

VIDEO GAMES AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO DA'WAH-EDUCATION CHANNELS

Arditya Prayogi

IAIN Pekalongan

arditya.prayogi@iainpekalongan.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Kemajuan teknologi digital dan penggunaan beragam media yang semakin banyak saat ini menimbulkan berbagai implikasi, termasuk dalam kehidupan beragama. Dalam Islam, dakwah -sebagai bagian dari Pendidikan Islam, berkembang dengan cepat melalui beragam media budaya populer, termasuk dalam hal ini *video game*. *Video game* merupakan suatu permainan yang berupa simulasi atas realitas yang dimainkan oleh individu atau sekelompok orang. Jenis permainan semacam ini biasanya identik dengan kaum muda (*youth*) yang ditengarai sanggup membentuk perubahan pola pikir dan perilaku para pemainnya. Hal ini menjadi daya tarik tersendiri mengingat *game* yang sebelumnya biasa diidentikan dengan kegiatan remeh-temeh, kini telah menjadi alat yang dapat dimanfaatkan untuk berbagai kepentingan termasuk dakwah- pendidikan. Dalam hal ini, muncul istilah *media dakwah pop* yang menggambarkan kehidupan masyarakat modern yang serba praktis, yang dalam kehidupannya lebih menyukai suguhan dakwah melalui media yang mudah dan menyenangkan untuk dapat diakses. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui analisis literatur yang didapatkan baik dari buku, jurnal dan sumber lainnya yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa fenomena penggunaan *video game* dalam dakwah-pendidikan Islam secara teoritik dipandang sebagai metode kontemporer dalam penyebaran pesan dakwah-pendidikan Islam. Secara praktik, penggunaan *video game* sebagai media baru dalam dakwah-pendidikan Islam dapat membuka peluang untuk menyebarkan pesan-pesan dakwah-pendidikan secara masif dan signifikan.

Kata kunci: Dakwah, Pendidikan, *video game*, media, populer

ABSTRACT

The advancement of digital technology and the increasing use of various media nowadays have various implications, including in religious life. In Islam, da'wah -as part of Islamic education, develops rapidly through various media of popular culture, including in this case video games. A video game is a game in the form of a simulation of reality played by an individual or a group of people. This type of game is usually synonymous with youth who are suspected of being able to shape changes in the mindset and behavior of the players. This is a special attraction considering that games, which were previously identified with trivial activities, have now become tools that can be used for various purposes, including da'wah-education. In this case,

the term pop dakwah media emerges which describes the life of a modern, practical society, which in life prefers da'wah shows through media that are easy and enjoyable to access. This study uses a qualitative approach through literature analysis obtained from books, journals and other relevant sources. The results show that the phenomenon of using video games in Islamic preaching is theoretically seen as a contemporary method in the dissemination of messages of Islamic da'wah-education. In practice, the use of video games as a new medium in Islamic preaching can open up opportunities to disseminate messages of da'wah-education massively and significantly.

Keywords: *Da'wah, education, video games, media, popular*

INTRODUCTION

Along with the progress of the times, the development of science and especially information-technology has become extraordinarily rapid in this digital natives¹ era. Many things have changed, especially in relation to the physical/material cultural forms produced by humans. For example, related to games that used to be activities involving non-electronic/traditional, nowadays they use a lot of electronic/modern components and especially those involving elements in the form of software and hardware where the glass screen is its medium. This type of game became known as a video game.² Now, video games appear on

various platforms.³

In popular culture studies,⁴ video games are often seen as an exclusive pop culture product played only by a handful of people in the world. However, this opinion is wrong. On the contrary, video games have a high level of distribution.⁵

Henry, Khamadi, *Dampak Digital Game Terhadap Perkembangan Sosial Budaya Masyarakat*, Jurnal Andharupa, Vol.02 No.01. (2016), h. 34.

