The Representation of Aqidah, Ahkam and Akhlaq in Video Games: An Assessment through Content Analysis

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Abstract
The rapid growth of the global video game industry has opened new avenues for embedding Islamic elements into digital entertainment. Despite this, limited scholarly attention has been directed toward the representation of Islamic values, particularly *aqidah* (creed), *ahkam* (jurisprudence) and *akhlaq* (ethics), in mainstream video games, especially from a content-analytical and da'wah (religious outreach) perspective. This study employs a qualitative content analysis of 11 gameplay videos sourced from YouTube. The unit of analysis comprises video games that feature Islamic content, including titles from the Assassin's Creed series, *ruqyah*-themed horror games (Iblis) and an umrah simulation in Roblox. Data were categorized into *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* themes and analyzed using Islamic scholarly literature and shariah guidelines. The findings reveal that several games incorporate explicit Islamic elements. Assassin's Creed Mirage notably includes the call to prayer, ablution, prayer rituals and historical settings from the Abbasid era. The Roblox umrah simulation portrays proper rituals and etiquette, while Iblis uses Quranic recitations as spiritual protection. Ethical values, such as discipline in worship and respectful behavior, are presented through non-player character (NPC) interactions. These portrayals have also attracted positive feedback from non-Muslim audiences, who express appreciation for authentic depictions of Islamic practices. This study concludes that video games have significant potential as contemporary da'wah tools by incorporating Islamic elements in engaging, interactive ways. Such representations can enhance understanding of Muslim identity, support informal religious learning and help preserve Islamic heritage in digital spaces. Future studies are encouraged to examine player reception and develop structured frameworks for evaluating shariah-compliant digital games.
Keywords: Aqidah, Ahkam, Akhlaq, Video Games, Content Analysis, Digital Da'wah

Introduction

The global video game industry has emerged as one of the largest and most influential sectors in digital entertainment, surpassing both the film and music industries in terms of market value and cultural reach (Newzoo, 2023). This medium, which is deeply embedded in the lifestyles of youth and digital natives, has evolved from mere entertainment into a powerful vehicle for cultural expression, identity formation, and social influence (Campbell, 2020; Fernández & Radde-Antweiler, 2020). In Muslim-majority societies, including Malaysia, the increasing exposure to video games has raised questions about the representation of religious and moral values in these interactive environments (MCMC, 2022).

While studies in digital religion have explored the mediatization of faith and the negotiation of religious identity online (Bunt, 2018; Campbell, 2012), few have systematically examined how Islamic values, particularly *aqidah* (creed), *ahkam* (jurisprudential), and *akhlaq* (ethics) are portrayed in mainstream video games. This gap is especially significant given that religious representation in video games often defaults to Judeo-Christian frameworks or secular metaphors, which may either marginalize or misrepresent non-Western faiths (Radde-Antweiler et al., 2014; Yılmaz, 2024).

Although prior research has addressed Islam-themed games and Islamic storytelling in digital media (Antariksa, 2023; Prayogi, 2024), there remains a lack of critical content analysis on commercial games that include Islamic symbols, rituals, or narratives particularly in how these relate to da'wah, spiritual identity, or ethical pedagogy. Furthermore, existing frameworks rarely incorporate Islamic epistemological dimensions when evaluating religious content, such as alignment with shariah principles or Islamic pedagogy (Kamali, 2008).

Given that Islam permits entertainment as long as it does not lead to elements contradicting the *shariah* (Arinal Husna, Zulkifli, & Yaacob, 2023), there is a need to examine how contemporary video games engage with religious values. Indeed, recent research has examined social media platforms like YouTube as channels for Islamic outreach (Razak, Baharudin, Nordin, Basah, & Bakar, 2023), yet video games remain an under-explored medium in this context.

The rapid development of interactive technology has also encouraged the incorporation of diverse themes, history, culture, social conflict and religion, into mainstream video games. Games like *Call of Duty*, *Civilization* and *Total War* have long included historical and geopolitical narratives as commercial attractions. In the Islamic context, games such as *Assassin's Creed* have drawn attention for depicting the golden age of Islam, including the Abbasid era and stories of important figures of the Islamic world. A study by Radde-Antweiler, Zeiler and Fernández (2014) indicates that the interaction between religion and video games is a growing field of research, yet there is still limited focus on how religion is portrayed and interpreted in this medium. Similarly, Bunt's (2018) work on digital religion asserts that religious representations in digital media are often shaped by the producer's perspective, commercial narratives and Western cultural imagination. A significant research gap is the lack of systematic studies that specifically evaluate how *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq*, three core components of Muslim life, are presented in video games, compared to studies that only superficially examine Islamic historical aspects or symbols (Yılmaz, 2024).

