



Development of Comic-Based Learning Modules to Improve Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Islamic Religious Education and Ethics for Junior High School Students

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Article Information:

Received February 16, 2025

Revised March 26, 2025

Accepted April 26, 2025

Keywords: *Learning modules, comics, critical thinking, Islamic religious education, character education.*

Abstract

This research is motivated by the low critical thinking skills of seventh-grade students of SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency in the subject of Islamic Religious Education and Character Building. This occurs because the use of conventional learning modules that tend to be monotonous, less visually appealing, and do not encourage students to actively think or discuss. This study aims to develop a comic-based learning module that is valid, practical, and effective in improving students' critical thinking skills. This type of research is research and development (R&D) with the 4D model (Define, Design, Development, Disseminate). The define stage is carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation to identify needs. At the design stage, a comic-based module design is produced. The development stage involves expert validation, practicality testing by teachers and students, and effectiveness testing through critical thinking ability tests with score analysis, Independent Sample T-Test, and N-Gain. The dissemination stage is carried out by distributing the module in printed and PDF forms. The results showed that the validity of the module obtained a percentage of 86% (very valid). Practicality received a score of 90% from teachers and 86% from students (very practical). The effectiveness test showed a significance of 0.000 (<0.05) and an average N-Gain of 77% (high category). Thus, the comic-based learning module was proven valid, practical, and effective in improving students' critical thinking skills.

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking skills are one of the essential key competencies in the 21st century, particularly in facing the complexity of information and the challenges of the industrial revolution 4.0 era (Rahanyiar, 2024; Adilah, 2024). In the context of education, critical thinking enables individuals to evaluate evidence, assumptions, logic, and language from statements or information received, both verbally and in writing (Lismaya, 2019; Agnes, 2021).

How to cite:

Olivia, O., Remiswal, R., Misra, M., Sepriyanti, N., Trinova, Z., Batubara, J. (2025). Development of Comic-Based Learning Modules to Improve Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Islamic Religious Education and Ethics for Junior High School Students. *Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education*, 4(1), 99-110.

E-ISSN:

2827-9573

Published by:

The Institute for Research and Community Service

Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System emphasizes the importance of developing students' potential to possess spiritual strength, religious beliefs, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and relevant skills. One crucial potential that needs to be developed to realize meaningful and active learning is critical thinking skills (Lisa & Muthohar, 2024; Sriyanto, 2024; Rahman et al., 2025).

In Islamic religious education and character education, critical thinking skills are vital (Trinova, 2022). Students are required to analyze religious texts, evaluate various perspectives, and make decisions based on a comprehensive understanding (Kusumawati, 2022). Ideal learning should expose students to real-world problems that stimulate their initiative to ask questions, respond, and understand, enabling them to express their opinions independently and discover material concepts through further investigation (Hugo, 2024; Haluti, 2025). To achieve this goal, effective and efficient learning solutions are needed, one of which is through the development of learning modules (Vicky Dwi Wicaksono, 2021).

A learning module is a teaching material systematically and structured to facilitate students' independent learning (Indarti, 2023; Widana, 2023; Pratiwi, 2022). Learning modules generally include a Learning Objective Flow (ATP), Learning Outcomes (CP), materials, and evaluations, enabling students to learn individually or under guidance (Nanik Setyowati & Satmoko Adi, 2023; Gunawan, 2022; Fahrurrozi, 2020). An ideal module should present problems or questions relevant to everyday life, encourage multiple perspectives, provide sufficient information for critical analysis and evaluation, and utilize various media to convey information (Sholikha, Farid, & Andriansyah, 2022; Nurhayati, 2022; Khoirudin, 2022).

However, initial observations at SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency, showed that the Islamic religious education and character education learning modules used were still conventional. These modules tended to be dominated by dense text without clear divisions and lacked visual elements, quickly causing visual fatigue and being less engaging for students (Murti, Kresnadi, & Halidjah, 2023; Widayati, Utami, Tobing, & Muhajir, 2022). The material presented tended to be dogmatic, providing little space for critical thinking, and resulting in students simply memorizing without understanding the meaning. As a result, students lacked interest, tended to be passive, and rarely interacted. This indicates students' low critical thinking skills in Islamic religious education and character education subjects at the school.

