

## Loose Parts Media in Islamic Religious Education Learning at Mutiara Ibu Elementary


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### Abstract

Loose parts are materials that can be moved, combined, separated, and reassembled in various ways. Loose parts can be natural or synthetic materials that are used creatively and flexibly to support learning. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of using loose parts media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SD Mutiara Ibu Purworejo. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation and documentation during PAI learning activities. The results of the study indicate that the use of loose parts media can increase creativity, active participation, and students' understanding of PAI materials. With this media, students are more enthusiastic in learning PAI without feeling bored. In addition, there are challenges faced by teachers, namely in terms of selecting materials that are in accordance with the material and managing learning activities. However, with good planning, loose parts media can finally become an effective innovation to improve the quality of PAI learning at SD Mutiara Ibu.

**Keywords:** Religious Education Learning, Loose Parts Media, Islamic Religious Education

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is an effort that is carried out deliberately and systematically to motivate, foster, help, and guide someone to develop all their potential to achieve better self-quality (Beni & Hendra 2009). Education will produce quality and competitive human beings. The main goal of education is not only focused on the transfer of knowledge, but also on character development, critical thinking skills, and increasing creativity of students. Effective education must be able to keep up with the times and pay attention to the increasingly complex needs of students. Therefore, in Education requires an innovative and relevant learning approach so that the learning process becomes more interesting and meaningful. Students are the next generation of the nation and state. If students get a good education, then students will become the next generation of the nation who are not only smart but also tough in facing the progress of the times. The success of a student cannot be separated from the role of a teacher. Teachers must be able to understand the learning needs of their students, understand technology, and be creative teachers.

In the context of education in Elementary School, the learning process must be able to build a strong foundation for the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor

abilities of students. One of the main challenges in the world of education is how teachers can deliver material in a way that is not only effective, but also fun and interactive. Conventional approaches that tend to be monotonous often make students less interested and passive in learning.

The learning process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) invites students to delve deeper into what Islamic religious material is like and how it should be. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is one of the subjects in Elementary School that aims to shape the morals, ethics, and ethics of students. (Rokhimah, 2022) Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is a learning process related to materials about the Islamic religion, it can also be interpreted as an effort for the learning process of students and encourage them to want to learn and be interested in continuously studying Islam, both for the sake of knowing how to practice religion correctly and studying Islam with the aim of making a relatively permanent change in a person's behavior that is good in cognitive, effective, and psychomotor. (Ahmad Jaelani, 2022) Islamic Religious Education itself includes aspects of the Qur'an Hadith, Fiqh, Akidah, Morals, and Islamic History.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in schools and madrasahs in achieving learning objectives still reaps various problems. These problems are marked by the increasingly low enthusiasm of students in following the learning process, especially in Islamic Religious Education subjects, even though PAI learning is the main subject that must be studied early by all students as the main capital towards being a perfect human being .

The most important thing for teachers is to formulate the learning objectives of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through various innovations, so that the learning process can achieve the goals that have been set. The objectives of PAI learning are basically forms of behavior that are expected to be possessed by students after following the learning process. The formulation of these objectives is formulated based on an analysis of various demands, needs and expectations (Mahfud, et al., 2015) Learning innovation is a learning process carried out to achieve maximum learning outcomes and it can be concluded that PAI learning innovation is a renewal, idea and strategy of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher in carrying out teaching and learning activities as an effort to achieve effective learning outcomes. This innovation is in the form of a renewal of the learning system in which there is a teacher and students. Learning is essentially communication that includes a teacher and students. To achieve better learning, the teacher acts as a facilitator and innovator.

This research began with the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in class phase A which was less interesting. To increase students' interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects, teachers must have innovations in the use of learning media, using relevant and creative teaching approaches. A pleasant classroom atmosphere will make students more comfortable in learning. Moreover, for students at the age of phase A in their development, they still need a lot of play. All of a child's intelligence potential will develop optimally if they are watered with an atmosphere full of love and far from violence so that children can play happily. (Dr.H. Darmadi, S.ag., MM, MM.Pd., M.Si.) One thing that teachers can do to make learning fun is to use interesting learning media in the form of *loose parts* .

The concept of *loose parts* was introduced by Simon Nicholson in 1971, who stated that unstructured materials can support children's creativity and exploration. *Loose parts* are separate materials that can be installed and removed, or combined with other objects to create a shape. (Lestari and Halim, 2022).

