

## Integrating Deep Learning Approaches to Enhance Student Engagement in Islamic Cultural History Education at MTs Miftahul Huda Pelepat Ilir

Hendriyadi<sup>1\*</sup>, Afit Datul Musafa'ah<sup>2</sup>, Luluk Alfiyah<sup>3</sup>, Husnah<sup>4</sup>, Eva Fauziah<sup>5</sup>

<sup>\*1,2,3,4,5</sup>Universitas Islam Yasni Bungo

<sup>\*1</sup>email: [afidatul820@gmail.com](mailto:afidatul820@gmail.com)

<b>Abstract</b>	
<p>This study aims to analyze the application of deep learning in the teaching of Islamic cultural history, focusing on students' learning styles and their active engagement in classroom learning from cognitive, affective, and spiritual perspectives. This study employed a qualitative approach conducted at MTs Miftahul Huda Pelepat Ilir, with a sample consisting of 2 religious education teachers and 23 eighth-grade students in total, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through initial observations, interviews, and documentation throughout the study. The results indicate that implementing deep learning through the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model can enhance student engagement in the knowledge transfer process, foster confidence in presenting ideas, and cultivate critical thinking. This approach not only strengthens students' conceptual understanding but also guides them toward meaningful Islamic values in learning. The findings of this study emphasize that the deep learning approach is an interactive learning strategy that effectively enhances students' active engagement in the study of Islamic cultural history.</p>	<p><b>Keywords:</b> Deep Learning; Active Engagement; The History Of Islamic Culture.</p>

<b>Abstrak</b>	
<p>Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penerapan deep learning dalam pembelajaran Sejarah kebudayaan islam, menyangkut karakteristik gaya belajar siswa serta keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam partisipasi pembelajaran dikelas dalam konteks kognitif, efektifitas dan rohani. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang dilakukan di MTs Miftahul Huda Pelepat ilir, dengan subjek yang terdiri dari guru Keagamaan berjumlah 2 orang dan siswa kelas VIII sejumlah 23 secara keseluruhan sebagai purposive sumpling. Data diperoleh melalui observasi awal, wawancara dan dokumentasi selama penelitian. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan deep learnin melalui model Problem Based Learning bisa meningkatkan partisipasi dalam keterlibatan siswa pada proses tranfer ilmu. Keberanian dalam menjelaskan presentasi, pola pikir yang kritis. Pendekatan ini tidak hanya memperkuat pemahaman konseptual</p>	<p><b>Kata Kunci:</b> Deep Learning; Keterlibatan Aktif; Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam.</p>

siswa tapi mengarahkan pada nilai-nilai keislaman pembelajaran bermakna. Temuan penelitian ini, berfokus bahwa pendekatan deep learning merupakan strategi gaya belajar yang interaktif, leluasa dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan aktif siswa pada pembelajaran sejarah kebudayaan islam.

Received : 23 February 2026; Revised: 12 April 2026; Accepted: 1 May 2026

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Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam  
Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara



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## 1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia today requires changes that emphasize the development of critical thinking skills, student participation, and meaningful learning through a deep learning approach. It goes beyond mere reading and writing (Noviani, 2023). It also involves the integration of technology appropriate for the challenges of the 21st century (Syahputra, 2024). The primary challenge in education is no longer access to information, but rather how to foster student engagement, critical analysis, and the meaningful application of knowledge, as exemplified by the deep learning approach (Damanik & Nurhadilla, 2025). However, religion-based education, such as the History of Islamic Education (SKI), holds significant potential in equipping a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually prepared. Nevertheless, SKI instruction often faces challenges related to teaching styles, where the transfer of religious knowledge is delivered in a oneway, continuous manner (lectures). Consequently, the exploration of the meaning of the knowledge conveyed lacks depth and impact (Hasmar et al., 2020).

