From Film to Fiqh: Using Film-Based Case Learning to Support Students' Understanding of Property Crimes in Islam

Farah Safura Muhammud*

Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun, Malaysia

***Corresponding Author**

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ABSTRACT

This classroom-based study investigates a film-based case learning activity designed to facilitate the understanding of Islamic property crimes among undergraduate students. The activity used the Thai film The Con-Heartist as a contextual stimulus for students to identify, interpret and apply the Islamic legal concepts of sariqah (theft), tadlīs (deception/fraud) and khiyānah (breach of trust). The research utilised a descriptive classroom-evaluation design with two types of evidence, namely case-study assessment performance and aggregated student feedback. Assessment records of 80 students were descriptively analysed. The case-study assessment was scored out of 20, with marks ranging from 12 to 18, with a mean of 15.54 (SD = 1.23) and a median of 15.50. 93.75% of students (75) passed at least 13/20. Feedback was extremely positive with 100% of students saying that they enjoyed the activity. The perceptions reported included a greater clarity of property crime issues, a more relaxed learning experience, and positive perceptions about the appropriateness of film as a learning medium. The findings are interpreted in terms of active learning, case-based learning, experiential learning and video-supported learning. The study contends that the pedagogical importance of the activity is not in film viewing per se but in the structured movement from narrative exposure to legal identification, conceptual application and contemporary contextualisation. The findings provide promising evidence at the classroom level, but do not establish causal effectiveness because no control group or pre-test/post-test design was implemented. This study is a case example of the context of integration of film-based case learning in undergraduate education of Islamic law and it provides practical implications for lecturers on how to relate doctrinal concepts to contemporary issues.

Keywords: film-based learning, case-based learning, education of Islamic law, active learning, student engagement

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary higher education emphasises increasingly learning designs that require students to actively participate in constructing and using knowledge. Active learning is about students interpreting, discussing, analysing and applying disciplinary concepts rather than receiving information. A large meta-analysis found evidence that active learning can improve student performance compared to traditional lecturing, although the effects depend on how learning activities are designed and implemented (Freeman et al., 2014). Case-based learning (CBL) is particularly relevant in that it places disciplinary concepts in concrete situations and requires students to reason from contextual information. Systematic reviews have shown benefits of CBL for learning competencies and student satisfaction but have also identified variability in the quality and certainty of the available evidence (Maia et al., 2023).

Another way of contextualising learning is through film and video. They can combine story, dialogue, visual information and social situations to make abstract ideas more concrete and recognisable. A systematic review of 105 studies involving 7,776 students in higher education found that video generally supported learning, and the

benefits were greater when video was added to existing teaching rather than replacing another instructional method (Noetel et al., 2021). More recent meta-analytic evidence also points to the value of active strategies embedded within video learning for supporting retention, comprehension, and transfer, suggesting the importance of the educational design around video (Zhang et al., 2025).

This is particularly so in Islamic Studies and legal education, where students are often required to navigate between doctrinal principles and contemporary social realities. The author of this paper has previously investigated film review as a method in teaching Fundamental of Islam (CTU101) in UiTM and reported positive students' reactions and perceived ease to relate Islamic concepts to everyday life (Muhammud, 2021). This pedagogical trend is extended to a more specialised Islamic law context by the present study. Rather than using multiple films in a general review activity, this research concentrates on a single film as a structured case stimulus within IMU255, Property Crimes in Islam, and examines assessment performance and student perceptions.

This difference is significant because legal education encompasses more than recognition or enjoyment of a narrative. Students need to identify legally relevant facts and select appropriate concepts and justify their application. Recent research on Malaysian legal education also indicated that reflective assignments based on films can assist students to link doctrinal legal structures with contextual ethical dilemmas and professional reasoning (Wook et al., 2026). Previous research on problem-based learning in Islamic legal education also emphasises the value of real or simulated problems, teamwork and reflective activity in promoting professionally relevant learning (Ali & Mohamad, 2012).

The learning activity presented in this paper used the Thai movie The Con-Heartist as a narrative case. Students were required to analyse scenes and connect them to Islamic concepts of property crime, in particular sariqah, tadlīs and khiyānah. The student learning artefact also related the discussion to contemporary issues in Malaysia such as online and romance scams. Thus, the original assignment is evidence of a learning sequence from exposure to film, to interpretation of the law, to contemporary application.

Thus, this study does not question whether a film per se "improves" learning. Instead the paper emphasises the pedagogical approach of a structured film-based case activity in an undergraduate Islamic law course.

1.1 Research Questions

RQ1. What level of achievement was demonstrated by students in the film-based case-study assessment?

RQ2. What perceptions did students report regarding the use of film as a learning medium for Islamic property crimes?

