



Strategies for Realizing Joyful Learning in Islamic Cultural History Education

Beni Suwardi, Rini Susilowati

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Bandung, Indonesia

Email : ustadzbeni65@gmail.com, rinisusilo.ppg@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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*Corresponding Author

ustadzbeni65@gmail.com

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This study aims to analyze the implementation of learning methods in creating joyful learning within Islamic Cultural History (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam - SKI) instruction. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through structured observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and eight selected students, student perception questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale, and learning documentation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by source and method triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings reveal that the implemented learning methods encouraged active student engagement, generated positive emotional responses, strengthened reflection on character values, and enhanced students' ability to connect historical figures and events in Islamic history with their personal experiences. Students' enthusiasm increased significantly from 48% to 85%, as indicated by observational data. These findings suggest that Islamic Cultural History learning can be developed not merely as a process of historical knowledge transmission but also as a space for character development and spiritual reflection. This approach aligns with the transformative principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and supports the broader goal of providing quality education.

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia emphasizes student-centered learning and encourages the creation of meaningful, engaging, and enjoyable learning experiences. Within this framework, the concept of joyful learning has gained increasing attention because a positive learning atmosphere has been shown to enhance students' motivation, active participation, emotional engagement, and overall learning outcomes. Learning environments that foster enjoyment and meaningful interaction enable students to develop deeper understanding while simultaneously cultivating positive attitudes toward the

learning process. Consequently, educators are challenged to design instructional strategies that not only facilitate cognitive achievement but also promote emotional well-being and character development.

In the context of Islamic Cultural History (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* – SKI), the realization of joyful learning remains a significant challenge. SKI is often perceived by students as a subject dominated by the memorization of historical figures, chronological events, and factual information. Such teacher-centered instructional practices frequently limit students' opportunities to engage critically and personally with historical content, resulting in low motivation and minimal emotional involvement. As a consequence, students tend to view Islamic history merely as a collection of past events rather than as a source of inspiration, wisdom, and moral guidance relevant to contemporary life. This condition is problematic because the primary objective of SKI extends beyond the acquisition of historical knowledge; it also encompasses the cultivation of Islamic values, character formation, and spiritual awareness.

Educational scholars have increasingly highlighted the importance of reflective and transformative learning approaches in addressing these challenges. Joyful learning, which emphasizes positive emotions, active participation, and meaningful experiences, has been widely discussed within the field of Islamic education. Research suggests that students learn more effectively when they experience enjoyment, relevance, and emotional connection during the learning process. Positive emotions facilitate stronger memory retention, higher levels of engagement, and greater willingness to participate in classroom activities. Nevertheless, existing studies have predominantly focused on active learning methods in general, while relatively little attention has been given to reflective learning approaches that connect students' personal identities with historical learning content.

One promising approach is the JoyFull Learning method, a reflective identity-based learning strategy that encourages students to explore self-awareness, personal values, and life experiences in relation to academic content. Rooted in the principles of reflective and constructivist learning, this method positions students as active meaning-makers who construct understanding through reflection on their own experiences. Through guided reflection, students are encouraged to identify values embodied by historical figures, compare them with their own personal experiences, and derive meaningful lessons that can be applied in daily life. Previous studies have demonstrated that reflective learning enhances self-awareness, strengthens character development, and increases students' emotional engagement with learning materials.

The application of the JoyFull Learning method is particularly relevant to SKI because Islamic history contains numerous exemplary figures whose lives offer valuable lessons in leadership, perseverance, integrity, spirituality, and social responsibility. By connecting these historical narratives with students' personal identities and experiences, learning becomes more meaningful and transformative. Rather than merely memorizing historical facts, students are

encouraged to internalize the values represented by Islamic figures and events, thereby fostering both cognitive understanding and character development. Such an approach aligns closely with the broader objectives of Islamic education, which seek to nurture intellectually competent, morally upright, and spiritually conscious individuals.