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this research gap by examining the representation of *aqidah*, *ahkam*, and *akhlaq* in selected video games through a content analysis approach grounded in Islamic principles. This approach not only aligns with the growing interest in shariah-compliant entertainment but also contributes to ongoing discussions in digital sociology, religious studies, and Islamic media ethics. By situating the research at the intersection of digital culture and Islamic value systems, the study provides an empirically grounded response to the urgent need for faith-sensitive evaluation frameworks in globalized entertainment media.

Literature Review

Discussions about entertainment in Islam typically start from the premise that entertainment is permissible (*harus*) as long as it does not violate *shariah* principles. Al-Qaradawi (1985), in his classic work *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, explains that entertainment remains within the permissible realm so long as it does not distract from religious obligations, does not contain forbidden elements and does not corrupt morals. This approach is supported by contemporary *fiqh* discussions which emphasize that judging entertainment, including video games, requires weighing benefits and harms in line with the categories of obligatory, recommended, permissible, discouraged, or prohibited, as outlined by Kamali (2008). From a media theory standpoint, Hall's (1997) representation framework asserts that media are never neutral; they shape meaning and ideology through images, narratives and cultural symbols. This approach is relevant when examining how *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* are represented in video games. At the same time, literature on "digital religion" by Campbell (2012) and Bunt (2018) shows that digital media, including video games, have become new spaces for identity construction and religious practice, not merely channels for information. Theoretically, therefore, this research stands at the intersection of Islamic entertainment jurisprudence, representation theory and digital religion studies. Notably, a recent study found that contemporary global values can erode the Islamic identity of Muslim youth (Aldosary & Alzeetawi, 2023), underscoring the importance of reinforcing Islamic teachings in the content that young people consume. These insights highlight the relevance of ensuring accurate and meaningful religious representations in popular media, including games.

From an empirical perspective, a few specialized studies have begun examining the application of Islamic principles in video games, but their focus and depth remain limited. A master's thesis by Antariksa (2023) analyzed how Islamic principles, including *tauhid* values and ethics, could be subtly implemented in video game design; however, that analysis was more conceptual and design-oriented, rather than a content analysis of actual game titles available in the market. Yılmaz (2024) examined the game *Knights of the Light: The Prologue*, which is set against the backdrop of the Battle of Qadisiyyah, focusing on the game's role in teaching Islamic history and awareness of early Islamic civilization. That study provided an important contribution in terms of historical and narrative elements, but it did not evaluate in detail the *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* dimensions of the game's content.

In the context of education, Prayogi (2024) investigated the use of video games as part of learning Islamic cultural history and found that games can increase students' interest and understanding of historical events. However, that study's focus was on pedagogical aspects and learning effectiveness, not on *shariah* or ethical evaluation of the game content itself. Additionally, several studies have looked at video games as media for da'wah and religious

education more generally. Prayogi (2021, 2022), in a number of papers, emphasized the potential of video games as alternative channels for da'wah and the gamification of Islamic education, highlighting how narrative elements, achievement systems and rewards in games can be aligned with religious messages. However, such studies are usually conceptual or limited case studies and they rarely provide systematic analysis of the representation of *aqidah*, Islamic law and morality in specific games.

On a broader level, Fernández and Radde-Antweiler (2020) showed that religion is often depicted in stereotypical ways in mainstream video games. However, their analysis covered multiple religious traditions and did not give in-depth focus to Islam as the primary subject. Overall, this literature review indicates that although there is awareness of the potential of video games as educational and da'wah media, content evaluation from the *aqidah–ahkam–akhlaq* perspective has yet to be rigorously undertaken.

From the above review, several research gaps can be identified. First, most existing studies focus more on historical and pedagogical aspects (such as fostering interest in Islamic history) rather than on an in-depth analysis of how *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* are represented in video games. Second, there is still an absence of a content analysis framework explicitly based on these three major Islamic dimensions as indicators for evaluating the alignment of video game content with Islamic entertainment guidelines, even though in Islamic jurisprudence literature on entertainment, these dimensions are strongly emphasized. Third, although digital religion discourse emphasizes the potential of interactive media as spaces for religious identity formation and practice, few studies have examined commercial or popular video games (as opposed to purpose-built educational games) as informal da'wah media, particularly among young Muslim players. Lastly, previous studies rarely connect media representation theory with Islamic normative frameworks explicitly, resulting in analyses of video games that often remain descriptive and have not extended to normative evaluations based on the concept of Islamic entertainment.

