



Constructivist Learning Theory in Islamic Education Media Development: A Qualitative Content Analysis

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Abstract

Constructivist learning theory emphasises the role of learners as active agents who construct knowledge through experience, social interaction and reflection. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this approach is highly relevant as it is capable of developing the cognitive, affective and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. This article aims to analyse the principles of constructivism and their application in the development of educational media for Islamic Religious Education. This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis, conducted through a literature review of academic books and journal articles published between 2020 and 2026; the data were analysed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The research findings indicate that constructivism-based learning media enhance (i) learner engagement, (ii) critical thinking, (iii) deep conceptual understanding, and (iv) foster affective and spiritual development. Effective learning materials must be interactive, contextual, collaborative and support independent exploration of knowledge, furthermore, the integration of technology with constructivist principles further enhances the meaningfulness of the learning experience. The implication of this study is that the application of constructivist theory in the development of Islamic education media provides an effective strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

The development of science, digital technology, and the transformation of 21st-century education have brought about fundamental changes in the learning paradigm at various levels of education. Learning, previously dominated by a hands-on approach, has shifted to a more traditional approach. *teacher-centered learning* now shifting towards *student-centered learning*, namely an approach that places students as the primary subjects in constructing knowledge through active, collaborative, and reflective learning experiences (Parnawi, 2023; Mahbubi & Aini, 2024; Kurniawan et al., 2024).

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This paradigm shift is influenced not only by the development of information technology, but also by the demands of developing 21st-century competencies, which include critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, digital literacy, and problem-solving skills. Therefore, the learning process is no longer solely oriented towards delivering information, but must be able to create meaningful learning experiences and encourage students to construct knowledge independently (Saleh et al., 2025; Damopolli, 2026).

One of the learning theories that serves as the primary foundation for student-centered learning is constructivist learning theory. This theory holds that knowledge cannot be transferred directly from teacher to student but is constructed through a process of interaction between new experiences and pre-existing knowledge structures (Mariska & Khobir, 2024). Piaget emphasized that the process of knowledge construction occurs through the mechanisms of assimilation and accommodation, while Vygotsky explained that social, cultural, and *scaffolding* plays a crucial role in helping students achieve optimal cognitive development. Therefore, effective learning must provide opportunities for students to explore, discuss, reflect, and solve various problems related to real life (Ilma et al., 2025; Datzuhriah et al., 2025). In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), constructivism theory has a very strong relevance because the goal of Islamic education is not only oriented towards mastering religious knowledge, but also towards the formation of morals, strengthening faith, developing character, and internalizing Islamic values in everyday life. Islamic education positions students as individuals with potential (*nature*) to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually (Casfian et al., 2024; Karomah & Hanif, 2025; Avif et al., 2026). Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education learning process needs to be designed in such a way that students not only understand Islamic concepts theoretically, but are also able to internalize, practice, and reflect on these values in various life situations. The constructivist approach provides more space for students to develop religious understanding through authentic experiences, discussions, collaborations, and continuous reflection processes (Marliat, 2023; Novrizal et al., 2023).

In line with the development of digital technology, learning media has become a crucial component in improving the quality of the learning process. Learning media is no longer understood solely as a tool for delivering material, but has evolved into a learning environment that allows students to actively interact with various learning resources. The presence of interactive multimedia, *Learning Management System* (LMS), learning videos, digital simulations, *gamification*, *Augmented Reality* (AR), dan *Virtual Reality* (VR) offers a significant opportunity to create more contextual, engaging, and learner-centered learning experiences (Maswati et al., 2025; Pranata et al., 2025). In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the use of digital media also has the potential to increase learning motivation, expand access to Islamic resources, and facilitate learning that is more adaptive to the characteristics of the digital generation. Nevertheless, various research results indicate that the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning media still faces several challenges. Most of the media used still focuses on linear material delivery, emphasizes memorization of concepts, and positions students as passive recipients of information (Zakaria & Nawi, 2020; Prissa et al., 2025). These media characteristics provide limited opportunities for students to explore, build understanding independently, engage in dialogue with peers, or connect learning materials to real-life contexts (Nurhadi & Hilmi, 2022). As a result, learning media are not fully capable of developing critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and reflection skills, which are the demands of 21st-century learning.