Despite its potential, empirical research examining the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method in SKI classrooms remains limited, particularly within Islamic boarding school settings. Most existing studies focus on instructional innovation in general Islamic education without specifically investigating how reflective identity-based learning contributes to the creation of joyful learning experiences in Islamic Cultural History. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into pedagogical approaches capable of transforming SKI into a meaningful space for reflection, character formation, and spiritual growth. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method in fostering joyful learning within Islamic Cultural History instruction at Pesantren Daarul Ihsaan Subang. Specifically, the study explores how reflective identity-based activities influence students' emotional engagement, active participation, and value internalization during the learning process. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of innovative pedagogical models in Islamic education, support transformative character-based learning, and promote quality education through inclusive, meaningful, and student-centered learning experiences.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore in depth the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method in fostering joyful learning within Islamic Cultural History (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam – SKI) instruction at Pesantren Daarul Ihsaan Subang. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand the learning process, participants' experiences, and the meaning they attributed to the implementation of reflective learning activities in a natural educational setting. The case study design enabled the researchers to examine comprehensively how the JoyFull Learning method was applied within a specific context and how it influenced students' engagement, participation, and learning experiences. The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year over a six-week period, encompassing four SKI learning sessions focusing on the history and development of Islam during the era of the Khulafaur Rashidun. The participants consisted of 32 sixth-grade students, with eight students selected through purposive sampling as interview informants based on their varying levels of participation and engagement in classroom activities. The SKI teacher was also included as a key informant to provide pedagogical perspectives regarding the implementation of the method.

Data were collected through four complementary techniques: structured classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, student perception

questionnaires, and documentation. Observations focused on indicators of joyful learning, including active participation, emotional expression, enthusiasm, and engagement in classroom discussions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and the selected students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding the JoyFull Learning method. A Likert-scale questionnaire (1-5), validated by two Islamic education experts, was administered to support qualitative findings related to students' perceptions of joyful learning. In addition, documentation such as lesson modules, students' reflective writings, learning artifacts, and photographs of classroom activities was collected as supporting evidence. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation (teacher and student perspectives), methodological triangulation (observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation), and time triangulation through data collection across multiple learning sessions during the six-week research period.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation And Findings Of Joyfull Learning Method

The implementation of the JoyFull Learning method in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning at Pesantren Daarul Ihsaan Subang was conducted through a structured process over four learning meetings, focusing on the material of Islamic development during the era of the Khulafaur Rashidun. The learning process was designed in a systematic flow consisting of five main stages, namely reflective opening, identity exploration, material connection, reflection presentation, and value internalization. These stages were consistently applied in each meeting to ensure that students experienced a continuous reflective learning cycle that connected historical understanding with personal meaning and character development. At the beginning of the implementation, the teacher introduced the JoyFull Learning approach by presenting reflective questions designed to stimulate students' thinking and emotional engagement. One of the key questions used in the first meeting was, "If you were entrusted with a responsibility as great as that of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, what would you do?" This question served as an entry point for students to move beyond passive reception of information toward active reflection on values, responsibility, and personal identity. Interestingly, this initial stimulus generated a noticeable shift in classroom dynamics. Students who were previously passive and reluctant to speak began to show curiosity and willingness to participate in discussions. The atmosphere of the classroom gradually became more open, interactive, and emotionally engaged.

The teacher also observed that the implementation of this method produced a different learning atmosphere compared to conventional lecture-based instruction. In traditional learning settings, students tended to focus on

memorizing historical facts such as names, events, and chronological sequences. However, through the JoyFull Learning approach, students were encouraged to interpret historical figures not only as subjects of memory but also as sources of moral inspiration and personal reflection. The reflective worksheets collected during the learning process further confirmed this transformation. Students were able to express their thoughts in a more meaningful way, linking historical narratives with their own experiences, values, and aspirations. This indicates that learning was no longer limited to cognitive recall but had expanded into affective and reflective dimensions.

