



**STUDENTS' LEARNING INTEREST IN ISLAMIC AND CHARACTER
EDUCATION THROUGH THE CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING
MODEL**

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji efektivitas model pembelajaran Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) dalam meningkatkan minat belajar Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) pada siswa SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung. Latar belakang penelitian ini adalah rendahnya minat belajar siswa yang ditunjukkan melalui kurangnya keterlibatan aktif dan perhatian terhadap materi, yang disebabkan oleh dominasi metode ceramah, keterbatasan media, dan variasi evaluasi yang minim. Penelitian menggunakan desain *Posttest-Only Control Group* dengan teknik *Simple Random Sampling*. Sampel terdiri dari dua kelas, yaitu kelas eksperimen yang menerapkan CTL dan kelas kontrol yang menggunakan metode konvensional. Instrumen penelitian berupa angket minat belajar dengan 15 butir pernyataan, di mana 13 dinyatakan valid dan reliabilitasnya tinggi ($\alpha = 0,87$). Data dianalisis menggunakan uji normalitas, homogenitas, dan uji-t. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya perbedaan signifikan antara kelas eksperimen dan kelas kontrol. Penerapan CTL terbukti efektif meningkatkan minat belajar siswa, ditandai dengan meningkatnya partisipasi, perhatian, dan keterlibatan aktif selama pembelajaran. Kebaruan (novelty) penelitian ini terletak pada penerapan CTL dalam pembelajaran PAI di tingkat SMP, yang sebelumnya belum banyak diteliti, sehingga memperluas konteks penerapan CTL yang selama ini lebih dominan pada mata pelajaran eksakta. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah memberikan panduan bagi guru dalam merancang pembelajaran yang lebih variatif, interaktif, dan relevan dengan kehidupan nyata siswa. Dengan demikian, hasil penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan ilmu pendidikan dan dapat dijadikan dasar perumusan kebijakan sekolah untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran PAI.

Kata Kunci: *Contextual Teaching and Learning, Minat Belajar, Pendidikan Agama Islam*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model in enhancing students' learning interest in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung. The background of this research lies in the low level of students' learning interest, as indicated by their limited active participation and lack of attention to the material, which are attributed to the dominance of lecture-based teaching methods, limited learning media, and minimal variation in assessment techniques. The research employed a *Posttest-Only Control Group* design with a *Simple Random Sampling* technique. The sample consisted of two classes: an experimental class that implemented the CTL model and a control class that utilized conventional teaching methods. The research instrument was a learning interest questionnaire comprising 15 statement items, of which 13 were deemed valid, with a high reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.87$). The data were analyzed using normality tests, homogeneity tests, and a t-test. The findings revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control classes. The implementation of the CTL model proved to be effective



in enhancing students' learning interest, as evidenced by increased participation, attentiveness, and active engagement throughout the learning process. The novelty of this study lies in the application of CTL within Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the junior high school level, an area that has been underexplored, thereby extending the scope of CTL implementation, which has predominantly been applied to science-related subjects. The practical implication of this research is to provide guidance for teachers in designing more varied, interactive, and contextually relevant learning experiences that connect with students' real-life situations. Consequently, the results of this study contribute to the advancement of educational science and can serve as a foundation for formulating school policies aimed at improving the quality of PAI instruction.

Keywords: *Contextual Teaching and Learning, Islamic Religious Education, Learning Interest*

INTRODUCTION

Learning interest represents a fundamental psychological construct manifested through an individual's inherent curiosity, sustained attention, and enthusiasm throughout the educational process (Arif et al., 2025; Nurmilasari et al., 2025). Students possessing a robust level of interest are generally identified by their proactive attitudes, consistent focus during lessons, and vigorous participation in classroom dialogues (Ainurruhama et al., 2024; Solehah et al., 2022). This internal drive may emerge from intrinsic sources, such as innate talents, or be significantly shaped by extrinsic environmental factors including the influence of educators, parents, and peer groups (Ramadani et al., 2023; Tanjung, 2022). A profound interest level facilitates a smoother comprehension of complex academic material, whereas a deficiency in this area often results in pervasive passivity and boredom (D. Y. Sinaga et al., 2024). To effectively bridge this gap, educators must implement *instructional media* and pedagogical strategies that resonate with the specific needs of the digital-age learner (F. D. Nababan et al., 2024; Sunanah et al., 2025).