³ In general, in the physical form and technology used, video games are divided into two types, namely computer-based (both PC and Note Book) and console-based (such as Nintendo, Play Station, X-Box and others). Along with technological developments, video games are now available in the form of gadgets and mobile phones. Physically, computer-based video games are divided into two types, namely video games that use software in the form of CDs and those that use the internet (without CDs) which are called online games. Jeannie Novak and Luis Levy themselves divided the types of video game devices into 4 types, namely: arcade, console, handheld and computer. Jeannie Novak dan Luis Levy, *Play The Game; The Parent's Guide to Video Game*, (Boston: Thomson Course Technology, 2008), h. 51.

⁴ There are many definitions of popular culture or pop culture and they are difficult to define. John Fiske, *Reading The Popular*, (London: Routledge, 1989), h. 1-4.

⁵ However, this opinion is wrong. On the contrary, video games have a high level of distribution.

See, <https://edukasi.kompas.com/read/2019/08/12/0>

¹ Marc Prensky, *Digital Natives Digital Immigrants*, (Horizon: MCB University Press, 2001), h. 05.

² J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study Of Play Element in Culture*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1944), h. 1-27. Another term that is in line with video games is digital games. Further in,

Video games have always been identified with youth games that are mediated by technology such as consoles or computers.

In the past, video games were only a medium for entertainment, but now, video games have become increasingly prevalent with the interest in various gaming platforms, especially mobile games and online games, as if it was the main need of the community to channel their fun and free time, which led to the identification that games or games - In general, it is also synonymous with entertainment activities or leisure activities which are generally carried out by a certain person or group in the midst of busy work or school. The impact is that in addition to video games being considered by the wider community as trivial and not of philosophical-important value, they are also considered wasteful/consumptive activities or are tertiary/high-cost activities. Furthermore, video games were even accused of being potentially addictive to children.⁶ Video games are accused of making most of its players-mostly

7520061/melirik-potensi-industri-gaming-di-indonesia. Accessed 20 Mei 2021, 20.00 o'clock.

⁶ John Fiske, *Reading The Popular*, (London: Routledge, 1989), h. 77.

school age children-become addicted, forget the time and various other stereotypes that can make parents uneasy.

However, the current data and facts show that video games are not just entertainment and futile activities. Like games in the past, of course there are positive and useful goals and objectives made by game developers/designers for the players. In this case, it can be said that playing video games -in general- has various benefits, especially in the health sector where video games can be used as exercise-therapy to improve eye performance and brain activity. In addition, video games with the kinetic/*exergame* sports genre can actually be used for therapy and rehabilitation for people with physical and cognitive problems.⁷ This

⁷ Pauline Maillot, Alexandra Perrot, and Alan Hartley. *Effects of Interactive Physical-Activity Video-Game Training on Physical and Cognitive Function in Older Adults*. (Psychology and Aging Advance Online Publication. 2011, November 28). Accessed 20 Mei 2021, 19.12 o'clock. Also see, Dirk Ifenthaler, et al. (ed), *Assessment in Game-Based Learning: Foundations, Innovations, and Perspectives*, (New York: Springer Science Business Media, 2012), h. 2 & 11. Also see, Nanda Khairiyah, *Analisis Penggunaan Video Game Online Sebagai Media Dakwah*, on *An-Nufus: Jurnal Kajian Islam, Tasawuf dan Psikoterapi*, Vol. 1. No. 2 (2020), h. 25-26. Also, Krista Surbakti, *Pengaruh Game Online Terhadap Remaja*, on *Jurnal Curere*, Vol. 01. No. 01 (2017), h. 34-35. Also, Jeannie Novak dan Luis Levy, *Play The Game; The Parent's*

phenomenon shows that video games can be said to be the most advanced form of pop culture today.

With such a wide dimension and such rapid development, the use of video games as part of popular culture -which is alive and in demand- in society can be directed at various things including in terms of da'wah (Islam) -as part of education. In the context of da'wah, video games can be an alternative media of preaching to insert values-intrinsically, or even convey Islamic messages-extrinsically, if managed properly. Da'wah in general aims to change the mindset and behavior of the target of preaching (*mad'u*) so that they are willing to accept Islamic teachings and practice them in their daily lives, as well as in the midst of society. For this purpose, of course, da'wah-education can be carried out through various mediums. In the end, video games can be considered as a medium that can be used in Islamic da'wah activities, especially considering that video games have a participatory dimension. Moreover, the trend of its use continues to advance and is of great interest to many circles,

Guide to Video Game, (Boston: Thomson Course Technology, 2008), h. 177.

especially in the country, where the majority of people are Muslim. However, very few Muslims, especially preachers, use video games as a medium for their preaching.