The application of deep learning in the study of Islamic cultural history is crucial for fostering an understanding of Islamic values. It is important to distinguish between deep and surface learning, where the deep learning approach involves the search for meaning and conceptual connections, while the surface learning approach tends to focus solely on rote memorization (Khasanah et al., 2025). Deep learning has three main principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning (Diputera et al., 2024). Purnamasari et al. (2026) state that deep learning is a pedagogical approach that encourages students to build meaningful understanding through reflection, critical thinking, fostering emotional engagement, and connecting knowledge with real-world learning experiences. One must have the capacity to analyze learning through appropriate technology. Technology can be utilized through interactive applications capable of presenting learning materials in a style that aligns with individual students' learning preferences and understanding levels; students are more likely to be active in learning and demonstrate interest and participation in the classroom (Depita, 2024).

Student engagement is a key indicator of the extent to which students are involved in learning, from cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perspectives. Reeve defines it as active participation that fosters motivation, effort, and interest in the learning process (Reeve et al., 2025), while Assefa emphasizes its three

main dimensions: behavioral, emotional control, and cognitive, which reflect students' activities in their actions, feelings, and mindset during learning (Assefa et al., 2025). Discrepancies in the field often present challenges such as digital distractions, low motivation, and differences in student abilities, resulting in a less-than-optimal learning process (Zou et al., 2025). Thus, the deep learning approach is suitable as a means to engage students in asking questions, collaborating on ideas, drawing inspiration, and exploring concepts more broadly and innovatively. This study demonstrates that it can enhance their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement (Aditama et al., 2025).

However, several challenges remain in implementing the deep learning approach at MTs Miftahul Huda Pelepat Ilir Madrasah, including limited teacher training in religious studies and a lack of deep learning-based curriculum guidelines. Hidayat (2026) adds that madrasah teachers still rely heavily on rote memorization and lecture-based methods, with little opportunity for deep reflection on the lessons of history. On the other hand, research by Sari et al. (2025) demonstrates that the deep learning approach is more effective and impactful in the knowledge transfer process. Digital policies at the madrasah have not yet fully adapted to support deep learning innovations optimally, as only projectors and laptops are available. Although the deep learning approach has been widely discussed in general education. As in the previous study by Hoeruman et al. (2025), the deep learning approach in Islamic history-based religious education highlights the importance of understanding spiritual values and the innate human capacity for logical reasoning in a conceptual sense; however, it has not yet deeply explored the empirical aspects of participation and collaboration between teachers and students. This indicates a lack of empirical discussion linking deep learning to student engagement in religious education. Specifically, the integration of learning styles in SKI madrasah instruction particularly regarding the "Islamic Golden Age" of the Abbasid Caliphate remains very limited. Consequently, there is not yet a clear, well-developed picture of how deep learning influences student engagement in the knowledge transfer process.

The novelty of this study lies in its empirical examination of the integration of deep learning with learning styles to foster active engagement among students at MTs Miftahul Huda in the SKI curriculum, both in terms of content delivery and its relevance to daily life. Unlike previous studies that emphasized critical thinking skills, this study integrates knowledge engagement, effectiveness, and spiritual enjoyment into a single learning style, while encouraging sustained active engagement. Through this article, the author aims to further explore meaningful learning outcomes. Based on these findings, the researcher is interested in examining how the deep learning approach can be applied to the learning style of Islamic cultural history under the "*Integrating Deep Learning Approaches to Enhance Student Engagement in Islamic Cultural History Education at MTs Miftahul Huda Pelepat Ilir*". This material will be delivered to eighth-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahul Huda Pelepat Ilir, Bungo Regency, as a subject that clearly involves more than just listening to stories. This study focuses on two main questions: (1) how students actively engage with the deep learning approach in Islamic cultural history learning, and (2) what impact the

deep learning approach has on the learning style applied in Islamic cultural history instruction.

The fundamental premise of this study is the application of deep learning in the teaching and learning process in rural areas, with the aim of offering an alternative instructional design that is engaging, practical, and interactive, in line with the demands of the 21st-century curriculum (Syahputra, 2024). Theoretically, this article is expected to contribute to a paradigm shift in Islamic education, particularly in developing instructional approaches that align with contemporary developments. Practically, this article can serve as a guide for subject teachers and education practitioners in designing religious education, particularly in the history of Islamic culture, where changes are more pronounced.