The implications of these problems can be seen in the daily test scores of students who have not met the KKTP (Criteria for Achieving Learning Objectives). The following data shows the number of students who have completed the daily tests in the second semester of grade VII in the subject of Islamic religious education and character education at SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency, for the 2024/2025 academic year:

Table 1. Data on the Number of Students Who Completed the Daily Islamic Religious Education and Character Education Tests for Grade VII Students in the 2024/2025 Academic Year.

Class	Total Number of Students	Number of Students		Completion Percentage	
		Completed	Not Completed	Completed (%)	Not Completed (%)
VII. 1	15	8	7	60%	40%
VII. 2	15	10	5	67%	33%

The table data above shows that the number of students completing the daily

Islamic religious education and character education test for the second semester of grade VII at SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency, still has many students who have not completed it or on average below the KKTP (Criteria for Achieving Learning Objectives). This shows that many students still have not mastered and understood the Islamic religious education and character education material that has been delivered by the teacher during the teaching and learning process.

To address this issue, the development of comic-based learning modules has been proposed as an innovative solution. Comics are a visual medium that combines images and text to convey stories or information (Ardiyanto, 2022; Devianty, 2024; Nur Haqiqi, 2022; Jannah, 2023). The use of comics in learning can stimulate students' visual analysis, cultivate questioning, train argument evaluation, and stimulate imagination and creativity (Suciana, Fauzan & Sriningsih, 2018; McCloud, 2022; Khairunnisa, 2023). Comic-based learning modules can encourage student engagement, facilitate understanding, and serve as an effective educational communication tool in enhancing critical thinking skills (Rachmasari, 2023; McCloud, 2022). The fundamental differences between conventional and comic modules lie in the stimulation of critical thinking, motivation, student engagement, flexibility, and material context, where comic-based learning modules offer significant advantages in facilitating 21st-century learning (Wibowo, 2023; Sari, 2021; Prayoga, 2021).

This study aims to produce a comic-based learning module to improve students' critical thinking skills in the subjects of Islamic religious education and character education of class VII SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency. Then to determine the validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the comic-based learning module to improve students' critical thinking skills in the subjects of Islamic religious education and character education of class VII SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency.

METHODS

This research uses the method Research and Development (R&D) with a 4D development model (Define, Design, Development, Disseminate), discovered by Sivasailam Thiagarajan (Thiagarajan, 1974). Level Define focuses on the analysis of needs and problems through observation, interviews with Islamic religious education and character education teachers, and documentation of student grades at SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency, where the research was conducted from February 4 to May 4, 2025. Furthermore, the next stage is the Design involves planning prototype the beginning of a comic-based learning module, including structure, visual design, material on avoiding gossip and carrying out tabayun, as well as the preparation of research instruments such as validation questionnaires and critical thinking ability test questions.

At the level Development The designed module was then validated by media, material, and language experts to ensure its feasibility. After that, the module's practicality was tested on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Guidance Counselors (BP) teachers and seventh-grade students of SMPN 3 Pancung Soal. A total of 30 seventh-grade students were divided into an experimental class (using a comic learning module) and a control class (using a conventional learning module), each with 15 students, for effectiveness testing. The types of data collected were qualitative (expert advice, observation, interviews) and quantitative (validation questionnaire scores, practicality, and pretest and posttest critical thinking skills in the form of multiple choice).

