

**STRENGTHENING THE MOTIVATION FOR CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER AND
STUDENT CHARACTER THRU A CONTEXTUAL LEARNING APPROACH IN
THE SUBJECT OF AKIDAH AKHLAK AT MDTA SHOBARUL YAQIN**

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Diterima: 11/05/2026; Direvisi: 13/05/2026; Diterbitkan: 19/05/2026

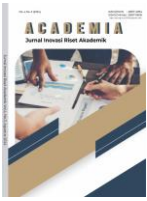
ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas pendekatan Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) dalam meningkatkan motivasi salat berjamaah serta pembentukan karakter siswa pada mata pelajaran Akidah Akhlak di MDTA Shobarul Yaqin. Latar belakang penelitian ini adalah pembelajaran Akidah Akhlak yang masih cenderung bersifat teoritis dan kurang terhubung dengan praktik kehidupan sehari-hari siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi lapangan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan siswa, serta dokumentasi kegiatan pembelajaran. Analisis data dilakukan secara deskriptif kualitatif melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan CTL yang menekankan keterlibatan aktif siswa melalui praktik nyata, diskusi reflektif, dan penilaian autentik mampu meningkatkan kedisiplinan dan kekhayusan siswa dalam melaksanakan salat berjamaah. Selain itu, pendekatan ini efektif dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai karakter seperti tanggung jawab, disiplin, kebersihan, dan kepedulian sosial. Simpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa CTL merupakan pendekatan yang efektif dalam mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam dengan pengalaman belajar kontekstual yang bermakna, sehingga direkomendasikan untuk diterapkan secara kolaboratif oleh guru, siswa, dan lingkungan sekolah guna membentuk karakter islami yang utuh dan aplikatif.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran Kontekstual, Motivasi Salat, Karakter Siswa, Iman dan Akhlak, Pendidikan Agama Islam.*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in enhancing students' motivation to perform congregational prayers and in shaping character development in the subject of Islamic Creed and Ethics (Akidah Akhlak) at MDTA Shobarul Yaqin. The background of this research is the tendency of Islamic education to remain theoretical and insufficiently connected to students' real-life experiences. This study employs a qualitative approach with a field study design. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of learning activities. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the CTL approach, which emphasizes active student engagement through real-life practices, reflective discussions, and authentic assessment, effectively improves students' discipline and devotion in performing congregational prayers. Furthermore, this approach successfully internalizes character values such as responsibility, discipline, cleanliness, and social awareness. The study concludes that CTL is an effective approach to integrating Islamic values with meaningful contextual learning



experiences and is recommended to be implemented collaboratively by teachers, students, and the school environment to develop comprehensive and applicable Islamic character.

Keywords: *Contextual Learning, Prayer Motivation, Student Character, Faith and Morals, Islamic Religious Education*

INTRODUCTION


Motivation is an important psychological factor that influences students' learning behavior and outcomes in the educational process. It refers to the internal and external forces that drive, direct, and sustain human actions toward achieving specific goals. In the context of education, motivation plays a crucial role in determining students' engagement and academic achievement. Without strong motivation, students tend to show low participation and minimal learning progress. Therefore, motivation becomes a fundamental element in improving cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning outcomes (Anjeli et al., 2025).

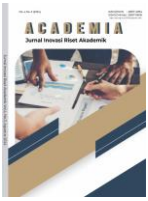
Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is an instructional approach that connects learning materials with real-life situations to make learning more meaningful and applicable. This approach positions teachers as facilitators who guide students in constructing knowledge based on their experiences. CTL encourages active participation, collaboration, reflection, and problem-solving skills among students. This student-centered orientation is also relevant to critical and inductive learning models in Islamic education that emphasize rational and empirical learning experiences for students (Susetyo et al., 2026). Research shows that CTL can improve students' understanding, critical thinking abilities, and learning motivation (Chusnah et al., 2024). This finding is also supported by Mahbubi and Sa'diyah (2025), who explain that contextual learning approaches significantly improve students' motivation and participation in Islamic Religious Education learning. In addition, CTL aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes knowledge construction through experience (Pramana et al., 2024).