RQ3. How can the film-based case activity be understood as a contextualised active-learning strategy in Islamic law education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Active Learning and Case-Based Learning

2.1 Active Learning and Case Based Learning

Active learning assumes that learning is meaningful only when students are cognitively engaged with content rather than simply passive recipients of information. In a large body of undergraduate STEM studies, Freeman et al. (2014) found that active learning was associated with improved examination performance relative to traditional lecturing. The disciplinary context is not the same as Islamic law, but the pedagogical principle is applicable: students learn more when they are asked to process and apply knowledge.

CBL puts this principle into practice by presenting students with a situation that requires interpretation, reasoning and application. Overall, reviews of CBL have found positive effects on learning-related outcomes and student satisfaction, but these are not consistent across all contexts (Maia et al., 2023; Thistlethwaite et al., 2012). Legal

education has also moved to embrace problem-based learning with similar emphasis on problem analysis, collaboration and reflection as complementary alternatives to purely doctrinal instruction (Ali & Mohamad, 2012).

2.2 Film and Video as Learning Resources

Video is most effective for teaching when used as part of an instructional sequence. Adding video to existing teaching resulted in stronger learning benefits than replacing another teaching method with video, as found by Noetel et al. (2021). This supports the present design in which the film was used as a case stimulus followed by guided analysis and assessment. Also, multimedia learning theory suggests that learners can benefit from coordinated verbal and visual representations if they actively select, organise, and integrate relevant information (Mayer, 2021). So the pedagogical question is not whether the film is fun or not, but whether the students are guided to process the film in ways that align with the intended learning outcomes.

This argument is supported by recent evidence. Zhang et al. (2025) found that adding active learning strategies to video learning positively affected retention, comprehension and transfer. This finding is especially relevant to film-based activities in that it turns the focus away from passive viewing to what students are asked to do with what they view.

2.3 Experiential and Contextualised Learning

Experiential learning considers learning as a process of turning experience into knowledge (Kolb, 2015). Film can provide a mediated experience where students can view and interpret situations, characters and dilemmas. But experience becomes educationally meaningful when learners are guided toward reflection, conceptualisation and application. In this sense, the present activity is sensible, taking the film as an experience and the case-study assignment as the resource for conceptual and contextual processing.

2.4 Film-Based Learning in Islamic and Legal Education

The importance of learning through films for Islamic education has been demonstrated in the past works of the present author. In 2021, Muhammud reported positive reactions from 100 students of CTU101 to using a guided film-review approach and concluded that film could help students connect Islamic concepts to everyday life. The present study extends this approach from the field of general Islamic Studies to a particular Islamic law topic and from a theoretical to an assessed case-study artefact.

The legal-education literature supports this direction further. Ali and Mohamad (2012) discussed problem-based learning within the framework of Islamic law and emphasised real case problems, teamwork and reflection. More recently, Wook et al. (2026) studied film-based reflective assignments in a Malaysian Professional Ethics course and found evidence of the contextual application of legal structures, moral reasoning and creativity. These studies suggest a growing pedagogical rationale for going beyond teaching doctrine in law and Islamic law. In the current study, we add to this literature by looking specifically at Islamic property crimes and by combining assessment evidence with aggregated student perceptions.

2.5 Islamic Property Crimes and Contemporary Relevance

Islamic property-crime concepts provide a particularly suitable context for contextualised case learning because students encounter contemporary forms of financial deception and misuse of trust in everyday digital environments. The concept of tadlīs, for example, concerns deceptive conduct and misrepresentation in transactions (Mohamed Adil et al., 2010). The protection of wealth (ḥifẓ al-māl) is also recognised as an important objective within maqāṣid al-sharīʿah (Zailani et al., 2022). Connecting these principles to contemporary scams can therefore help students recognise the continuing relevance of Islamic legal reasoning.

The original IMU255 learning artefact illustrates this contextualisation. Students analysed film scenes under the categories of sariqah, tadlīs and khiyānah and then related the concepts to contemporary Malaysian issues such as online scams and romance scams.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive classroom-based evaluation design. Two forms of classroom evidence were examined: (1) students' case-study assessment marks and (2) aggregated student feedback concerning the learning activity. The design is intentionally descriptive because the available evidence does not include a comparison group or pre-test/post-test measure. The study therefore evaluates classroom achievement and perceived learning experience rather than causal effectiveness.

3.2 Participants and Course Context

The analysed assessment records comprised 80 undergraduate students enrolled in IMU255, Property Crimes in Islam. The learning activity was a group case study titled The Con-Heartist. The assignment required students to use the Thai film as a case through which they analysed Islamic property crimes, including sariqah, tadlīs and khiyānah. The assignment structure and learning objectives are documented in the submitted student artefact.

The assignment document identifies the course, lecturer, academic session information and case-study structure. Before journal submission, the author should verify the official semester/session label against the assessment record because the assignment document and the supplied assessment sheets contain different session labels. This manuscript deliberately avoids asserting a definitive semester label until that record is verified.