The cultivation of an active and meaningful environment requires the integration of diverse teaching methods, such as interactive discussions and technology-supported inquiries (Nursafitri et al., 2021; Rusiadi, 2020). Student engagement is quantifiable through their willingness to pose questions, complete rigorous assignments, and apply theoretical knowledge to solve practical, real-world problems (Puspita sari et al., 2022). In the modern era, technology serves as a cornerstone for educational support, provided that teachers can guide students toward its positive utilization (M. Rizal & Syihabuddin, 2021; Rakhmah & Pradikto, 2025). However, a preliminary investigation conducted at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung revealed significant discrepancies between these pedagogical ideals and the current reality of Islamic Religious Education. Observations and interviews with the teacher, Mr. Ahmad Suhendar, indicated a heavy reliance on traditional lecture methods and a distinct lack of varied assessment techniques. This stagnation in teaching methodology has led to a documented decline in student focus and a general sense of disengagement within the seventh-grade cohorts during their daily religious studies.

Empirical data from a student questionnaire at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung further highlights these challenges, showing that positive feelings toward the subject stand at only 27%. More critically, the indicators for active engagement in learning and high attention to the material both recorded the lowest scores at 24% each. While interest in the presented material was slightly higher at 25%, the overall distribution confirms that nearly three-quarters of the student body lacks high-level engagement. This statistical reality is concerning because active involvement is the primary catalyst for deep understanding and long-term retention of



information. When students remain peripheral participants, their grasp of Islamic values remains superficial, eventually leading to a complete erosion of academic motivation. Consequently, there is an urgent need for teachers to transition away from monotonous delivery styles toward more interactive and *contextual* experiences. Addressing these low percentages is not merely a pedagogical preference but a necessity for ensuring the effectiveness of the curriculum at the junior secondary level.

To rectify these deficiencies, the implementation of the *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) model is proposed as a strategic solution aligned with student characteristics (Fauziah et al., 2024). This framework functions by explicitly connecting instructional content to real-world contexts, allowing students to perceive the practical utility of their lessons (Lase et al., 2025). Unlike traditional models, CTL necessitates that students move beyond passive listening to engage in active exploration and collaborative problem-solving (Hasudungan, 2022; Zuliyanti & Pujiastuti, 2020). Such an approach transforms the classroom into a dynamic space where intrinsic motivation and creativity are naturally fostered (Kurniasih, 2021; D. Nababan, 2023; Sastradiharja et al., 2020). By emphasizing the meaningfulness of the subject matter, CTL addresses the root cause of the 24% engagement rate identified in the preliminary study. The model shifts the focus from rote memorization to an experiential journey, ensuring that the learning process is not only academically rigorous but also personally relevant to the lives of the students.

The CTL framework is architecturally supported by seven core pillars: *constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning communities, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment* (W. Sinaga et al., 2024). These components ensure that students are directly involved in their own knowledge construction, working alongside peers while utilizing various relevant resources (Haziyah et al., 2024). Research has consistently demonstrated that CTL enhances student activeness and creativity by fostering an environment that prioritizes the *contextual* application of theory (Gunawan & Roihan, 2024). By linking abstract concepts to tangible life experiences, students are encouraged to exercise critical thinking and maintain high levels of motivation (Indana & Azizah, 2021; Sawitri et al., 2024). Previous scholarship has validated the effectiveness of CTL in diverse fields; for instance, it significantly improved science interest in elementary settings and enhanced digital simulation learning in vocational schools (Laila et al., 2022; Muamar & Agustyarini, 2022; Rohmatullah & Purwanti, 2021). These studies provide a strong foundation for the versatility of the model across different disciplines and educational stages.

Despite the proven success of CTL in subjects like mathematics and science, a critical research gap remains regarding its specific application within Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level. This study provides a significant innovation by targeting this unexplored niche, specifically addressing the unique cultural and spiritual dimensions of PAI learning at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to modernize religious education through a model that has historically been reserved for secular sciences. Given the current reliance on monotonous lecture-based methods and the resulting decrease in student engagement, the urgency of this intervention cannot be overstated. By identifying innovative strategies tailored to seventh-grade students, this research offers a vital reference for educators and policymakers seeking to improve instructional quality. Ultimately, the findings are expected to create a transformative ripple effect, enhancing both the pedagogical standards of the institution and the long-term learning outcomes of the students in a sustainable and meaningful way.



RESEARCH METHOD

This The study was implemented at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung during the second semester of the 2026/2027 academic year. The research population comprised all seventh-grade students, totaling 350 individuals. The sample was selected using the *Simple Random Sampling* technique, ensuring that each class had an equal chance of being chosen. Based on the random selection results, two classes were selected: one as the treatment class, which implemented the *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) approach, as well as the other as the control class, which utilized conventional teaching methods. The research design employed was the *Posttest-Only Control Group Design*, in which the treatment was administered exclusively to the experimental class, and the outcomes were compared to those of the control class through a final test (posttest).

