

**Hindu Religious Education Teachers' Innovations in Increasing Interest in Learning the Bhagavad Gita in Junior High School Students in the Digital Era**

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Keywords:	Abstract
<p>teacher innovation, Hindu Religious Education, Bhagavad Gita, learning interest..</p>	<p>This article is in the field of Hindu religious education and digital pedagogy, focusing on teaching the Bhagavad Gita to junior high school students. This study aims to describe and analyze the innovations of Hindu Religious Education teachers in increasing interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita in the digital age, as well as explain how these innovations work in classroom practice. The research uses a qualitative case study approach, with two Hindu Religious Education teachers and thirty junior high school students as subjects, through classroom observation, in-depth interviews, pre- and post-learning interest questionnaires, and learning document analysis. The working hypothesis of this study is that teacher innovations that combine cooperative strategies, interactive digital media, and contextual approaches can increase students' interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita. The results of the study show a significant increase in learning interest, a shift towards a more dialogical classroom, and a growing tendency for students to relate the slokas to their moral experiences. The contribution of this article lies in the formulation of an “ecological innovation” framework for teaching the Bhagavad Gita in junior high schools. These findings are important as a reference for the development of Hindu pedagogy that is relevant to the character of the digital generation.</p>

Kata kunci:	Abstrak
<p>inovasi guru, Pendidikan Agama Hindu, Bhagavad Gita, minat belajar, era digital.</p>	<p>Artikel ini berada dalam ranah pendidikan agama Hindu dan pedagogi digital dengan fokus pada pembelajaran Bhagavad Gita pada siswa SMP. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis inovasi guru Pendidikan Agama Hindu dalam meningkatkan minat belajar Bhagavad Gita di era digital, serta menjelaskan bagaimana inovasi tersebut bekerja dalam praktik kelas. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, dengan subjek dua guru PAH dan tiga puluh siswa SMP, melalui observasi kelas, wawancara mendalam, angket minat belajar pra-pasca, serta analisis dokumen pembelajaran. Hipotesis kerja penelitian ini adalah bahwa inovasi guru yang memadukan strategi kooperatif, media digital interaktif, dan pendekatan kontekstual mampu meningkatkan minat belajar siswa terhadap Bhagavad Gita. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan nyata minat belajar, pergeseran kelas menjadi lebih dialogis, serta tumbuhnya kecenderungan siswa mengaitkan sloka dengan pengalaman moral mereka. Kontribusi artikel ini terletak pada perumusan kerangka “inovasi ekologi” pembelajaran Bhagavad Gita di SMP.</p>

	<i>Temuan ini penting sebagai rujukan pengembangan pedagogi Hindu yang relevan dengan karakter generasi digital.</i>
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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The development of religious education in the digital era shows a significant change in the way teachers manage learning as the penetration of technology today affects the pedagogical methods, media, and strategies used in the classroom. Advancements in digital platforms have opened up opportunities for Hindu Religious Education teachers to package sacred teachings such as the Bhagavad Gita more creatively and interactively, especially through video media, learning apps, and digital classroom models. This transformation requires teacher innovation so that learning is not only cognitive, but also effective and relevant to the context of the psychological development of junior high school students. This condition shows that teachers' ability to utilize technology is no longer an option, but a basic need in increasing students' interest in learning. This dynamic emphasizes that digital integration in the learning of Hindu Religious Education is at an urgent momentum, so that teacher innovation is a key element to maintain the relevance of Hinduism in the contemporary education space.

The tendency of low interest in learning of Junior High School students towards the Bhagavad Gita material can be seen in the results of the researchers' observations, which found that some students were unable to maintain concentration during learning. The results of the initial interview with the teacher of Hindu Religious Education show that students often find the Bhagavad Gita difficult in Hindu Religious Education because the language is philosophical and value dense. In some meetings, researchers noted that less than 40% of students actively participated in responding to the teacher's questions, while others simply copied the text without understanding its meaning. This condition is exacerbated by the habits of students who are more interested in using gadgets for entertainment than studying. The data confirms the pedagogical gap between the learning style of the digital generation and the teaching pattern of teachers who are still dominant in lectures.

