

Implementing crossword puzzles using crosswordlabs.com in the campus program teaching at an elementary school

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i> learning media crossword puzzles website Islamic religious education teaching campus program</p>	<p>Islamic religious education learning is an important part of the educational curriculum that aims to form a good understanding, values and attitudes towards Islamic teachings. In order to increase student participation and change the learning atmosphere, it is necessary to use engaging learning media. One of the most widely used and practical media is crossword puzzles. This study aims to describe or explain the students' responses towards the use of crossword media in Islamic religious education learning at SDN Kesamben II Plumpang. The research method is qualitative descriptive research. The data were obtained through direct observation, interviews, and analysis of documents related to the use of crossword media in Islamic religious education learning. The research participants consisted of thirty students of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade learning Islamic religious education at SDN Kesamben II Plumpang. The result shows that the use of crossword puzzle media in Islamic religious education learning has several advantages and has a positive impact on students' learning activities. It can be concluded that the use of crossword media can be an alternative that attracts students to learn Islamic religious education.</p>

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Introduction

The teaching campus program is a form of implementation of the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) which provides opportunities for students to seek teaching experience to support learning in elementary schools (Khotimah et al., 2021). In this program, students become teachers' partners in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Students collaborate with schools to solve several problems at school, especially in the aspects of literacy and numeracy.

SDN Kesamben II is one of the elementary schools that is the target of the teaching campus program organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the criteria set to be the target place of the program is elementary/junior high schools have low AKM scores. In other words, the target of the teaching campus program is elementary/junior high school with low literacy and numeracy levels. For one semester, the university students who join the teaching campus program will become become a partner of teachers and schools in carrying out creativity and innovation in learning (Dirjen Pendidikan Tinggi et al., 2023).

The purpose of the teaching campus program is to help improve literacy and numeracy in students. Based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey released by *the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) in 2019, Indonesia ranks 62 out of 70 countries. In other words, it is included in the 10 countries with the lowest literacy levels. The scope of learning on the teaching campus includes learning that focuses on literacy and numeracy, technology adaptation by assisting the implementation of technology-based learning systems 4.0, and includes matters related to school administration (Anwar, 2021).

Before designing and implementing the program, students were given 1 week to conduct observations at the school. During the observation, there were several things that were found, including limited reading, writing, and arithmetic skills in some students, a lack of student understanding of the reading material and learning tended to be passive and teacher centered.

From the results of these observations, it can be seen that the level of understanding and literacy in students is still low and learning is less active and interactive. This can be caused by low interest and motivation of students, the learning methods used are not attractive, the lack of availability of learning aids or media, the paradigm of teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards learning activities that are not correct (Khalilullah, 2012). Similar to Khalilullah's statement, (Hidayati et al., 2024) stated that low literacy is caused by internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include low motivation to learn, intelligence ability and students' interest in learning. External factors include inadequate facilities and infrastructure, the environment and the ability of teachers. This situation occurs in several subjects, one of which is the Islamic Religious Education subject. Islamic Religious Education subjects have characteristics with the concept of understanding a lot of material. Students have to memorize, remember, and understand so many of the concepts presented. In Islamic Religious Education learning, almost all of them contain material concepts and only a small part contains practice. Therefore, innovation in learning is needed by using fun learning media. Islamic Religious Education has an important role in shaping the character and moral values of students. For elementary school students, studying religion education is not only about understanding religion concepts, but also about developing an understanding of religious values in daily life. In the research

of (Ainiyah, 2013) it is said that religion education is a means to change knowledge from a religious point of view (cognitive aspect), as a means to change moral norms and values to form attitudes (affective aspect), which plays a role in controlling behavior (psychomotor aspect). With good religious education, a perfect human personality will be created. To achieve these goals, educators should use creative and engaging approaches to keep students actively engaged in learning.

In the increasingly evolving digital era, the use of media in learning has become the main focus. One of the media that can be used is crossword puzzles. Crossword puzzles are a form of game that involves filling in empty boxes with letters that form words based on certain clues (Maharani et al., 2019). Crossword puzzle games are commonly used as a means of entertainment and brain exercise, besides that they are also used in learning to improve vocabulary skills, text comprehension, and critical thinking skills (Amalia & Hidayat, 2018). The crossword puzzle makes the filler play and think at the same time. The concept of playing while learning on crossword puzzles makes the learning process fun and meaningful for students (Hiasa et al., 2022). Currently crossword puzzles can be created online on [Crosswordlabs.com](https://www.crosswordlabs.com) website page. With the website, we only need to enter the questions and answers that have been created then the answers will automatically be formed in the crossword puzzle.

