

# STRENGTHENING PRAYER MOTIVATION AND STUDENT CHARACTER THROUGH A CONTEXTUAL LEARNING APPROACH IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUBJECTS AT THE IT NU TANJUNG BARU ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** This study aims to strengthen the motivation to pray and the character of students through the application of a contextual learning approach in Islamic religious education subjects. The contextual learning approach is designed to connect the subject matter with students' real experiences, thereby increasing the understanding and application of religious values in everyday life. The research method used is qualitative research that uses field research with stages of observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the contextual learning approach is able to increase students' motivation in performing prayers and form positive characters, such as discipline, responsibility, and religious obedience. Thus, contextual learning is effectively applied in teaching Islamic religious education to achieve holistic character education goals.

**Keywords:** Prayer, character, and contextual learning.

## Introduction

At the elementary education level, instilling good prayer habits is very important to shape the character of students who are devout and have spiritual discipline. Islamic religious education learning at SD IT NU Tanjung Baru needs to be developed to be more relevant to the daily lives of students. The contextual approach is considered effective because it connects the material taught with real situations and experiences of students. By using this approach, it is hoped that students will find it easier to understand religious concepts and apply them in their daily lives, including in performing prayers and improving the character of students in Islamic religious education subjects at SD IT NU Tanjung Baru.

Prayer according to language is *ال دعاء* which means Prayer. While in sharia terminology, prayer is as Imam Ar-Rofi'ie has said, which means words and actions that begin with takbir and end with greetings with predetermined conditions (Maryam, 2018).

Al-Ghazali in the book *Ihya 'Ulumuddiin* states the meaning of character. According to him, character is a trait embedded in the soul from which actions grow easily and without requiring consideration. Meanwhile, Syarbini argues that character is a steady, stable and special trait that is inherent in a person that makes him behave and act automatically, cannot be influenced by circumstances, without requiring prior thought/consideration (Tohidi, 2017).

Huitt, W said that motivation is a condition or internal status (sometimes interpreted as a need, desire, or passion) that directs a person's behavior to actively act in order to achieve a goal.

Thursan Hakim put forward the understanding of motivation as a drive of will that causes someone to do something to achieve a certain goal (Rochman Natawidjaja, 1989).

Contextual Learning is a learning approach that emphasizes the relationship between the material being studied and the real life or real-world context of students. Contextual learning aims to make learning materials more relevant and meaningful to students, so that they can more easily understand and apply the knowledge in their lives, while reinforcement in learning refers to providing stimuli or responses that increase the likelihood of certain behaviors being repeated.

This study aims to explore how the contextual learning approach can improve prayer motivation and strengthen the character of students at SD IT NU Tanjung Baru, with the hope of providing a real contribution in creating a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has good character and high spirituality. The usefulness of this study for students, especially at SD IT NU Tanjung Baru, can help increase student motivation to perform prayers regularly and to form better student characters, such as discipline, responsibility and honesty in forming a person with noble morals.

### **Literature Review**

Research conducted by Arsyad, Wahyu Bagja Sulfemi, Tia Fajartriani, entitled Strengthening Prayer Motivation and Student Character Through a Contextual Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education Subjects, the results of the research are that a contextual approach to Islamic Religious Education learning in schools provides knowledge, appreciation and encourages students to practice and relate it to everyday life, because they feel the wisdom and benefits in real life (Fadli, 2023).

Research conducted by Miftahul Huda, entitled Strengthening Prayer Motivation and Student Character Through a Contextual Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at SMP Plus Darunna'im Sidomukti East Lampung, the results of the study are that the character of students at SMP Plus Darunna'im Sidomukti East Lampung in Islamic Religious Education subjects also varies. Some students show good character, such as discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and moral integrity, while others may need development in terms of character. The contextual learning approach is effective in increasing students' prayer motivation. By linking prayer practices to the real context of students' lives, this approach can provide greater relevance to students' understanding of the importance and benefits of prayer in everyday life (Huda, 2023).

Research conducted by Akhmat Fadli entitled Strengthening Prayer Motivation and Student Character through a contextual learning approach in Islamic Religious Education subjects, the results of the study indicate that the use of contextual learning methods in Islamic Religious Education can increase students' motivation to perform prayers. This may be because students can better understand the importance of prayer in the context of their daily lives. The Effect of Contextual Learning Methods on Strengthening Character: In addition to prayer motivation, contextual learning methods also have a positive impact on strengthening students' character. This can include increasing moral values, ethics, and other positive attitudes related to religion. This study provides valuable insight into the importance of a contextual approach in Islamic Religious Education learning in schools to motivate students and strengthen their character. The results of this study can be the basis for developing a better and more effective Islamic Religious Education curriculum in the future (Tinggi 2023).

