

Developing and Implementing Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Models in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) faces significant challenges, particularly the low levels of student interest and comprehension due to conventional teaching methods that lack real-life relevance. This study aims to analyze the concept and implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) as an innovative approach in IRE instruction. Using a library research method, this study reviews relevant literature to explore the core components of CTL, its advantages over traditional methods, and its application in Islamic educational contexts. The findings show that CTL significantly enhances student engagement, material relevance, and the internalization of Islamic values through direct, experiential learning. The study also highlights the positive impact of CTL on fostering critical thinking and a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. The seven key components of CTL—constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment—serve as the foundation for a holistic and transformative learning process. These findings suggest that the implementation of CTL in IRE not only improves learning outcomes but also supports the development of students' Islamic character. However, the success of CTL relies heavily on teacher preparedness, continuous professional development, and the availability of adequate resources and support.



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and personality based on fundamental Islamic values. The spiritual and ethical values embedded in PAI significantly contribute to fostering spiritual awareness and independent thinking among learners (Harahap 2023). However, despite its vital role, there remain substantial challenges that hinder the effectiveness of PAI learning. A lack of student interest and understanding indicates that conventional approaches primarily relying on lecturing and question-and-answer methods are insufficient in connecting learning materials to students' real-life contexts (Adinda and Pahrudin 2024), (KISMATUN 2021). This condition highlights the urgent need for more innovative learning approaches to enhance the relevance and meaningfulness of religious education in daily life.

One innovative strategy proposed to address these challenges is Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). CTL emphasizes a direct connection between learning content and the real-life contexts or situations experienced by students. This approach seeks to transform learning experiences by enabling students to relate theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom to everyday life practices (KISMATUN 2021; Subhan 2019). By integrating elements of real-life experience, reflection, and dialogue, CTL effectively addresses the limitations of traditional learning methods, which often result in a low level of meaningful learning among students (Harahap 2023; KISMATUN 2021).

The implementation of CTL in PAI learning is expected not only to enhance students' activeness and motivation but also to strengthen their understanding of Islamic values through direct engagement with real-life contexts (Mukhlis, Janwari, et al., 2023; Mukhlis & Abdullah, 2025). For instance, previous studies have demonstrated that contextual approaches help students develop deeper connections between religious concepts and situations encountered in their home, school, and community environments (Subhan 2019). This is particularly relevant given that the role of PAI extends

beyond the mere transmission of information to the formation of Islamic character through authentic experiences.

Furthermore, employing a library research method, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the CTL concept, explore the rationale for its use in PAI learning, and discuss its various applications within the context of Islamic education. Existing literature also emphasizes that the successful implementation of CTL largely depends on teachers' ability to relate learning materials to students' life contexts and to accommodate diverse learning characteristics (Adinda and Pahrudin 2024; KISMATUN 2021). Therefore, the selection of CTL as a learning strategy is expected to serve as a strategic solution for transforming PAI learning experiences toward a more active, innovative, and reflective direction.

Through the CTL approach, Islamic values are holistically integrated into every educational activity, enabling the effective and meaningful internalization of Islamic character (Mukhlis, 2025a; Mukhlis & Saidah, 2025). This aligns with the concept of transformational learning, which emphasizes direct experience, discussion, and the application of concrete actions in daily life (Harahap 2023). Accordingly, this study represents an initial step in documenting and analyzing the implementation of CTL in PAI learning as an effort to comprehensively improve the quality of Islamic religious education.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method employed in this study is library research using a qualitative approach that focuses on an in-depth analysis of relevant literature sources. Systematically, data were collected from various sources, including books, scholarly journals, articles, and related documents discussing Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) learning (Asiyah and Jazuli 2022; P 2023). Primary data were obtained through library exploration and online database searches such as Google Scholar and ResearchGate, which provide access to credible and relevant academic literature (Asiyah and Jazuli 2022).

The data collection process began with the identification of key terms and main topics, such as "contextual teaching and learning" and "PAI learning", in order to capture literature that addresses the concepts, advantages, and implementation of CTL within the context of Islamic education (P 2023). Data collection techniques involved not only searching for and selecting relevant literature sources, but also systematically recording and critically reviewing each reference obtained (Anam 2021; Samsudin and Ambrin 2022). This documentation process is essential to ensure that the synthesized data can be comprehensively integrated into the research framework.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively by identifying key themes emerging from the reviewed literature. These themes include the fundamental concepts of CTL, the advantages of the CTL approach compared to conventional learning methods, and concrete examples of its implementation in PAI learning (Hidayat and Syahidin 2019). This analytical technique emphasizes the synthesis of qualitative data to produce a systematic depiction of how CTL can be integrated into the PAI learning context to enhance students' motivation and active participation (Hidayat and Syahidin 2019). In addition, the descriptive analysis approach facilitates an in-depth examination of the roles of teachers and student engagement, thereby providing a deeper contextual understanding of learning dynamics (Anam 2021; Samsudin and Ambrin 2022).