*Loose parts* media is a collection of simple and unstructured objects such as stones, wood, leaves, buttons, or used objects that can be used flexibly. There are several examples of loose objects around children, namely: natural materials (stones, gravel, soil, sand, shells, leaf twigs), plastic (straws, bottles, baskets, pipes), metal (cans, coins,

spoons), wood and bamboo (pieces of wood, sticks, blocks), yarn and cloth (ribbons, yarn, scraps of cloth, cotton), glass and ceramics (glass bottles, beads, marbles), used packaging (cardboard, tissue rolls, egg cartons) and so on (Siantajani, 2021). With this media, students are given the freedom to be creative and build concepts according to their imagination. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, this media can help students understand abstract concepts such as morals, pillars of faith, or stories of the prophets in a more concrete and interesting way.

Based on these problems, Mutiara Ibu Elementary School (SD) Purworejo is one of the schools in Purworejo that has started implementing *loose parts media* in learning including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects. The use of this media is expected to increase active participation of students, creativity, and understanding of religious concepts. However, the application of *loose parts media* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects also has challenges such as in the selection of appropriate materials, classroom management, and the effectiveness of learning time. Therefore, the researcher will conduct research related to the effectiveness of using *loose parts media* in supporting Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School Purworejo.

This research is important to be conducted to determine the extent to which the effectiveness of *loose parts media* in increasing students' motivation, understanding, and thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education learning. From the results of this study, it is expected to provide a positive contribution in the development of more creative and enjoyable Islamic Religious Education learning methods and become a reference for other teachers in implementing similar media.

## **METHOD**

### *Location and Time of Research*

This research was conducted at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School, in December 2024. The subjects in this study were students in Class 1 (Phase A) who were Muslim. The number of students in Class 1 was 18 children consisting of 8 Muslim children, 1 Hindu child, 4 Catholic children, and 6 Christian children.

### *Tools and materials*

The tools and materials used are various *loose parts*, stationery, laptops, reading books about prophets and apostles, and mobile phones. *Loose parts* used include natural objects such as small stones, twigs, dry leaves, shells, wood, artificial objects such as bottle caps, used cardboard, buttons, ropes, colored paper, ice cream sticks, and beads. These materials were chosen because they are easy to obtain and safe for students.

### *Data collection*

Data collection is carried out using several techniques to ensure the accuracy and depth of information, including:

1. Observation

Observation or observation is carried out during the learning process. Observation is carried out directly on the use of *loose parts media* by students when learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The aspects observed include students' interest in learning when using *loose part media*, student activity, student creativity, achievement of learning objectives, and obstacles that arise during learning.

2. Interviews

Interviews were conducted with students to explore their views on the use of *loose parts media*. This interview aims to find out the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced during learning.

3. Documentation

During the activity, the author also conducted documentation which included photos of learning activities, learning implementation plans, and student work produced through the use of *loose parts*.

### Data analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's data analysis technique which descriptively and qualitatively involved three stages, namely:

1. Data Reduction

Data reduction focuses on the data to be taken. This process takes place from the beginning of the research question being created until the research data is collected.

2. Display Data

After the data is reduced, the next step is data presentation. The data obtained can be presented in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories. The purpose of presenting data is to make it easier to understand what is happening and plan further work based on what has been understood.

3. Drawing Conclusions

The initial conclusion put forward is still temporary, and will change if no strong evidence is found to support it in the next data collection stage. However, if the conclusion put forward in the initial stage is supported by valid and consistent evidence when the researcher returns to the field to collect data, then the conclusion put forward is a credible conclusion (Sugiyono, 2017). Based on the three steps in data analysis, it can be concluded that in qualitative descriptive research there are two possibilities, namely it may be able to answer the problem formulation formulated from the beginning and the second may not answer the problem formulation. This conclusion is because from the beginning the problem and problem formulation in qualitative descriptive research are still temporary and will develop after the research is in the field. The conclusion in qualitative research that is expected is a new finding that has never existed before.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach method, by discussing the data that has been collected, processed, and presented by assessing the data. Qualitative research is referred to as research that emphasizes an understanding of problems in social life, of course based on conditions and facts that occur in reality, complex and detailed (F Luthfiyah, 2020). Qualitative descriptive (QD) is focused on answering research questions related to the questions of who, what, where, and how an event or experience occurs until finally it is studied in depth to find patterns that emerge in the event (Kim, H., Sefcik, JS, & Bradway, C., 2016).