Before the research instrument was utilized, a pilot test was conducted on a class that was not included in the study sample. The instrument consisted of a learning interest questionnaire comprising 15 statement items, with 7 positive and 8 negative statements. The validity test results indicated that out of the 15 items, 13 were deemed valid, while 2 were eliminated because their calculated *r*-values were lower than the critical *r*-table values. Following this, a reliability test was performed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.87, which falls within the high-reliability category. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered appropriate for use as a data collection tool to measure students' learning interest.

The research process began with the application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach within the experimental class over several sessions. The steps of CTL implementation included: the teacher posing trigger questions that connect the lesson content to students' real-life experiences, eliciting students' prior knowledge, designing exploratory activities such as observation and investigation, guiding students in drawing conclusions, and encouraging group discussions among students. Additionally, the teacher provided real-world examples, facilitated reflection, offered constructive feedback, and conducted authentic assessments through activities such as projects, presentations, and group discussions. After completing the entire series of learning activities, a posttest was administered to both classes. The collected data were further examined using normality and homogeneity tests, as well as a hypothesis test (t-test), to identify the effectiveness of the CTL approach in improving students' learning interest in Islamic Religious Education (IRE).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

1) Normality Test

A normality test is a statistical technique applied to examine whether the research data are normally distributed. A normal distribution is considered essential, as it forms a fundamental assumption for the implementation of parametric statistical procedures, including the t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). If the normality test yields a significance value (Sig.) above 0.05, the dataset is classified as normally distributed, and the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. Conversely, a significance value below 0.05 indicates non-normal distribution and results in the rejection of H_0 .

Table 1. Results Ofthe Normality Test.

Tests of Normality	
	Shapiro-Wilk
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a

	Statisti c	df	Sig.	Statisti c	Df	Sig.
Eksperimen	.130	34	.156	.944	34	.081
Kontrol	.132	30	.190	.935	30	.065
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

As indicated by the Shapiro–Wilk normality test results in the table 1, the experimental group demonstrated a significance value (Sig.) of 0.081. Meanwhile, the control group obtained a Shapiro–Wilk a statistical significance value of 0.065. Since the two values are not less as compared to 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no significant deviation from a normal distribution in the data distributions of both groups. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the data for both groups follow a normal distribution. This assumption of normality is essential for linear regression analysis, as the data used must be normally distributed to meet the regression assumptions. Accordingly, it can be concluded that basic linear regression analysis is appropriate for the data presented in this study.

2) Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test is a statistical procedure employed to determine to examine whether the variances of data from the variances across two or more groups are equivalent. Homogeneity of variance is a critical requirement for the valid application of parametric statistical tests, including the t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). A significance value (Sig.) exceeding 0.05 indicates homogeneous data and acceptance of H_0 , whereas a lower value signifies variance heterogeneity and rejection of H_0 .

**Table 2. Results of Levene's test
Test of Homogeneity of Variance**

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Data	Based on Mean	10.716	1	62	.002
	Based on Median	10.008	1	62	.002
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	10.008	1	52.613	.003
	Based on trimmed mean	10.871	1	62	.002

According table 2 to the Mean-based Levene’s Test results, the significance value (Sig.) was 0.002, which is less than 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, indicating unequal and non-homogeneous variances between the two groups. Therefore, the data from the two groups demonstrate heterogeneity of variance (i.e., unequal variances).

3) T-test

The *t*-test is a parametric statistical test used to determine whether there is a difference in the mean values between two sample groups. In this study, an independent samples *t*-test was employed because it compares two groups that are not related to each other. The decision-making criterion is based on the significance value (Sig., two-tailed), where a significance value less than 0.05 leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0), indicating a statistically significant difference in mean values. Conversely, if the significance value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that there is no statistically significant difference in mean values between the two groups.

