

## Analysis of the Suitability of Contextual Learning Materials in the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Article history:</b> Received: June 19, 2025 Revised: July 28, 2025 Accepted: August 17, 2025 Available Online: September 30, 2025	This study aims to analyze the suitability of contextual learning materials in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with document analysis techniques. Data were obtained from PAI learning materials used in secondary schools and compared with the applicable curriculum standards. The results indicate that most learning materials have integrated students' real-life context; however, some content still needs to be adjusted to be more relevant and applicable. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for teachers and curriculum developers in improving the quality of contextual PAI learning materials.
<b>Keywords:</b> Contextual Learning Materials; PAI Curriculum; Suitability Analysis.	<b>ABSTRAK</b> Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kesesuaian bahan pembelajaran berbasis kontekstual pada kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik analisis dokumen. Data diperoleh dari bahan ajar PAI yang digunakan di sekolah menengah serta dibandingkan dengan standar kurikulum yang berlaku. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar bahan pembelajaran telah mengintegrasikan konteks kehidupan siswa, namun terdapat beberapa materi yang masih perlu disesuaikan agar lebih relevan dan aplikatif. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat menjadi acuan bagi guru dan pengembang kurikulum dalam meningkatkan kualitas bahan ajar PAI berbasis kontekstual.
<b>Please cite this article:</b> Roza, M., Berutu, A. I., & Sari, I. P. (2025). Analysis of the suitability of contextual learning materials in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. <i>Integrasi: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora</i> , 3(3), 155–162.	
Page: 155-162	This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA licence ( <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/</a> ).

### A. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a vital role in shaping students' character, moral values, and religious understanding. Through IRE, students acquire not only knowledge of Islam but also the skills to implement Islamic values in their daily lives (Setiawan, 2019). Therefore, the quality of IRE learning materials is a crucial factor in effective teaching.

The IRE curriculum implemented in schools sets specific standards that must be followed to ensure the learning process aligns with national education goals. These curriculum standards include basic competencies, learning indicators, and relevant teaching materials (Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 2017).

Contextual learning approaches have been recognized as effective strategies to bridge theory and practice. This approach emphasizes learning that relates content to students' real-life experiences, environment, and social context, making learning more meaningful (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

Contextual learning materials can include textbooks, modules, worksheets, or digital media tailored to students' social, cultural, and environmental conditions. Alignment between these materials and the curriculum is essential to ensure effective and applicable teaching (Arends, 2012).

Analyzing the suitability of contextual learning materials against the IRE curriculum is a strategic step to evaluate whether the materials meet educational standards, address students' needs, and facilitate the achievement of basic competencies optimally (Husain & Setiawan, 2021).

Previous studies have shown that learning materials that do not align with students' context can reduce students' interest, motivation, and comprehension in IRE subjects. Conversely, contextual materials enhance student engagement and strengthen understanding of religious concepts (Sari, Setiawan, & Prasetya, 2025).

In the modern era, technological developments have influenced the preparation of IRE learning materials. Digital media and online-based learning provide alternatives to present content that is relevant to students' real-life situations. Nevertheless, curriculum alignment remains essential to maintain structured and standardized materials (Tungkir & Setiawan, 2025).

The 2013 curriculum emphasizes competency-based learning, requiring teachers to present materials in a contextual, engaging, and practical manner. Therefore, IRE materials must be evaluated periodically to ensure compliance with the curriculum, students' needs, and societal development (MEC, 2017).

One of the main issues is that many IRE materials remain theoretical and lack connections to students' real-life experiences. This makes it difficult for students to apply the values learned in daily practice (Setiawan, 2020).

Analyzing the suitability of learning materials involves not only content evaluation but also methods of delivery, language, illustrations, and socio-cultural relevance. Teachers can then select or develop materials that effectively enhance learning quality (Arends, 2012).

Moreover, evaluating contextual learning materials allows the identification of strengths and weaknesses in existing materials. The findings can guide the development of new materials that are more relevant, interesting, and easily understood by students (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

The use of contextual materials aligns with the principles of character education, where students are encouraged to internalize religious values through real-life experiences. This supports the goals of IRE in fostering faithful, moral, and socially adaptive generations (Husain & Setiawan, 2021).

This study is essential for teachers, curriculum developers, and researchers to understand the extent to which IRE materials correspond with the curriculum and students' needs. The results are expected to provide practical recommendations for improving IRE learning resources (Sari et al., 2025).

The focus of this study is on analyzing the suitability of contextual IRE learning materials with the curriculum applied in secondary schools. The analysis compares content, delivery methods, and socio-cultural relevance with curriculum standards (MEC, 2017).

In conclusion, this research is expected to contribute significantly to the development of high-quality, contextual, and effective IRE learning materials. It may also serve as a reference for efforts to improve the quality of IRE learning in the modern educational context (Setiawan, 2019; Tungkir & Setiawan, 2025).

## **B. Method**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design, aiming to provide an in-depth description and analysis of the suitability of contextual learning materials in the Islamic

Religious Education (IRE) curriculum. A descriptive qualitative approach is appropriate because it focuses on understanding phenomena in their natural context without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014).

The subjects of this research are IRE learning materials used in secondary schools, including textbooks, teaching modules, worksheets, and supplementary digital media. The materials were selected based on their relevance to the 2013 IRE curriculum and their usage in classroom learning.