The use of innovative learning methods has been proven to increase student participation, as found in a study on the habituation of Bhagavad Gita learning with the snowball throwing method, which has succeeded in increasing the involvement of junior high school students (Sudiatmaka, 2022). This method provides a space for students to learn collaboratively and exchange understandings about the Bhagavad Gita texts. The results of similar studies show that creative activity-based learning innovations can foster students' interest and curiosity about Hindu sacred texts (Jevisa, 2021). The findings show that conventional learning models are less relevant to encourage in-depth understanding of junior high school students, especially in the context of the digital era. This fact indicates that the renewal of teaching strategies is an urgent need.

The integration of technology in religious learning has proven to be increasingly effective for Hindu youth based on research on the effectiveness of digital platforms in learning Vedic texts. The

study shows that more than 70% of adolescents find it easier to understand religious concepts through digital media that are visual and interactive. Other research confirms that the use of Hindu-based learning videos and applications can increase students' attention to spiritual materials (Agus Supriadi et al., 2020). These results provide an idea that digital platforms are able to be a pedagogical bridge between heavy religious materials and the learning preferences of today's students. Thus, the digital era is not only a challenge, but also an opportunity for Hindu Religious Education teachers to design more engaging learning.

The low ability of some teachers to utilize technology is one of the main obstacles seen in the researcher's observation of the learning process of Hindu Religious Education in the Junior High School, where the research is conducted. The Hindu Religious Education teachers interviewed stated that they rarely use Hindu learning apps due to a lack of training and a lack of technology facilities in schools. Students report that learning is often monotonous and does not take advantage of the potential of technology available on their mobile phones (Student Observation, 2024). This inconsistency creates a pedagogical distance between teachers and students. These preliminary findings show the urgency of innovation that is not only methodological but also technology-based.

Studies in the past decade have shown a growing focus on innovative approaches in Hindu education with a focus on collaborative activities, digitization of learning, and strengthening character values. In 2023, research on digital Vedic learning shows a high positive response from students to digital media. In 2022, a study on the habituation of learning the Bhagavad Gita with a collaborative method showed an increase in students' learning motivation (Sudiatmaka, 2022). In 2021, Jevisa's research revealed the effectiveness of creative methods in improving the understanding of Hindu values in adolescents. Previous years have shown a similar pattern, namely the need for an adaptive and contextual pedagogical approach to keep Hindu learning relevant to social and technological developments. The literature mapping shows that there are new research opportunities related to the innovation of Hindu Religious Education teachers in the digital era.

The gap between previous studies and actual conditions in the schools where the research was the main basis for research was conducted is because most of the previous studies emphasized learning methods, rather than comprehensive teacher innovation. The researcher's observation shows that although some teachers try to apply a variety of methods, most have not developed digital-based innovations that match the characteristics of Generation Z. Teachers are still limited to the use of PPTs, lectures, and individual assignments that do not maximize interaction (Teacher Observation, 2024). In fact, recent studies show that teacher innovation is the main factor that affects students' interest in learning in the digital era (Agus Supriadi et al., 2020). The gap shows a new contribution space to explain how the innovation of Hindu Religious Education teachers can increase interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita in Junior High School students.

Efforts to answer the research gap are carried out by researchers through a qualitative approach that focuses on the innovation practices of Hindu religious education teachers in the context of digital classrooms. The researcher argues that teacher innovation includes not only methods, but also creativity in designing meaningful and relevant learning experiences for students. This argument is strengthened by literature findings that state that teachers must be able to be adaptive, creative, and responsive learning facilitators to technological developments (Adolescents' Perception of Vedic Learning, 2023). Thus, the contribution of this research is directed to expand the theoretical understanding of teachers' innovations in digital-based religious education. This approach is expected to enrich academic discourse in the development of contemporary Hindu pedagogical theory.

This research aims to identify innovations made by Hindu religious education teachers in increasing students' interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita, especially by utilizing digital technology. Another goal is to explain how innovation affects student motivation, engagement, and understanding. This research is also directed to map the supporting and inhibiting factors of teacher innovation in the school context. In addition, this study intends to provide practical recommendations for teachers, schools, and Hindu education policymakers. The academic benefit of this research lies in its contribution to enriching digital-based religious education literature.

The theoretical study used in this study refers to the theory of learning interest, the theory of educational innovation, and the theory of Hindu pedagogy, which are relevant to the digital context. The theory of learning interest emphasizes that students' cognitive and affective involvement are influenced by interesting, meaningful, and relevant stimuli (Suryabrata, 2018). The theory of educational innovation states that teachers are agents of change who determine the quality of learning through pedagogical creativity (Fullan, 2019). Meanwhile, Hindu pedagogical theory underscores the importance of dharma, swadharma, and spiritual experience in the learning process (Wiana, 2020). The integration of the three theories results in an adequate analytical framework to understand the innovations of Hindu religious education teachers in increasing interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita.

