

# Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Strategies and Models for Enhancing Student Motivation

Hikma Helmia<sup>a</sup>, Nurmilasari<sup>b</sup>, Enan Kusnandar<sup>c</sup>

*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam DR. KHEZ. Muttaqien Purwakarta*

\*Corresponding author: [helmiyahikma@gmail.com](mailto:helmiyahikma@gmail.com), [nur290305@gmail.com](mailto:nur290305@gmail.com),  
[enan.kusnandar91@gmail.com](mailto:enan.kusnandar91@gmail.com)

*Manuscript received : 11-10-2025; revised : 13-12-2025; accepted : 21-12-2025. date of publication: 09-01-2026*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to describe the strategies and learning models of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) implemented by teachers to enhance students' learning motivation at SMP Negeri 2 Plered.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** –This research employed a qualitative approach using interview methods with two PAI teachers as the main informants.

**Findings** – The findings reveal that teachers apply various learning models, including Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Problem Based Learning (PBL), Project Based Learning (PjBl), and Discovery Learning (DL), adjusted to students' characteristics and learning objectives. Supporting strategies include active learning, constructivist approaches, habituation, role modeling, and reflective strategies. These strategies positively impact students' motivation, religious awareness, moral behavior, and self-confidence. Despite facing challenges such as limited digital media, diverse student characteristics, and low self-confidence, teachers address these issues through contextual approaches, intensive guidance, and the use of worksheets and educational games.

**Originality/Value** –The study concludes that appropriate strategies and learning models in PAI play a significant role in increasing students' learning motivation and character development.

**Keywords:** Learning Strategies, Learning Models, Islamic Education, Learning Motivation

Copyright © 2026, Author

This is an open-access article under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Hasriadi (2022), a learning model is a design that describes the process and creates environmental conditions so that students can interact, change, and develop. Consequently, this model is essentially a specific form of instruction presented by the educator. Learning itself is a process in which students develop their potential extensively based on their initial understanding. At SMP Negeri 2 Plered, this design is manifested through a combination of several instructional models tailored to students' unique motivational needs.

Joyce & Weil (in Zainiyati, 2010) studied learning models based on learning theories, which are grouped into four categories: the social interaction model, the information processing model, the personal model, and the behavioral (character modification) model. The PAI teachers in this study focus primarily on the social interaction and behavioral models to instill Islamic values.

PBL (Problem Based Learning) is a learning model that can help students develop their critical thinking skills. Problem-based learning is an effective approach for teaching higher-order thinking processes. This learning helps students process pre-existing information in their minds and then construct their own knowledge about the social world and their surroundings. This learning is suitable for developing both basic and complex knowledge. In practice, teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Plered implement PBL by presenting religious case studies that require students to solve social-moral dilemmas collaboratively.

According to Jerome Bruner, Discovery Learning is a learning method that encourages students to ask questions and draw conclusions from practical general principles based on experience. Wilcox also argues that in discovery learning, students are encouraged to learn actively through their own direct involvement with concepts and principles, while the teacher encourages students to have

experiences and conduct experiments that allow them to discover principles for themselves. This theoretical framework is utilized at the early stages of lessons at SMP Negeri 2 Plered to trigger students' curiosity and independent investigation.

Project-based learning (PjBL) is a learning method that begins by using a problem to integrate new knowledge based on real experiences. In PjBL, students are involved in complex real-world issues and can apply their knowledge and skills in various contexts. They conduct research, plan, think critically, and solve problems with the aim of producing a product (Jufri AP, et al., 2023). The implementation of PjBL at this research site is clearly seen in calligraphy-making projects, where students produce a tangible artistic work as a result of their spiritual learning.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is an instructional design that enables teachers and students to accurately connect the meaning of real-world situations with teaching materials. CTL is also defined as a learning method that prioritizes active student participation in acquiring subject matter and linking it to real life so it can be applied in daily contexts. Implementing CTL forces teachers to present real-world scenarios so that students can understand the points being studied more easily. Through CTL, PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Plered ensure that the Islamic materials are directly relevant to the students' lived experiences.

### **Learning Strategies**

A learning strategy can be defined as a pattern of learning activities chosen and used by teachers contextually, in accordance with student characteristics, school conditions, the surrounding environment, and formulated learning objectives. A learning strategy consists of methods, techniques, and procedures that ensure students truly achieve the learning objectives. As noted by J.R. David (1976), a strategy is a "plan, method, or series of activities designed to achieve a particular educational goal."