On the other hand, previous studies have focused more on the effectiveness of using specific digital media or on the development of learning media products,

while research examining the conceptual relationship between constructivist learning theory and the principles of Islamic education media development is still relatively limited (Ferianto et al., 2024). Most studies measure improvements in learning outcomes after using specific media, but not many explain how constructivist principles can serve as a pedagogical foundation in designing Islamic education learning media that can fully integrate cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects. Thus, there remains a conceptual gap (*research gap*) regarding the synthesis of constructivism theory as a basis for developing Islamic education media that is appropriate to the characteristics of students in the digital era (Razak, 2020; Amin et al., 2026). Furthermore, the rapid development of educational technology demands a conceptual framework that connects learning theory with instructional media design. Media development that focuses solely on technological sophistication without a strong foundation in learning theory risks producing visually appealing media that is less effective in facilitating meaningful learning. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of constructivist principles is needed as a basis for designing interactive, contextual, and collaborative Islamic education media that encourages students to construct Islamic knowledge and values through authentic learning experiences (Marlina & Dananier, 2024; Nurhasanah, 2025).

Based on this description, this study was conducted to analyze in-depth constructivist learning theory and its implications for the development of Islamic education media through a qualitative content analysis approach. This study reviewed various scientific literature published in the 2020–2026 period to identify relevant constructivist principles in the design of Islamic education learning media. Novelty (*novelty*) This research focuses on developing a conceptual synthesis that integrates constructivism theory with the characteristics of Islamic education learning media in the digital era. The results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education learning theory and serve as a reference for teachers, media developers, and researchers in designing more innovative, participatory, contextual, and effective learning media in achieving the goals of Islamic education holistically.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a qualitative content analysis method through library research to analyze constructivist learning theory in the development of Islamic Education media (Wijayanti & Astuti, 2024; Engkizar et al., 2026). Data were obtained from academic books and scientific articles published in the period 2020–2026, which were selected purposively based on their relevance to constructivism theory, learning media, and Islamic Religious Education. Literature searches were conducted through scientific databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, and Garuda. All data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) which includes data reduction, data presentation, as well as drawing conclusions and verification. To ensure the credibility of the research results, source triangulation was carried out by comparing various scientific literatures to obtain a comprehensive conceptual synthesis regarding the application of constructivist theory in the development of Islamic Education media (Rupawan & Wardfi, 2024; Susanti et al., 2025; Mutathahirin et al., 2026).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of a content analysis of various scientific literature published in the 2020–2026 period indicate that the application of constructivist learning theory in the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) media makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of learning. The synthesis of various studies

identified four main findings, namely: (i) increasing student engagement, (ii) developing critical thinking skills, (iii) deepening conceptual understanding, and (iv) fostering affective and spiritual development. These four findings indicate that learning media no longer functions merely as a tool for conveying information, but as a learning environment that facilitates students to actively construct knowledge through experience, interaction, reflection, and collaboration. A more detailed explanation of the four findings relating to improvements in the quality of student learning can be seen in Figure 1.



Fig 1. Four findings regarding improvements in the quality of pupils' learning

Increasing Student Engagement

The results of the analysis show that learning media developed based on the principles of constructivism are able to increase engagement (*student engagement*) students during the learning process (Haerullah et al., 2024; Ahyai et al., 2026). Unlike conventional media, which tend to be one-way, constructivist media provides opportunities for students to interact actively with materials, teachers, and peers through discussions, explorations, simulations, problem-solving, and project-based learning. These activities create a more meaningful learning experience because students not only receive information but are also involved in the process of discovering, interpreting, and constructing knowledge. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this active involvement allows students to connect Islamic concepts with everyday life experiences. For example, material on honesty, trustworthiness, tolerance, or social awareness can be learned through case studies, interactive videos, or problem-based learning that encourages students to discuss and provide solutions based on Islamic values (Aldi et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2026). Thus, learning media functions as a facilitator that creates a participatory learning environment, thereby increasing students' motivation, interest, and responsibility in the learning process.