In response, the study "Representation of Aqidah, Ahkam and Akhlaq in Video Games: A Content Analysis Evaluation" attempts to fill these gaps with several key contributions. First, the study develops and applies a content analysis framework explicitly based on three Islamic dimensions, *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq*, in the context of digital entertainment, thereby operationalizing the concept of Islamic entertainment into indicators that can be observed in video games. Second, this framework is applied to actual popular video games that contain Islamic elements, not only to specially designed educational games, thus providing a more realistic depiction of how Islam is represented in the mainstream entertainment ecosystem. Third, the study combines Hall's representation theory with Campbell's and Bunt's digital religion discourse to explain how religious meaning is constructed through visuals, narratives and game mechanics, while being re-evaluated through the lens of *shariah* and Islamic ethics. Through this approach, the research not only contributes to the academic literature on video games and Islam, but also offers practical implications for game developers, educators and religious authorities in formulating *shariah*-compliant digital entertainment guidelines and leveraging games as a contemporary da'wah medium.

Conceptual Framework

Islamic Entertainment Concept: The concept of Islamic entertainment is rooted in the principle that entertainment is part of human nature and needs, but remains bound to *shariah* limits and spiritual objectives. Al-Qaradawi (1985) explains that permissible entertainment in Islam is that which provides emotional relaxation without leading to heedlessness, sin, or elements that harm morality. Al-Ghazali (2005) similarly emphasizes that enjoyment is not completely rejected in Islam; indeed, it is an important mechanism for soul purification when managed with proper etiquette and intention. From an Islamic philosophy of art perspective, Nasr (1987) states that all forms of entertainment in Islamic culture must be based on *tawhid* (monotheism) and reflect an aesthetic decorum that brings one closer to God. Together, these scholars provide a firm basis that Islamic entertainment is not merely a relaxation activity, but a process that preserves spiritual and moral harmony. In the digital era, this understanding must extend to modern entertainment forms such as video games, which now function not only as interactive media but also as spaces for the formation of meaning, values and identity. Therefore, in this study, Islamic entertainment is defined as entertainment that meets the psychological and social needs of players without neglecting the principles of *tawhid*, *shariah* boundaries and the goal of moral purification.

Aqidah, Ahkam and Akhlaq in Entertainment: The integration of the main Islamic values of *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* into entertainment content refers to incorporating these principles in a structured and meaningful way. Al-Attas (1995) asserts that *aqidah* (creed) is the foundation of a Muslim's worldview and acts as a filter against any form of thought or representation received through media. *Aqidah* in entertainment demands that content not normalize elements of *shirk* (polytheism), supernatural beliefs that contradict Islamic teachings, or the glorification of any power other than Allah. From the *ahkam* (Islamic law) perspective, Kamali (2008) explains that *shariah* functions to regulate human actions based on principles of welfare and harm prevention, including in entertainment. Hence, entertainment content is deemed *shariah*-compliant when it avoids forbidden elements such as excessive violence, pornography, gambling, slander and immoral dialogue, criteria elaborated by Deraman (2017) in his study of *shariah*-compliant entertainment. Next, *akhlaq* as the core of Islamic ethics refers to the cultivation of noble character traits like trustworthiness, proper etiquette, honesty and compassion. According to al-Attas (1991), *akhlaq* is the manifestation of spiritual values in action. In the media context, Ward (2011) stresses that entertainment content can shape the behavior of young generations through the normalization of moral or amoral actions. This synthesis of literature shows that *aqidah* provides the faith framework, *ahkam* provides legal boundaries and *akhlaq* provides the ethical yardstick in entertainment. Therefore, for this study, the *aqidah, ahkam* and *akhlaq* concept serves as three analytical dimensions to evaluate the accuracy, authenticity and impact of video game content on players' Islamic understanding.

Video Games as a Digital Da'wah Medium: The concept of video games as a medium for digital da'wah is based on the transformed landscape of religious communication in the digital era. Bunt (2018) emphasizes that digital media open new spaces for disseminating Islamic messages through more creative, visual and interactive approaches. Campbell (2020) likewise asserts that interactive media such as video games are capable of shaping immersive religious experiences, combining narrative, visuals and player action into a unique spiritual experience. Fernández and Radde-Antweiler (2020) show that video games also function as arenas of

religious representation that can shape perceptions or stereotypes depending on how religious values are presented. Combining these perspectives, video games can be seen as informal da'wah media that influence players' thinking, identity and moral sensitivity through storytelling, game mechanics and character interactions. Based on this synthesis, the study defines digital da'wah through video games as the process of conveying Islamic values indirectly via interactive experiences that provide opportunities for education, reflection and moral development. This operational definition enables the study to evaluate *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* representations systematically and to understand the potential of video games as an Islamic entertainment medium contributing to Muslim identity formation.

