

**Developing Students' Learning Interests in Islamic Religious Education
through Contextual Teaching and Learning Method**

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Abstract

Education is an inherent component of human life and existence, both formal and informal learning. Because it is conceivable to claim that education is an essential component of human existence. This research is important because it can provide insight into how the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method can increase students' interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI*). This research aims to examine how the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning approach at SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung can increase students' interest in learning PAI. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methodology to describe the effectiveness of CTL techniques in increasing students' interest in learning. Data was collected through interviews, observations and document analysis involving PAI teachers and students as research subjects. The research results showed that the application of the CTL method can significantly increase students' interest in learning. This happens through the relationship of teaching materials with real experiences, the use of varied learning media, and the active involvement of students in the learning process. Students were more motivated to understand Islamic religious values because this method creates relevant, meaningful and interesting learning. Teachers play an important role as facilitators by integrating Islamic values in learning activities, so that students not only understand theory, but can also apply it in everyday life. In conclusion, students' learning interest can be increased effectively through the implementation of CTL method.

Keywords: Islamic religious education, contextual teaching and learning, interest in learning

INTRODUCTION

Education is an inseparable part of human life and living, both official and informal learning. Because it is possible to argue that education is an inherent necessity of human existence. An individual or group of people's attitudes and behaviours can be changed through education in an effort to help them evolve as human beings. The first component of education is input, which consists of students and teachers; the second is a process that is impacted by the environment and instructional tools; and the third is the result of interactions between students and teachers that are supported by the process.

Teachers, who are at the forefront of the school learning process, are specifically accountable for the improvement of educational quality (Rizki, 2019). Schools are structured establishments that play a part in raising the standard of education as one of the hubs for carrying out educational activities. In line with this, schools are correlated with school quality. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Chapter I Article 1 paragraph (1) states "Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation, and state".

Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI*) in general aims to shape the child's personality into a person who can reflect the teachings of Islam and has a value of piety to Allah (Hakim & Iskandar, 2023). Good learning using various media such as information technology-based can increase students' interest in learning (Nursyam, 2019). From some of the definitions above, In addition to being founded on accepting a relationship between oneself and something external, interest can be defined as a sentiment that leans toward love and a sensation of attraction to something or an activity without any force (Munib et al., 2021). The teaching and learning process will be impacted by interest as well, so when interest is there, learning will proceed effortlessly.

Several previous research results reveal that an educator is required to have a good understanding of the physical character, behavioral ethics, emotional, religious and intellectual of students. It is not surprising that in an effective learning process, teachers need to develop an ideal learning process which is able to develop imaginative power and creativity in learning so that through an interesting learning process it can arouse the enthusiasm of students' motivation in studying and understanding each material given (Sari et al., 2022). Teachers must be creative and imaginative in their approach to teaching because students have different needs and learn in different ways.

Interest is one of the motivations for students so that students at school can concentrate and focus on the activities being carried out. With the interest of students, the students will continue to try to be diligent and enthusiastic in learning (Mukaromah & Vardia, 2021). Students' interest in learning arises not only from themselves, but there must also be strong support or encouragement from the family and the surrounding community. In the learning process, interest acts as a *motivating force*, namely as a force that will encourage students to learn, students who are interested in a subject will continue to be diligent and persistent in learning. He will continue to encourage himself to learn and always try to achieve satisfactory results. Students who are able to develop their interests and are able to direct all their abilities to master certain subjects will certainly get satisfactory learning achievements (Permatasari, 2020).

Interest plays a very important role in learning if the subject does not match the interest in learning then students will have difficulty in learning and students will not be enthusiastic in learning, interest also has a big influence on learning achievement if the

learning material does not match the interests of students then students will not learn as well as possible because there is no attraction for them, student interest and understanding become problems that must be resolved because with low student interest it results in less than optimal student learning outcomes (Mardhiah & Julike, 2022). Low student interest in learning a subject is caused by several things, such as students do not understand the material and the learning atmosphere in the classroom is not interesting, this results in students not being motivated and not enthusiastic about participating in learning in the classroom (Efendi, 2022).

