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# Beyond Technology: Rethinking Low-Cost Instructional Media for Meaningful Learning in Islamic Religious Education

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**ABSTRACT**

Islamic Religious Education requires accessible instruction that supports conceptual understanding, engagement, and practical application of religious knowledge. However, educational resource disparities and abstract religious concepts complicate effective instruction. This study examines the implementation, contributions, and challenges of low-cost media in Islamic Religious Education. A descriptive qualitative literature review examined recent publications on instructional media and Islamic education. Literature was analyzed through thematic coding, comparative synthesis, and source criticism. The synthesis identified visuals, instructional cards, and physical teaching aids as accessible media categories. Their educational value depended primarily on alignment with learning objectives rather than technological sophistication. Card-based activities offered opportunities to organize religious concepts and support interactive learning. Visual and concrete representations potentially clarified abstract ideas and procedural knowledge. Meaningful activities and teacher feedback emerged as important conditions for conceptual understanding. Student engagement and motivation appeared promising but remained distinct from demonstrated learning gains. Implementation challenges included teacher preparedness, preparation time, learner diversity, and contextual constraints. The study proposes a framework linking pedagogical alignment, meaningful activities, inclusive engagement, and formative evaluation. This framework offers practical guidance for resource-constrained classrooms while highlighting the need for comparative empirical validation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic position in shaping human beings who are knowledgeable, moral, and able to make decisions based on Islamic values. This importance goes beyond academic achievement because students' behavior will affect family, school, and community life. Meaningful PAI learning needs to connect religious knowledge with social experiences so that the values of faith, responsibility, and tolerance do not stop at memorization. The study of Susanti et al. (2024) shows the importance of media innovation to make religious learning relevant to the needs of students. Meanwhile, Widodo (2024) shows that the management of media use is an important part of PAI learning practices. These two findings confirm that the quality of religious education is not only determined by the completeness of the material, but also by the way teachers facilitate student understanding. Therefore, research on learning media that is easy to apply is meaningful for society because it has the potential to strengthen the quality of religious education equally, including schools with limited resources.

The urgency of improving the quality of PAI is also related to the principle of equal distribution of learning opportunities. Schools have different conditions of facilities, educator capabilities, and technological support, so learning innovation should not depend entirely on digital devices. Umami et al. (2025) identified the limitations of infrastructure, internet access, and technological competence as challenges to the use of digital media in PAI. These findings do not mean that technology should be abandoned, but rather that affordable learning alternatives are still needed. Media in the form of images, material cards, charts, and teaching aids can be developed from available materials and adapted to learning objectives. Pedagogically, the use of these media provides opportunities for students to actively observe, group, discuss, and explain religious concepts directly. Thus, the assessment of simple media contributes to an inclusive educational agenda, as it offers practical options for teachers to improve the quality of the learning experience without waiting for the availability of complete technological facilities in each educational unit.

The general problem of PAI learning lies in the gap between the breadth of the goals of character education and the limited conceptual understanding that can be built through one-way delivery. Materials such as faith, morals, example, and the law of worship contain meanings to be translated into concrete examples and experiences. When learning only emphasizes lectures and repetition of information, students run the risk of remembering terms without being able to explain their meaning or apply them on a daily basis. Suwartiningsih and Besari (2024) developed PAI videos. Sholeh et al. (2024) examined the use of audiovisual media to aid understanding in Islamic education, while Yahya et al. (2024) examined the effectiveness of technology-based audiovisual through meta-analysis. The research reinforces the urgency of clear representation of the material, but also shows the dominance of device-based solutions. The main

problem is not just the availability of media, but the suitability of the form of media with the character of the concept, the teacher's ability, and the needs of students. Therefore, a simple approach needs to be assessed as a relevant strategy, not a temporary option when technology is not available.