## **2. Method**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach (Rusli et al., 2014). This is because the scope of the study focuses on deepening meaning and fostering active student engagement. The aim is to explore how the deep learning approach often discussed in the broader context of general education can be adopted and developed within the field of religious education, such as Islamic Studies (SKI). The research was conducted at MTs Miftahul Huda Pelepat Ilir, Bungo Regency, with research subjects consisting of 2 religious studies teachers and 23 eighth-grade students. Data collection was conducted through initial observation, interviews, and documentation throughout the study; these techniques complement each other to produce robust data in qualitative research (Abdussamad, 2021). The data analysis methods used included data reduction, data presentation, and thematic analysis to detail the deep learning approach as an integration of active student engagement.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured by applying the principles of trustworthiness which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability while all procedures were conducted in accordance with good research practices, ranging from obtaining official permission from the madrasah, honestly explaining the study's objectives to the informants, to obtaining their consent through informed consent. Thus, the results are expected to provide practical recommendations regarding learning styles that truly encourage students' active engagement with the subject matter of Islamic Cultural History as a whole at MTs Miftahul Huda.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

### **3.1 Result**

Based on in depth interviews with teachers and students, the implementation of Islamic cultural history instruction based on deep learning is understood as a process that requires student engagement and a deep understanding of the material not merely the transfer of knowledge but rather creating a classroom environment that involves all students with diverse learning styles within a single class, such as auditory, visual, or blended learners, through a flexible approach. This makes lessons more meaningful and effective in achieving learning objectives. As Teacher 1 stated, "Deep learning isn't just about

conveying the content of the worksheets, but about how students are truly engaged and understand the meaning of the material being presented” (interview, October 3, 2025). Teacher 2 added that “with the deep learning approach, the classroom becomes more lively, the atmosphere is enjoyable, and students grasp the material more quickly, because they’re not just listening and taking notes” (interview, October 8, 2025).

In practice, teachers continue to align SKI instruction with the learning objectives implemented through the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model using student worksheets (LKPD). Instruction is designed around the presentation of problems or case studies that students must solve in groups. Of course, the teacher acts as a facilitator who guides student discussions in understanding problems and solutions, rather than as the primary source of information. According to an interview, the teacher explained that students are given an assignment in the form of a problem regarding the Abbasid Caliphate, after which they discuss to find solutions and results, while the teacher guides them in a transparent manner (interview, October 3, 2025). The learning media used as tools to support deep learning-based instruction include PowerPoint, interactive media (WordWall), and the use of artificial intelligence (AI)-based technology, to broaden the students’ perspectives. Interview results with students indicate that SKI lessons, which were previously considered boring, become more engaging when based on deep learning, providing a more memorable learning experience. Not confined to workbooks, one student stated that “this lesson is more fun than listening to classmates read and write on the blackboard” (interview, October 14, 2025).

Deep learning-based Islamic cultural history materials have great potential to encourage active student engagement through presentations, reflections, and Q&A sessions, supported by interactive tools. This approach builds students’ confidence to express their opinions, even though they may still fear making mistakes when speaking individually. However, group-based learning helps boost students’ self-confidence (student interview, October 14, 2025). The impact of implementing deep learning is evident in students’ competence in addressing problems in assigned tasks and their understanding of how these relate to their surroundings, through exercises in analyzing problems, expressing opinions, and reflecting on the material. Additionally, students better understand their responsibilities as students who are motivated to practice Islamic values in daily life in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Although the process did not run smoothly immediately and required time to develop.

These findings are supported by observational and documentary data, showing that teachers begin lessons with an introductory phase that connects the material to students’ prior knowledge, using icebreaker questions and opportunities to write down ideas in front of the class, to encourage students’ cognitive engagement and build their confidence in the learning process.



