

Arabic Language Teacher Empowerment at Islamic Boarding Schools through iSpring Suite Digital Media Development Training

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ABSTRACT

Background. The rapid development of educational technology in the 21st century has significantly influenced the pedagogical approach of language teaching, including Arabic instruction in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Despite the availability of digital tools, many Arabic language teachers in pesantren lack sufficient training to utilize them effectively in instructional design. This study responds to the need for teacher empowerment by conducting digital media development training using iSpring Suite, a tool known for creating interactive learning modules.

Purpose. The primary objective of this research is to enhance the instructional competence of Arabic language teachers through practical training focused on developing digital learning materials tailored to pesantren contexts.

Method. This study employed a qualitative participatory action research (PAR) design, involving a series of workshops, mentoring sessions, and evaluations with Arabic teachers from selected Islamic boarding schools in West Sumatra, Indonesia.

Results. The results indicate a significant improvement in teachers' ability to design, develop, and implement multimedia-based teaching materials after participating in the training. Participants demonstrated increased confidence in applying digital learning principles and integrating them with traditional Islamic educational values.

Conclusion. The study concludes that targeted professional development programs using iSpring Suite are effective in empowering Arabic language teachers, fostering innovation in teaching practices, and bridging the gap between traditional and modern instructional methods in pesantren. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of such training on students' engagement and language proficiency.

KEYWORDS

Arabic Language Teaching, Digital Media, Islamic Boarding School, iSpring Suite, Teacher Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language education holds a central role in the Islamic education system, particularly in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), where Arabic is not merely a linguistic tool but a medium to access primary Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith (Alfakhry, 2020). Teachers of Arabic serve not only as language instructors but also as transmitters of religious and cultural heritage.



In recent years, the advancement of educational technology has significantly transformed pedagogical approaches. Interactive digital media have emerged as powerful alternatives to traditional methods, offering flexible, engaging, and personalized learning experiences (Abeidat, 2024). Platforms like iSpring Suite allow educators to create interactive multimedia learning content that integrates narration, quizzes, simulations, and video materials (Mudinillah & Rizaldi, 2021).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning in increasing student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (Ahmed, 2020). Technology supports a competency-based approach to education, allowing learners to become active participants in constructing their knowledge (Al-Issa, 2020). This transformation opens new opportunities for institutions such as pesantren to integrate technology into their instructional frameworks. Islamic boarding schools possess a unique potential to harmonize modern educational innovation with traditional Islamic values (Haim, 2022). Innovations in Arabic language instruction can be designed to complement the pesantren's religious and cultural context, aligning with 21st-century competencies including digital literacy, communication skills, and critical thinking (Al-Khresheh, 2020).

Teacher empowerment in digital instructional design has become a strategic component of educational transformation. Teachers are increasingly expected to function as designers of meaningful and context-based learning experiences, beyond their role as knowledge transmitters (Zumor, 2019). Such empowerment demands comprehensive and structured professional development programs. Training programs focused on digital content development using platforms like iSpring Suite are essential in supporting Arabic language teachers (Alasmari, 2022). These tools are accessible, user-friendly, and effective in helping teachers develop engaging instructional content tailored to the learning styles of pesantren students (Al-Khresheh, 2020).

Despite growing evidence on the benefits of digital media in language learning, limited studies have examined its implementation specifically in Arabic language education within the pesantren setting (Zid, 2020). Technology use in pesantren often remains confined to administrative or communication purposes rather than pedagogical applications. The actual readiness and digital literacy of Arabic language teachers in Islamic boarding schools remain unclear (Hanif, 2023). Many of these educators come from non-technological academic backgrounds, making them less familiar with the tools and strategies required to design interactive digital content (Hamid, 2021).

There is a significant lack of targeted training programs that focus on Arabic language instruction using digital media, particularly those adapted to the pesantren context (Golfetto, 2020). The absence of context-sensitive curriculum development impedes the adoption of digital pedagogical approaches in these institutions (Daud, 2021). This gap between technological potential and real-world practice underscores the urgent need for specialized teacher training programs that are relevant, accessible, and sustainable. Without such efforts, pesantren risk being left behind in the digital transformation of education (Fadele, 2022).