Methodology
This section describes the research design, unit of analysis, data sources, data collection process and data analysis methods used in the study "Representation of Aqidah, Ahkam and Akhlaq in Video Games: An Assessment Through Content Analysis." The methodology was developed based on the requirements of qualitative research and was tailored to the nature of the study material, which is visual, narrative and interactive.

Research Design: This study adopts a qualitative research design using a content analysis approach. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to examine and interpret both explicit and implicit meanings in video game content that features Islamic elements. The qualitative approach is suitable for addressing research questions about what *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* elements are represented, why they are presented in certain ways and how Islamic messages are constructed through narratives, visuals and game mechanics.
Content analysis was selected as it enables detailed observation of the representation of symbols, dialogue, storyline, environment, character movement, as well as rituals that might be contained in the games. This approach also allows the researcher to evaluate the messages being conveyed through images and narratives and to assess how well the content aligns with Islamic entertainment principles. Using this design, analysis was conducted in a systematic, thematic manner with an interpretive orientation toward Islamic values.

Unit of Analysis: The unit of analysis in this study encompasses the visual, audio, narrative and interactive content within video games that contain Islamic elements. This includes:
- character dialogues containing religious references;
- depictions of worship such as prayer (*salat*), call to prayer (*azan*), ablution (*wudu*), *dhikr* or supplications;
- visuals such as mosques, the Kaaba, Arabic manuscripts and other Islamic symbols;
- game mechanics such as acts of helping others, observing social etiquette, or moral-based reward systems;
- narratives involving Islamic history, notable figures, moral values, or *shariah* rulings;
- player interactions such as moral choices, reactions to in-game situations and game rules.

These units were selected because they reflect how Islamic elements are represented in video games and allow for evaluation across the study's three main dimensions: *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq*.

Data Sources: The data for this study consist of primary and secondary data.
- **Primary Data:** Primary data were obtained from recordings of video gameplay uploaded on YouTube. Games were selected based on the following criteria:

  – The game includes direct Islamic elements (worship practices, prayers, Islamic history, Islamic symbols);
  – The game highlights moral values relevant to Islamic ethics (*akhlaq*);
  – The game's narrative involves Muslim communities, Islamic civilization, or religious rituals;
  – The game is popular and widely reviewed by players on social media (e.g., *Assassin's Creed Mirage*, *Assassin's Creed Origins*, *Assassin's Creed Revelations*, *Roblox* Umrah Simulator, etc.).

- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data include:
  – journal articles related to Islamic entertainment, digital religion and game studies;
  – academic books discussing *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq*;
  – official documents such as entertainment guidelines by JAKIM (the Malaysian Islamic authority);

Secondary sources were used to reinforce analysis interpretations and to support comparisons with Islamic principles.

Data Collection Procedure: Data were collected through several systematic steps:

- **Game Selection:** The researcher identified games containing Islamic elements through keyword searches such as "Islamic games," "Muslim gameplay," "Islam elements in video games," and "gameplay umrah."
- **Eligibility Assessment:** Each candidate game was watched for at least one full session to ensure it contained elements relevant to the study's dimensions (*aqidah*, *ahkam*, *akhlaq*).
- **Marking and Initial Coding (Open Coding):** While viewing, the researcher took notes on:
  – depictions of religious rituals (prayer, call to prayer, ablution, *dhikr*);
  – character actions that illustrate moral values (honesty, patience, trustworthiness);
  – narrative elements involving Islamic history or etiquette;
  – displays of religious rules (prohibitions, commands, *adab* of *shariah*);
  – potentially conflicting elements such as magic, idolatry, or non-Islamic rituals.
- **Preparing Analysis Tables:** All identified elements were recorded in a table or matrix according to the *aqidah, ahkam* and *akhlaq* categories.
- **Cross-Checking with Islamic References:** Each recorded item was compared against Islamic sources, *fiqh* entertainment guidelines and scholarly works to determine alignment or contradiction with Islamic teachings.

