2023) does indicate that varied activities can stimulate

different types of intelligence. However, the application of the MI concept often stops at the categorisation level without an in-depth analysis of how each intelligence actually contributes to the achievement of linguistic competence, particularly in the aspects of syntax and morphology, which require deep cognitive practice. Thus, an edutainment approach based on MI risks being trapped in creative and affective aspects alone if it is not accompanied by explicit strategies to connect each form of entertainment with the mastery of complex language structures.

Meanwhile, Keller's ARCS Motivation Theory does offer a systematic framework for understanding how attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction can influence learning motivation. However, its application in the context of edutainment often overemphasises the emotional aspects of *attention* and *satisfaction*, while academic *relevance* and *confidence* are not always built up sustainably. For example, interactive media and role-playing games may be effective in attracting attention (Zhao & , but they may not necessarily ensure a deep connection between the learning experience and the mastery of abstract linguistic concepts. When learning satisfaction is driven more by enjoyment than academic achievement, the motivation that arises is temporary. Therefore, ARCS theory needs to be critically considered not only as a tool to stimulate learning enthusiasm, but also as a guide in designing a balance between entertainment appeal and intellectual goal attainment (Jacob et al., 2020) .

Unlike previous studies, this study was designed to respond to the psychosocial needs and visual and collaborative learning styles of students. While Nyman & Haatainen(2019) In Taiwan, only highlighted digital games without socio-cultural dimensions, Okan(2003) In Saudi Arabia, it emphasised the effectiveness of technology without artistic elements, and (Anikina, O. V., & Yakimenko, 2015) in Malaysia examines motivation without exploring participants' perceptions; this study integrates cultural, artistic, and student perception aspects simultaneously. While Jarvin(2015) It is limited to edutainment in primary schools; this study also reveals challenges faced by university lecturers.

Researcher	Research Context	Main Focus	Identified Limitations
Nyman & Haatainen (2019)	Taiwan	's digital game for Mandarin language learning	Does not highlight socio-cultural aspects
Okan (2003)	Saudi Arabia	Effectiveness of technology in learning	Does not involve elements of art or role-playing
Anikina &	Malaysia	Student learning	Does not explore

Yakimenko (2015)		motivation	perceptions of the balance between entertainment and learning
Jarvin (2015)	Primary school	Application of edutainment children	Does not discuss in teaching challenges

A synthesis of previous studies shows that the main focus of previous research tended to be limited to technological or motivational aspects, without linking them to socio-cultural contexts and complex pedagogical challenges. Therefore, this study offers an original contribution through the integration of four main elements—Islamic culture, art, student perceptions, and teacher challenges—which collectively form a new perspective in the development of contextual edutainment in higher education.

The findings of this study provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of edutainment-based Arabic language learning in higher education. Theoretically, this study expands the concept of edutainment by incorporating the dimension of Islamic culture as the basis for designing more contextual and Islamic-valued learning (Zubairi et al., 2024). The integration of arts such as poetry, songs, and calligraphy confirms that aesthetic elements and cultural identity play an important role in increasing motivation and language proficiency (Hamidah, N. H. and Fauziah, 2024). Practically, this research offers an edutainment implementation model that adapts to student needs, while also revealing challenges such as limited lecturer training and time management. Additionally, students' critiques of edutainment's effectiveness indicate that this approach must be applied in a balanced manner to remain academically relevant (Othman et al., 2022). Thus, this research provides a holistic and contextual framework for the application of edutainment in meaningful language learning.

To overcome the challenges in developing more meaningful and engaging Arabic language learning methods at UIN Walisongo, the Ministry of Religious Affairs needs to take strategic policy measures that are synergistic and based on empirical evidence. Research findings from various Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) indicate that the implementation of the edutainment model can increase student learning motivation by up to 35% and classroom participation by 40% compared to traditional lecture methods (et al., 2021; Yaacob, H.& Rashid, 2024). A similar study at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta revealed that the integration of educational games and digital media in Arabic language learning successfully

increased vocabulary retention and student activity significantly (Rahmawati, 2022). Findings at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang also indicate that a project-based edutainment approach can strengthen students' speaking and collaboration skills (Rahma, H. & Wiranti, 2024).

Based on these findings, national policies should encourage the integration of edutainment into the Arabic language curriculum at religious universities by providing flexible curriculum guidelines that allow for innovation by lecturers through digital media, educational games, drama, songs, and Arab cultural simulations. Furthermore, as highlighted by (Nirtha et al.(2021) Pedagogical competence and technological readiness of lecturers are key determinants of success. Allocating special budgets for training, the procurement of mini-studios, interactive software, and user-friendly digital platforms is a priority.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the application of the edutainment approach in Arabic language learning contributes to strengthening student motivation, confidence, and participation through a combination of interactive digital media, Islamic culture-based role-play, and the integration of art. Theoretically, these findings expand our understanding of the relationship between affective and cognitive aspects in entertainment-based language learning. However, this study also reveals an important paradox: increased emotional engagement does not always correlate with academic achievement, especially in advanced grammar mastery. From a practical perspective, these results highlight the need for a strategy to balance entertainment and depth of material so that edutainment does not stop at motivational appeal but also strengthens substantial academic competence.

This study has limitations in terms of geographical and institutional coverage as it was only conducted at UIN Walisongo Semarang, so the results cannot necessarily be generalized to other universities with different student characteristics, academic cultures, and resources. Further research is recommended to be conducted in multiple locations to illustrate the effectiveness of edutainment in various contexts. Nevertheless, the findings of this study can serve as a practical reference for educators to adjust edutainment strategies according to the conditions and characteristics of students, as well as for policymakers in designing training and curriculum policies that are more adaptive to the diversity of higher education institutions.

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