Research has elucidated the benefits of media in PAI learning through various approaches. Tarsono et al. (2024) report the results of a meta-analysis that supports the use of digital applications to improve learning outcomes, while Susanti et al. (2024) describe a variety of digital media innovations for religious learning. Zulkifli et al. (2024) map the development of PAI technology and learning media studies, and Khamdani (2023) associate the use of weblogs with students' learning interests. These findings show that media can help attract attention and expand access to learning resources. However, the focus on applications, audiovisuals, and online platforms has not fully addressed the needs of learning in environments that face limited costs or connectivity. In addition, the success of digital media cannot be directly generalized to media without electronic devices because the way of interaction and the demands of use are different. Thus, research that focuses on simple media choices as a practice that can be replicated and adapted to PAI materials is needed.

A number of studies show the potential of simple media in Islamic education. Firdaus et al. (2024) developed crossword puzzle-based tajweed cards to support the understanding of madrasah students, while Pohan et al. (2025) developed picture cards to strengthen the memorization of short surahs. Afifah and Manshur (2025) studied cards in fiqh, while Jannah et al. (2025) researched PAI card sort media; while Leni and Ridwan (2026) reported an improvement in learning outcomes through card matching activities. This evidence suggests that simple media can actively involve students in certain materials. However, the study tends to focus on card types, specific topics, or improving scores and memorization. Explanations that link the selection stages and the use of various simple media with the depth of understanding of concepts and obstacles to their implementation need to be expanded. The gap is important because the improvement in test results does not necessarily explain how students construct meaning, express reasons, and use religious knowledge in different contexts.

Based on this synthesis, the novelty of this research lies in an integrated analysis of the application process, contributions to conceptual understanding, and constraints on the use of simple learning media in PAI. The study does not place media as a mere complementary tool, but as a means of interaction that connects abstract concepts with visual representations, classification activities, and meaningful discussions. This approach differs from research that primarily evaluates specific card products or the success of digital applications. Widodo (2024) shows the need for attention to media management strategies, while Firdaus et al. (2024) show the possibility of developing concrete teaching materials for religious topics. By integrating these two concerns, the research is directed to generate an understanding of the conditions when simple media is

effective, as well as the reasons why its application can be hampered. The novelty offered is analytical and contextual, not the claim of creating an entirely new media. The results are expected to support the formulation of media selection principles that are in accordance with the goals, materials, and characteristics of students.

This research departs from three main questions: how do teachers apply simple learning media in PAI, how does their use contribute to student understanding, and what obstacles arise during its implementation? Understanding in this study is seen as going beyond the ability to remember definitions, which includes the ability to re-explain, give examples, distinguish concepts, and relate them to everyday experiences. The initial argument of the study states that pictures, cards, charts, and teaching aids have the potential to help students understand the material if used through targeted activities and accompanied by teacher feedback. This view is in line with the results of studies by Afifah and Manshur (2025) regarding student involvement through cards and Sholeh et al. (2024) regarding the support of media representation for understanding. However, media is not automatically assumed to be effective in all circumstances. The suitability of the material, teacher readiness, learning duration, and student characteristics are expected to determine the quality of its application. Therefore, research needs to examine the learning mechanism in depth as well as the various conditions that affect the results.

The purpose of this study is to describe the application of simple media in PAI learning, analyze its contribution to students' conceptual understanding, and identify obstacles and alternative solutions. This study is expected to make a theoretical contribution in the form of explaining the relationship between media characters, learning activities, and the process of forming religious understanding. From a practical perspective, the research results can be a reference for teachers when choosing media that is cheap, easy to make, and relevant to the targeted competencies. Previous research on digital media showed innovation opportunities as well as infrastructure challenges (Umami et al., 2025), while card research showed the potential for active learning in certain materials (Leni & Ridwan, 2026). By bringing together these two directions of findings, this study seeks to offer a more realistic decision-making foundation for diverse educational units. In the end, the quality of PAI learning is expected to improve not because of the sophistication of the tools used, but because of the accuracy of the teaching strategies in helping students understand and appreciate religious values.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a library research method to explore, analyze, and synthesize existing literature on the use of low-cost instructional media in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). This approach was selected to examine instructional implementation, contributions to

students' conceptual understanding, and challenges associated with media utilization without conducting field observations or interviews. Instead, the study relied on published scholarly evidence to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. As Barry et al. (2022) explain, literature reviews facilitate knowledge integration, identification of conceptual developments, and critical synthesis of existing research. Accordingly, this methodological approach enabled the systematic interpretation of relevant findings and the identification of theoretical and practical implications for IRE.