The problem point related to low interest cannot be separated from the teacher's teaching method, the principle of learning through lectures and questions and answers, this learning will direct students to memorize without looking for or building concepts from teacher to student (Mario et al., 2024). One way to optimize is by improving the learning process that many teachers do into active and enjoyable learning, a teacher must provide their abilities, especially the ability to determine a method in teaching (Tholhah, 2024). Each student has different abilities, so with these differences, teachers should be able to understand and be able to carry out good learning, one of which is by determining a good learning method in order to increase students' interest in learning (Putri et al., 2024).

A method is any approach that may be used to carry out a predetermined plan in order to create authentic and useful activities that meet learning objectives. (2016, Roba'ah)The connection between each learning topic or piece of content and real-world situations is the basis of the CTL approach. In addition to the fact that the content being studied is directly tied to factual condition (Paramartha, 2016), there are a number of ways to link it. For example, it can be deceived into offering instances or illustrations, educational materials, or other media., which are in fact made in an effort, either directly or indirectly, to be connected to or have a relationship with real-life experiences; as a result, learning will be more engaging and each student will feel that they need to learn it because they will find it immediately useful (Rusman, 2014). When learning through CTL, students should be able to connect the material to real-world scenarios to help them make the connection between what they have learned and how it applies to their daily lives. Additionally, their knowledge should go beyond simply memorizing concepts; it should also help them discover them on their own so that lessons can be conducted effectively and efficiently and boost students' interest in learning. (Sugiarto, 2020).

Based on the researchers' initial observations where during the learning process the class conditions were very ineffective where a student was found sleeping when the teacher was explaining and there were also students talking to their friends during the learning process. From several points of the problem and the results of the research above, a teaching method that actively engages students is essential. Teachers must create lessons that help students become more proficient in the cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains. From the description above, the researchers conducted a study entitled Developing Student Learning Interests in Islamic Religious Education Subjects through the Contextual Teaching Learning Method at SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung.

METHOD

This research was conducted using qualitative research and using a phenomenological approach. This study aims to present factual and systematic data in accordance with what happens in the field, so that with these data researchers can find their findings. The data obtained are the results of interviews, observations, and

documentation (Sidiq, 2019). While the phenomenological approach is a study based on subjective or phenomenological experiences that are experienced and occur in reality. Through the phenomenological approach, it is possible to express concepts that are running and happening. Phenomenology is also interpreted as a view of thinking that emphasizes the focus of subjective human experiences and stories and interpretations or implementations in the world.

This study employs both primary and secondary data sources to gather information and data. Learning Implementation Plans (RPP) serve as the study's secondary data source, previous research, and important meeting documents related to the study. While the primary data in this study were obtained directly through observations of SMP N 1 Kedawung and direct interviews with PAI subject teachers at SMP N 1 Kedawung regarding the development of student learning interests. The information gathered from the interviews was fully backed up by the findings of the observations and documentation. This study's data analysis method makes use of Milles and Huberman's concepts of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion formulation. The researchers then presented the methodically gathered data in narrative text format, which would subsequently make it easier to generate interim conclusions that needed to be confirmed in order to produce objective conclusions. Extending the observation period, triangulating, closely observing, and conducting member and check were all done to evaluate the validity of the data and ensure that the information gathered could be used in the study in a way that aligned with the informant's intentions (Sugiyono, 2013). If there is no discrepancy between what the researchers reported and what actually occurred to the object under study, the data findings can be deemed genuine.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Student Learning Interest in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at SMP N 1 Kedawung

Firstly, the researchers conducted interviews with teachers regarding students' learning interests in Islamic Education Subject at SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung. The interviews were conducted to find out what obstacles were faced by class VIII during learning. The following are the findings of the interviews that researchers performed with instructors of Islamic Religious Education:

“While I was teaching Islamic Religious Education here, I had an analysis of students' different learning interests in each class or period, all of that has indeed become something that is understood by all teachers, not only Islamic Religious Education teachers, because the learning ability of each student cannot be averaged. In grade VII, I think they have an interest in learning of 80%, which is quite high because they are still new students so they are still fresh and enthusiastic, the rest I evaluate because my learning model may be boring and less interesting for children of grade VII age. Then in grade VIII it is at 70%, they are still enthusiastic but not all, they are enthusiastic because the material in grade VII has indeed been mentioned in grade VII so it's like they just continue it. Then in grade IX, which is at the lowest percentage, which is at 60%, the most accurate reason is because they are currently at the highest level in school so they feel that the material is easy and they think they will graduate soon, for them maybe studying or not studying will definitely graduate even though it shouldn't be like that, teachers also need assessment and evaluation of student competency.”