Data analysis was performed using percentage calculations for validation and practicality (Husen, 2020). For effectiveness, normality and homogeneity tests were carried out, followed by a test Independent Sample T-Test to compare the average

valueposttestbetween the experimental and control groups. In addition, the test N-Gainused to measure the improvement of critical thinking skills in each class (Rahman et al., 2024; 2024Engkizar et al., 2025). final stage, Disseminate, involving the dissemination of tested comic-based learning modules in print and digital formats, so that they can be accessed and utilized more widely by the education community (Sugiyono, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented systematically following the stages of the 4D model, starting from the problem definition stage to product dissemination. **Define**Initial observations conducted on May 13, 2024, at SMPN 3 Pancung Soal clearly identified that the Islamic religious education and character education learning modules used were still conventional, dominated by dense text and minimal visual elements. This condition resulted in a lack of student focus during the learning process and low critical thinking skills. An interview with the seventh grade Islamic religious education and character education teacher, Dodi Yulmaida, S.Ag, on May 20, 2024, confirmed these findings, showing that students tended to be passive, rarely asked questions, and had difficulty expressing opinions independently, indicating low critical thinking skills. Documentation data from daily test scores for the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year further showed that the majority of students' scores were below the Learning Objectives Achievement Criteria (KKTP) or that many students did not complete the course. These findings collectively emphasize the urgency and urgent need to develop more innovative learning modules that are able to effectively improve students' critical thinking skills.

Continue to the level **Design, prototype**The initial comic-based learning module was successfully designed comprehensively. The module design includes *cover*visually appealing, an introduction, and the formulation of specific learning outcomes and objectives. The core part of the module is the presentation of the material "Avoiding Backbiting and Carrying Out Tabayun" in a comic narrative format. The story is presented linearly involving student characters (Olivia, Bela, Putri, Lia) and a teacher, who interact in a social conflict in the school environment. The dialogue in the comic is designed to contain moral values, present various arguments, and offer choices of attitudes towards the spread of conflicting information, reinforced by expressive illustrations that depict emotions and social symbols. The module is also strategically inserted with verses from the Qur'an (Q.S Al-Hujurat: 12 and Q.S Al-Hujurat: 6) and authentic hadith to strengthen the religious foundation of the material. The evaluation section is equipped with multiple-choice questions specifically designed to test students' critical thinking skills at the analysis (C4) and evaluation (C5) levels according to Bloom's Taxonomy. All research instruments, including test questions, have been validated and tested to ensure their feasibility before being used in testing.

The culmination of this research is at the stage **Development**, where the designed comic-based learning module was tested for its validity, practicality, and effectiveness. The validation results from six experts showed that the module achieved a very high level of validity. Media experts namely Dr. Zulvia Trinova, M.Pd and Dr. Rezki Amelia, M.Pd gave an assessment of 88% (very valid category). Furthermore, material experts namely Dr. Fauza Masyhudi, M. A and Dr. Harmonedi, M.Ag. gave an assessment of 93% (very valid category). Then, language experts namely Abdul Basit, M. Pd and Drs. Zufahmi HB, M. Hum gave an assessment of 98% (very valid category). Overall, the learning module obtained an average validity percentage of 86% from 6 experts, indicating that the comic-based learning module is very feasible in terms of content, design, and language use. All suggestions for improvement from the validators have been accommodated to

improve the module. Furthermore, the practicality test also showed very good results. The practicality of teachers in this study was carried out by two Islamic religious education and character education teachers, namely Dodi Yulmaida, S.Ag and Mardiah S.Th.I.,Gr, who gave an assessment of 90% (very practical category), while class VII.1 students rated the learning module as very practical with a score of 86%. These results prove that the comic-based learning module is easy to implement in the field and is well received by users.

Crucial part of the stage *Development* is a test of effectiveness. after learning, *posttest* given to measure the improvement in student learning outcomes carried out in the experimental class and control class, the results data *pretest* And *posttest* Students' critical thinking abilities have been analyzed and can be seen in Table 2, as follows:

Table 2. Results of Improving Critical Thinking Skills of Students in the Experimental and Control Classes