Research conducted by Aminah, Hairida, and Agung Hartoyo entitled strengthening student character education through a contextual learning approach in elementary schools. The result of

this study indicate that the contextual learning approach has a positive effect on strengthening the character of students in elementary schools. The contextual approach in strengthening character education for elementary school students is able to connect what they learn with how it is used in rela everyday life. Using a contextual learning approach in learning is also an effort to realize the “Freedom of Learning” program initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud). The contextual approach can realize learning independence which contributes to the actualization of the Mendikbud program. (Aminah, 2022).

Research conducted by m.hasan muammar, abd. rachman assegaf and khoirun ni'am entitled contextualization of religious character values of students at mts bilingual muslimat nu pucang sidoarjo. The results of this research are: First, the form of religious character of students at MTs Bilingual Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, namely obedient worship, responsibility, selfconfidence, honesty, love of knowledge, discipline, and respect for others. Second, contextualization of the values of Islamic education at MTs Bilingual Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo is realized in the form of a madrasa activity program and contextual learning. Third, contextualization of Islamic education values has implications or has a positive impact on the formation of students' religious character at MTs Bilingual Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo. (Hasan 2024).

## Method

This study uses a qualitative research method, Qualitative research methods are research based on philosophy used to research the conditions of natural objects, where researchers are the key to measuring the phenomena being observed. Researchers as data source sampling, data collection techniques with triangulation (combination), and data analysis is inductive/qualitative (Nana & Elin, 2018). This study uses a type of field research (Field Research), namely researchers directly conduct field research or objects to be studied to collect data and information in an institution where the research will be carried out, namely at the SD IT NU Tanjung Baru school.

The location or place of research that researchers do to obtain data sources used in this study is based on the title of the study, This research is located in In this study, researchers use observation, interview, and documentation methods. Research time, October 2024-January 2025

## Result and Discussion

### Result

#### 1. Implementation of Prayer and Character of Students Through Contextual Approach in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at Sd It Tanjung Baru

At Sd It Tanjung Baru school, all students perform dhuha prayers and zuhur prayers in congregation, and there is also the implementation of prayer practices in Islamic religious lessons, where in the implementation of the prayer, students are made prayer leaders by other students who have quite extensive abilities in prayer, have fluent memorization of prayer readings and correct prayer movements.

#### 2. Strengthening Students' Motivation to Pray Through Contextual Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at SD IT NU Tanjung Baru

Strengthening students' motivation to pray through contextual learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects is an effective approach to connecting religious learning with students' real lives. Contextual learning aims to link learning materials with everyday situations, so that students feel more connected and motivated to practice religious teachings, including in terms of prayer worship.



**Figure 1: congregational prayer**

Here are some steps that can be taken to strengthen students' motivation to pray through contextual learning at SD IT NU Tanjung Baru:

a. Connecting Prayer with Daily Life

Teachers can explain the importance of prayer not only as a religious obligation, but also as a spiritual and emotional need that provides peace and balance in life. Real examples can be given, for example how prayer helps someone to be more focused and disciplined in carrying out daily activities.

b. Fostering a Sense of Love and Desire to Pray

Learning can be done in a fun way, such as holding discussions or questions and answers about students' personal experiences in prayer. Through this approach, students can feel more appreciated and feel like they have space to share and deepen their understanding of prayer.

c. Emphasize the Benefits of Prayer

Focus on the worldly and afterlife benefits of prayer. Explain how prayer can improve relationships with Allah and others, provide a sense of peace in the soul, and help students become more patient, disciplined, and responsible.

d. Reinforcement with an Interactive Class Approach

Contextual learning can involve group discussions, problem solving related to prayer, and creating projects related to worship. For example, students can be asked to make a presentation about the history and importance of prayer in life.

e. Give Awards for Achievement

Motivation can be increased by giving appreciation to students who show progress in performing prayer, either through praise, certificates, or activities involving the whole class. With this approach, religious learning is not only about teaching theory, but also providing practical experiences that can help students feel the importance of prayer in their lives.

### **3. Strengthening Student Character Through Contextual Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at SD IT Nu Tanjung Baru**

After the implementation of the contextual learning approach in Islamic religious education learning, there were several significant changes related to student motivation in performing prayers. The values of character education produced through the contextual learning approach in Islamic religious education subjects at SDIT NU Tanjung Baru some of the strengthening of character education found are as follows:

a. Religious

Religious is M. Jalaluddin revealed that religious means: believing in God or superhuman power or power above and worshiped as the creator and maintainer of the universe, the expression of the above belief in the form of acts of worship, and a state of mind or way of life that reflects love or belief in God, will, attitude and behavior in accordance with God's rules as seen in habitual life (Mutiawati, 2019).

b. In this study, the researcher found that religious values can be formed starting from students performing ablution, because by performing ablution it means being pure from minor hadats so that their prayers become valid.