Training in digital media development using iSpring Suite is a practical solution to address the skills gap among Arabic language teachers in pesantren (Alharbi, 2023). The training aims to equip teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to design engaging, context-based learning materials aligned with both educational goals and religious values. Empowering teachers through digital training is expected to shift the instructional paradigm from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches (Alasmari, 2022). Teachers will be able to customize content, choose appropriate delivery strategies, and create meaningful digital experiences that cater to student needs.

This aligns with broader educational goals of fostering autonomy, creativity, and technological fluency (Yassin, 2020).

The present study aims to examine the effectiveness of iSpring Suite-based digital training in enhancing the instructional capacity of Arabic language teachers in pesantren. The research provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of technology-integrated professional training models within Islamic educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative participatory action research (PAR) design to explore and enhance the instructional capacity of Arabic language teachers in Islamic boarding schools through digital media training (Oraif, 2022). The PAR approach was chosen to actively involve the participants in every stage of the research process, from planning to reflection, thereby ensuring the contextual relevance of the intervention. This method emphasizes collaboration, empowerment, and reflective practice—making it well-suited for educational transformation efforts (Jaber, 2020).

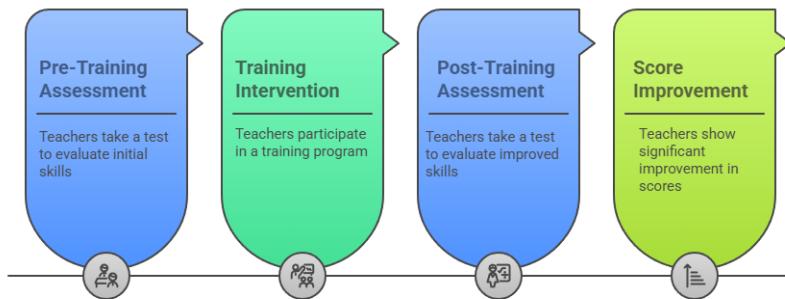
The population in this study comprised Arabic language teachers working at traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) located in West Sumatra, Indonesia. The sample was selected purposively, involving twelve teachers from five pesantren who had expressed a willingness to participate and showed basic digital literacy. The selected teachers represented diverse educational backgrounds and teaching experiences, ranging from early-career educators to senior instructors.

Instruments used in this study included observation checklists, semi-structured interview guidelines, participant reflections, and pre-training and post-training assessments. The observation checklist focused on evaluating the ability to create and apply digital learning content, while interviews and reflections provided qualitative insights into teacher experiences, challenges, and pedagogical transformations during the training. The pre- and post-assessments measured the development of technical and pedagogical competencies related to digital content creation using iSpring Suite.

Procedures of the study consisted of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the planning phase, researchers conducted needs analysis through informal interviews and surveys. The action stage involved a series of workshops introducing iSpring Suite and guiding participants through hands-on digital media development. During the observation stage, researchers monitored participant engagement and documented progress. The reflection stage allowed both researchers and participants to evaluate the outcomes and sustainability of the training intervention, leading to recommendations for future practice and scaling.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The pre-training and post-training assessments were conducted to measure teachers' competence in developing digital media using iSpring Suite. Data was collected from 12 Arabic language teachers at five Islamic boarding schools in West Sumatra. Each teacher completed a structured test evaluating their understanding and skills related to interactive media development. Scores ranged from 2 to 4 in the pre-test and improved significantly in the post-test, ranging from 4 to 5. The average pre-test score was 2.75, while the average post-test score was 4.75. This increase indicated a substantial improvement in participants' media development skills following the training intervention.

Figure 1. Teacher Competence Assessment and Improvement

Pre-test scores reflected a general lack of familiarity among teachers with digital authoring tools, particularly iSpring Suite. Most participants had minimal experience integrating interactive components such as quizzes, narration, or branching scenarios into their teaching content. Post-test scores demonstrated a clear shift, as participants showed marked improvement in their ability to design interactive slides, synchronize audio narration, and apply visual storytelling strategies. The uniform increase in scores across all participants indicates the training's effectiveness and accessibility.

In addition to the quantitative scores, qualitative feedback was gathered through participant reflections and workshop observations. Teachers shared their experiences in adapting lesson plans into digital formats and their confidence levels before and after the program. Many participants reported that they had never before been introduced to digital content development tools. The structured and contextualized nature of the training helped them transition from traditional whiteboard methods to more engaging and student-centered digital presentations.