Not many studies have reviewed how video games are used specifically for da'wah-educational purposes. Several existing studies, such as Nanda Khairiyah's writing entitled "Analysis of the Use of Online Video Games as a Media for Da'wah" in the *An-Nufus Journal of Islamic Studies of Sufism and Psychotherapy*, only reviews the concept of using video games and is limited to the aspect of the finished product without seeing how the conceptual building is. Thus, this article is a further elaboration of the concept of using video games in da'wah-education aimed at providing conceptual and theoretical contributions to it.

METHODS

The writing of this paper uses qualitative research methods. The analysis is based on extracting library data/literature studies from several literature sources (written). Writing is done through the process of extracting data from various reference sources

that discuss various activities related to the use of video games and their various impacts in previous research published in the public media. After that, a descriptive-analytic analysis was carried out to find new meanings. Researchers do not make face to face observations, but the data that has been obtained can be guaranteed its validity based on scientific research theory, because the reference sources obtained, based on the method used, are sources whose existence can be guaranteed. These sources can be accessed through various places (libraries) and internet media openly. This paper can be extracted from various articles and related writings. Thus, the article in this paper is more of a synthesis of existing writings, to be seen in terms of what can be done in the current context.

DISCUSSION

The essence of popular culture is a cultural form (whether material or non-material) that is favored by many people, only accentuates surface values, and is made to fulfill the desires of that society commercially. The way to measure whether a culture belongs to popular culture is by measuring it quantitatively. That is

why popular culture is a form of culture that is easily spread-as well as accepted, even capitalized- in a wide audience.⁸ The trait of popular culture that is only concerned with skin and outer appearance, without offering depth is very suitable for the character of most humans. With these characteristics, it is not surprising that when this culture enters, it can immediately thrive and develop in all aspects of life.

The sophistication of technology has progressed, making video games have been installed in almost all forms of electronic media, both hardware and software, have been mediated into forms, and especially wide spread -as part of popular culture- in the community. Video games can offer a picture of today's world based on emerging new ways of thinking. The content of games in the context of sociological and cultural studies is understood as a simulation in the form of a representation of reality that involves the player as a user who studies various issues regarding the reality in it. This means that what is presented

⁸ John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, (Sunderland: Pearson Longman, 2009), h. 5-8.

in the video game is also a reflection of the reality that is packaged in such a way as a game that eventually becomes a mass product. In fact, behind the content must be the reality experiences presented by the creator. These experiences of reality are presented in certain symbolizations that are sometimes vague if we are not careful in seeing them. There is an ideology that is deliberately planted in it. We can also find the inculcation of values through this kind of content in television shows, even in advertisements. It is not surprising that many agencies or even individuals make or at least make use of games to instill their ideology and principles of reality in the public. There has been a paradigm shift in understanding video games, from being trivial, to something that has educational value and correction of reality.⁹

The completeness of the video games features that are able to unite various forms of information transfer channels is a necessity that video

⁹ Sandy Allifiansyah, *Video Game: Antara Produk Budaya Pop dan Resistensi Terhadap Otoritas*, on, http://www.academia.edu/20038715/Video_GameAntara_Produk_Budaya_Pop_dan_Resistensi_Terhadap_Otoritas. Accessed 20 Mei 2021, 20.15 o'clock.

games can also be used for the benefit of conveying Islamic teachings or Islamic preaching with a more popular-modern approach. Modernity da'wah is preaching that is carried out by paying attention to the important elements of the da'wah, then the subject or preachers/preachers adjust the material, methods, and media of preaching to the conditions of modern society (as the object of da'wah) which may be the situation and conditions that occur in modern times, especially in the field of religion, never happened before, especially in classical times. On this basis, video games can be included in the category "objects as media/channels¹⁰ of popular-modern preaching", namely media/channels for delivering Islamic information that can display elements of writing, and/or images, and/or sound simultaneously when communicating messages and information. Finally, video games also become a medium for preaching-modern-popular education.¹¹

With the popular culture approach in making video games a

¹⁰ Samsul Munir Amin, *Ilmu Dakwah*, (Jakarta: Amzah, 2009), h. 113.