Data were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and official educational policy documents retrieved through Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, university digital repositories, and the National Library of Indonesia's e-Resources. The literature search primarily covered publications from 2022 to 2026, prioritizing articles published in SINTA- or Scopus-indexed journals. Seminal methodological books and official policy documents published outside this period were considered supplementary sources. Literature selection followed predefined inclusion criteria encompassing topical relevance, methodological clarity, full-text availability, and the significance of reported findings. Duplicate publications, unreliable sources, and studies unrelated to the research objectives were excluded. Data collection involved three systematic stages: searching, screening, and organizing. Searches employed relevant English and Indonesian keywords, including "low-cost instructional media," "simple learning media," "Islamic Religious Education," and "student conceptual understanding," combined using Boolean operators. Eligible publications were subsequently organized into a literature matrix documenting authorship, publication year, research design, instructional media, key findings, and limitations, following the principles of transparent literature synthesis outlined by Marzi et al. (2025).

Data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, involving systematic reading, data reduction, coding, thematic categorization, and cross-study synthesis. Relevant information was coded and classified into three analytical themes: (1) characteristics and implementation strategies of low-cost instructional media in IRE, (2) contributions to conceptual understanding, student engagement, and learning motivation, and (3) implementation challenges and optimization strategies. Findings were compared across studies to identify recurring patterns, theoretical relationships, inconsistencies, and research gaps. The synthesized evidence was presented through analytical narratives, comparative tables, and a conceptual framework illustrating the relationships among instructional media, pedagogical processes, and anticipated learning outcomes. This procedure followed Braun and Clarke (2023), who emphasize methodological coherence in thematic analysis, and Saunders et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of systematic coding, theme development, and interpretive synthesis in qualitative research.

The trustworthiness of the findings was established through external source criticism, internal source criticism, and source triangulation. External criticism assessed authors' academic credibility, journal reputation, indexing status, publication dates, and the authenticity of publication records. Internal criticism examined methodological consistency, argumentative coherence, evidential adequacy, and the alignment between reported findings and conclusions. Source triangulation involved comparing evidence across publications, methodological approaches, and educational contexts to identify convergent and divergent findings. Additionally, the informational richness and explanatory depth of individual studies were considered, consistent with the qualitative evidence appraisal principles discussed by Ames et al. (2024). The literature selection, coding, and synthesis procedures were documented in an analytical matrix to enhance transparency, methodological rigor, and the traceability of the study's conclusions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Implementation of Low-Cost Instructional Media

The synthesis of recent literature identifies three principal categories of low-cost instructional media in Islamic Religious Education (IRE): printed visual materials, card-based resources, and concrete teaching aids. Visual materials, including illustrations, diagrams, and photographs, facilitate the representation of abstract religious concepts, while flashcards and matching cards support knowledge organization, retrieval, and discussion. Meanwhile, concrete objects and teaching aids enable students to engage with practical aspects of religious instruction. Despite their different characteristics, these media share the potential to promote accessible and contextually meaningful learning. Their educational effectiveness, however, depends primarily on their alignment with instructional objectives, subject content, and learner characteristics rather than their technological sophistication (Widodo, 2024; Zulkifli et al., 2024).

Empirical studies provide evidence supporting the pedagogical potential of low-cost instructional media. Firdaus et al. (2024) developed crossword-based tajwid cards using the ADDIE model, incorporating expert validation and a limited evaluation involving ten students to support understanding of Qur'anic recitation rules. Similarly, Afifah and Manshur (2025) examined flashcard-based instruction in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), emphasizing its potential to enhance conceptual understanding and classroom engagement. Pratiwi and Ma'rifah (2026) further investigated quartet cards integrated with the Deeper Learning Cycle, highlighting the relevance of structured card-based activities to learning outcomes. Collectively, these studies indicate that inexpensive instructional resources can facilitate knowledge organization, conceptual reinforcement, and active participation. Nevertheless, their findings remain context-dependent and do not establish the universal superiority of card-based instruction over alternative pedagogical approaches.