**Figure 1.** Students writing reflections on group learning



**Figure 2.** Group enthusiasm in the deep learning approach

Based on Figure 1, learning activities took place in a participatory manner and were not entirely teacher-centered, and Figure 2 shows that the enthusiasm surrounding the implementation of deep learning indicates that students were actively engaged and enjoyed the learning process. Meanwhile, the teaching materials documentation indicates that the modules used were designed in accordance with deep learning principles, covering learning objectives, activity steps, and student activities such as problem based learning in worksheets, peer learning, and reviewing learning through question and answer sessions (evaluation). The alignment between the planning of learning strategies and their implementation in the classroom reinforces the research findings that the deep learning approach is systematically applied in SKI instruction.

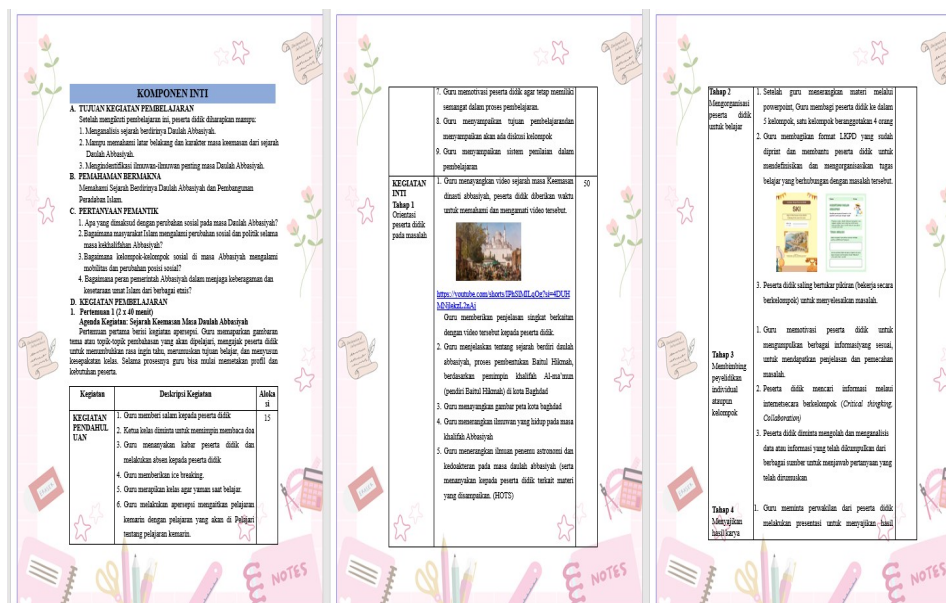


Figure 3. A selection of SKI teaching modules based on deep learning

The figure above shows that learning activities including group discussions using student worksheets (LKPD), presentations, and reflections have been designed to accommodate classroom conditions within the instructional materials. This underscores that the implementation of deep learning is not haphazard but has been systematically planned, taking into account the appropriateness of the learning aids selected by the teacher.

### 3.2 Discussion

The discussion is based on research findings indicating that the integration of deep learning approaches into the study of Islamic cultural history is proceeding systematically. This is evidenced by the way teachers perceive deep learning as a teaching method that truly brings the classroom to life. Enriched with discussion and presentation activities that actively engage students, coupled with teaching modules that are truly aligned with real world contexts, this demonstrates that this learning approach successfully fosters student engagement in a genuinely meaningful learning experience. This study aligns with (Wahyudin, 2025), who states that effective learning and high learning interest can enhance students' active participation in understanding the learning material.

The research, during the initial observation phase, showed that teachers begin lessons by reviewing and revisiting previous material a process commonly known as apperception. For example, students are invited to come to the front of the class to write down what they already know, so that from the very start of the lesson, they are indirectly and actively engaged. This, in turn, encourages more enthusiastic participation throughout the learning process. This simple step immediately engages them actively, fostering readiness for learning both cognitively and emotionally. Such principles align closely with the essence of meaningful learning in deep learning, which emphasizes connecting students'

experiences with lesson concepts to deepen effective understanding (Sutopo et al., 2025).