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), CTL is considered an effective approach to enhance learning effectiveness and student engagement. Studies have shown that CTL improves learning outcomes in PAI by linking religious concepts with students' daily experiences (Putri & Subando, 2025). Similarly, contextual-based learning has been proven to increase the effectiveness of Islamic education at the secondary level by making learning more relevant and meaningful (Khauroh et al., 2025). Furthermore, this approach helps students internalize Islamic values through practical application rather than memorization alone. As a result, learning becomes more interactive and impactful for students' moral development. In the current educational era, Islamic schools are expected not only to transfer religious knowledge but also to strengthen students' religious awareness and moral behavior through meaningful learning experiences. One of the challenges faced by Islamic educational institutions is the decreasing consistency of students in practicing religious activities such as congregational prayer, discipline, and responsibility in daily life. This condition indicates that learning activities still need to be connected more closely with students' real-life experiences so that religious values can be internalized effectively. Islamic Religious Education serves as an important foundation in shaping students' religious character and strengthening moral values through continuous habituation and practical implementation in everyday life (Zahro, 2025). Therefore, learning approaches that emphasize active participation and contextual experiences are needed to strengthen students' understanding and religious practice simultaneously.

The implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) also reflects the development of student-centered learning approaches in Islamic education. Through contextual learning, students are encouraged to construct knowledge through observation, discussion, reflection, and direct experience related to everyday religious practices. This approach is

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relevant to the critical-inductive learning model that emphasizes rational and empirical learning experiences in the process of understanding Islamic teachings (Susetyo et al., 2026). By involving students directly in meaningful activities such as congregational prayer practices, learning becomes more interactive, reflective, and applicable in daily life. As a result, students are not only able to understand religious concepts cognitively but are also encouraged to apply Islamic values consistently in their attitudes and behavior.

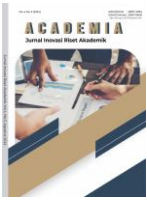
Character education is an essential goal in Islamic education, Islamic Religious Education not only focuses on cognitive mastery of religious knowledge, but also functions as a foundation for developing students' religious character and daily behavior. Religious values taught in schools are expected to become habits reflected in students' attitudes, discipline, and social interactions. According to Zahro (2025), Islamic education plays a strategic role in strengthening students' religious character through continuous value internalization and practical implementation in everyday life. Therefore, character education in Islamic schools should be integrated with contextual and experience-based learning approaches so that students are able to understand and practice Islamic teachings simultaneously. as it aims to develop students who are morally upright, responsible, and socially aware. Islamic Religious Education also functions as a fundamental foundation for strengthening students' religious character through the internalization of Islamic values in daily behavior (Zahro, 2025). Internalization of values such as discipline, honesty, and social responsibility is a key focus in shaping students' character. Islamic Religious Education plays a significant role in embedding these values through both classroom learning and school culture (Suwahyu, 2025). Studies also show that structured value internalization programs in schools contribute positively to students' moral development (Rifai et al., 2024). Additionally, integrating religious values into learning activities helps strengthen students' social piety and ethical behavior (Abdillah & Jaki, 2025).

However, in many educational settings, including Islamic schools, learning is still dominated by teacher-centered approaches. This condition makes students passive learners who depend heavily on teacher explanations. Teacher-centered methods often limit students' creativity, participation, and critical thinking skills (Ghafar, 2023). In contrast, student-centered learning approaches have been shown to improve engagement and learning outcomes more effectively (Levitt & Grubaugh, 2023). Therefore, a shift toward more interactive and participatory learning models is necessary to improve educational quality.

At MDTA Shobarul Yaqin, Islamic Religious Education learning still tends to focus on theoretical understanding rather than practical application in daily life. Students often act as passive recipients of information, while teachers dominate the learning process. This condition creates a gap between ideal learning outcomes and actual classroom practices, particularly in the internalization of Islamic values. Therefore, implementing Contextual Teaching and Learning is considered an important strategy to improve motivation and strengthen students' character. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of CTL in shaping students' moral character and increasing motivation in congregational prayer activities within the school environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research approach with a field study design conducted at MDTA Shobarul Yaqin. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in improving students' motivation and character, particularly in congregational prayer activities. The research subjects include Aqidah Akhlak teachers and students involved in the learning process at the institution. Data in this study were collected



through observation and interviews. Observation was carried out to examine the learning environment, classroom activities, and the implementation of congregational prayer habituation programs. Interviews were conducted with teachers and students using structured questions to obtain in-depth information regarding learning practices and student behavior. The data used consist of primary data obtained directly from respondents and secondary data obtained from relevant documents, references, and literature related to the research topic. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques, including data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section presents the findings obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation regarding the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MDTA Shobarul Yaqin. The findings focus on students' motivation in performing congregational prayer, character development, learning activities, and the evaluation process applied by teachers during the learning process. The discussion is further connected with relevant theories and previous studies to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of CTL in strengthening students' religious behavior and character formation within the Islamic educational environment.