It may be inferred from the preceding class VIII teacher's interview results that students' enthusiasm in studying Islamic Religious Education is still comparatively low.

This is because teachers have not used many learning models and the methods applied by teachers are conventional and question and answer, so that only active students often answer. The results of observations at school show that there are students in classes VII, VIII, and IX where each class has 3 classes, so there are 9 classes in total, of course they have different learning interests in the subject of Islamic Religious Education. There is 80% interest in learning students in class VII. In the process of learning Islamic Religious Education, class VII students are asked to read and summarize the material as an effort by the teacher to encourage students to focus, then the teacher re-explains what has been understood by the students through several methods including the lecture method, this must be done by the teacher as validation of student understanding through reading at the beginning. Class VII students still have high enthusiasm for learning and they also find it easy to condition the class so that it is not crowded when the learning process begins and they are also still entering the early stages of moving from elementary school to junior high school so they still have a fear of breaking the rules when in the learning process.

There is 70% of student interest in learning in class VIII because some students still remember the material that has been taught previously, and when given assignments or homework there are still some students who have not done the assignments given by the teacher so that the students are given sanctions to recite the Qur'an up to 1 juz. Students are also asked to read the next material, but there are still students who like to talk to themselves and still have great difficulty understanding the material being studied. Then after the students have read the material, the teacher explains the lesson material and asks again about the material that has been read by the students. And when students are asked to explain and give examples of the discussion of the next material, they still have great difficulty because the material has not been studied and taught by the teacher because students rarely read books at home so that students rely more on teaching from the teacher than studying independently at home.

Meanwhile, in class IX there are 65% of students' interest in learning which is still relatively low, this happens because students tend to take the material lightly, they feel that class IX is the highest level in junior high school so they underestimate the PAI subject which they consider easy. In the learning process, students often talk to themselves with their friends, eat in class, and even sleep. This is a challenge for teachers in dealing with student characters, teachers are required to be more creative so that in learning they have solutions to every challenge. Students' interest in learning PAI at SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung shows variations influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include personal motivation, understanding of the material, and students' spiritual awareness. Meanwhile, external factors include teacher teaching methods, the use of interesting learning media, and a conducive learning environment. PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung have tried to increase students' interest through interactive approaches, such as group discussions, use of technology, and practical religious activities. However, challenges remain, such as limited teaching time and lack of student participation in learning activities. With proper management, students' interest in learning is expected to continue to increase so as to create a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has a strong religious character.

Students' learning interest in PAI subjects at SMP N 1 Kedawung shows an interesting level of variation to study. Several factors that influence students' learning interest include the teaching methods used by teachers, the relevance of the material to everyday life, and support from the environment, both family and school. Teachers who are creative in delivering material, for example through discussions, simulations, or the

use of educational technology, tend to be able to increase student participation in learning. In addition, an approach that emphasizes religious values with social problems or challenges faced by today's teenagers can increase the relevance of lessons and attract students' attention. On the other hand, learning interest is also influenced by students' internal factors, such as personal motivation, basic abilities in understanding religious material, and the belief that Islamic Religious Education has an important role in character formation. The results of observations at SMP N 1 Kedawung show that students who have good family support, such as parental supervision in learning activities at home, tend to have higher interest. Therefore, the synergy between innovative teaching approaches, a supportive environment, and students' internal motivation is the key to increasing students' learning interest.

Learning Process for Islamic Religious Education Subjects using the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Method

Before this research was conducted, the researchers first conducted an interview with the teacher. The interview was conducted to find out how the learning process was and what obstacles the teacher faced during learning. Researchers conducted interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers and the results are as follows:

“ Actually, teachers have implemented methods in learning, right, ma'am, but here I think my method is not interesting enough, I understand very well because when I was in school, if there was a lot of material and the teacher only told stories, it was really boring and made me sleepy, so that's why I evacuated my teaching and I implemented the CTL method, with that method we as teachers are like projecting the material in the book into everyday life, so students find it easier to remember and understand it .”