Table 3. Results of the independent samples t-test

Independent Samples Test									
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	10.716	.002	2.528	62	.014	3.314	1.311	.693	5.934
Equal variances not assumed			2.453	46.341	.018	3.314	1.351	.596	6.032

Based on table 3 the results of the Independent Samples t-test, a two-tailed significance value (Sig.) of 0.018 was obtained, which is lower than the 0.05 threshold. This result indicates the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀). Accordingly, it can be concluded that a statistically significant difference exists in the mean level of learning interest between the experimental and control groups.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the implementation of the *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) model significantly enhanced students’ learning interest in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung. This improvement was evident through the increased active engagement of students in the learning process, which had previously been relatively low, particularly in the indicators of participation and attentiveness to the material. These findings reinforce the argument that learning approaches connecting concepts to real-life experiences can stimulate students’ curiosity and intrinsic motivation. CTL enables learners to analyze the relevance of the material within their daily life contexts, thereby transforming the learning process from being merely theoretical to one that is both practical and meaningful.

Theoretically, these results align with the views of (Gunawan & Roihan, 2024), who emphasize that *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) can create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, in which students serve as active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This approach contrasts with the traditional lecture method that has long dominated IRE (Islamic Religious Education) classes at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung. In the control class, which continued to use conventional methods, students’ learning interest tended to remain stagnant because they were merely passive receivers of information. The shift in the teacher’s role from being solely a transmitter of content to acting as a facilitator proved to be a key factor in fostering students’ critical and creative thinking processes.

This study also found that the key components of *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) such as constructivism, inquiry, modeling, and reflection had a tangible impact on enhancing student engagement (Hernaningsih et al., 2024). For instance, when teachers began the lesson with contextual questions relevant to students’ daily lives, learners became more



interested in exploring the material in greater depth. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Indah et al (2023) which demonstrated that integrating the seven components of CTL can significantly increase learning motivation, as students feel a sense of ownership in constructing their own understanding. Consequently, CTL not only affects cognitive learning outcomes but also positively influences affective aspects, such as students' interest and attitudes toward Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning (Burhan et al., 2025).

From the perspective of novelty, this study provides a significant contribution. Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) in subjects such as science, mathematics, and digital skills (Adim et al., 2020; Laila et al., 2022; Rohmatullah & Purwanti, 2021). However, there has been limited research specifically exploring the application of CTL in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the junior high school level. Therefore, this study addresses the existing research gap by expanding the context of CTL implementation to religious education. This is particularly important because IRE instruction has unique characteristics, emphasizing the development of values, attitudes, and behaviors, which require strategies that effectively bridge theoretical concepts with real-world practice in students' daily lives.

Empirically, the results of the hypothesis testing revealed a significant difference between the experimental class and the control class. The t-test indicated that the implementation of *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) had a stronger positive effect on enhancing students' learning interest compared to conventional teaching methods. This finding demonstrates that CTL is effective in addressing the issue of low learning interest identified during the preliminary study phase. Furthermore, the high reliability score of the instrument (0.87) strengthens the validity of these research findings, making them a solid foundation for teachers and policymakers to design more innovative instructional strategies. This approach not only improves student engagement but also significantly enhances academic performance across various subjects, including Arabic language acquisition and negotiation text writing (Ardiansyah et al., 2025; Fayyumi et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2025; Mahbubillah et al., 2025; Yudha et al., 2025).

This study also provides significant practical implications. The implementation of *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) can serve as a strategic solution to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction, particularly in schools that still rely on traditional teaching approaches. By utilizing CTL, teachers can design activities that encourage students to actively engage in discussions, collaborate with peers, and solve problems that are relevant to their real-life contexts (Namuza et al., 2023). This is consistent with the findings of Sawitri et al (2024) who emphasize the importance of collaborative and contextual learning in promoting 21st-century skills development. Thus, *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) does not merely improve students' learning interest while simultaneously preparing them to face real-world challenges (Pane & Lubis, 2025).

Finally, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The research was conducted at a single school with a limited population, which means that the generalization of the findings should be approached with caution. Furthermore, the study focused solely on the aspect of learning interest and did not examine other variables, such as cognitive learning outcomes or social skills. Future research is recommended to expand the sample size and explore the impact of *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) on additional variables, as well as to integrate CTL with digital technology to further enhance learning effectiveness. Nevertheless, the findings of this study provide a valuable contribution to the development of



both theoretical and practical aspects of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

In light of the obtained findings, the study concludes that the implementation of the *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) model has been proven effective in enhancing students' learning interest in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subject at SMP Negeri 11 Bandar Lampung. This improvement is demonstrated by the higher level of active student engagement in the learning process, particularly in the indicators of participation and attention to the material. The comparison between the experimental class and the control class through hypothesis testing revealed a significant difference, where the class using CTL demonstrated greater learning interest compared to those taught through conventional methods. Therefore, CTL can be considered an innovative instructional strategy to create a learning environment that is more interactive, meaningful, and relevant to students' real-life experiences.

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