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses *triangulation techniques of sources and methods*, namely comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, *member checks were conducted* with informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with their experience. This method is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness and challenges of using *loose parts media* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SD Mutiara Ibu Purworejo.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of student observations in Islamic Religious Education learning at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School, Purworejo are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Observation sheet of students at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School, Purworejo

No	Indicator	Aspects observed	Evaluation							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Student responses to <i>loose parts media</i>	Enthusiasm of students before carrying out learning	SB	B	B	SB	SB	C	B	SB

	activities.								
	Student interest in learning activities.	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	B	B	SB
2.	Children's skills in using <i>loose parts media</i>	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	B	SB
	Student activity during learning.	SB	B	SB	SB	SB	B	B	SB
3.	Students' communication skills when interacting with their friends.	SB	SB	B	SB	SB	B	B	SB
	Ability to name prophets and messengers	SB	SB	B	SB	SB	SB	B	SB
	Ability to understand the miracles of prophets and apostles	SB	B	B	SB	SB	SB	B	SB

Description: Category SB = Very Good (if students like learning media using *loose parts* ); B = Good (if students like learning media using *loose parts* , but still need to be directed); and C = Sufficient (if students do not like learning media using *loose parts* )

Based on the results of the observation, it can be explained that before carrying out the learning activities, there were 4 children who looked enthusiastic, 3 children were enthusiastic but still needed to be guided, and 1 child was less enthusiastic. The interest of students in learning activities was 6 children were very interested and 2 children were interested but still needed support. In learning activities, there were 7 children who were skilled in using *loose parts* and 1 child still needed to be guided. When conducting learning, there were 5 children who were active and 3 children were active but still needed to be guided. From the learning results, there were 5 children who could communicate very well and 3 children whose communication skills were good, 6 children could mention the names of prophets and apostles fluently and 2 children could already mention the names of prophets and apostles but still needed help in writing them, 5 children were very able to mention the miracles of prophets and apostles and 3 children could already mention them but still needed help from the teacher. So, with *loose parts media* , students become enthusiastic in learning, become more active, improve student communication when interacting, and students understand the material better. In this study, interviews were also conducted with students in a fun way through *recalling activities* . The results of the researcher's interviews with 8 students are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Data from interviews with students at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School, Purworejo

A list of questions				
No	Name	How do students feel during learning?	What do they think about the media they have used?	What problems occurred during learning?
1.	Aca	Like	Interesting	No problem
2.	Alby	Like	Interesting	Poor memorization of letters
3.	Navigator	Like	Interesting	No problem
4.	Syafiqah	Sad	Interesting	His friend doesn't want to

				take turns
5.	Amara	Like	Interesting	Afraid of being wrong
6.	Ifra	Like	Interesting	Embarrassed
7.	Kesha	Like	Interesting	There isn't any
8.	Akmal	Like	Interesting	There isn't any

Based on the data in Table 2, the results of interviews with students in Class 1 of Mutiara Ibu Purworejo Elementary School are that students are very happy when learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI). They find it easier to understand the material taught by the teacher because they think the media is interesting. Students can learn and play using the *loose parts media* that have been prepared. With *loose parts media*, the planned learning objectives can be achieved. This is in accordance with the research of Rahardjo & Maryati (2021) that one of the principles of learning is relevant learning, which is designed according to the context and environment so that it is more optimal in its delivery. A good learning process is a process that allows for the optimal development of a student's potential. The expected communication is not only logical communication but also multi-directional communication, namely communication between teachers and students, students with each other, or groups with students and teachers. Learning activities are carried out in a happy atmosphere and direct students to be creative according to their imagination and creativity. Thus, students do not feel bored because they are actively trying to create some new works, because they are free to choose the materials used. Students indirectly are not only playing but also learning. Before conducting Islamic religious learning, the teacher designs activities that will be carried out by students. These activities include opening, core, and closing activities. In the opening activity, the teacher invites students to pray before studying, *have quite time*, ask for news, take attendance, and conduct an initial assessment by singing 25 Names of Prophets and Apostles. In the core activity, the teacher has prepared three core activities, namely finding information about the names of prophets and apostles and their stories, compiling the names of prophets and apostles, and making works related to the miracles of prophets and apostles. In this core activity, the teacher uses *loose parts media* for learning. Closing activities include *recalling* material, asking students how they feel when playing, asking how the media has been used, praying after studying and ending with greetings.

Figure 1 . Media *loose parts* ; Write the names of the prophets and apostles using letter beads; and Making Noah's Ark AS.



The first core activity is to arrange the letters of the names of prophets and apostles. Based on Figure 1A in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning activities, students are provided with *loose parts media* in the form of letter beads, letter carpets, letters made of wood, letter leggo, paper, and pencils. The trigger sentence used is "Can you arrange 5 names of prophets and apostles?". Based on observations, in Figure 1B, students can be seen when they write the names of prophets and apostles, they feel happy because they write them while playing looking for letters and arranging them into the names of the prophets and apostles they want. Students can not only memorize the names of prophets and apostles, but students can learn religious values such as patience, honesty, self-confidence, and never give up.