Data Analysis Method: Data were analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis, which involved:
1. **Open Coding:** Identifying keywords, symbols, actions or dialogues related to *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq*.
2. **Axial Coding:** Categorizing identified elements into the three main dimensions:
– *Aqidah:* monotheism (*tawhid*), prohibition of polytheism, prayers, *dhikr*, reliance on Allah;
– *Ahkam:* authentic worship practices, *shariah* prohibitions, etiquette, *halal–haram* boundaries;
– *Akhlaq:* morality, etiquette, interpersonal relations, virtuous values.
3. **Selective Coding:** Integrating the three dimensions to develop a comprehensive picture of the representation of Islam in the video games.
4. **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing across games to identify patterns, differences, or particular trends in how Islam is depicted.

5. **Shariah Evaluation:** Evaluating each identified element based on:
– *aqidah* principles (al-Attas, 1995),
– *shariah* principles (Kamali, 2008),
– *akhlaq* ethics (Hassan, 2010),
– JAKIM's entertainment guidelines.
The results of this analysis were used to determine the degree of alignment of game content with Islamic entertainment principles.

Results
Overall, the findings show that the selected video games contain various Islamic elements that can be grouped into four main components: *aqidah*, *ahkam*, *akhlaq* and Islamic history. *Aqidah* elements are most clearly displayed through the call to prayer (*azan*), prayer (*salat*), performing ablution (*wudu*), Quranic recitations and references to unseen evil forces like Satan. *Ahkam* elements are reflected in depictions of worship procedures such as ablution and *umrah*, presented in considerable detail. *Akhlaq* values emerge in the form of portrayals of discipline in worship, etiquette in interactions and examples of polite behavior. Meanwhile, Islamic historical elements are evident in settings of Islam's golden age, references to Islamic figures like Salahuddin al-Ayyubi and depictions of major events such as the Crusades and the story of Prophet Musa (AS). These findings confirm that video games do not solely offer entertainment, but also contain content that can be linked to Islamic education and the construction of Muslim identity.

Data Visualization
Restatement: This section presents a summary of the presence of *aqidah*, *ahkam*, *akhlaq* and other elements like the history in the analyzed video games, based on video codes 1A through 11A. Each code refers to a specific YouTube gameplay video representing a particular game or segment, whether from the *Assassin's Creed* series, *Roblox*, or horror games like *Iblis*. **Table 1** below provides an overview of the distribution of these elements in each video.

Table 1
Summary of Islamic Elements in Selected Video Games

Code	Game/Video (brief)	Aqidah	Ahkam	Akhlaq	History/Other
1A	*Assassin's Creed Origins* – Prophet Musa	–	–	–	✓ Story of Prophet Musa A.S. & Pharaoh
2A	*Assassin's Creed Mirage* – Wudu	✓	✓	✓	–
2B	*Assassin's Creed Mirage* – Prayer after azan	✓	–	✓	–
2C	*Assassin's Creed Mirage* – Fajr azan	✓	✓	✓	–
3A	*Assassin's Creed Mirage* – Shout "Allahu Akbar"	✓	–	–	✓ Jihad spirit (pre-battle context)
4A	*Assassin's Creed* – Street preacher	✓	–	–	✓ Reference to Salahuddin al-Ayyubi
5A	*Iblis* (Indonesia) – Ruqyah healer	✓	–	✓	–
6A	*Roblox* – Umrah Vlog (Makkah)	✓	✓	✓	–

Code	Game/Video (brief)	Aqidah	Ahkam	Akhlaq	History/Other
7A	*Iblis – Full Game Walkthrough*	✓	–	–	–
8A	*Assassin's Creed Revelations – Maghrib azan*	✓	✓	✓	–
9A	Review: *Assassin's Creed Mirage* – Historical Realism	–	–	–	✓ Assessment of Islamic historical accuracy in game
10A	*Assassin's Creed (2007) – Altaïr & Richard Lionheart*	–	–	–	✓ Crusades setting
11A	*Assassin's Creed Mirage – Walking in Baghdad*	–	–	–	✓ Depiction of Abbasid-era Baghdad

Note: ✓ = element present; – = no notable element.

Brief Description of Table 1: Table 1 shows that *aqidah* elements appear most frequently in videos related to *Assassin's Creed Mirage*, *Assassin's Creed Revelations*, the horror game *Iblis* and *Roblox* (*Umrah*). *Ahkam* elements are most evident in the ablution scene (2A), the accurate timing and phrasing of the *azan* (2C, 8A), as well as the *umrah* simulation (6A). *Akhlaq* elements are seen in the form of NPCs maintaining prayer discipline and observing proper etiquette (e.g., abandoning tasks to perform prayer when the *azan* is heard, as in videos 2B, 2C, 8A) and in the respect shown for sacred objects (for example, in *Iblis* video 5A, the Qur'an is placed in a clean, elevated space, demonstrating reverence even in a horror context). Islamic history elements dominate in the *Assassin's Creed* series (entries 1A, 4A, 9A, 10A, 11A), which utilizes historical settings, figures and events from Islamic civilization as the foundation of its game world.