The effectiveness of instructional media also depends on their suitability for the cognitive and conceptual demands of religious learning. Mutha'aliin et al. (2026), through a systematic review, identified graphic media, projected materials, printed visuals, and real objects as instructional representations capable of supporting learning when appropriately designed. Their findings suggest that well-structured visual materials may reduce unnecessary cognitive demands and facilitate information processing. Within IRE, sequential illustrations can clarify ritual procedures, while illustrated scenarios and classification cards may support ethical reasoning and the differentiation of jurisprudential concepts. However, these applications should be regarded as pedagogically informed possibilities rather than interventions directly evaluated in the present study. Accordingly, media selection should reflect the complexity of religious content and the specific competencies students are expected to develop.

Beyond instructional design, successful implementation requires consideration of teacher competence and institutional conditions. Widodo (2024) emphasized the importance of appropriate media selection and classroom implementation in Indonesian Islamic secondary education. Similarly, Mintasih et al. (2024) identified teacher readiness and infrastructural limitations as significant considerations in technology-supported IRE. Although their investigation focused on digital instruction, its findings reinforce the importance of pedagogical competence across different media formats. Susanti et al. (2024) further highlighted the diversity of digital-media innovations, suggesting that educational resources should be evaluated according to their instructional functions rather than technological complexity. These studies collectively indicate that effective media integration depends on teachers' ability to align instructional resources with learning objectives, classroom activities, and students' educational needs.

Overall, the literature suggests that digital and nondigital media should be understood as complementary instructional resources rather than competing indicators of educational quality. Digital technologies offer multimedia capabilities and flexible access to information, whereas low-cost materials enable direct interaction without requiring sophisticated infrastructure. The educational value of either approach depends on purposeful instructional integration. Consequently, effective implementation requires a coherent sequence involving objective identification, media selection, activity design, learner participation, and formative assessment. This synthesis therefore advances a pedagogically integrated perspective that moves beyond the affordability of instructional resources to emphasize their alignment with meaningful learning processes. Low-cost instructional media should thus be regarded as legitimate components of IRE instructional design, particularly in educational contexts where accessibility, sustainability, and contextual relevance are essential.

**Effects on Student Learning and Engagement**

The reviewed literature suggests that the contributions of low-cost instructional media to Islamic Religious Education (IRE) can be examined through three interconnected dimensions: conceptual understanding, student engagement, and learning motivation. Conceptual understanding refers to students' ability to interpret, classify, explain, and apply knowledge, whereas engagement reflects their behavioral participation and cognitive involvement in learning activities. Motivation concerns their willingness to initiate and sustain learning. Although these dimensions are interrelated, increased participation or positive attitudes toward instructional activities do not necessarily indicate deeper conceptual understanding or sustained learning outcomes. Therefore, evaluating instructional media requires distinguishing between students' immediate responses and measurable educational achievements.

Research on card-based instruction provides evidence of its potential to support subject-specific learning. Afifah and Manshur (2025) examined the use of flashcards to enhance understanding and engagement in fiqh instruction, while Firdaus et al. (2024) developed tajwid cards to facilitate students' comprehension of Qur'anic recitation principles. Similarly, Rozaqi et al. (2026) investigated picture cards for teaching halal and haram concepts to 15 fifth-grade students, reporting an increase in mean scores from 58.00 to 82.30 through a single-group pretest–posttest design. Collectively, these findings suggest that structured visual and card-based materials may facilitate knowledge organization, conceptual reinforcement, and learning achievement. Nevertheless, the absence of a comparison group in the latter study and differences in research designs limit causal interpretations and broader generalizability.