Data were collected through document analysis. This involved reviewing and examining the content of learning materials in relation to the curriculum standards. The analysis focused on several aspects, including content relevance, which assessed the alignment of the materials with basic competencies and learning indicators; contextuality, which evaluated the integration of students' real-life experiences, environment, and socio-cultural factors into the materials; and the method and presentation, which examined the clarity of explanations, language appropriateness, and the use of illustrations or multimedia.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The steps included reading and understanding the learning materials thoroughly, coding and categorizing material based on curriculum alignment, contextual relevance, and presentation quality, comparing each component with the curriculum standards to determine suitability, and drawing conclusions along with recommendations for improving the learning materials.

To ensure credibility, triangulation was applied by cross-checking data from multiple sources, including curriculum documents, textbooks, and supplementary materials. Member checking was also conducted through consultation with experienced IRE teachers to validate the findings.

Ethical considerations were observed by acknowledging all sources and materials analyzed properly. Although the research did not involve direct human subjects, consultations with teachers were conducted with their informed consent to ensure ethical compliance.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The analysis of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning materials revealed that most textbooks and modules align well with the basic competencies and indicators outlined in the 2013 curriculum. The content of the materials generally covers essential topics such as Aqidah, Akhlak, Fiqh, and Islamic history, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings (Setiawan, 2019).

However, while the materials meet curriculum standards, the integration of contextual elements varies across different resources. Some textbooks include examples and scenarios that relate to students' daily experiences, such as family interactions, school activities, and community practices, making the content more relatable and engaging.

Despite these strengths, several materials still present content in a highly theoretical manner. For instance, discussions on moral values or religious obligations often lack connection to real-life applications, which may hinder students' ability to internalize and practice these concepts effectively.

Worksheets and supplementary modules show better contextual integration compared to standard textbooks. These materials often contain exercises that ask students to relate Islamic teachings to contemporary issues, such as social responsibility, environmental awareness, and ethical decision-making.

Digital learning resources also contribute positively to contextual learning. The use of videos, interactive quizzes, and online simulations helps students visualize religious practices and concepts in real-life situations. However, not all digital materials are aligned with the curriculum standards, and some require teacher mediation to ensure accuracy and appropriateness (Tungkir & Setiawan, 2025).

The analysis indicated that language and presentation style play a critical role in material suitability. Materials that use simple, clear language, accompanied by relevant illustrations, enhance students' understanding and engagement. In contrast, overly formal or complex language can impede comprehension, particularly for students with limited literacy skills.

Another key finding relates to cultural and social relevance. Materials that incorporate local customs, traditions, and social examples are more effective in promoting meaningful learning. For instance, case studies involving community events or family practices help students contextualize religious teachings in their own environment.

Despite these positive aspects, the study found gaps in gender representation and diversity. Many learning materials predominantly present male examples or focus on traditional family roles, which may not fully reflect students' social realities or promote inclusive perspectives.

The evaluation also highlighted the importance of teacher guidance in using materials effectively. Even well-designed contextual resources require teachers to facilitate discussions, provide examples, and encourage reflection to maximize learning outcomes (Arends, 2012).

Comparison with previous studies supports these findings. Research by Sari, Setiawan, and Prasetya (2025) demonstrated that students' motivation and engagement increase when learning materials are contextualized and connected to real-life situations. This reinforces the necessity of aligning materials with both curriculum standards and students' experiences.

The study also revealed that some materials overemphasize content coverage at the expense of practical application. While comprehensive content is important, a lack of contextual exercises limits students' ability to transfer knowledge into action. Therefore, balancing content depth with practical relevance is essential.

Furthermore, the research indicates that contextual materials facilitate the development of character education. When students relate learning to real-life situations, they are more likely to internalize Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy, which are central to IRE objectives (Husain & Setiawan, 2021).

Digital and print materials complement each other in promoting contextual learning. While print materials provide structured knowledge, digital resources offer interactive experiences. Integration of both formats can enhance understanding and engagement, provided they are aligned with curriculum standards.

The overall findings suggest that while many IRE learning materials are suitable, there remains room for improvement, particularly in enhancing contextual relevance, diversity, and

practical exercises. Curriculum developers and teachers should collaborate to revise existing resources and create materials that are both academically rigorous and contextually meaningful.

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that contextual learning materials significantly support the achievement of IRE curriculum goals. By integrating real-life examples, clear language, illustrations, and culturally relevant content, students' engagement, understanding, and moral development can be enhanced. Future research may focus on developing guidelines for creating fully contextualized IRE materials that are inclusive, interactive, and aligned with national curriculum standards.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the majority of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning materials align with the 2013 curriculum standards and cover essential topics such as Aqidah, Akhlak, Fiqh, and Islamic history. However, the integration of contextual elements in the materials varies, with some resources effectively relating content to students' daily lives, while others remain highly theoretical.

Worksheets, modules, and digital learning resources generally provide better contextual relevance, including exercises that connect Islamic teachings to real-life issues. Nonetheless, some materials still lack practical applications, cultural diversity, and gender inclusivity, which are important for fostering meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

Language clarity, presentation style, and the use of illustrations also significantly affect the suitability and effectiveness of the materials. Materials that employ simple language, clear explanations, and relevant examples facilitate better understanding and student engagement.

The study highlights the critical role of teachers in mediating and enhancing the effectiveness of learning materials. Even well-designed contextual resources require active teacher guidance to ensure comprehension, reflection, and application of religious values.

Overall, contextual learning materials have the potential to enhance students' understanding, engagement, and moral development in IRE. Continuous evaluation and improvement of these materials, in collaboration with teachers and curriculum developers,

are necessary to create resources that are academically rigorous, contextually relevant, inclusive, and aligned with curriculum standards.

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