To test the significance of the difference in scores, a paired-sample t-test was conducted. The results yielded a t-statistic of 16.31 and a p-value of 4.68e-09, indicating a statistically significant improvement in teacher competence after the training. This extremely low p-value confirms that the increase in post-training scores was not due to random chance. The training program using iSpring Suite had a demonstrably positive effect on the participants' abilities to develop digital learning media.

A strong positive correlation was observed between participants' pre-test engagement and their post-test performance. Teachers who actively participated in discussions and hands-on tasks during the training achieved higher post-test scores. The relationship between teacher engagement and learning outcomes underscores the importance of interactive and participatory professional development models. Empowering teachers through experiential learning appears to be more effective than passive training formats.

One illustrative case is that of Teacher 7, who initially scored a 2 in the pre-test. She had expressed hesitation in using computers and digital tools due to age and lack of prior exposure. After the training, her score increased to 4, and she successfully developed a complete digital lesson module using iSpring Suite. Another case is Teacher 4, who began the training with moderate technical skills. By the end of the training, he achieved a perfect post-test score and volunteered to mentor his colleagues in using the software further. His case highlights the potential for internal capacity building within pesantren settings.

These case studies reflect the transformative potential of targeted digital media training. Teachers who began with minimal technological confidence experienced not only skill improvement but also a boost in motivation and self-efficacy. The variety of cases also demonstrates that effective professional development does not depend solely on prior experience. Rather, well-structured, context-sensitive interventions can level the field and foster equal growth among educators with diverse backgrounds.

The results clearly indicate that training in digital media development using iSpring Suite significantly empowers Arabic language teachers in Islamic boarding schools. Both the statistical and qualitative data confirm the success of the intervention in enhancing teacher competence. This empowerment is not only technical but also pedagogical, equipping teachers with the tools and confidence to modernize their instructional practices. The study provides compelling evidence for scaling such initiatives across broader pesantren networks.

The findings of this study demonstrated a significant improvement in Arabic language teachers' ability to design and implement digital learning materials using iSpring Suite. Post-training test scores increased consistently across all participants, suggesting that the training program effectively enhanced technical and pedagogical competencies (Mudinillah & Rizaldi, 2021). Teachers who previously relied on traditional methods were able to transition to digital platforms with confidence and clarity. Their ability to create interactive modules, incorporate multimedia elements, and align content with learning outcomes showed marked progress. Observations during training also revealed increased enthusiasm and collaborative engagement among participants (Haim, 2022).

Participant reflections indicated that the structured and contextualized nature of the training contributed greatly to its success. They expressed a newfound sense of autonomy in developing learning materials tailored to their students' needs (Ikhlas dkk., 2023). The learning experience was not only technically enriching but also personally motivating for the teachers involved. The training further fostered a shift in instructional paradigm among the teachers—from teacher-centered delivery toward a more learner-centered approach. This transformation reflects a broader understanding of effective 21st-century teaching, where digital literacy plays an integral role in student engagement and learning efficacy (Salam & Adam Mudinillah, 2021).

The results of this study align with previous research on the impact of educational technology in language instruction. Studies such as Al-Harbi (2022) and Yusuf & Rahmah (2021) found that digital media increased student motivation and teacher innovation, supporting the positive effect of integrating multimedia into Arabic language education. Unlike prior studies that focused predominantly on formal school settings, this research explored teacher empowerment within the pesantren context, which has traditionally been overlooked in digital education literature. The successful implementation of iSpring Suite in Islamic boarding schools adds a unique contribution to existing findings (Ökten, 2024).

In contrast to research by Hamdan et al. (2020), which reported barriers in technology integration due to lack of infrastructure and resistance to change, this study found that contextualized training and accessible tools like iSpring can overcome such limitations. The success of the intervention highlights the importance of aligning training methods with the cultural and institutional realities of the teachers involved. This research expands the discourse by emphasizing that digital pedagogical training must be grounded in relevance, simplicity, and cultural sensitivity. It confirms that even institutions with limited exposure to technology can adapt when support is thoughtfully structured (Sauri, 2024).