Qualitative research further highlights the pedagogical processes underlying the effectiveness of instructional media. Kholidi and Ivansyah (2026), through a case study of interactive flashcards in IRE, reported that contextualized visual activities encouraged classroom participation and supported students' conceptual engagement. Their findings also emphasized teachers' pedagogical competence in integrating instructional resources into meaningful learning activities. This suggests that the educational value of low-cost media depends not merely on their physical characteristics but also on instructional strategies, teacher facilitation, and opportunities for student interaction. However, because qualitative case studies investigate context-specific experiences, their findings should be interpreted cautiously rather than generalized as evidence of consistent causal effects across educational settings.

Comparative insights from digital-media research further clarify the relationship between instructional resources and student engagement. Jennah et al. (2025) investigated video-supported Qur'an and Hadith instruction using a mixed-methods approach involving 155 students and qualitative interviews, examining affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of engagement.

Similarly, Tarsono et al. (2024) synthesized evidence on digital applications in IRE and reported positive learning-related outcomes. Although these studies focused on technology-supported instruction, their findings underscore the importance of distinguishing student engagement from actual learning achievement. They also suggest that pedagogical principles such as meaningful interaction, appropriate content representation, and instructional alignment may be relevant across media formats. However, the available evidence does not establish equivalent effectiveness between digital and low-cost media. Table 1 summarizes the principal findings and methodological characteristics of the reviewed studies to facilitate comparison across instructional approaches and research designs.

**Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of the Reviewed Evidence**

| Study | Instructional focus | Evidence and methodological considerations |
|---|---|---|
| **Firdaus et al. (2024)** | Crossword-based tajwid cards | Instructional development and small-scale testing; limited generalizability |
| **Widodo (2024)** | Media implementation strategies | Qualitative evidence concerning instructional planning and media utilization |
| **Susanti et al. (2024)** | Digital-media innovation | Illustrates alternative instructional resources and digital learning practices |
| **Mintasih et al. (2024)** | Teacher competence and technology | Identifies implementation conditions and infrastructure-related challenges |
| **Tarsono et al. (2024)** | Digital applications in IRE | Provides synthesized learning-outcome evidence; not a direct low-cost-media comparison |
| **Reksiana et al. (2024)** | Teacher digital literacy | Highlights professional competencies required for instructional innovation |
| **Afifah and Manshur (2025)** | Flashcards in Islamic jurisprudence | Investigates understanding and engagement through card-based instruction |
| **Umami et al. (2025)** | Technology-based IRE learning | Literature synthesis of learning benefits and implementation barriers |
| **Jennah et al. (2025)** | Video-supported Qur'an–Hadith learning | Mixed-methods evidence on learner engagement |
| **Kholidi and Ivansyah (2026)** | Interactive flashcards | Qualitative evidence on pedagogical implementation and conceptual engagement |
| **Pratiwi and Ma'rifah (2026)** | Deeper Learning Cycle quartet cards | Quasi-experimental comparison of card-based instructional approaches |
| **Mutha'aliin et al. (2026)** | Visual instructional materials | Systematic review emphasizing representation and cognitive-load considerations |

Further insights from studies on digital literacy and cognitive engagement highlight the importance of teacher competence and cognitive processes in instructional effectiveness. Reksiana et al. (2024) demonstrated that educational innovation depends on teachers' digital literacy and professional readiness, while Husain et al. (2025) emphasized the roles of attention and memory in e-learning

from a neuroscience perspective. Although these studies focus on digital instruction, their findings provide conceptual insights into low-cost instructional media. The reviewed literature suggests three interconnected learning processes: presenting accessible information through visual, verbal, or physical representations; facilitating active knowledge construction through classification, discussion, and interpretation; and strengthening conceptual understanding through teacher feedback and formative assessment. These processes may support students' comprehension of Qur'anic recitation, Islamic jurisprudence, worship practices, and ethical principles. However, this framework remains a theoretical synthesis rather than an empirically established causal relationship.