Result

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MDTA Shobarul Yaqin improves students' motivation in performing congregational prayer. Students become more active because learning activities are directly connected to real-life worship practices. The teacher links classroom materials with daily prayer habits, especially the Asr prayer in congregation at school. This integration helps students understand the practical importance of prayer in their daily lives. As a result, students show increased awareness and consistency in performing congregational prayer.

The teacher also encouraged students to relate the material of Aqidah Akhlak to their personal experiences in worship activities at home and school. During classroom observation, students actively participated in group discussions regarding the importance. The implementation of CTL in this study also reflects the development of rational and empirical learning approaches in Islamic education. Susetyo et al. (2026) explain that critical-inductive learning encourages students to construct understanding through observation, reasoning, and real-life experiences. This concept is relevant to CTL because students are actively involved in understanding religious practices through direct participation in congregational prayer activities. Learning becomes more student-centered and reflective rather than merely relying on memorization. Therefore, contextual learning strengthens students' critical awareness and practical understanding of Islamic teachings. of discipline in congregational prayer. Some students stated that they became more motivated to pray in congregation because the learning process allowed them to directly practice prayer activities rather than only listening to theoretical explanations. Teachers also used reflective questions to help students evaluate their consistency in worship practices. This condition created a more interactive and meaningful learning atmosphere. Interview results show that students demonstrate improved discipline, responsibility, and cleanliness through the habituation of congregational prayer. The teacher assigns specific roles such as adhan caller and imam to train students' responsibility and time

awareness. Students also become more aware of the importance of purification before prayer as part of religious practice. Learning is not limited to theory but directly applied in daily behavior. These findings show that CTL supports meaningful behavioral change in students.

The implementation of CTL follows structured learning stages, starting from introduction, core activities, and closing activities. In the introduction stage, students are prepared through questions related to prior knowledge and learning objectives. In the core activities, students observe, discuss, and practice prayer-related materials in groups. Students also present and demonstrate prayer practices based on real-life situations. This process shows that learning is

Evaluation in CTL-based learning is carried out through both cognitive tests and portfolio assessments. Students are assessed not only on written knowledge but also on their daily prayer practices. Teachers provide feedback to improve students' understanding and religious behavior. This evaluation model strengthens the connection between knowledge and practice. It also ensures continuous monitoring of students' learning progress.

The results further show that CTL contributes to character development in students. Values such as religiosity, discipline, honesty, and social care are formed through continuous practice of congregational prayer. Students gradually show positive behavioral changes in school activities. However, some students still show inconsistency such as lateness and lack of discipline. This indicates that continuous reinforcement from teachers is still needed.

Table 1. Key Findings of CTL Implementation in Aqidah Akhlak Learning


No	Aspect	Findings
1	Student Motivation	Increased motivation and participation in congregational prayer
2	Student Behavior	Improved discipline, responsibility, and cleanliness
3	Learning Process	Student-centered learning through practice, discussion, and reflection
4	Evaluation System	Combination of cognitive tests and behavioral/portfolio assessment
5	Character Building	Development of religiosity, honesty, discipline, and social care

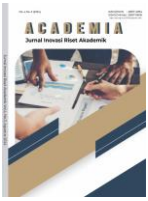
Table 1 presents the key findings of the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MDTA Shobarul Yaqin. The results show that CTL has a positive impact on students' motivation, as it increases their participation and enthusiasm in performing congregational prayer activities. In terms of behavior, students demonstrate improvements in discipline, responsibility, and cleanliness through continuous habituation in school. The learning process is also more student-centered, as it involves active participation through practice, discussion, and reflection rather than passive learning. Furthermore, the evaluation system combines cognitive assessment and portfolio-based assessment, ensuring that both knowledge and behavior are measured comprehensively. Overall, CTL contributes significantly to students' character development by fostering values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, and social care, although some students still require continuous guidance to maintain consistency in their behavior.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is effective in improving students' motivation and understanding in Aqidah Akhlak learning. This is in line with the view that CTL helps students connect learning materials with real-life situations, making learning more meaningful and applicable (Daud, 2024). In this

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study, students show higher engagement in congregational prayer activities because learning is directly linked to daily practice. This condition supports previous research stating that CTL improves student learning motivation and understanding in Islamic education (Mahbubi & Sa'diyah, 2025). Therefore, CTL is an effective approach in bridging theory and practice in religious learning.