No	Name of Class VII.1 Students (Experiment)	Pretest	Posttest	Name of Class VII.2 Students (Control)	Pretest	Posttest
1	Aditya	70	95	Amira Zulfitri	35	75
2	Ahmad Fauzan	50	85	Fahri Alam	50	80
3	Endang Dwi Azzahra	65	90	Firat Nufus	40	80
4	Hisham Nova	60	90	Hengky Kurniawan	60	85
5	Lita Arma Indah	55	90	Ilham Pratama Siregar	65	75
6	Muhammad Azhari	70	95	Indra Yuliadi	60	70
7	Muhammad Daffa Azzami	70	95	Jessica Aulia Depal	45	75
8	Getting Old	55	80	Kalisa Naura Athifa	55	80
9	Nailul Hafifah	45	90	Muhammad Idris Siregar	35	70
10	Niko Novrianto	60	95	Muhammad Fauzan	70	80
11	Nurmahira Simbolon	65	85	New Octavia	40	75
12	Nurul Hikmah Ramadan	60	80	Nur Hidayah	55	65
13	Hanafi ritual	70	95	Princess Oktaviani	60	85
14	Silvia Melani	75	100	Rehan Naldi Pratama	65	80
15	Toguan Siregar	65	95	King	60	75

After tabulating the student grade data, the next step was to test for normality. The normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The normality test in this study was assisted by the SPSS 24 application. To determine normality, the Sig. value in the Shapiro-Wilk column in Table 2 can be seen. If the Sig. value in the Shapiro-Wilk column is greater than 0.05, the data are normally distributed.

Table 3. Normality Test

	Kelas	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Results	Pretest Kelas VII.1 Eksperimen	0,158	15	0,200*	0,945	15	0,445
	Posttest Kelas VII.1 Eksperimen	0,234	15	0,027	0,891	15	0,070
	Pretest Kelas VII.2 Kontrol	0,196	15	0,126	0,916	15	0,170
	Posttest Kelas VII.2 Kontrol	0,192	15	0,141	0,926	15	0,235

In Table 4.14 it can be seen that the Sig. value in the Shapiro-Wilk column in detail, the significance value in *pretest* experimental class is 0.445 and *posttest* experimental class is 0.070. Meanwhile, the significance value at *pretest* control class is 0.170 and *posttest* control class is 0.235 which is known to be more than 0.05, so it can

be said that the four data (*Pretest* and *Posttest*) in the experimental and control classes are distributed **Normal**. After the data is declared normal, the next step is to conduct a homogeneity test using the Levene test. The homogeneity test in this study was assisted by the SPSS 24 application. To determine the homogeneity, see the Sig. value in Table 3. If the Sig. value is more than 0.05, then the data is homogeneous (derived from the same variance).

Table 4. Homogeneity Test

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Results of Improving Students' Critical Thinking Skills	Based on Mean	0,050	1	28	0,824
	Based on Median	0,064	1	28	0,803
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0,064	1	27,917	0,803
	Based on trimmed mean	0,048	1	28	0,829

In Table 3, it can be seen that the Sig. value is 0.829, which is known to be more than 0.05, so it can be said that the two data are homogeneous. After the data is declared homogeneous, the next step is to conduct a test. *Independent Sample T-Test*. It should be underlined, test *Independent Sample T-Test* only held when testing *pretest* And *posttest* in the experimental and control classes. This test was assisted by the SPSS 24 program or by the following formula:

$$s_p^2 = \frac{(n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}$$

The conditions:

If the significance > 0.05 then H_0 accepted

If significance < 0.05 then H_a accepted.

The significance level of the independent sample test (*Independent Sample T Test*) is 0.05 (*invitation interval* 95%)

The method for interpreting the results after the data has been analyzed is:

View and interpret the significance of the results

Probability = between 0.000 to 0.010, so the results are very significant

Look at the average value in each class, which is higher (largest). If the value of the experimental class is greater than the control class, the result is significant (H_a accepted), on the other hand, if the value of the experimental class is the same as the control class, the result is not significant (H_{the} accepted)

Table 5. Test *Independent Sample T-Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
value	Equal variances assumed	0,050	0,824	6,665	28	0,000	14,000	2,101	9,697	18,303
	Equal variances not assumed			6,665	27,883	0,000	14,000	2,101	9,696	18,304