The effectiveness of low-cost instructional media should therefore be evaluated through multidimensional indicators encompassing conceptual understanding, student engagement, and learning motivation. Beyond memorization and recall, conceptual understanding requires students to explain religious principles, justify interpretations, compare concepts, and apply knowledge in different contexts. Meanwhile, engagement can be assessed through active participation, collaborative reasoning, and sustained involvement in learning activities, whereas motivation requires separate evaluation. This distinction is essential because increased attention or participation does not necessarily indicate deeper conceptual understanding or lasting learning outcomes. Accordingly, this study emphasizes the importance of pedagogically structured media use and comprehensive assessment in determining the educational contributions of low-cost instructional resources in Islamic Religious Education.

**Implementation Challenges and Optimization Strategies**

Despite their accessibility and affordability, low-cost instructional media present several implementation challenges, particularly regarding teacher competence, instructional preparation, learner diversity, and assessment practices. These factors determine whether instructional resources are meaningfully integrated into learning activities or merely serve as supplementary classroom materials. Widodo (2024) and Mintasih et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of pedagogical planning, instructional alignment, and teacher readiness in effective media utilization. Teacher competence is especially critical because identical instructional resources may support different cognitive processes depending on how they are employed. For instance, instructional cards can facilitate basic memorization or promote higher-order thinking through classification, comparison, justification, and discussion. Reksiana et al. (2024) highlight the significance of teachers' instructional competencies, while Kholidi and Ivansyah (2026) emphasize pedagogical competence in implementing interactive flashcards. Accordingly, professional development should extend beyond media production to encompass instructional design, questioning

strategies, differentiated instruction, and formative assessment.

Instructional preparation and contextual suitability constitute additional challenges in implementing low-cost media. Although these resources generally require limited technological infrastructure, their development still demands accurate content selection, appropriate visual representation, and integration into lesson plans. Teachers may address these constraints by developing reusable instructional materials, organizing resources according to curricular objectives, and collaborating in lesson preparation. Furthermore, instructional media must accommodate differences in students' prior knowledge, cognitive development, literacy, and educational needs. Visual materials may clarify religious narratives but remain insufficient for complex jurisprudential reasoning, whereas flashcards may facilitate conceptual identification without adequately supporting procedural understanding. Mutha'aliin et al. (2026) emphasize the importance of appropriate visual representations and cognitive-load considerations in Islamic education. Similarly, Mintasih et al. (2024) and Umami et al. (2025) identify teacher readiness, technological infrastructure, internet accessibility, and instructional-content suitability as significant challenges in digital learning. These findings suggest that media selection should prioritize pedagogical relevance and contextual feasibility rather than technological sophistication.

The literature also reveals methodological and conceptual limitations requiring further investigation. Previous studies on low-cost instructional media frequently emphasize specific teaching products, classroom interventions, and achievement indicators, whereas digital-media research primarily addresses technological innovation, instructional integration, and infrastructure-related challenges. Studies by Firdaus et al. (2024), Afifah and Manshur (2025), and Pratiwi and Ma'rifah (2026) demonstrate the educational relevance of card-based instruction, while Susanti et al. (2024), Tarsono et al. (2024), and Umami et al. (2025) provide insights into the opportunities and limitations of digital learning environments. However, differences in research designs, educational contexts, and outcome measurements limit direct comparisons between instructional approaches. Consequently, existing evidence remains insufficient to establish the universal superiority of particular media formats. Instead, the literature indicates that instructional effectiveness should be examined through the interaction between media characteristics, pedagogical strategies, student engagement, and contextual conditions.

Building on these findings, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework comprising four interconnected components: pedagogical alignment, meaningful learning activities, inclusive student engagement, and formative evaluation. Pedagogical alignment ensures consistency between instructional objectives, religious content, learner characteristics, and media selection. Meaningful learning activities promote observation, classification, discussion, explanation, and practical application of religious knowledge. Inclusive

engagement facilitates equitable participation, collaboration, and instructional support, while formative evaluation enables teachers to assess conceptual understanding, identify misconceptions, and improve instructional practices. These components are synthesized in Figure 1, which illustrates the proposed relationships between low-cost instructional media, pedagogical processes, and anticipated learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education. The framework contributes a context-sensitive perspective by emphasizing that instructional effectiveness depends not on the affordability or simplicity of educational resources alone, but on their systematic integration into meaningful teaching and learning processes.