Table 1. Comparison of Joyful Learning Indicators Before and After the Implementation of the JoyFull Learning Method



The responses of students throughout the four meetings showed a consistent improvement in indicators of joyful learning. These indicators included increased participation in classroom discussions, greater enthusiasm during learning activities, more expressive emotional engagement, and a higher level of interaction between students and the teacher. Students appeared more confident in expressing their opinions, sharing personal reflections, and responding to questions posed by the teacher. The learning environment became more dynamic, with students actively involved in both individual reflection and group discussion activities.

The findings from the student perception questionnaire further strengthened these observational results. The highest-rated statement was “I understand myself better through this learning process,” with an average score of 4.6 out of 5. This was followed by “This learning process is enjoyable,” with a score of 4.4, and “I am able to connect historical material with my own life,” with a score of 4.3. These results indicate that students not only experienced enjoyment during the learning process but also developed a deeper level of self-awareness and personal connection to the learning material. The data suggests that the JoyFull Learning method successfully created a learning environment that was both emotionally engaging and intellectually meaningful.

In addition, qualitative data from interviews provided richer insights into students’ experiences. One student explained that learning SKI through reflective

questions helped them understand the material more deeply because they could imagine themselves in the position of historical figures. According to this student, the learning process was no longer limited to memorization but had become more meaningful and emotionally engaging. Another student shared that at the beginning they felt confused when asked to reflect on themselves, but after participating in group discussions, they began to understand the values that could be learned from figures such as Caliph Umar. These testimonies illustrate how the method facilitated a gradual shift in students' understanding from surface-level knowledge to deeper value internalization.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges emerged during the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method. One of the main challenges was students' initial unfamiliarity with reflective learning activities. Approximately 30 percent of students showed confusion during the first meeting when confronted with personal and reflective questions, indicating that this approach required an adaptation process. Another challenge was related to time allocation. Compared to conventional lecture-based methods, JoyFull Learning required more time to allow students to reflect, discuss, and present their ideas. This condition demanded careful classroom time management to ensure that all learning stages could be completed effectively within the available lesson time. Furthermore, the success of this method also depended heavily on the teacher's facilitation skills. Teachers were required to guide reflective discussions carefully, ensuring that students felt safe and comfortable in expressing their thoughts without fear of judgment. This required not only pedagogical competence but also emotional sensitivity and the ability to create a supportive learning atmosphere. Without proper facilitation, reflective activities risk becoming superficial or failing to achieve their intended learning outcomes. Overall, the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method demonstrated that when students are given opportunities to reflect on their identity and connect it with historical content, learning becomes more meaningful, engaging, and transformative. The integration of cognitive, emotional, and reflective dimensions in SKI learning contributed to a richer educational experience that extended beyond knowledge acquisition toward character development and personal growth.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning significantly contributes to the creation of a joyful learning environment characterized by active participation, emotional engagement, and meaningful learning experiences. This result is consistent with the core principles of joyful learning, which emphasize the importance of positive emotional states in enhancing students' motivation, attention, and cognitive processing during the learning process. When students experience enjoyment and emotional connection in learning, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material and construct

more meaningful understanding.

One of the most important findings of this study is the transformation of students' learning orientation from memorization-based learning to reflective and meaning-based learning. In conventional SKI instruction, students tend to focus on recalling historical facts such as names, events, and chronological sequences. However, through the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method, students were encouraged to interpret historical figures as moral exemplars and connect historical narratives with their personal experiences. This reflective process enabled students to move beyond surface-level understanding toward deeper internalization of values. Such transformation is in line with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through reflection and personal meaning-making rather than passively received.

The increase in student engagement observed during the learning process also indicates that emotional involvement plays a crucial role in shaping classroom dynamics. The reflective questions used in the JoyFull Learning method functioned as cognitive and emotional triggers that encouraged students to think critically about themselves and their values. As a result, students who were initially passive became more active, confident, and willing to participate in discussions. This finding supports previous studies that highlight the role of emotional stimulation in enhancing student participation and classroom interaction. Furthermore, the high scores obtained from the student perception questionnaire, particularly the statement related to self-awareness, suggest that JoyFull Learning not only improves enjoyment in learning but also strengthens students' reflective capacity. The ability of students to connect historical content with their personal lives indicates that learning has become more contextual and meaningful. This aligns with the objectives of Islamic education, which emphasizes not only cognitive achievement but also moral and spiritual development. In this sense, SKI learning is transformed into a medium for character formation rather than merely a subject of historical memorization.