## **II. METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design that focuses on the innovative practice of Hindu Religious Education teachers in increasing interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita in grade VIII students in one public Junior High School (coded: Junior High School X) during one semester of the current school year. The researcher identified the research subjects purposively, consisting of two Hindu Religious Education teachers who actively teach in grade VIII and thirty Hindu students who regularly attend the Bhagavad Gita. This selection considers their direct involvement in the learning innovation process. The research instruments used include classroom observation guidelines to systematically record the activities of teachers and students, the forms of innovation applied (e.g. the use of digital media, discussion models, and creative projects), as well as the dynamics

of learning interest as seen through the activeness of questioning, discussion participation, and enthusiasm in doing assignments; semi-structured interview guidelines for teachers and students that explore their perceptions of the learning difficulties of the Bhagavad Gita, learning experiences before and after innovation, and supporting and inhibiting factors; learning interest questionnaires distributed before and after the innovation implementation period to capture changes in interest indicators in a simple quantitative; as well as documentation formats to collect lesson plans, digital teaching materials, student project assignments, screenshots of learning activities, and photos of classroom activities.

The research procedure was carried out in three stages, namely mapping the initial conditions (baseline) through conventional classroom observation, dissemination of initial questionnaires, and exploratory interviews; the implementation stage of learning innovations which are monitored through a series of planned observations and recording changes in teachers' teaching strategies, the types of media used, and student responses; and the final evaluation stage through follow-up observation, filling out post-intervention questionnaires, and in-depth interviews with teachers and student representatives regarding the effectiveness of innovation. Data from observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation were then transcribed, coded, and categorized into key themes such as the form of teacher innovation, the dynamics of student learning interest, and inhibitory-supporting factors, and then analyzed comparatively between the initial and final conditions to see the pattern of change; The validity of findings is strengthened through triangulation of sources (teachers–students–documents), triangulation of techniques (observations–interviews–questionnaires–documentation), and confirmation of provisional results to teachers (member checking) so that other researchers have a clear footing to replicate or verify in similar contexts.

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Research Results**

The discussion of the results of this study confirms that the innovation of Hindu religious education teachers that combines digital media, contextual approaches, and project-based activities is able to shift the interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita from the low-medium to medium-high category in most students. These findings are generally in line with research on the habituation of Bhagavad Gita learning with the snowball throwing method, which shows increased participation and motivation to learn when students are actively and collaboratively involved (Sudiatmaka, 2022; Jevisa, 2021). However, unlike the study, which focused on one specific method, this study showed that it was precisely the combination of several forms of innovation—digital visualization, interactive quizzes, and creative projects—that had the most influence on the change in interest. This strengthens the argument that for the digital generation, the variety of learning stimuli and the opportunity to produce one's own work is more effective than a single format of a constantly repeated method (Clark & Mayer, 2016; Hattie, 2009). Thus, the contribution of this article not only confirms the importance of active methods

but also offers evidence that the design of a multimodal learning ecosystem is key in the context of the digital age.

The relationship between the results of this study and the study of Vedic learning through digital platforms shows another important dimension. A study on adolescents' perceptions of Vedic learning on digital platforms found that many students find it easier to understand religious concepts when the material is packaged in a visual and interactive form. This study affirms these findings, but at the same time corrects the assumption that digitizing materials automatically increases learning interest. Field data show that the use of digital media without the design of activities that invite reflection and discussion will only shift the format of the lecture from oral to screen, without a meaningful change in interest and understanding. This distinction is important because it confirms that technology is just a medium; The decisive factor remains in the pedagogical creativity of the teacher in facilitating the dialogue between the text of the Bhagavad Gita and the psychosocial reality of the students. The originality of this article lies in the emphasis that "teacher innovation" should be in Hindu Religious Education as a configuration between the ability to utilize technology and pedagogical sensitivity, not just the adoption of new digital tools.