¹¹ Mohammad Hasan, *Metodologi Pengembangan Ilmu Dakwah*, (Surabaya: Pena Salsabila, 2013), h. 58

channel of propaganda-education, theoretically, there are three ways of looking at video games.¹² *First, games as intervention*, where video games can be seen as a means of delivery/intervention intended to change behavior through the player's learning process. The results of the intervention can be positive, for example increasing motivation, spatial abilities, and the development of complex motor skills. Change can also be negative, such as aggression and addiction. This can be achieved if the actors are directly involved (especially) as producers and consumers in a video game. There are values that every video game tries to instill when it is mass produced so that it becomes part of popular culture and leads to changes in lifestyle and behavior. *Second, video games as interactive tools*. In this case the video game functions as a simulation and model that provides a meaningful experience, allowing the player to achieve a task. Thus, video

games act as a companion to the cognitive processes that produce behavioral changes in players. *Third, video games as part of an environment capable of providing various (direct) activities that are useful and meaningful from the learning aspect (immersion games)*. In this point of view, learning is defined as an activity that occurs in a system. Players can learn from the system, or from other elements found in the video game. That is, the process of da'wah-education can be included in the video game system, where da'i and *mad'u* can learn from each other according to the role they take when they enter the system. The da'wah-education process through video games requires a direct and comprehensive involvement process from the learner in interacting with the system contained in the design of video games.

There are at least several ways (practical-concrete) in making video games with various platforms/forms as a channel/medium for preaching-Islamic education. *First*, building the entire process of building a video game platform by involving Muslim components in it. In this way, it is to

¹² P.G.Schrader, & Michael McCreery, *Are All Games The Same? Examining Three Frameworks for Assessing Learning From, With, and In Games*, on https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292614160_Are_All_Games_the_Same. Accessed 21 Mei 2021, 17.45 o'clock. Also see, Rahmat Hidayat, *Game-Based Learning: Academic Games sebagai Metode Penunjang Pembelajaran Kewirausahaan*, on *Buletin Psikologi*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (2018), h. 73.

make video games that contain Islamic preaching. Of course, making video games that contain Islamic da'wah-education content is not easy and cheap,¹³ but all relevant parties must strive so that the community, in this case Muslims, can be protected from the bad excesses of video games themselves. There are several examples of games built by local developers (in this case from Indonesia) whose content clearly contains Islamic values. The use of popular video games should be chosen with certain adjustments, for example by introducing educational games (edutainment). Without prejudice to various other Islamic games, here are examples, among others: *the Sholeh Children game*, *Soleh Super Jump*, and *Muslim Millionaire*.

Second, namely by inserting Islamic elements, so that the process of playing video games can be done by giving (Islamic) interpretations of these elements. This approach appears as an answer to the challenges/constraints that exist in the

thematic approach. The first approach by building a whole video game process involving Muslims is not (or not yet) popular considering the large capital and challenges involved in the process. Even so, it does not mean that the use of video games as a channel / media for educational da'wah is devoid of enthusiasts. Such a large number of Muslims will eventually encourage various (large) game developers who have special capital and specialization in video game development, to participate in the development of video games that at least incorporate Islamic elements in them. Unlike the first approach, in this approach, game selection must be done selectively, especially since there are no (big and serious) game developers who completely make Islamic teachings the most important element in video game gameplay.