Then the PAI teacher also explained the implementation, the following are the results of the interview:

“ For the implementation, I can take an example from my teaching implementation last week in class VII, at the beginning of the lesson I gave an apperception then I attached a picture on the board related to the material, after that I connected it to the material in the book, for the closing I just reviewed the material that day and I gave a little assignment to measure student satisfaction, thank God with that I think it can increase the percentage of student interest in learning, for more details after this later I will teach as a teacher, you also need to observe so it's just a matter of time .”

Based on the interview, the interest in learning Islamic Religious Education in grade IX is relatively low. This is because teachers have not used many learning models and the methods applied by teachers are conventional and question and answer, so that only active students often answer. So that the learning model used by teachers so far is learning that is less interesting to students, therefore to increase students' interest in learning by using the Contextual Teaching Learning learning model, namely learning that links material to everyday life.

Before the lesson began, all media that would be used were prepared in advance. Learning began by singing the song “Confidence” that had been given the previous week together. Then continued with learning. The teacher explained the learning procedures that students must carry out and the competencies that students must achieve. Entering the core activity, the teacher explains the material little by little to stimulate the students' brains to ask questions about the material. So that when students ask questions, the teacher holds a question and answer session with the students regarding the material being

studied. However, the teacher does not answer the question directly but throws it to other students to answer it (Shilviana & Hamami, 2020).

After holding a question and answer session, the teacher gave students an assignment to observe the media provided. The observation carried out was an observation of the picture. There were 4 different pictures that contained messages about self-confidence and independence. Students made descriptions related to the picture.

While students are actively participating in learning, the teacher carries out an assessment on the student activity observation sheet. After that, the teacher checks the results of the students' observations. In the final activity, the teacher and students together re-observe the picture and the teacher provides additional explanations regarding the material. To increase students' understanding of the learning material, the teacher gives students the opportunity to ask questions again. However, students are still passive in asking questions to the teacher. So the teacher gives assignments to be done at home and together closes the lesson with prayer.

Developing Students' Learning Interests in Islamic Religious Education Subjects Using the Cotextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Method

Researchers conducted interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers and the results are as follows:

“ So far I have realized, ma'am, that my teaching method may be less interesting for students, then I evaluated it together with other teachers who also had the same obstacles as me, and found the solution by implementing CTL, actually there are many methods but I took CTL because in Islamic Religious Education it is related to the implementation of daily life, namely morals, fiqh. The implementation of the CTL method begins by exploring students' experiences or initial knowledge related to the topic to be studied. For example, when discussing the values of honesty, teachers can start by asking students to tell personal experiences or observe events in the surrounding environment that involve honesty. “

Based on the interview above, learning that is oriented towards mastery of material and curriculum demands, has failed to equip students to solve problems in everyday life, therefore packaging learning with the use of contextual learning models (CTL) is an alternative way to help students in Islamic Religious Education subjects, so that students experience what they learn and find the theoretical concepts they learn, students are not only able to remember long term, but can internalize the theoretical concepts they learn.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a learning model that can be used to make character education in schools more effective and successful. In other words, CTL can be developed into a character-based learning model, because in its implementation it emphasizes more on the relationship between learning materials and the real world of students' lives, so that students are able to connect and apply the competencies of learning outcomes in everyday life. Through the process of applying character in everyday life, students will feel the importance of learning, and they will gain deep meaning to what they are learning (Mulyasa, 2016).

The application of the CTL method begins by exploring students' prior experiences or knowledge related to the topic to be studied. For example, when discussing the values of honesty, teachers can start by asking students to tell personal experiences or observe events in the surrounding environment that involve honesty. Furthermore, teachers can facilitate learning through activities that actively involve students, such as

group discussions, role-playing, or problem-based projects (problem-based learning). In this way, students not only understand the material in theory, but also learn to apply it in their lives. The CTL method also emphasizes that students must work together to complete tasks, which allows them to learn from each other's experiences. Teachers also help students relate religion to real-world things, such as social media ethics, religious tolerance, and social awareness. With CTL, students are expected to be more motivated to learn because they feel that what is learned has direct benefits for their lives. This approach also helps students to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and attitudes that are in accordance with Islamic values. Ultimately, the use of CTL in Islamic Religious Education subjects not only increases students' interest in learning, but also shapes character and behavior.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the CTL Method in Islamic Religious Education Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung