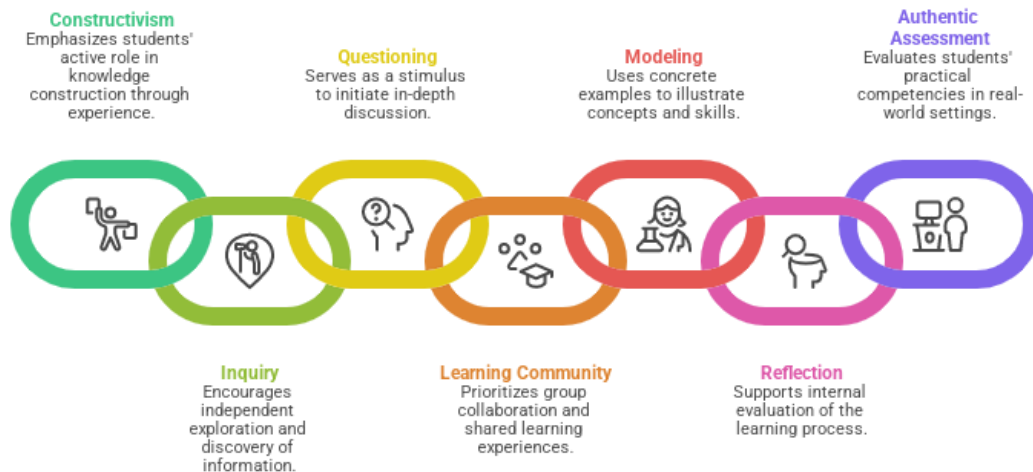
The use of a library research method in this study supports a deeper theoretical exploration and conceptual understanding of CTL as articulated in numerous scholarly references. This provides a strong foundation for practical recommendations in the development of PAI learning by utilizing more contextual and innovative instructional approaches that are relevant to students' real-life experiences (Adinda and Pahrudin 2024). Accordingly, the results of the literature analysis are expected to make a significant contribution to efforts to improve the quality of PAI learning through the integration of CTL concepts that are holistic and transformative in nature (Hidayat and Syahidin 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature analysis conducted, the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is identified as a learning approach that connects instructional content with students' real-life contexts (Kismatun 2021; Subhan 2019). This approach is able to bridge the gap between theory and practice, thereby enhancing the meaningfulness and relevance of learning. CTL consists of seven core

components that form the foundation of its implementation. First, constructivism, which emphasizes students' active role in constructing knowledge through experience and interaction with their environment (Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, & Zulbaidah, 2025; Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, Zulbaidah, et al., 2025). Second, inquiry, which encourages independent exploration and discovery of information (Mukhlis, 2025b; Mukhlis, Suradi, et al., 2023). Third, questioning, which serves as a stimulus to initiate in-depth discussion. Fourth, the learning community, which prioritizes group collaboration. Fifth, modeling through concrete examples. Sixth, reflection, which supports internal evaluation of the learning process. Seventh, authentic assessment, which evaluates students' practical competencies (Ummah 2019).

Foundations of Contextual Teaching and Learning



The application of CTL in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is grounded in strong theoretical and practical considerations. First, this approach enhances the relevance of IRE materials by directly linking them to students' daily lives (Adinda and Pahrudin 2024). Second, CTL promotes active learning in which students become active participants in the learning process through various activities such as discussions and field projects (Subhan 2019). Third, this approach develops essential social skills, including cooperation and communication, which are aligned with Islamic values (S.A.P. 2017). Fourth, CTL facilitates the internalization of religious values through direct experiences that are more meaningful than those provided by conventional instructional methods.

The implementation of CTL in IRE learning can be carried out through various adaptive methods. Group discussions on Islamic values facilitate the exchange of experiences in accordance with the learning community component. Field projects, such as observing the implementation of zakat, provide real-world experiences that integrate modeling and reflection (Kismatun 2021). Role-playing activities designed to practice commendable moral conduct foster constructivism and authentic assessment simultaneously (Subhan 2019). In zakat-related topics, for example, students not only study theoretical concepts but also engage in zakat calculation activities and visits to zakat management institutions, demonstrating a comprehensive integration of CTL components (Adinda and Pahrudin 2024).

Overall, the implementation of CTL in Islamic Religious Education demonstrates significant potential for improving the quality of Islamic education (Mukhlis et al., 2024; Mukhlis, Maryam, et al., 2023). This approach is capable of transforming learning from a mere transfer of knowledge into a contextual and participatory process (Kismatun 2021). The success of its implementation depends on teachers' ability to design learning activities that are relevant to students' life contexts and to encourage their active participation (Adinda and Pahrudin 2024). To optimize outcomes, adequate teacher training and the development of supportive learning resources are required to ensure the comprehensive application of CTL in Islamic Religious Education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) strategy in Islamic Religious

Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) plays a significant role in improving the quality of learning. The CTL approach, which emphasizes the connection between learning materials and students' real-life contexts, has been proven to bridge the gap between theory and practice, thereby making learning more meaningful and relevant (Kismatun, 2021; Subhan, 2019). The seven core components of CTL—constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment—serve as essential foundations for creating holistic and transformative learning experiences.

The application of CTL in Islamic Religious Education is based on several strategic considerations, including enhancing the relevance of learning materials, promoting active learning, developing social skills, and facilitating the internalization of Islamic values through direct experience (Adinda & Pahrudin, 2024; S.A.P., 2017; Subhan, 2019). The implementation of CTL can be carried out through various adaptive methods, such as group discussions, field projects, and role-playing activities, which are tailored to the characteristics of the subject matter and the students' life contexts (Kismatun, 2021).

The success of CTL implementation is highly dependent on teachers' ability to design contextual learning activities and to encourage active student participation (Adinda & Pahrudin, 2024). Therefore, targeted initiatives are necessary to ensure continuous teacher training, as well as to provide innovative learning resources and technological tools to support CTL. Additionally, further studies should explore the long-term impact of CTL on students' character development and academic achievement, especially in diverse cultural and educational settings. By examining these variables, future research can offer valuable insights into optimizing CTL practices across different educational contexts and improve the scalability of its application in Islamic Religious Education.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article. This study was conducted independently using a library research approach and was not influenced by any financial, institutional, or personal interests that could have affected the objectivity or integrity of the research.

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