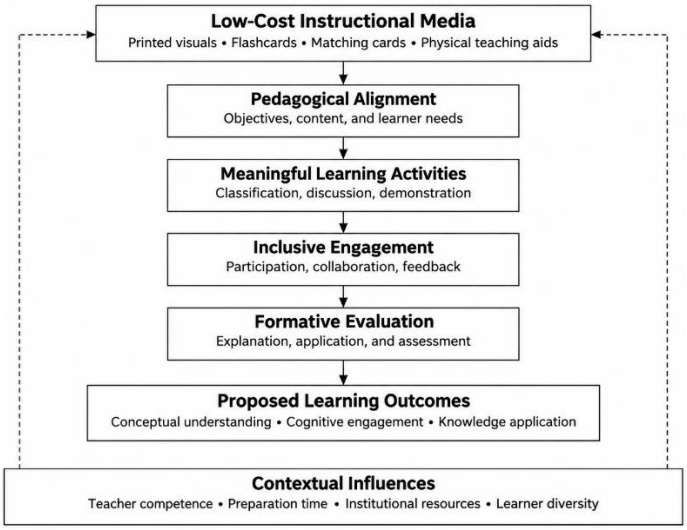



**Figure 1. Low-Cost Instructional Media Framework**

The proposed framework conceptualizes these components as interdependent rather than as an invariant sequence of effects. Pedagogical alignment informs activity design; learning activities create opportunities for engagement and conceptual processing; and formative assessment provides information for instructional improvement. Teacher competence, available resources, and classroom conditions operate as contextual influences across the framework. This integrated interpretation constitutes the principal conceptual contribution of the present literature-based investigation. Rather than presenting inexpensive instructional materials as inherently effective, it explains the conditions under which they may support meaningful IRE learning.

Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. The reviewed studies represent different educational levels, instructional objectives, research designs, and outcome measures. Furthermore, a descriptive qualitative literature review cannot establish pooled effect sizes or determine causal relationships between media use and student achievement. The proposed framework should therefore be understood as a theoretically informed model requiring empirical examination. Future research could employ comparative classroom interventions, mixed-methods designs, or longitudinal assessment to examine

whether and how pedagogically structured low-cost media contribute to conceptual understanding, student engagement, and the application of Islamic knowledge across educational contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the educational value of low-cost instructional media in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) lies not primarily in their affordability or simplicity, but in their pedagogical alignment with learning objectives, meaningful learning activities, and students' conceptual needs. The synthesis of recent literature indicates that printed visuals, flashcards, matching cards, and physical teaching aids have the potential to facilitate conceptual understanding, encourage active participation, and support learning motivation when systematically integrated into instructional practices. The principal scientific contribution of this study is the development of an integrative conceptual framework comprising four interrelated components: pedagogical alignment, meaningful learning activities, inclusive student engagement, and formative evaluation. This framework advances the scholarly understanding of instructional media by emphasizing the pedagogical conditions under which accessible resources may support meaningful religious learning rather than assuming that instructional effectiveness depends on technological sophistication. The practical implications highlight the importance of strengthening teachers' instructional design competencies, promoting context-sensitive media selection, and integrating formative assessment into classroom practices, particularly in resource-constrained educational settings. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature, methodological heterogeneity across the reviewed studies, and the absence of primary empirical data, which restricts causal interpretation and the generalizability of its conclusions. Future research should employ comparative experimental designs, longitudinal investigations, and mixed-methods approaches to empirically validate the proposed framework, assess the effectiveness of different low-cost instructional media, and examine their long-term contributions to conceptual understanding, student engagement, and the practical application of Islamic values across diverse educational contexts.

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