Developing Critical Thinking Skills

The following findings show that constructivism-based learning media contributes to the development of critical thinking skills (*critical thinking*). The principle of constructivism encourages students to analyze information, evaluate various perspectives, connect existing concepts with new knowledge, and generate solutions to problems faced (Taufiq et al., 2025; Hamdi & Jasiah, 2025). Therefore, learning media not only presents material informatively, but also presents activities that require the process of analysis, argumentation, reflection, and decision-making. In Islamic Religious Education learning, critical thinking skills are essential so that students are able to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively and apply them to various contemporary issues. Digital media that contain case studies, interactive discussions, and learning simulations provide space for students to develop arguments based on the verses of the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic values (Ariansyah, 2023; Darmawan & Ramli, 2025). This process not only improves logical thinking skills but also forms a wise attitude in addressing various social and religious issues.

Deepening Conceptual Understanding

The analysis also shows that constructivist learning media can produce deeper conceptual understanding than memorization-oriented learning. This occurs because students construct their own understanding through exploration, direct experience, reflection, and social interaction (Basyiror et al., 2024; Chairunnisa et al., 2025). Knowledge gained through this construction process tends to be more meaningful, more durable, and easier to apply in different situations. In Islamic Religious Education, deep conceptual understanding enables students not only to understand the meaning of a teaching but also to grasp its wisdom, purpose, and relevance in everyday life. For example, learning about zakat, waqf, or muamalah becomes easier to understand when presented through simulations, social projects, or case studies related to community conditions (Susanto et al., 2024; Alfiansyah et al., 2025). Thus, constructivist-based learning media can connect abstract concepts with real-life experiences, thereby improving the quality of students' understanding of Islamic values.

Cultivating Affective and Spiritual Development

Another important finding is that constructivism-based learning media not only enhances cognitive aspects but also contributes to students' affective and spiritual development. Islamic Religious Education essentially aims to shape individuals who are faithful, pious, and have noble character. Therefore, learning media must be able to facilitate the process of internalizing values, character formation, and strengthening spiritual awareness (Minarti et al., 2023; Ridwan et al., 2025; Thoyib et al., 2026). The results of the literature synthesis show that media designed contextually and reflectively can encourage students to internalize Islamic values through authentic learning experiences. Reflective activities, group discussions, social problem solving, and projects based on Islamic values help students develop empathy, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, and concern for others (Septiawan et al., 2026). Furthermore, the use of digital media containing exemplary stories, inspirational videos, prayer simulations, and religious reflection activities also strengthens students' spiritual dimensions, so that learning not only results in mastery of the material but also changes in attitudes and behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings. Overall, research results indicate that the development of learning media based on constructivist theory makes a comprehensive contribution to improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education (Syahapala et al., 2025; Zahra et al., 2026). Media designed based on the principles of interactivity, collaboration, contextuality, and reflection can increase student engagement, develop critical thinking skills,

deepen conceptual understanding, and foster affective and spiritual development in an integrated manner. These findings confirm that the success of Islamic Education media development is determined not only by the sophistication of the technology used, but also by the alignment of the media design with constructivist pedagogical principles that are oriented towards active, meaningful, and holistic learning (Saefudin et al., 2021; Fatchiatuzahro et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of content analysis of various scientific literature, it can be concluded that constructivist learning theory provides a strong pedagogical foundation in the development of Islamic Religious Education media. Learning media designed based on constructivist principles can increase student engagement through active and collaborative learning, develop critical thinking skills through exploration and problem-solving activities, deepen conceptual understanding through contextual learning experiences, and foster affective and spiritual development through internalization of Islamic values in the learning process. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of learning media is not only determined by the use of digital technology, but also by its suitability with the principles of constructivism that position students as active subjects in constructing knowledge. Therefore, the development of Islamic Education media needs to integrate aspects of interactivity, contextuality, collaboration, reflection, and digital technology in order to be able to create meaningful learning experiences and support the achievement of the goals of Islamic Education holistically in the digital era.

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