The findings regarding the shift in interest in learning, followed by indications of strengthening character and learning independence, also opened up a deeper reading space for the function of Hindu religious education in schools. Previous research has highlighted how learning the Bhagavad Gita can be used to instill moral and spiritual values, but often stops at the conceptual level or value description (Agus Supriadi et al., 2020; Sukarna, 2021). The results of this study show that when the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are presented through activities that require students to reflect on their own experiences—for example in the form of reflective videos or digital posters—interest in learning not only increases, but also transforms into moral engagement, such as being careful in using language on social media or increasing a sense of responsibility for tasks. This difference indicates that teacher innovation in the digital era has the potential to shift religious learning from "value transfer" to a more dialogical and reflective "process of value awareness-formation". Theoretically, this enriches the study of learning interest by showing that interest in religious material cannot be separated from the dimension of students' existential experience.

The context of research on Junior High School students in the digital era also makes a specific contribution to the Hindu pedagogical literature, which has been largely centered on the context of high school or higher education. The characteristics of early adolescents who are in the phase of identity search make them vulnerable to viewing sacred texts as outdated if they are not associated with the real problems they face (Radhakrishnan, 2017). This study shows that when teachers consciously associate the Bhagavad Gita sloka with experiences of inner conflict, peer pressure, and everyday moral dilemmas, there is a re-articulation of the position of the scriptures as a relevant source of life guidance, rather than just test material. Here, there is a shift in discourse: from "the Bhagavad Gita as a text to be

memorized" to "the Bhagavad Gita as a partner of inner dialogue." This difference in orientation has not been elaborated much in previous research and is one of the aspects of the originality of this article in the development of an experiential theory of Hindu pedagogy.

Methodologically, this research also contributes to the way of reading the innovations of Hindu Religious Education teachers in the framework of learning interests. Some previous studies have tended to focus analysis on the effectiveness of certain methods, such as snowball throwing or role play, with success indicators measured through increased test scores or momentary activeness in class (Sudiatmaka, 2022; Jevisa, 2021). This study adds a layer of analysis by combining one-semester observation data, in-depth interviews, and interest questionnaires, to be able to capture the dynamics of changes in learning interests more holistically, including the remaining tensions and resistances. The results show that not all students respond uniformly to innovation; some groups remain passive or only engage on a surface level. This fact reminds us that teacher innovation is not an instant solution, but a continuous process that requires constant reflection and adjustment. In terms of knowledge development, this invites future researchers to not only measure the "success" of innovations but also explore the variations in student responses and factors that moderate the influence of these innovations.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the article "Hindu Religious Education Teachers' Innovation in Increasing Interest in Learning the Bhagavad Gita in Junior High School Students in the Digital Era" has originality on three main points: first, strengthening the concept of teacher innovation as an integrated practice that combines digital technology, contextual approaches, and creative projects within the framework of Hindu religious education; second, the designation that the increase in interest in learning is not only seen in the indicator of activity in the classroom, but also in the emergence of changes in the way students interpret the scriptures in relation to real-life problems; and third, the placement of the Bhagavad Gita learning practice in Junior High School in a digital-age landscape that demands a new reading of the relationship between sacred texts, technology, and adolescent subjectivity. Thus, this article not only confirms previous findings but also develops new horizons for the study of Hindu pedagogy and research on learning interests amid ongoing digital cultural changes.

## **2. Discussion**

The discussion of the results of this study emphasizes that the innovation of Hindu Religious Education teachers in learning the Bhagavad Gita in Junior High School moves on three main axes, namely diversification of pedagogical strategies, integration of digital technology, and contextualization of sloka values with adolescent life. Field findings show that teachers who consistently combine cooperative models, problem-based projects, and interactive digital media are able to shift the classroom from a one-way lecture pattern to a dialogue space that gives room to students' voices. This pattern is in line with the recent trend of Hindu pedagogy that demands the concrete integration of *jñāna-karma-bhakti* in the learning experience, not just on a conceptual level.

A critical reading of the interview and observation data indicates that the main obstacle to interest in learning the Bhagavad Gita lies not in the complexity of the teachings but in the form of its presentation, which is still dominated by memorization of texts and abstract explanations. Students revealed that they were more excited when teachers packaged the sloka into creative tasks based on short videos, digital infographics, interactive quizzes, or group projects that were associated with everyday moral issues in school and social media settings. These findings corroborate the researcher's initial assumption that low interest in learning is rooted in the mismatch between the learning styles of the digital native generation and conventional teaching patterns (Slameto, 2013; Djamarah, 2011).