There are several examples of popular games available, which contain Islamic elements so that they can be used (as interpretation-enrichment material) for proselytizing-educational purposes. Some of them; *Age of Empires*, *Assassin's Creed*, *The Sims*, and especially *Ghaib*, a horror game

¹³ Jeannie Novak dan Luis Levy, *Play The Game; The Parent's Guide to Video Game*, (Boston: Thomson Course Technology, 2008), h. 249-273

where players are faced with ghosts and to defeat them can only be done with "the power of faith". But before that, efforts to insert Islamic values have been initiated by creative hands through various communities, outside game developers/studios, particularly by the modder community.¹⁴ This community is able to rearrange a game into something different from the original gameplay. In this case, the popular games, which were released on an initial basis and did not initially (or were even hostile) include Islamic elements. For example, in the *Grand Theft Auto* (GTA) game built by *Rockstar Studio*, it can be redesigned by incorporating Islamic elements in it.

Third, this can be done by involving other platforms outside the video game system itself and requires internet network support and involvement of other application platforms, such as the use of *Youtube*, *Instagram*, *Tik-Tok* and other applications that support the transfer of data or information from one user

to other user (streaming). From this process, the actors involved are known as *game streamers*. This third approach is used primarily because of the massive development of online video games in all their forms. The main thing that distinguishes this approach from the other two approaches is the absolute need to collaborate with other platforms, and is more aimed at gamers who play popular games which are basically made for the benefit of the entertainment industry, such as popular games (online), especially those based on smartphones that are currently popular, such as *Mobile Legends*, *PUBG*, *Free Fire*, *World of Warcraft*, *DOTA*, and others. Because it is a popular game, even though it has no Islamic element in it, it can still be used as a channel for Islamic education by utilizing streaming media. There are two important keys to da'wah-education through game streaming media carried out by game streamers as its position as da'i, namely passion-skill and personality. These two keys are important to have in order to attract the attention of *mad'u*/viewers who will later access the game streaming process where

¹⁴ Walt Scacchi, *Modding as a Basis for Developing Game Systems*, Proceedings International Conference on Software Engineering, 2011. On https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228743734_Modding_as_a_basis_for_developing_game_systems, Accessed 28 Mei 2021, 20.25 o'clock.

more and more viewers are present in the game streaming process, the more popularity they get which in the end will also facilitate the transfer of Islamic values. inside it.

CONCLUSION

Video games nowadays have become part of the civilization of modern society with all the sophistication of technology that allows direct involvement in it. On this basis, it is not surprising that video games can be called the most sophisticated and complete form of art. In a video game, human nature is seen as a creature who likes to play through every cultural product created and developed. Along with technological developments, video games have also become part of popular culture. As part of popular culture, video games have a wider dimension when compared to other popular cultures, so the use of video games as part of popular culture can be directed at various things including in terms of da'wah (Islam) and education. In the context of da'wah, video games can be an alternative media for da'wah-education. The use of video games as a means of da'wah-education deserves to be taken into

account, considering that the trend of its use continues to advance and attracts many people, including in the Islamic world.

Theoretically, as part of popular culture, the use of video games also does not necessarily mean leisure oriented has a superficial meaning. The use of video games as a modern-popular propaganda-educational channel can be interpreted in three ways, namely; First, games as intervention, Second, video games as interactive tools. Third, video games as part of an environment capable of providing various (direct) activities that are useful and meaningful from the learning aspect (*immersion games*).

Practically speaking, the use of video games as a channel/medium for Islamic education can be realized in the following ways; first, to build the entire process of building a video game platform by involving Muslim components in it, which in this way is to create video games that have a clear Islamic preaching-education content. Second, namely by inserting Islamic elements, so that the process of playing video games can be done by giving (Islamic) interpretations of

these elements. Third, it can be done by involving other platforms outside the video game system itself and requires internet network support and the involvement of other application platforms.

As a result, although there are still pros and cons regarding the benefits of using video games, the use of video games as a da'wah channel can bridge the need to play dan implementation of the obligation of preaching-education at the same time. If video games can be utilized properly as one of the Islamic da'wah strategies, it is not impossible that the negative stigma of video games will be reduced, replaced by their positive influence in spreading the values of Islamic teachings.

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