This learning media using crossword puzzles has great potential in Islamic Religious Education learning in elementary school. Various benefits can be obtained by using the medium of crossword puzzles. First, it can improve the understanding of concepts. Crossword puzzles allow students to think critically and find answers that fit the clues given. Second, it can develop students' vocabulary. Through crossword

puzzles, students will get to know various relevant religious terms, keywords, and concepts. The process of finding answers in crossword puzzles will help students understand and remember the words better. Third, it can encourage students to actively collaborate and discuss. Crossword puzzles can be played individually or in groups. As students work together to solve crossword puzzles, they will discuss, share knowledge, and build a better understanding. This will encourage teamwork, collaboration, and togetherness in Islamic Religious Education learning. Fourth, the use of crossword puzzles provides a more interactive and enjoyable learning experience. This activity can reduce boredom and increase students' motivation in learning Islamic Religious Education. Fifth, crossword puzzles can be an enrichment medium for students. Through the crossword puzzle game, the teacher can find out the extent of students' understanding of the material that has been delivered so that it can be used as evaluation material for the next lesson.

The various benefits of crossword puzzle learning media are also strengthened by various previous studies. The finding of the research by (Aziz & Alfurqan, 2023) with the title "The Use of Crossword Puzzle Media (TTS) in Improving Students' Critical Thinking in PAI Learning in Elementary Schools" showed that crossword puzzle media can be used to develop critical thinking skills and sharpen memory. In addition, crossword puzzles can stimulate students' critical thinking and curiosity, which affects intelligence and helps students in creating concepts by evaluating the learning that has been learned. Another study from (Amalia & Hidayat, 2018) that examined the impact of crossword puzzle activities on the vocabulary mastery of Islamic religious education of elementary school students. The results of the study showed a significant increase in

the mastery of Islamic religious vocabulary in the group that used crossword puzzles. In addition, another study was also conducted by (Siswasusila, 2017) who conducted research by observing the interaction and collaboration between students in working on crossword puzzles, as well as their impact on students' understanding of religious concepts and social skills. The results of the study show that collaborative learning through crossword puzzles could improve students' understanding of religious concepts and social skills.

Based on the above explanation, this article presents the use of crossword puzzle learning media through the web *Crosswordlabs.com* in Islamic Religious Education learning at Elementary School of SDN Kesamben II Plumpang. The purpose of this study is to describe the students' responses to the use of crossword puzzle learning media in Islamic Religious Education subject. With the existence of the crossword puzzle media, it is hoped that it can solve existing problems. The students become more interested in learning, can easily understand the material, and can work well together.

Method

In this study, the author uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research focuses on natural phenomena or symptoms and is carried out in the field, not in the laboratory (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021). Qualitative descriptive (QD) is a term used in qualitative research for a descriptive study (Kim et al., 2017); (Yuliani, 2018). Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe the existing phenomena, both natural and human engineering by paying more attention to the characteristics, qualities and relationships between activities. Therefore, in this study, there is no treatment, manipulation, or modification of the variables

examined or offered, but the variables and data are explained as they are. This study analyzes the use of crossword puzzle learning media through the *Crosswordlabs* web in Islamic Religious Education learning. The conditions found during the research on the use of this crossword puzzle medium would be explained. The use of this descriptive research method is used to collect a reality in the field so that it can be understood in depth and the data findings in accordance with the research objectives were obtained.

The data collection techniques used in this study are interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to corroborate the results of observations that had been made previously. The interviewees were the students who took Islamic Religious Education subject at an elementary school, SDN Kesamben II. Meanwhile, observation technique was used to observe the implementation of the use of crossword puzzle media. In making observations, there are guidelines or limitations so that the data obtained remains focused on the research objectives.

Furthermore, in analyzing the data, the researcher used the Miles–Huberman and Saldana interactive model, which included data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusion and verification (Miles et al., 2018).

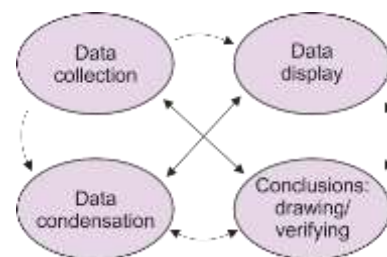


Figure 1. Components of qualitative data analysis: interactive model

In checking the validity of the data, the author chose to use the triangulation

method. Data triangulation is checking data by re-examination. Data triangulation can be done in three ways, namely source triangulation, method triangulation and time triangulation (Wijaya, 2019). In this study, the author uses a triangulation method. The researcher compared several data collection methods to determine the validity of the data. The researcher compared the data from the results of the interview, observation and documentation techniques. The researcher checked with several methods, namely with interview guidelines given to students as well as observation guidelines and documentation guidelines. If the results are the same, the data collection method is valid.