c. Improving the character of discipline

Discipline is a learning discipline in this study is a student's attitude that is formed through a process of a series of behaviors that show values of obedience, and order based on individual moral value references to obtain behavioral changes that include changes in thinking, attitudes and actions that are in accordance with social standards (Nugraheni, 2019).

d. Actions that show that someone is orderly and obedient to existing regulations. Observations of student behavior at SDI NU Tanjung Baru show an increase in discipline, both in performing prayers on time and orderly or no pillars are left behind or prioritized because they can result in invalid prayers.

e. Development of Responsibility

Through assignments and projects given by teachers, students are involved in activities that require a sense of responsibility, such as leading congregational prayers, in this case students are also encouraged to be more responsible for their tasks, both at school and outside school.

f. Increased honesty

Honesty is Honesty is one of the elements of spiritual strength, noble morals, and personality. Honesty will be reflected in the behavior of speaking according to reality, acting according to the truth and this is one of the spiritual strengths, noble morals, and personality (Lase & Halawa, 2022).

#### **4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Strengthening Prayer Motivation and Students' Character Through Contextual Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at Sd It Nu Tanjung Baru.**

Inhibiting factors in strengthening prayer motivation and students' character through contextual learning approach in Islamic religious education subjects are facilities that are not yet optimally adequate, such as the unavailability of a prayer room for children who will perform prayers. The supporting factors in strengthening prayer motivation and students' character through contextual learning approach in Islamic religious education subjects are:

a. The Role of Teachers as Role Models

Real Example: Teachers who are role models in performing prayers and showing good morals will motivate students to follow in their footsteps. Teachers' attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with religious values provide real examples for students.

b. Holistic Education: Teachers who integrate religious values in everyday life through attitudes, speech, and habits will strengthen students' character.

c. Supportive Environment

- d. **Family Support:** Parental involvement in supporting their children's prayer at home plays a major role in building prayer habits. If the family environment is supportive, students' motivation to pray will increase.
- e. **School Environment:** Schools that provide prayer facilities, such as prayer rooms, and organize regular prayer schedules can help shape students' prayer habits. In addition, creating a school atmosphere that supports religious values is also important.
- f. **Interesting and Relevant Learning Methods**  
**Contextual Learning:** Linking lesson materials to real experiences in everyday life, as well as the use of active methods, such as discussions, role-plays, or social projects, can make students more interested and understand the importance of prayer and good character in their lives.
- g. **Approaches that Provide Rewards**  
**Appreciation for Positive Change:** Giving awards or praise to students who show improvements in prayer or good behavior can provide positive encouragement for them to continue to strive to maintain good character.  
**Inhibiting Factors in Strengthening Motivation for Prayer and Character:**
  - a. **Lack of Support from Family**  
**Unsupportive Family Environment:** If parents do not set an example or even do not support the implementation of prayer at home, students will have difficulty maintaining the consistency of their prayers. Busy families or those who are less concerned about the formation of children's character can also hinder the strengthening of religious values.
  - b. **Lack of Role Models from Teachers**  
**Teacher Inconsistency:** If teachers only teach theory without applying it in daily behavior, students will find it difficult to emulate what is taught. Teacher inconsistency in practicing prayer or good morals can reduce their influence on students.
  - c. **Lack of Facilities and Infrastructure**  
**Unsupportive Facilities:** If the school does not have a prayer room or a proper place for prayer, or if prayer times are not properly arranged in the school schedule, this can be an obstacle for students to perform prayers on time.
  - d. **Limited Access to Technology:** Students who do not have access to technology or modern learning aids such as prayer time reminder apps may find it difficult to motivate themselves in terms of worship.
  - e. **Busyness and Lack of Time**  
**Academic Pressure and Other Activities:** Students who have a lot of schoolwork, extracurricular activities, or other activities often find it difficult to perform prayers on time. If time management is not good, they may miss prayer times. Added to this, some teachers have to monitor dozens of students in one class, so each child is not well conditioned.
  - f. **Lack of Understanding of the Benefits of Prayer and Character**  
**Limited Understanding:** If students do not understand well why prayer and good character are important in their lives, they will tend to consider it merely an obligation without seeing its benefits in depth. This will reduce their motivation to perform prayers and develop good character.

## Discussion

Strengthening the motivation to pray and the character of students through a contextual learning approach in Islamic religious education subjects at SD IT NU Tanjung Morawa is carried

out with several learning approaches applied to strengthen the motivation to pray and the character of students including teachers providing direct prayer learning through demonstrations and joint practice. This approach instills an understanding of the correct way to pray while at the same time accustoming students to carry it out and building the character of students to become disciplined students.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of the implementation of prayer and the character of students through a contextual learning approach in Islamic religious education subjects at SD IT Tanjung Baru begins with strengthening students' prayer motivation, strengthening students' character and the existence of factors that support and inhibit strengthening students' prayer motivation and character.

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