Aqidah Elements in Video Games: The findings show that *aqidah* elements are depicted through several primary forms: fundamental acts of worship, expressions of *tawhid* (Islamic monotheism), Quranic recitations and awareness of unseen evil (Satan). In *Assassin's Creed Mirage*, videos 2A, 2B and 2C demonstrate the presence of prayer performance and the call to prayer integrated into the daily life of non-player characters (NPCs). In video 2B, NPCs are portrayed performing the prayer after the *azan*, while video 2C features the Fajr (dawn) *azan* with wording and timing consistent with actual Muslim practice. This conveys that prayer is a basic routine institutionalized within the Islamic city setting.

Aqidah elements are also evident in horror-themed games such as *Iblis* (videos 5A and 7A), where Quranic verses and *ruqyah* (Islamic exorcism recitations) are used as means to expel supernatural disturbances. The Quranic recitation serves as the primary "weapon" against Satan, unlike typical Western horror games that use symbols or rituals from other religions. In *Roblox* (video 6A), the *umrah* pilgrimage is presented as a main activity, encompassing *tawaf*, *sa'i* and supplications, which directly relates to *aqidah*, i.e. reliance on Allah and devotion in the Holy Land. Overall, these findings indicate that the *aqidah* dimension is present not only in symbolic form but through the practice of worship and the use of phrases tied to monotheism.

Ahkam Elements in Video Games: From the *ahkam* (jurisprudential) perspective, the key findings involve the accuracy and meticulousness of performing religious rituals as depicted in the games. Video 2A shows a near-complete depiction of the steps for performing ablution (*wudu*), including all obligatory steps and some recommended ones, programmed into the

NPC's routine. This provides a clear illustration of the proper order of *wudu* for the viewer. In videos 2C and 8A, the call to prayer is not only fully rendered in terms of phrases, but is also linked to changes in in-game activity, as some NPCs proceed to pray after the *azan* is sounded. The *umrah* simulation in *Roblox* (video 6A) also stands out in terms of *ahkam*. That video displays the path of *tawaf*, the *sa'i* between Safa and Marwah, visiting the Kaaba and some basic etiquette during the pilgrimage, all in visual form. The arrangement of movements and the main locations of the ritual (the Kaaba, Safa–Marwah) provide a fundamental idea of the structure of the *umrah*. From these findings, it can be concluded that *ahkam* elements in the video games studied are mostly concentrated on practical acts of worship (ablution, prayer, *umrah*) rather than on spoken or text-based legal discussions.

Akhlaq Elements in Video Games: *Akhlaq* (ethical) elements are observed through the display of discipline in worship, proper etiquette in interactions and respect for sacred things. In *Assassin's Creed Mirage* and *Assassin's Creed Revelations* (videos 2B, 2C, 8A), NPCs are shown abandoning other activities to perform prayer after the *azan* is heard. This behavior depicts discipline and the prioritization of worship in Muslim life. In the game *Iblis* (video 5A), the Qur'an is depicted as being kept in a special, clean space, signaling the etiquette of venerating the holy scripture even in a horror game context.

In *Roblox* (video 6A), *akhlaq* is clearly illustrated through etiquette observed during *umrah* and in interactions among characters. For example, the game portrays thanking one's parents, making supplications when drinking Zamzam water and fostering an atmosphere of respect around the Masjid al-Haram (Grand Mosque). These depictions show that the game not only imitates the physical movements of worship, but also highlights the manners and virtues accompanying those rituals. Overall, the *akhlaq* dimension in the games is mostly manifested through routine behaviors and polite social interactions.

Islamic Historical Elements in Video Games: In terms of historical content, the findings indicate that some games utilize Islamic historical settings and figures as the basis of their worlds. Video 1A from *Assassin's Creed Origins* shows a reference to the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) and Pharaoh in the form of a visual "easter egg" referring to the event of the staff turning into a snake. The *Assassin's Creed* series heavily leverages Islamic historical backdrops: video 10A portrays a scene from the Crusades involving Salahuddin al-Ayyubi (Saladin) and Richard the Lionheart, while video 11A depicts the famed round city of Baghdad during the Abbasid era. Video 9A specifically evaluates the historical accuracy of *Assassin's Creed Mirage*, including aspects like architecture, clothing and the social atmosphere of the Islamic society of that period.