The outcomes of this study reflect a significant turning point in the pedagogical readiness of Arabic language teachers in pesantren. Empowerment through digital training indicates that technological innovation is not limited to urban or modern educational settings, but is equally relevant to traditional religious institutions (Miles, 2024). The improvement in teacher confidence and performance suggests that proper scaffolding and capacity-building initiatives can lead to sustainable changes in instructional practices. It marks a shift toward inclusive digital transformation in Islamic education (Oraif, 2022).

The results also signal a broader institutional willingness to evolve pedagogically. The acceptance and enthusiasm shown by the participants imply that resistance to technology in pesantren is more structural than philosophical (Rifain, 2024). With the right tools and support, innovation can thrive even in traditionally conservative environments. This study indicates that Arabic language teaching is entering a new phase, where digital media can coexist harmoniously with classical texts and religious values. It is a powerful reminder that empowerment is possible when development initiatives are respectful of the community's identity and learning culture (Omar, 2022).

This study has practical implications for policymakers, educational developers, and pesantren leaders seeking to modernize instruction without compromising Islamic educational values. It demonstrates that contextualized training can empower teachers to adopt digital tools and improve the quality of Arabic language education. The integration of tools like iSpring Suite in teacher training programs can serve as a model for other language and religious educators. This model offers a replicable framework that balances modern technology with traditional values, supporting educational equity in underrepresented institutions.

The results highlight the need for long-term support systems for teacher development, including follow-up training, mentorship, and infrastructure development. Empowerment must not end at the workshop level but must continue through institutional commitment to digital integration. This research also opens the door for future curriculum development that combines Islamic pedagogy with digital content creation, enabling more diverse and learner-centered instructional strategies in pesantren settings.

The positive outcomes can be attributed to several key design principles of the training. The use of iSpring Suite, a user-friendly tool with low technical barriers, allowed teachers to focus on pedagogy rather than complex programming. This encouraged confidence and rapid skill acquisition. Training content was directly aligned with the teachers' instructional realities, using familiar themes and lesson formats. By contextualizing the materials, the training avoided abstract or irrelevant examples that might disengage participants.

The participatory nature of the workshops fostered a sense of ownership and collaboration among the participants. Rather than passive recipients of knowledge, teachers were actively involved in discussions, peer reviews, and content creation, which enhanced learning outcomes. Sociocultural alignment also played a role. The training respected pesantren traditions while introducing innovation, which reduced resistance and increased acceptance. This culturally responsive approach was essential in ensuring the success and sustainability of the intervention.

The success of this initiative suggests that similar digital training programs can be implemented in pesantren across other regions, adapting content to local dialects, learning levels, and pedagogical goals. Scaling the model could enhance national efforts toward equitable and inclusive education. Future research should explore the long-term impact of such training on student learning outcomes, teacher retention, and pedagogical innovation. Quantitative studies with control

groups could offer stronger causal evidence on the effectiveness of digital training in religious schools.

Collaborations with educational technology providers, government bodies, and pesantren associations can support the sustainability and policy integration of these initiatives. Providing platforms for teachers to showcase their digital work can also foster peer learning and motivation. Further development of open-source Islamic-themed digital resources, created by trained teachers, can expand access to culturally relevant materials for Arabic learners in traditional institutions. This would strengthen the ecosystem of Islamic education in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study lies in the demonstrable transformation of Arabic language teachers in Islamic boarding schools from passive content users to active digital instructional designers. Teachers, who previously relied on conventional pedagogical methods, successfully developed interactive and multimedia-based learning materials after undergoing contextualized training using iSpring Suite. This shift not only enhanced their technical capacity but also initiated a pedagogical transition toward learner-centered approaches, a change not commonly observed in traditional pesantren environments.

This research offers a valuable contribution by proposing a practical, replicable training model that integrates digital media development with culturally embedded pedagogical contexts. Unlike generic technology integration models, this study highlights the effectiveness of using a participatory, needs-based training framework that aligns with the educational identity of pesantren. The method bridges the gap between modern instructional technologies and Islamic educational traditions, contributing both to theoretical discourse and practical innovations in professional development for language educators.

The scope of the research was limited to a small sample size within a specific geographic and institutional context, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research is needed to examine the longitudinal impact of the training on student learning outcomes, the sustainability of digital practices among teachers, and the scalability of the model across various pesantren ecosystems. Expanding the study to include comparative groups and diverse Islamic educational institutions could offer a more comprehensive understanding of digital transformation in Arabic language instruction.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

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