Researchers conducted interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the CTL method. The results are as follows:

“Every method that is applied has advantages and disadvantages, if so far I have practiced this CTL method, the main advantage is as an approach which places students as active subjects in it, so students find it easier to apply it in their daily lives. In addition, it can encourage students to think critically and creatively. Besides all that, there are still disadvantages of CTL, one of which is the lack of teacher skills, in implementing it, planning is needed, while CTL applies technology which not all teachers can do, including me who is sometimes still not literate with technology, sometimes students are more up to date than me, but the solution is to hold training for teachers to be more qualified and follow the movement of the times. “

PAI learning in junior high school uses the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method. One of the main advantages of this method is that it places students as active subjects in learning. Through CTL, students are encouraged to connect teaching materials with daily life so that they can understand and apply religious values in daily life. To instill care, teachers can engage their students in charitable activities for the less fortunate. It teaches students not only further, CTL encourages students to think critically, collaborate, and communicate (Erwanto et al., 2024). They are encouraged to explore Islamic values such as justice, cooperation, and honesty when solving a given problem. This is in line with the needs of the 21st century which emphasizes the development of soft skills. Another advantage of the CTL method is its flexibility, as it can be adapted to a variety of themes and learning objectives.

The CTL method has many benefits, including helping students develop life skills such as critical thinking, effective communication, and collaboration. Learning becomes more contextual, which allows students to understand and apply religious values in daily life. CTL also encourages creativity and increases students' learning motivation. In addition, this method helps students develop critical thinking skills in understanding Islamic Religious Education concepts (Halimah et al., 2025).

However, the CTL method also has shortcomings that must be overcome. One of them is the demand for high skills for teachers in designing relevant and contextual learning. Islamic Religious Education teachers must be able to design learning scenarios that are not only interesting, but also in accordance with learning outcomes. According to Trianto (2010), without thorough preparation, the implementation of CTL can be ineffective and confusing for students. In addition, the limited class time is a challenge in

itself, especially if the material presented is dense (Wacahyani & Ningrum, 2021). Because CTL requires exploration, discussion, and reflection, its implementation takes longer than the lecture method. In addition, there is a lack of adequate supporting resources, such as educational media, access to technology, and a good learning environment. Very few facilities in some education, especially in rural areas, can cause the CTL method to become ineffective. The diversity of students' backgrounds is also an issue because not all students have experiences that are relevant to a particular learning context. Furthermore, compared to traditional methods, CTL requires more time to discuss and conduct practical activities. In addition, students who have limitations in critical thinking and communication can be a challenge. Evaluation of learning also becomes more difficult because it requires a more comprehensive and process-based assessment.

Several solutions should be taken to overcome these shortcomings. Teachers must be trained to improve their abilities and knowledge in applying the CTL method. Technology can help overcome time and resource constraints, and the curriculum must be modified to accommodate the CTL method. Effective supervision and evaluation can also help find errors and improve the learning process (Putra & Yahyai, 2023). As a result, SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung can improve the quality of education and optimize Islamic Religious Education learning. Overall, the CTL method has great potential to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning in junior high schools, especially in instilling Islamic values practically and meaningfully. However, the success of using this method is highly dependent on the readiness of teachers, facility support, and sufficient time allocation. Therefore, improving teachers' abilities through training and improving educational facilities is an important step to optimize the use of this method in religious education (Triyanto, 2010).

CONCLUSION

One of the learning models that can be utilized to increase the efficacy and success of character education in schools is contextual learning. Because it places more emphasis on the connection between learning materials and students' real-world experiences, CTL can be developed into one of the character learning models. This will enable students to apply and connect the competencies of learning outcomes in their daily lives. Islamic Religious Education learning with the CTL method is not only a way to transfer knowledge but also build character and Islamic values in students' lives. With a relevant approach and actively involving students, CTL provides opportunities for students to learn in a more interesting and meaningful way. This approach has proven effective in increasing students' interest and motivation to study Islamic teachings in a more contextual and applicable way. Thus, CTL not only forms students who are academically intelligent but also have noble character. The CTL method is effective in developing students' interest in learning Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Kedawung. The synergy between teachers, students, and the school environment is the main factor in the successful implementation of this method. This study makes a significant contribution to the development of innovative learning strategies in Islamic religious education.

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