Consistent with these definitions, the research at SMP Negeri 2 Plered reveals that the chosen "series of activities" includes both academic instruction and spiritual habituation. Before determining a strategy, clear and measurable goals must be formulated, as the goal is the "soul" of strategy implementation (Wina Sanjaya in Magdalena 2022). By setting the goal of "Enhanced Motivation," teachers at the school specifically select interactive and exemplary strategies, such as role modeling and the recitation of the *Asmaul Husna*, to ensure that the pedagogical principles are implemented effectively.

## **II. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach using the interview method. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Plered, with the research subjects being two Islamic Religious Education teachers who teach grades VII, VIII, and IX. Data collection techniques were carried out through unstructured interviews to gather information regarding the implemented learning strategies and models, the challenges faced, and the impact on student learning motivation.

Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing answers between informants. The researcher served directly as the primary instrument in both data collection and analysis.

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The learning process at SMP Negeri 2 Plered is not merely a transfer of knowledge but a dynamic interaction designed to shape character and motivation. PAI teachers at this school have moved beyond theoretical definitions to practically apply various learning models—specifically Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and Discovery Learning (DL)—adapting them to the unique characteristics of their students.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) serves as the primary framework for connecting Islamic values with the students' reality. Teachers utilize this model to link PAI material directly to the students' daily lives, ensuring that religious education is relevant rather than abstract. To operationalize this, teachers employ "triggering questions" derived from real-world experiences close to the students' lives. This approach allows students to construct new understandings based on their existing experiences, effectively bridging the gap between textual religious knowledge and their social environment.

In fostering critical thinking, teachers implement Problem-Based Learning (PBL) through the use of religious case studies. Rather than passive listening, students are organized into groups to analyze specific religious problems or social issues. This method transforms the classroom into a space for active

inquiry, where students must process information and collaborate to find solutions based on Islamic principles. This strategy is particularly effective in overcoming passivity, as it compels students to interact and voice their perspectives within a safe group setting.

To address the psychomotor and creative aspects of learning, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is utilized. This model is applied through specific projects such as calligraphy making and the demonstration of religious practices. By engaging in these hands-on activities, students are not only learning about Islamic art or worship theoretically but are producing tangible products and performing the skills themselves. This aligns with the goal of making learning meaningful and applicable in various contexts.

Furthermore, Discovery Learning (DL) is implemented strategically at the early stages of lessons. Instead of immediately delivering content, teachers guide students to search for and investigate concepts independently. This method encourages students to ask questions and draw their own conclusions before receiving full instruction, fostering a sense of ownership over the knowledge they acquire.

These models are not applied in isolation but are supported by active strategies including habituation and role modeling. For instance, the habituation of reciting prayers and the *Asmaul Husna* creates a spiritual readiness that enhances the effectiveness of the academic models used. Through this integrated approach, teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Plered successfully navigate the challenges of limited facilities and diverse student backgrounds to create a motivating learning environment.

### **Supporting Learning Strategies.**

The successful implementation of learning models in Islamic Religious Education cannot be separated from the supporting strategies used by teachers during the learning process. Learning models such as Problem-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Contextual Teaching and Learning require appropriate strategies to ensure that learning objectives are achieved optimally. Supporting learning strategies function as operational approaches that direct the interaction between teachers, students, materials, and the learning environment. In the context of PAI instruction, supporting strategies are not only oriented toward cognitive achievement but also toward the formation of students' attitudes, character, and religious awareness. Therefore, PAI teachers are required to implement active, contextual, humanistic, and reflective learning strategies so that learning becomes meaningful and capable of increasing student motivation.

To support the success of these learning models, teachers implement active, constructivist, exemplary (modeling), habituation, and reflective learning strategies. The habituation strategy is carried out through activities such as reciting prayers, the *Asmaul Husna*, and short surahs before the lesson begins. The exemplary strategy is applied by providing direct examples of Islamic attitudes and behaviors.

### **Learning Challenges and Solutions**

In the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies and models, teachers inevitably face various challenges arising from student aspects, infrastructure, and the learning environment. These obstacles can affect the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process if not addressed properly. Therefore, teachers are required to possess adaptive and reflective skills to identify emerging problems and formulate solutions that align with student characteristics and school conditions. In PAI instruction, challenges are not merely seen as barriers but as pedagogical challenges that serve as a basis for developing more contextual and humanistic learning strategies. Thus, the teacher's efforts in designing learning solutions become a vital part of maintaining the continuity and meaningfulness of the PAI learning process.