3.3 Learning Activity and Pedagogical Sequence

The activity was structured around four linked stages: (1) film exposure, (2) identification of legally relevant conduct, (3) application of Islamic legal concepts, and (4) contextualisation through contemporary Malaysian issues. Students were expected to move beyond film summary by linking selected scenes to the relevant legal categories and discussing associated factors and identities. The resulting student work functioned as a learning artefact demonstrating conceptual application.

The pedagogical sequence can be represented as: Film narrative → identification of legal issues → application of Islamic legal concepts → case analysis → contemporary contextualisation. This sequence is consistent with active-learning and experiential-learning principles because students are required to process an experience and convert it into disciplinary knowledge rather than simply consume media.

Figure 1 presents the methodological and pedagogical framework used in the study. The film functions as the instructional input; guided analysis constitutes the learning process; the student case-study functions as the learning artefact; and assessment performance and aggregated student feedback provide the two forms of classroom evidence. The framework is descriptive and represents the logic of the implemented activity rather than a validated causal model.

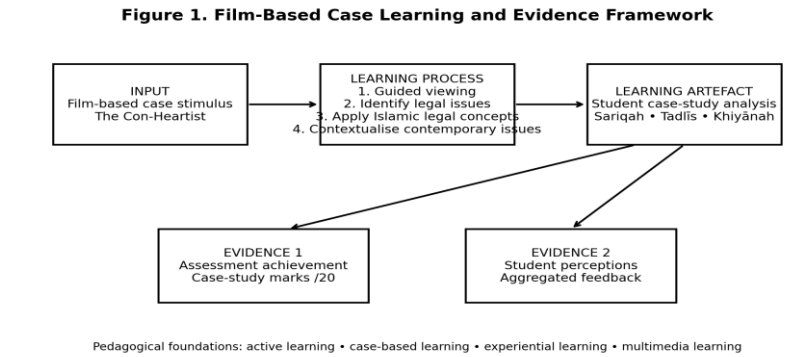

Figure 1. Film-based case learning and evidence framework.

3.4 Data Sources and Analysis

The case-study assessment was marked out of 20. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the 80 available records, including minimum, maximum, mean, median and standard deviation. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the observed mark categories. Student feedback was available to the researcher in aggregated form. The lecturer reported that 100% of students gave positive feedback about the activity. The reported perceptions included clearer understanding of property-crime issues, a more relaxed learning experience and positive views regarding the suitability of film as a learning medium. Because individual comments and the original response instrument were not included in the material available for this manuscript, the feedback is presented as aggregated descriptive evidence rather than as a formal thematic-analysis dataset.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

No student names or matriculation numbers are reported in this article. Findings are presented in aggregate form. Before submission, the author should confirm the applicable UiTM requirements concerning research ethics, consent and secondary use of classroom assessment or feedback data. Where required, the relevant ethics approval or consent statement should be added to the final manuscript.

RESULTS

4.1 Case-Study Assessment Performance

The 80 students scored between 12 and 18 out of 20 on the case study. The mean score was 15.54 (SD = 1.23) and the median score was 15.50; Seventy-five students (93.75%) scored above 13/20 and five students (6.25%) scored below 13/20. Overall, the distribution was around 15-16 marks suggesting a generally strong performance on the assessed learning artefact.

Statistic	Result
Number of students	80
Maximum mark	20
Minimum score	12/20
Maximum score	18/20
Mean	15.54/20
Median	15.50/20
Standard deviation	1.23
Students scoring ≥13/20	75 (93.75%)
Students scoring <13/20	5 (6.25%)

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the film-based case-study assessment.

Case-study mark	Frequency	Percentage
12/20	5	6.25%
14.5/20	2	2.50%
15/20	26	32.50%
15.5/20	8	10.00%
16/20	25	31.25%
16.5/20	6	7.50%
17/20	3	3.75%
18/20	5	6.25%

Table 2. Distribution of case-study assessment marks (n = 80).

4.2 Student Perceptions

The aggregated feedback revealed that it was all positive, with 100% of students saying they liked the film-based activity. Reported perceptions were in three areas: understanding, learning experience and suitability.

Students commented that the film helped them to understand property-crime issues more clearly. The activity made learning feel more relaxed and the film was seen as appropriate as a learning medium for the topic.

Reported perception	Description
Understanding	Students reported clearer understanding of property-crime issues.
Learning experience	Students reported a more relaxed and enjoyable learning experience.
Suitability	Students viewed the film as suitable for learning the topic.
Overall response	100% positive response was reported.

Table 3. Aggregated student perceptions of the film-based learning activity.