In video 4A, a street preacher character mentions Salahuddin al-Ayyubi as a figure to emulate for his courage in facing the enemies of Islam. This links the game's narrative with real historical figures. These data show that Islamic history is employed not just as an aesthetic backdrop, but also as a narrative reference that adds additional meaning to the gaming experience. Overall, the historical elements in the selected games serve as an informative bridge introducing the context of Islamic civilization to players, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

Discussion

The results of this study generally indicate that the selected video games display a variety of Islamic elements that can be categorized into four main components: *aqidah*, *ahkam*, *akhlaq* and Islamic history. Representations of *aqidah* appear via the *azan*, *salat*, *wudu*, Quranic recitations and references to Satan as an unseen enemy. *Ahkam* elements are evident in the depiction of ablution procedures and *umrah* simulations, while *akhlaq* is manifested in the discipline of worship and etiquette during interactions. Historical elements are highlighted through Abbasid-era settings, Crusades events, figures like Salahuddin al-Ayyubi and narratives of Prophet Musa (AS). These findings are in line with the study's objective of assessing how video games can function as Islamic entertainment media containing *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* representations and potentially contribute to Muslim identity formation.

Several factors can explain why these findings take the shape they do. First, the portrayal of rituals such as prayer, ablution and *umrah* in video games indicates that ritual aspects are easier to visualize and adapt into game mechanics compared to the theoretical aspects of *aqidah* or abstract *fiqh* discussions. Rituals provide clear imagery and motions (e.g., the pillars of prayer, the order of *tawaf*, the movements of *wudu*), which are readily translated into animations and NPC routines. Second, the choice of Islamic historical settings, like Abbasid Baghdad or the Crusades, reflects a creative strategy by developers aiming to exploit the uniqueness of Islamic civilization as an exotic setting rich in narrative, while still maintaining commercial appeal. Third, the inclusion of *aqidah* elements through *ruqyah* and Quranic recitations in horror games like *Iblis* may be driven by market trends seeking an alternative to common Western horror tropes (which often use Christian rituals or folk beliefs); in this case, Islam provides a fresh aesthetic and narrative source. However, the heavier emphasis on ritual and historical aspects over deeper *aqidah* themes also suggests that Islam is often used at a symbolic and functional level, rather than as a comprehensive worldview framework.

Compared to previous studies, these findings both confirm and extend existing discussions. Radde-Antweiler et al. (2014) and Fernández and Radde-Antweiler (2020) observed that religion in video games is often reduced to symbols, settings and surface narratives without deep theological elaboration. In the context of Islam, our findings show a similar trend: *azan*, *salat*, *wudu* and Baghdad are utilized as visual signifiers of Islam, but very few games truly engage in reflective Islamic theological or ethical discourse. This aligns with Yılmaz's (2024) findings that the game *Knights of the Light* largely leverages early Islamic history as a narrative foundation, yet the normative aspects of Islam remain confined to depictions of bravery and jihad. Likewise, Prayogi's (2024) work emphasized the potential of video games in teaching Islamic history but paid little attention to the normative *shariah* or ethical dimensions of the content. Our study expands on these insights by demonstrating that, beyond historical content, aspects of ritual and etiquette are also integrated, thereby adding new layers to understanding the representation of Islam in mainstream and quasi-Islamic video games.

Through a theoretical lens, the findings can be interpreted with Hall's representation theory (1997) and the Islamic entertainment concepts by al-Qaradawi (1985) and Kamali (2008). Hall posits that representation is a meaning-making process that is not neutral; the selection of elements like the *azan*, prayer and Baghdad as symbols of Islam illustrates how game developers construct an "image of Islam" that can be consumed by a global audience, recognizably Islamic, yet not so complex as to demand theological commitment from players.

From a *shariah* standpoint, al-Qaradawi asserts that entertainment is permissible as long as it does not lead to immoral behavior or neglect of duties, while Kamali highlights the principles of *maslahah* (benefit) and *mafsadah* (harm) in determining the lawfulness of an activity. The findings of this study suggest that some games, notably the *umrah* and *wudu* simulations, approach the ideal of Islamic entertainment by blending enjoyment with religious education. However, al-Attas's (1995) reminder that *aqidah* underpins one's worldview implies that as long as Islam is presented only as rituals or backdrops without a holistic contextual meaning, such representations remain fragmented and do not reach the level of a true "Islamic worldview." In this regard, our study supports aspects of digital religion representation theory, while also suggesting that *fiqh* and *aqidah* frameworks are necessary to evaluate the depth and authenticity of these representations.