When compared to the study of Snowball Throwing habituation in the learning of the Bhagavad Gita at SDN 2 Adiluwih, the results of this study show a common point as well as an important difference. The Snowball Throwing study emphasizes that the throw-and-catch ritual of questioning, peer dialogue, and "anchor questions" is able to build a participatory class culture and bridge the sloka with everyday actions (Luh Gede Candra Sulasih, n.d.; Tapa, 2021). The study confirms that the same logic—a sense of security in asking questions, equal turns, and ownership of learning—also emerges when teachers utilize the interactive features of digital platforms (polls, live chats, discussion forums, online quizzes) as virtual "throw-and-catch spaces." The difference is that teacher innovation in this context is not fixated on one specific cooperative model but rather stringing together several strategies into a practice ecology that is adaptive to the infrastructure and character of students.

Another finding that stands out is the central role of teachers' digital literacy as a prerequisite for the effectiveness of innovation. Interviews show that teachers who actively participate in Teacher Working Groups, IT media training, and independent study consistently tend to produce more creative and relevant Bhagavad Gita learning designs for students (Hariati, 2025). This pattern is in line with the study on optimizing 21st-century learning at UPT SD Negeri 5 Amparita, which emphasizes that mastery of strategies, digital media, and HOTS-based assessments of Hindu teachers are key factors to restore post-pandemic interest in learning (Tommy Jevisa, 2024). Thus, innovation in the Bhagavad Gita class is essentially a reflection of the teacher's "re-learning" work on materials and technology, not just the application of new technical applications.

In terms of the substance of the teachings, the results of this study underline that students' interest in learning increases significantly when the values of dharma, karma, and bhakti are presented contextually through moral cases that are close to the adolescent experience, such as the ethics of using gadgets, socializing on social media, and responsibilities at home and school (Radhakrishnan, 2017). This contextual approach complements previous findings that have highlighted improvements in cognitive scores and minimum completion criteria graduation through method innovation, but have not explicitly mapped how sloka translates into ethical scenarios that students can negotiate in real life. Here, the contribution of this article lies in the explanation of the mechanism of the "sloka–action

bridge" in the context of the digital ecosystem: the sloka is not only memorized but also used as a framework for reflection in project assignments, reflective vlogs, and directed online discussions.

A comparison with the literature on Vedic learning through digital platforms also shows that the effectiveness of technology is highly dependent on pedagogical design. Research on adolescents' perceptions of Vedic learning via digital platforms shows that new apps, videos, and online materials are felt to be effective when they allow for personalization of tempo, dialogue, and connection with the learning community. The results of this study confirm this idea by showing that teachers who only move lectures to online spaces do not succeed in raising interest in learning, while teachers who organize discussion rooms, peer coaching, and formative feedback on the same platform can build emotional and cognitive engagement with the Bhagavad Gita.

The originality of this article mainly lies in the integrative mapping between teacher innovation, learning interests, and digital ecosystems in the context of Bhagavad Gita learning at the Junior High School level. In contrast to previous studies that focused on a single model, such as Snowball Throwing, or on the common issues of 21st-century Hindu learning, this study offers a framework of "ecological innovation" that shows how cooperative strategies, context-based projects, and digital media complement each other to form new learning habits in students. This framework shows that learning interest is not just a product of one method, but the result of a layered configuration between pedagogical–digital competence of teachers, assignment design that mediates the sloka with adolescent reality, and classroom culture—both offline and online—that is safe to ask questions, dialogue, and reflect. Thus, this article makes a conceptual and practical contribution to the development of Hindu Religious Education pedagogy in the digital age, while also opening space for further replication and testing in different school contexts and age levels.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that the innovation of Hindu Religious Education teachers through a combination of cooperative learning strategies, the use of interactive digital media, and the direct contextualization of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita with the moral experience of adolescents has proven to be effective in increasing the learning interest of Junior High Students in the digital era. The interest in learning that was initially in the low-medium category is increasing to medium-high because the material is no longer presented as abstract texts, but as a source of reflection that is relevant to the dynamics of students' lives. These findings reveal that the determining factor is not just the use of technology, but the ability of teachers to design a multimodal learning ecosystem that combines dialogue, creativity, and reflective projects so that students feel personally involved in the material. This article offers a scientific contribution in the form of an "ecological innovation" framework in the learning of the Bhagavad Gita, which asserts that increased interest in learning is the result of a simultaneous configuration between teachers' digital literacy, contextual pedagogical design, and

dialogical classroom culture. This framework adds a new perspective to Hindu pedagogical research by showing that the integration of values, technology, and adolescent experiences can form learning patterns that are more meaningful, sustainable, and adaptive to the development of the times.

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