DISCUSSION

The results provide classroom-level evidence that the film-based case activity was associated with generally strong assessment performance and positive perceptions by students. The average score of 15.54/20 and the finding that 93.75% of students scored at least 13/20 show that most students successfully performed the assessed learning task with a relatively high level of competence. This pattern is consistent with literature supporting active and case-based approaches, though it cannot prove that the film activity caused the observed performance (Freeman et al., 2014; Maia et al., 2023).

The results also support the claim that the instructional value of video is contingent upon how the video is incorporated into instruction. Noetel et al. (2021) found that the addition of video to existing teaching was more beneficial than replacement. Similarly, positive effects were found for active learning strategies embedded in video learning by Zhang et al. (2025). In today's activity, students didn't get marks for just watching The Con-Heartist. They had to determine relevant conduct, apply categories of Islamic law and link those categories with contemporary issues. The film thus functioned as a trigger for academic processing rather than as a teaching method in itself.

The present author's previous work is also consistent with the positive student perception that the activity made learning more relaxed. In CTU101, Muhammud (2021) reported that students responded positively to guided film-based learning and felt that film made it easier to relate Islamic concepts to everyday life. The present study builds on this previous work by showing how the same general pedagogical principle can be adapted to a more specialised legal topic. This continuity is important: the contribution of the present article is not to claim that film-based learning was invented for this study, but to show a new application and a different form of classroom evidence .

The legal-education literature also supports this reading. Wook et al. (2026) found that film-based reflective assignments in Malaysian professional-ethics education could contextualise the application of legal structures, moral reasoning and creativity. The pedagogical logic of their study and the present study is similar. Film provides a narrative situation and the academic task asks students to interpret that situation in terms of a formal disciplinary framework. The difference is that the current study deals with property crimes committed by Muslims and adopts a case-study assessment as the main learning artefact.

The activity also brings to light the importance of contextualising Islamic legal concepts. Students had to move from narrative situations to sariqah, tadlīs and khiyānah and then to contemporary issues such as online and romance scams. This is pedagogically important because it helps to establish Islamic law as an analytical framework for contemporary social problems rather than as a body of terminology divorced from students' lived environments. The original learning artefact makes explicit the connection between the film scenes and these legal categories and contemporary Malaysian issues.

5.1 Implications for teaching and Learning

This has some practical implications. First, the choice of film should be informed by clearly defined learning outcomes. Second, students should be provided with guided questions or an analytical framework to focus their

attention on relevant scenes. Third, the lecturer should insist that students translate narrative observations into disciplinary language and reasoning. Fourth, students should be asked to apply the concepts to modern cases. Finally, assessment criteria should reward analysis and application rather than film summary.

This approach can be adapted by Islamic law educators to other topics where doctrinal concepts need contextualisation, such as Islamic finance, family law, ethics, criminal law and maqāṣid al-sharīʿah. The method is relatively accessible as it does not require sophisticated technological infrastructure, its key requirement being careful alignment between the chosen film, learning outcomes, analytical task and assessment.

5.2 Contribution to Teaching and Learning Scholarship

The study makes three contributions to Teaching and Learning scholarship. Firstly, it provides a context-specific example of film-based case learning in undergraduate Islamic law, a field that is less represented in the mainstream video-learning literature. Second, it shows how a narrative from popular culture can be transformed into an organised legal learning artefact through guided analysis. Third, it contributes evidence of assessment to the existing discourse on students' positive perceptions of film-based Islamic learning. The study, therefore, goes further than the claim that students "like films" and explores what students had to do academically with the film.

5.3 Limitations

Our study has some limitations. There is one course and one cohort of 80 students and limits generalisability. No comparison group or pre-test/post-test measures were used, so the causal improvement from film-based learning cannot be determined. The assessment score measures classroom achievement and is not a validated standalone measure of conceptual understanding. Student feedback was only available in an aggregated form, so we were not able to formally perform qualitative coding of individual responses. Future studies should employ a validated instrument of perception, incorporate individual reflective responses, collect data before and after the intervention, and, if possible, compare film-based case learning with an alternative instructional condition.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined a film-based case learning activity in IMU255, Property Crimes in Islam, with The Con-Heartist as a contextual stimulus. The classroom evidence shows generally strong performance on assessments and uniformly positive aggregated student perceptions. The mean case-study score of 80 students was 15.54/20 and 93.75% scored 13/20. Feedback received indicated that students found the activity to be useful in understanding property-crime issues, more relaxed as a learning experience and appropriate as a learning medium.

The main pedagogical lesson is that the educational value of film is in what students are asked to do with it. The trajectory from film narrative to legal identification, via conceptual application and contemporary contextualisation, here presented a structured opportunity for students to make the connection between Islamic legal doctrine and identifiable social problems. The approach thus provides a practical model for the teaching of contextual Islamic law. However, stronger claims of effectiveness would require future research using comparative and longitudinal designs.

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