Results and Discussion

Creating crossword puzzles on *Crosswordlabs.com website* is an alternative to create crossword learning media automatically. Crosswordlabs.com website is a website for creating various kinds of puzzles, one of which is crossword puzzles that are easy to use and free. This website can solve crossword puzzles online or in print or downloaded for offline use. To use it, users do not need to pay any fees, no ads, watermarks, and no registration is required. Everyone can use it easily and simply visit *Crosswordlabs.com website*. Here are the steps to make a crossword puzzle through *Crosswordlabs.com website*.

The first thing that needs to be done is to visit the website first by writing on a search on google with the keyword *Crosswordlabs.com*. Next, a front page will appear containing the title column and question column. The title column is used to fill in the title or material used in creating a crossword puzzle. The question column must be filled with questions that have previously been made along with the answers. Questions and answers are

written as one in the question column with a spaced answer format. The format is a provision of the website to make it easier for machines to read the questions and answers. Before hitting the finish and save button, *Crosswordlabs.com website* will provide several crossword puzzle design options. Next, select the desired design and press the finish button, the machine will automatically work according to the questions and answers that have been entered and the design that has been selected. Thus, crossword puzzles can be used both online and offline.



Figure 2. The initial appearance of the crosswordlabs.com website



Figure 3. Enter titles, answers, and questions in the format

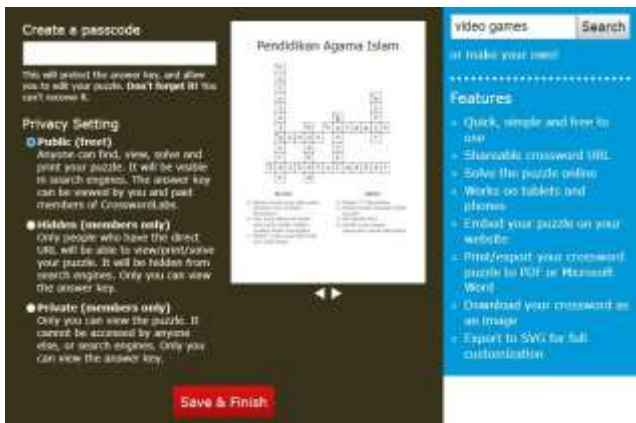


Figure 4. Select a design by clicking the right and left arrows



Figure 5. Crossword puzzles can be used

After the crossword puzzle is created, the steps used in learning using the crossword puzzle media are as follows. The teacher explains the rules of the game. Furthermore, students are divided into several groups. Each group consists of four to five students. Each group gets a crossword puzzle framework complete with questions. Each group works on the crossword puzzle in the form of group cooperation.

This research was carried out in the odd semester of 2023 in the context of the implementation of the teaching campus program at SDN Kesamben II Plumpang. The research subjects were 30 students in grades 4, 5, and 6 at SDN Kesamben II Plumpang. The results of the study show

that the use of crossword puzzle media at SDN Kesamben II had a positive impact on Islamic Religious Education learning. One of the important findings of this study is that the use of crossword media is able to encourage students to actively participate in learning. The results of this study are in accordance with the finding by (Karlina et al., 2020) that shows an increase in the value of learning outcomes and student activity in the subject of Civic Education. Student learning outcomes in affective, cognitive, and psychomotor fields had improved because of the use of this crossword puzzle active learning strategy. According to (Widaningsih, 2023) one of the approaches that can be used by teachers is the crossword puzzle learning strategy. It is an effective and enjoyable active learning strategy that does not take away from the essence of learning. Not only teachers but also students are actively involved in learning by playing crossword puzzles. They will also ask questions as well as seek answers and participate in learning activities. Crossword media provides an interesting and interactive stimulus for students, so they are more involved in the learning process. With crossword puzzles, students are invited to think critically and analytically in finding the right answers. The following is evidence that students actively participate in the use of crossword media.



Figure 6. Students participate in Islamic Religious Education learning

The learning model used is *Cooperative learning* in which students work together in small groups with different abilities, and some use different group sizes to help each other in learning (Mahanani, 2022). In solving problems, students collaborate with groups to find the right answer by discussing and exchanging opinions with each other. This is in line with the statement by (Sogianor & Syahrani, 2022) that in cooperative learning, the main value that students want to instill is the ability to cooperate, socialize, and take responsibility to achieve goals. Students in one group will give each other opinions and input according to the knowledge they understand. Students have different understandings so that the thinking process occurs. This activity stimulates students to interact with learning materials and develop their problem-solving skills.