To overcome various obstacles in applying PAI learning strategies and models, PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Plered implement several pedagogical solutions that are contextual and adaptive. One of the primary solutions is the application of individual and group approaches for students with low self-confidence. Teachers do not immediately demand students to speak actively in front of the class but instead assist them through small group discussions and personal approaches. This strategy aligns with Djamarah (2011: 178), who states that an individual approach in learning is necessary to help students overcome psychological barriers, such as shyness and lack of confidence, so that their learning potential can develop optimally.

Furthermore, teachers utilize simple and contextual "triggering questions" as a solution to increase student participation. These questions are designed based on real experiences close to the students' lives, making it easier for them to understand and respond to the lesson. According to Zainiyati (2010: 76), the use of contextual questions can help students construct new understandings based on their existing experiences while encouraging active involvement in the learning process. In this way, students do not feel pressured but are instead encouraged to express their opinions gradually.

In facing the limitations of digital media and learning facilities, teachers develop solutions by utilizing Student Worksheets (LKPD), educational games, and simple paper-based media. Teacher creativity is the key to ensuring that learning remains effective despite limited facilities. Arsyad (2017: 30) emphasizes that learning media do not always have to be high-tech but must be able to help students understand the material and achieve learning objectives. The use of LKPD and educational games has proven effective in maintaining student engagement and creating a pleasant learning atmosphere.

Another solution is the implementation of process assessment as a form of appreciation for students' learning progress. Teachers do not only evaluate the final learning outcomes but also pay attention to the students' involvement during discussions, group work, and reflections. According to Sudjana (2016: 72), process assessment is important to observe the development of students' attitudes, participation, and learning efforts holistically. Through process assessment, students feel more appreciated, which increases their learning motivation even if they have not yet achieved optimal academic results.

Teachers also implement habituation and reflection strategies as long-term solutions to address low learning awareness and religious attitudes among students. Habituation activities, such as reciting prayers, the *Asmaul Husna*, and *sholawat* before the lesson, help create a religious atmosphere and student readiness for learning. Ramayulis (2012: 204) explains that consistently practiced habituation can shape the character and religious awareness of students. Meanwhile, learning reflection is used to invite students to evaluate their attitudes and understanding of PAI material, ensuring the learning holds personal meaning for them.

Thus, the learning solutions implemented by PAI teachers are not merely technical but also touch upon the psychological, pedagogical, and spiritual aspects of the students. This humanistic, creative, and reflective approach is the key to overcoming learning obstacles while simultaneously increasing the effectiveness of PAI learning strategies and models.

### **Impact on Student Learning Motivation**

The implementation of appropriate Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies and models has a significant impact on student learning motivation. Learning motivation serves as a crucial indicator of instructional success because it directly relates to students' involvement, earnestness, and the sustainability of their learning activities. In PAI instruction, learning motivation is not only aimed at academic achievement but also at the growth of religious awareness, behavioral changes, and the practice of Islamic values in daily life. Therefore, the impact of PAI learning needs to be viewed holistically, covering students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Interview results indicate that the application of learning models such as Problem-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Contextual Teaching and Learning is capable of increasing student engagement and interest in learning. Students become more enthusiastic about participating in lessons because the material is linked to real-world problems they experience. This aligns with Uno (2016: 23), who states that learning motivation will increase if students feel the learning is meaningful, relevant, and in accordance with their needs. Contextual learning encourages the emergence of intrinsic motivation—a drive to learn that originates from the student's self-awareness rather than solely from external demands.

Another perceived impact is the change in students' religious attitudes and behavior. PAI teachers reported that after certain lessons, such as material on faith in the Last Day, students showed self-awareness to improve their behavior, even expressing regret for past mistakes. Muhaimin (2015: 155) emphasizes that the success of PAI learning is marked by changes in the attitudes and character (*akhlak*) of the students, not just an increase in knowledge. Thus, effective PAI learning is capable of deeply touching the students' affective and spiritual dimensions.

Furthermore, the reflective and habituation strategies implemented by teachers have resulted in increased learning awareness and students' courage in expressing opinions. Through reflection, students are invited to re-evaluate their understanding and attitudes toward the material studied. Sardiman (2014: 89) states that self-reflection in learning can strengthen intrinsic motivation because students realize the meaning and purpose of their learning activities. This impact is evident in the increased courage of students to engage in discussions, express opinions, and participate actively in PAI lessons.