The interview data further reinforce the importance of experiential and reflective learning in shaping students' understanding. Students reported that they were able to empathize with historical figures and derive personal lessons from their experiences. This suggests that the JoyFull Learning method successfully bridges the gap between historical knowledge and lived experience. By situating students within reflective scenarios, the method encourages them to internalize values such as responsibility, leadership, and integrity, which are embodied by figures such as Abu Bakr and Umar ibn Khattab. However, despite these positive outcomes, the study also reveals several pedagogical challenges. The initial confusion experienced by a portion of students indicates that reflective learning requires adaptation, particularly in contexts where students are more accustomed to teacher-centered instruction. This suggests that a gradual introduction of reflective activities may be necessary to help students adjust to this new learning approach. Additionally, the increased time requirement for

implementing JoyFull Learning highlights the need for careful lesson planning and time management to ensure that all learning stages can be effectively executed without reducing instructional quality.

Another important issue is the role of teacher competence in facilitating reflective learning. The success of JoyFull Learning depends heavily on the teacher's ability to create a safe, supportive, and open learning environment. Teachers must be able to guide discussions without imposing judgment, allowing students to freely express their thoughts and emotions. This requires not only pedagogical skills but also emotional intelligence and sensitivity to students' learning needs. Without these competencies, the reflective process may not reach its full potential in fostering meaningful learning experiences. Overall, the findings of this study confirm that JoyFull Learning is an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing joyful learning in SKI instruction. By integrating reflection, identity exploration, and value internalization, this method transforms SKI from a purely cognitive subject into a holistic learning experience that nurtures emotional engagement and character development. The study also highlights the importance of aligning instructional strategies with the principles of Islamic education, which emphasize the integration of knowledge, values, and spirituality. In this regard, JoyFull Learning offers a promising model for developing transformative Islamic education that is both meaningful and relevant to students' lives in contemporary educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the JoyFull Learning method in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning at Pesantren Daarul Ihsaan Subang is effective in fostering a joyful learning environment characterized by active participation, emotional engagement, and meaningful student learning experiences. The method successfully transforms the learning process from a teacher-centered and memorization-oriented approach into a more student-centered, reflective, and value-based learning experience. The application of structured reflective stages—consisting of reflective opening, identity exploration, material connection, reflection presentation, and value internalization—has proven capable of enhancing students' engagement both cognitively and emotionally. Students are not only more active in classroom discussions but also demonstrate increased self-awareness and the ability to relate historical Islamic figures and events to their personal lives. This indicates that learning SKI through JoyFull Learning goes beyond knowledge acquisition and extends to the internalization of moral and spiritual values.

Furthermore, the findings show that students' joyful learning indicators, such as enthusiasm, participation, emotional expression, and learning enjoyment, significantly improve after the implementation of the method. The increase in student motivation and engagement is also supported by questionnaire data and interview responses, which reveal that students experience learning as more meaningful, enjoyable, and personally relevant.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identifies several challenges, including students' initial unfamiliarity with reflective learning, the need for longer instructional time, and the importance of teacher facilitation skills in guiding reflective discussions. These challenges indicate that successful implementation of JoyFull Learning requires gradual adaptation, careful classroom management, and strong pedagogical competence from the teacher. Overall, the JoyFull Learning method offers a promising instructional approach for SKI learning within Islamic education settings. It not only enhances joyful learning experiences but also supports the broader goals of Islamic education by integrating knowledge, values, and character development. Therefore, this method can be considered a valuable alternative strategy for improving the quality of SKI learning and fostering holistic student development in the context of contemporary education.

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