The implications of these findings are significant for da'wah, education and the digital entertainment industry. First, the study shows that video games have genuine potential as informal da'wah media, especially when worship practices and ethical values are portrayed with relative accuracy and consistency. This opens up possibilities for educators, da'wah activists and Muslim game developers to design content that not only features Islamic symbols, but also integrates narratives, moral choices and game mechanics that support the development of good character and understanding of *aqidah*. Second, for Islamic media guideline developers, these results provide an initial foundation for developing assessment frameworks for *shariah*-compliant digital entertainment, which take into account *aqidah–ahkam–akhlaq* dimensions rather than merely the absence of explicit vices or violence. Third, for media researchers, Islamic-themed video games and mainstream games with Islamic elements are important sites for evaluating how Muslim identity is negotiated and formed in the global entertainment ecosystem. The "so what?" of this study is this: if this realm is ignored, the portrayal of Islam in video games will continue to be shaped by outsiders, with all the accompanying risks of stereotyping and simplification.

Meanwhile, this study has several limitations to acknowledge. First, the game sample was limited to a few titles and YouTube recordings; it does not encompass the vastness of the global video game industry, nor did it involve direct gameplay experience in all game modes. Second, the study only analyzed content and did not include the perspectives of players (Muslim or non-Muslim) or game developers; yet the meaning of religious content in digital media is greatly influenced by audience reception and interpretation. Third, the qualitative nature of this study with a purposive sample limits the ability to generalize the findings across the entire video game industry. Therefore, future research could employ mixed-methods approaches by incorporating surveys or interviews with players, comparisons across platforms, or a design-based research approach to develop and test video games built specifically on the *aqidah–ahkam–akhlaq* framework. Despite its limits, this study provides an important starting point for further discourse on video games as part of the contemporary Islamic entertainment ecosystem.

Conclusion
This study examined the representation of *aqidah*, *ahkam* and *akhlaq* in several video games containing Islamic elements through a content analysis approach. The main findings show that *aqidah* elements were most commonly expressed through routine worship depictions such as prayer, the *azan*, *wudu*, Quranic recitations and references to Satan as an unseen

adversary. *Ahkam* elements were visible in the detailed portrayal of religious rules and rituals, like the *umrah* and *wudu* simulations, while *akhlaq* elements appeared as discipline in worship, social etiquette and honoring sacred entities. Islamic historical elements also played a significant role in shaping the games' settings, including references to the Abbasid era, the figure of Salahuddin al-Ayyubi, the Crusades and the story of Prophet Musa (AS). Overall, the study demonstrates that video games have potential as an Islamic entertainment medium that combines educational content, cultural heritage and spiritual values, even if currently these are incorporated in a somewhat symbolic and selective manner.

The implications of this study are noteworthy in today's context. First, the findings suggest that video games can function as informal da'wah channels capable of reaching young Muslim generations who are increasingly immersed in digital culture. This resonates with digital religion theory (Campbell, 2012; Bunt, 2018), which posits that interactive media have become new arenas for religious expression and identity formation. Second, games that showcase worship practices and moral values have the potential to counteract negative narratives about Islam in global media, thereby offering an alternative portrayal that is more authentic and positive to non-Muslim audiences. Third, Hall's (1997) representation theory also indicates that media can shape perceptions of a religion or culture; thus, the existence of more accurate representations of Islam in video games can influence global perceptions of Islam. From a practical perspective, the findings can contribute to the development of *shariah*-compliant digital entertainment frameworks and guidelines for evaluating game content based on *aqidah, ahkam* and *akhlaq* dimensions.

However, this study has a few limitations that invite further investigation. First, the content analysis performed involved only a small sample of video games and YouTube gameplay recordings and did not cover the wide variety of games in the global market. Future studies should expand the game sample, including genres like action, interactive storytelling and mobile games. Second, this study did not involve player perspectives; thus, future research can include interviews, surveys, or reception analyses to understand how Muslim and non-Muslim players interpret these Islamic elements. Third, research might progress toward a design-based approach to create and test video games that are fundamentally based on the *aqidah, ahkam* and *akhlaq* framework and the theory of Islamic entertainment. Additionally, comparative studies between commercial games and Islamic educational games could offer broader insights into strategies of representing Islam in the digital entertainment ecosystem. In conclusion, this study opens an initial space for strengthening the role of video games as relevant mediums for Islamic da'wah and education in the digital era.

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