The second activity, students are provided with several *loose parts media* in the form of used newspapers, wood, twigs, seeds, rocks, leaves, *playdough*, glue, and pencils. Here students are given the freedom to be creative in making something related to the miracles of the prophets and apostles. The trigger sentence used by the researcher is "Can you make a creation related to the miracles of the prophets and apostles?". In Figure 1C, students were found who chose to make the ship of the prophet Noah. The researcher collected information from the work made by students. Based on the results of observations, students were not only able to understand the miracles of the prophet Noah, but they also learned religious values, namely self-confidence, speaking well, cooperation, and appreciating the work of others. With open questions, students not only learned about the miracles of the prophet Noah, but they also learned about who made the ship, the wood media used, the creation of Allah SWT, what they should do with what Allah SWT had created.

In the third activity, students were provided with laptops and reading books related to learning. They were free to search for as much information as possible to enrich their knowledge. Students were free to choose whether to watch films about the stories of prophets and apostles, read books about the stories of prophets and apostles, or learn by listening to songs to get to know the prophets and apostles. Based on the results of observations, students were very enthusiastic when searching for information about the stories of prophets and apostles.

In this study, formative assessment was also conducted to monitor and evaluate students' understanding and development. Formative assessment *according to* Black & William, as quoted by Dunn & Mulvenon (2009), is the entire activity of teachers and/or students that provides information as feedback *to* improve the quality of teaching and learning activities. By conducting formative assessment, students' difficulties can be identified early and more effective strategies can be developed to ensure that learning objectives are achieved. In this activity, summative assessment activities are also carried out to determine the achievement of learning objectives.

Some of the challenges faced during Islamic Religious Education learning using *loose parts media* include: (1) Not enough time because activities using *loose parts* require a long time, both for preparation and implementation; (2) In class management, sometimes students are too busy playing with *loose parts* so that learning objectives cannot be achieved; and (3) Religious teachers do not yet have a special room that can be set up according to the religious theme. To overcome these challenges, several strategies can be implemented, namely planning activities carefully, setting up an interesting learning environment by working together with class teachers, making agreements with students so that they remain focused during the learning process.

Based on the results of the observations and interviews above, the use of *loose parts media* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning activities at SD Mutiara Ibu Purworejo can provide a deeper and more meaningful learning experience to students. Through the manipulation of concrete objects, students not only understand the concept

of Islam theoretically, but also internalize moral and spiritual values in everyday life. Students during the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning activities looked happy and full of enthusiasm.

The results of this study indicate that the application of loose parts media in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School in Purworejo significantly enhances students' enthusiasm, active participation, and conceptual understanding of religious material—particularly related to the names and miracles of prophets and messengers. This approach allows students to learn through concrete, exploratory experiences, reinforcing not only their cognitive abilities but also instilling moral and spiritual values. Activities such as arranging prophet names using letter beads, creating models of Prophet Noah's ark from natural materials, and exploring stories through books, videos, and songs provided a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

The novelty of this research lies in the application of loose parts media within the context of Islamic Religious Education—an approach that has traditionally been underutilized in religious learning settings. Previously, loose parts were more commonly associated with creative or general early childhood education. This study uniquely adapts this open-ended, tactile learning strategy to convey deeply rooted spiritual values, such as faith, patience, honesty, cooperation, and perseverance. This represents an innovative pedagogical shift that bridges hands-on learning with religious content, fostering both intellectual engagement and value-based education.

Theoretically, this study reinforces constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that children learn more effectively through active interaction with their environment and tangible learning materials. Practically, it provides an alternative model for IRE teachers—particularly at the primary school level—who seek engaging, contextualized, and student-centered learning methods. This model moves away from rote memorization and toward a more holistic learning process, integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in a creative and joyful atmosphere. Despite its promising findings, the study is not without limitations. First, the participant pool was small, involving only eight students, which restricts the generalizability of the results. Second, time management posed a challenge, as activities using loose parts required extensive preparation and implementation time. Third, the absence of a dedicated classroom space for religious-themed learning limited the effectiveness of the media. These limitations highlight the need for further research on a larger scale and with more comprehensive facilities to validate and expand upon the findings of this study.

## CONCLUSION

*Loose parts* media can increase the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education learning and can encourage student activity and increase student creativity in understanding the religious concepts taught. Students find it easier to understand the material because they use concrete objects, so that learning becomes more meaningful. The use of *loose parts* helps teachers in implementing innovative learning methods that are in accordance with the characteristics of students at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School (SD). The application of *loose parts media* at Mutiara Ibu Elementary School, Purworejo has great potential to improve students' understanding, motivation, and thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Consistent support, teacher training, and the provision of adequate facilities are the keys to the success of the implementation of this media on an ongoing basis.

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