Positive impacts are also visible in the improvement of students' religious practices, such as better Quranic reading skills and worship implementation. The learning and habituation programs implemented by teachers have gradually helped students who previously could not read the Quran to become more skilled. According to Ramayulis (2012: 203), PAI learning accompanied by habituation will form religious character slowly but sustainably. This shows that appropriate PAI learning strategies

and models not only increase learning motivation but also shape students' religious behavior in the long term.

In conclusion, the impact of implementing PAI learning strategies and models at SMP Negeri 2 Plered demonstrates that learning designed contextually, reflectively, and humanistically is able to increase student motivation while simultaneously forming character and religious awareness. PAI learning is not just a means of knowledge transfer but also a vehicle for the moral and spiritual development of the students.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies and models plays a vital role in increasing student learning motivation at SMP Negeri 2 Plered. PAI teachers implement various learning models, such as Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and Discovery Learning (DL). These models are operationalized through practical activities, such as the analysis of religious case studies and the creation of calligraphy projects, which are adjusted to the material, learning outcomes, and student characteristics. These models are capable of creating meaningful, contextual learning and encouraging active student engagement.

The success of implementing these learning models is supported by appropriate learning strategies, including active, constructivist, exemplary (modeling), habituation, and reflective strategies. These supporting strategies function not only to achieve cognitive goals but also to shape students' attitudes, character, and religious awareness. The habituation of religious activities, such as the recitation of Asmaul Husna, and the role modeling provided by PAI teachers have proven to contribute positively to creating a religious and conducive learning atmosphere.

This study also indicates the existence of obstacles in the implementation of PAI learning, such as low student self-confidence, diverse student characteristics, and limitations in learning media and facilities. Nonetheless, PAI teachers are able to overcome these obstacles through individual and group approaches, the use of contextual triggering questions, the utilization of Student Worksheets (LKPD) and educational games, and the application of process assessment. The solutions implemented are adaptive, humanistic, and reflective, ensuring that the learning process remains effective even amidst infrastructure limitations.

The impact of implementing PAI learning strategies and models is evident in the increase of both intrinsic and extrinsic student learning motivation. Furthermore, there are observable changes in students' religious attitudes and behavior, increased courage in expressing opinions, and improvements in religious practices such as Quranic reading and the performance of worship. Thus, PAI learning designed contextually and reflectively serves not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a vehicle for the moral and spiritual development of the students.

#### V. REFERENCES

- Arsyad, A. (2017). *Media pembelajaran*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.
- Budiana, I. (2022). *Strategi pembelajaran*. PT Literasi Nusantara Abadi Group. [https://www.google.co.id/books/edition/Strategi\\_Pembelajaran/](https://www.google.co.id/books/edition/Strategi_Pembelajaran/)
- Djamarah, S. B. (2011). *Psikologi belajar*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta. Djamarah, S. B. (2011). *Psikologi belajar*. Rineka Cipta.
- Hasriadi. (2022). *Strategi pembelajaran*. Mata Kata Inspirasi.
- Jufri, A. P., Asri, W. K., & M. M. (2023). *Strategi pembelajaran*. CV. Ananta Vidya.
- Lefudin. (2017). *Belajar dan pembelajaran dilengkapi dengan model pembelajaran, strategi pembelajaran, pendekatan pembelajaran dan metode pembelajaran*. Deepublish. [https://books.google.co.id/books?id=f\\_VLDwAAQBAJ](https://books.google.co.id/books?id=f_VLDwAAQBAJ)
- Magdalena, I. (2022). *Konsep dan teori micro teaching*. CV. Jejak.
- Muhaimin. (2015). *Pengembangan kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam*. Rajawali Pers.
- Nasution, W. N. (2017). *Strategi pembelajaran*. Perdana Publishing. <http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/2723/1/Buku%20Strategi%20Pembelajaran.pdf>
- Ramayulis. (2012). *Ilmu pendidikan Islam*. Kalam Mulia.
- Sardiman, A. M. (2014). *Interaksi dan motivasi belajar mengajar*. Rajawali Pers.
- Saripudin, A. (2023). *Ragam-ragam strategi pembelajaran*. PT Literasi Nusantara Abadi Group.
- Sutikno, S. (2022). *Strategi pembelajaran*. Penerbit Adab.
- Sudjana, N. (2016). *Penilaian hasil proses belajar mengajar*. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Uno, H. B. (2016). *Teori motivasi dan pengukurannya*. Bumi Aksara.