The effectiveness of CTL is also evident in the improvement of students' learning outcomes and participation. Research shows that CTL contributes positively to student achievement because it encourages active involvement in the learning process (Hidayah et al., 2025). In this study, students become more active through observation, discussion, and direct practice of prayer activities. This aligns with Afriantoni et al. (2026), who emphasize that contextual learning strengthens students' understanding through real-life application. Thus, CTL supports both cognitive and practical development in Islamic Religious Education.

From a motivational perspective, CTL plays an important role in increasing students' learning enthusiasm and participation. Students are more motivated when learning activities are connected to their daily worship practices. This is supported by Mahbubi and Sa'diyah (2025), who state that contextual learning significantly improves student motivation in PAI subjects. The learning process becomes more engaging because students can directly experience and practice what they learn. Therefore, CTL creates a learning environment that supports both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

In terms of character formation, the findings show that CTL contributes to the development of religious character such as discipline, responsibility, and religiosity. This is in line with Rahmad and Kibtiyah (2022), who found that religious habits can strengthen students' character formation. Similarly, Ridhwan et al. (2025) emphasize that routine worship activities such as prayer help build discipline and responsibility. In this study, students show gradual behavioral improvement through habituation of congregational prayer. However, some students still require continuous guidance to maintain consistency.

The role of habituation in shaping character is also supported by previous studies on religious practices in schools. Aufa et al. (2023) state that repeated religious activities contribute significantly to the development of students' religious character. This is reinforced by Lubis et al. (2024), who found that congregational prayer habituation strengthens discipline and moral behavior among students. In this study, similar findings are observed where students become more disciplined through structured prayer activities at school. Therefore, habituation plays a key role in internalizing religious values in students' daily life.

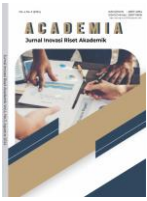
The implementation of CTL also reflects the shift from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. The implementation of CTL in this study also reflects the development of rational and empirical learning approaches in Islamic education. Susetyo et al. (2026) explain that critical-inductive learning encourages students to construct understanding through observation, reasoning, and real-life experiences. This concept is relevant to CTL because students are actively involved in understanding religious practices through direct participation in congregational prayer activities. Therefore, contextual learning strengthens students' critical awareness and practical understanding of Islamic teachings. Tarmizi and Mansur (2024) explain that student-centered learning encourages active participation and critical thinking among students. This is relevant to the findings of this study, where teachers act as facilitators while students actively construct knowledge through practice. Telaumbanua and Sanjaya (2025) also emphasize that CTL supports meaningful and contextual Islamic learning. Therefore, CTL not only improves learning motivation but also strengthens the integration of knowledge, practice, and character formation in Islamic education.

KESIMPULAN

This study concludes that the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning effectively increases students' motivation to perform congregational prayers and strengthens their religious character. The CTL approach, which is based on real-life experiences such as direct practice, discussion, and authentic assessment, helps students internalize values of discipline, responsibility, and spirituality in daily life. It also bridges the gap between theoretical understanding and practical religious behavior, making learning more meaningful and applicable. Furthermore, this study shows that CTL contributes to more active student involvement and positions teachers as facilitators in the learning process. The approach also highlights the importance of collaboration between teachers, students, and the school environment in supporting character formation. Therefore, CTL can be considered an effective learning model in Islamic Religious Education to develop both cognitive understanding and religious behavior. For future research, it is recommended to explore the long-term impact of CTL implementation on students' consistency in religious practices and to examine the role of family involvement in strengthening character education outside the school environment.

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ACADEMIA: Jurnal Inovasi Riset Akademik

Vol. 6, No. 2, Maret-Mei 2026

e-ISSN : 2807-1808 | p-ISSN : 2807-2294

Online Journal System [https : //jurnalp4i.com/index.php/academia](https://jurnalp4i.com/index.php/academia)



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