In table 4, it is found that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000. This value is less than 0.05, meaning the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Because there is a significant difference between the experimental class and the control class where the treatment of the experimental class affects the students' grades, causing them to be higher than the grades in the control class which did not receive any treatment. Next, the test *N-Gain* designed to determine the effectiveness of comic-based learning modules in improving students' critical thinking skills. To calculate *N-Gain* use SPSS 24 Formula *N-Gain* can be calculated based on this formula, as shown below:

$$N-Gain = \frac{Posttest - Pretest}{score\ ideal - Pretest}$$

Table 6. Results *N-Gain* in the Experimental Class and Control Class

No	<i>N-Gain</i> % (Eksperimen Class)	<i>N-Gain</i> % (Control Class)
1	83	62
2	70	60
3	71	67
4	75	63
5	78	29
6	83	25
7	90	55
8	56	56
9	82	54
10	88	33
11	57	58
12	50	22
13	83	63
14	100	43
15	86	38
Mean	76,80	48,33
Min	50	22
Max	100	67

Table 7. Effectiveness Interpretation Categories *N-Gain*

<i>N-Gain</i> (%)	Interpretation
< 40	Ineffective
40-55	Less effective
50-75	Moderately effective
>76	Effective

Based on the results of the test calculations *N-Gain* above, shows that the average *N-Gain* (%) experimental class (using comic-based learning modules) was 76.80 or 77%, so the interpretation is effective. *N-Gain* (%) minimum 50% and maximum 100%. While the average *N-Gain* (%) control group (using conventional learning modules) was 48.33 or 48%, so the interpretation is less effective. *N-Gain* (%) minimum 22.% and maximum 67%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of comic-based learning modules (experimental class) is effective in improving students' critical thinking skills in Islamic religious education and character education subjects of class VII.1 SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency. While the use of conventional learning modules (control class) is less effective in improving students' critical thinking skills in Islamic religious education and character education subjects of class VII.2 SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency.

Overall, level *development* This study successfully demonstrated that the comic-based learning module is not only effective in improving students' critical thinking skills, but is also valid, practical, and easy to use for both students and teachers. With

some minor improvements based on user suggestions, this comic-based learning module has great potential to support a more engaging, interactive, and adaptive learning process to meet students' needs. Based on all of these validation results, practicality, and effectiveness, *prototype* the end of the learning module has been perfected and is ready to be distributed.

Lastly, on the level **Disseminate** This comic-based learning module, which has been tested for validity, practicality and effectiveness, is distributed in print and through internet access. *link*PDF. This step aims to ensure that the module can be widely utilized by other teachers and students, not only at SMPN 3 Pancung Soal but also in other schools that have similar needs to improve the quality of PAI and BP learning and students' critical thinking skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion presented, several key points can be concluded. First, a comic-based learning module to improve students' critical thinking skills in Islamic religious education and character education for seventh grade students at SMPN 3 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan Regency, has been successfully developed systematically through the implementation of the following stages: define, design, development, And disseminate from the 4D model. This module is designed with a comprehensive structure, featuring an attractive comic design, and integrating relevant Islamic religious education and character education materials, explicitly aiming to facilitate interactive learning and effectively improve students' critical thinking skills. Second, this comic-based learning module has proven to be highly valid, practical, and effective. The module's validity reached the very valid category with a percentage of 86% based on assessments by material, media, and language experts, indicating the feasibility of its content and design. The practicality aspect also fell into the very practical category with a score of 90% from teachers and 86% from students, indicating its ease of use and acceptance in the field. The test results Independent T-Test shows a significance value of 0.000, this value is less than 0.05, which means that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) accepted, and test N-Gain average of 77% is at an interpretation greater than 76% indicating that the comic-based learning module has proven to be effective. This research provides significant implications by presenting an innovative solution in the form of a valid, practical, and effective comic-based learning module.

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Tunas Bangsa Lidah Wetan Lakarsantri. *Aptekmas, Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 5, 195–200. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.polsri.ac.id/index.php/aptekmas/article/view/6291>

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Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education

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