In this study, the use of crossword puzzle media also facilitates students' understanding of the concepts or materials taught. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by (Edriati et al., 2017) in Mathematics that the strategy of using crossword puzzles is better in improving students' understanding of mathematical concepts than with conventional learning. A well-designed crossword puzzle can cover various aspects of learning, including the definitions, concepts, values, and practices of the Islamic religion. This helps students to relate the information provided to the information they have previously obtained. Thus, students will gain a more comprehensive understanding.

By using crossword learning media, the learning atmosphere was enjoyable and livelier. This is proved by the students' responses as many as 73% of students (22 students) felt pleasant to learn Islamic Religious Education using crossword puzzle games. Crossword puzzle strategy is a learning strategy that combines play and

learning. Students not only play crossword puzzles but also learn about the material through crossword puzzles so that they are more motivated and interested in learning (Karlina et al., 2020). Learning with conventional methods tends to make students bored because the learning process that occurs is only one way and tends to be *a text book*. Meanwhile, by using crossword media, students are more engaged and learning feels like playing. The following are the results of research related to the level of student enjoyment in learning using crossword puzzles.

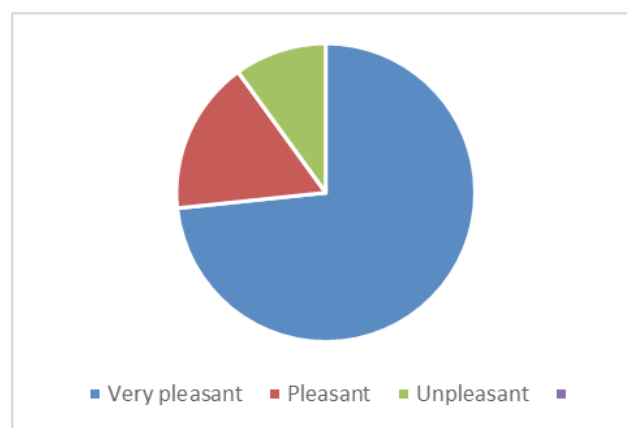


Figure 7. The students' responses to the use of crossword puzzle media

In this study, the use of crossword puzzle media in Islamic Religious Education learning involved the use of projector devices and laptops. The use of this learning media has a positive impact on introducing technology to students. The use of projector devices allows teachers to project prepared crossword puzzles onto a large screen in the classroom. Students can see the crossword puzzles clearly and easily follow. Meanwhile, the laptop was used to transfer materials or crossword puzzle designs into the projector. The use of this technology creates an interesting learning atmosphere and attracts students' attention.

In addition, the use of projector devices and laptops in crossword learning also helps prepare students for the ever-evolving world of technology. In an era where information technology is an important part of daily life. For this reason, it is important for students to develop technology skills from an early age. By using this device in Islamic Religious Education learning, students will know about the use of technology in learning so that they will be familiar and skillful in using technology.

The use of technology in learning is also one of the main programs that the teaching campus focuses on, namely technology adaptation (Dirjen Pendidikan Tinggi et al., 2023a). This technological adaptation is carried out to introduce students to various kinds of technological developments that exist today. These activities can be a valuable provision in their education and life in the future. At a higher level of education, students will not have difficulties and feel unfamiliar with technology because they have been introduced and taught from an early age. Thus, the use of crossword puzzle learning media is not only able to increase students' enthusiasm for learning and understanding but can also be a technology adaptation program in learning.

However, it should be noted that the use of technology in learning should not be the main goal. The use of crossword puzzle learning media should still focus on the learning objectives of Islamic Religious Education, which is to increase students' understanding of the concept of Islam and the values contained in it. This is because during learning, the first focus of students is on the devices used. They are unfamiliar with these devices so their curiosity is very high. Therefore, it is important for teachers to accompany and direct students so that their focus is on the material and not on the devices used.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that the use of crossword puzzle learning media has a positive impact on Islamic Religious Education learning and can be an interesting alternative. In this study, crossword puzzle media is able to increase student engagement, strengthen understanding of Islamic Religious Education concepts, and arouse students' interest in learning these subjects. In addition, the use of crossword puzzle media in Islamic Religious Education learning involving projector devices and laptops provides benefits in introducing technology to students. This creates engaging and interactive learning and prepares students for the increasingly advanced technological era. However, the use of this media should be well planned and relevant to the curriculum and the level of understanding of students. Not only that, the use of learning tools also needs to be considered and it is important to keep the focus on the learning objectives designed.

This study shows the potential and good impact of the use of crossword puzzle media in Islamic Religious Education learning. With this research, it is hoped that it can contribute to the development of more innovative learning methods in the context of Islamic Religious Education and become a reference for programs that want to be implemented in participating in teaching campus activities.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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