The integration of strategies using the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in religion-based education has been shown to increase student engagement in reasoning and understanding the instructional material (Kusnandar & Mirza, 2025). In interviews, subject teachers stated that students are given case studies with the teacher acting as a facilitator, which encourages active participation. This finding is supported by research showing that the combination of PBL and deep learning in religious studies shifts learning from rote memorization to applied understanding through discussion, case analysis, and decision-making (Depita, 2024). Furthermore, students' willingness to actively participate in class as expressed by students during interviews indicates that group discussions build self-confidence, reflecting increased active engagement. This aligns with the findings of Rahmawati et al. (2025), who noted that deep learning can encourage student participation in discussions, evaluate information, and reflect on learning, thereby strengthening their reasoning skills and their courage to express opinions openly in the ongoing process of knowledge transfer.

Analysis of field documents reveals a close alignment between the instructional modules designed by subject teachers and the actual classroom instruction. The modules are designed with core activities such as discussions, presentations, and reflections that are fully aligned with the principles of deep learning, particularly in fostering higher-order thinking skills, self-reflection, and collaboration among students all activities that reinforce the essence of deep learning. The alignment between planning and classroom implementation indicates that teachers do not merely understand the concept of deep learning theoretically but are able to apply it systematically and contextually. This finding is supported by Rahmawati et al. (2025), who state that a deep learning-based approach to religious education, using appropriate teaching materials meaning those that take into account classroom conditions, learning styles, and student needs enhances students' mental engagement and fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

In addition to enriching students' knowledge, the application of deep learning in Islamic Studies (SKI) education also contributes to the internalization of Islamic values among students. These findings indicate that the deep learning approach in religious education is not limited to cognitive aspects alone but encompasses a broad scope of learning within the realm of students' faith. This approach goes beyond mere knowledge reinforcement, as it is grounded in religious instinct. With its relatively adaptable and meaningful nature, deep learning encourages students to connect and bridge instinctive thought patterns related to life. The process of reflection, for example, not only builds theoretical understanding but also fosters awareness to cultivate behavior aligned with traditional teachings. This is reflected in deep learning-based learning evaluations, where reflective and contextual activities strengthen students' spiritual engagement. Overall, this discussion yields truly meaningful learning.

This approach not only motivates students, deepens their understanding, and sharpens their critical thinking, but also instills Islamic values consistent with the material presented, in a sustainable manner. Thus, this study highlights the unique characteristics of integrating the deep learning approach into the history of Islamic culture through collaboration and the internalization of religious values.

Overall, this study emphasizes the application of deep learning in the teaching of Islamic cultural history, which enables learning that extends beyond the classroom and allows students to engage in meaningful learning within an enjoyable environment. This approach not only enhances learning motivation, enjoyable learning experiences, and students' skills but also reinforces the foundational belief that humans possess spiritual faith rooted in Islamic values instilled within the students. Thus, this study demonstrates the characteristics of the deep learning approach in Islamic Cultural Studies (SKI) material, which integrates cognitive engagement, psychomotor skills, social collaboration, and a deep understanding of Islam simultaneously.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The integration of the deep learning approach to enhance student engagement: based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the deep learning approach in SKI instruction at MTs Miftahul Huda was systematic and successfully created a more meaningful and participatory learning process, by fostering active student engagement through group discussions, problem-solving via project-based learning models in student worksheets (LKPD), and a play-based learning style using interactive games that address both cognitive and spiritual-religious aspects. Theoretically, the findings of this study reinforce the concept of deep learning as a teaching approach that goes beyond merely conveying instructional content; it must foster students' active, collaborative participation. Practically, the results of this study offer implications for SKI subject teachers as an innovation in developing contextual, enjoyable, and undoubtedly memorable learning strategies for daily life.

However, this study has limitations due to its scope being confined to a single school using a qualitative approach; therefore, a recommendation for further study is to combine quantitative methods or conduct research and development on media produced through the deep learning approach. Therefore, future research needs to expand the context to different levels and characteristics of schools so that we can gain a more meaningful picture of the application of the deep learning approach in religious education, particularly in the Islamic Cultural History (SKI) subject.

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