

## Enhancing Spiritual Resilience among Gen Z Muslims: The Role of Contextualized Islamic Curriculum Innovation

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**Abstract**

*This study aims to analyze and develop a contextual curriculum design in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) oriented to the mastery of spiritual science Generation Z students in SMP IT Sababat Alam. Generation Z, often characterized as a highly digital generation, faces distinctive challenges related to spirituality, including issues of religiosity, technology integration, and identity formation. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers and students, and analyses of curriculum documents and instructional materials. The findings indicate that the contextual PAI curriculum design aligns learning materials with students' everyday realities, thereby enhancing the relevance, applicability, and depth of their understanding. The integration of environmental issues, digital technology, and contemporary social dynamics into PAI content contributes to strengthening students' spiritual values within their present context. Furthermore, the use of reflection-based learning strategies, open discussions, and integrated social projects proved effective in cultivating spiritual awareness that is adaptive and resilient to external influences. This study highlights the importance of developing a context-based PAI curriculum as a strategic response to the demands of 21st-century education, particularly for Generation Z learners who inhabit an increasingly digital and pluralistic environment.*

**Keywords:**

Contextual Curriculum, Generation Z, Islamic Religious Education, SMPIT Sababat Alam, Spiritual Resilience

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan mengembangkan desain kurikulum kontekstual dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) yang berorientasi pada penguasaan ilmu kerohanian siswa Generasi Z di SMP IT Sababat Alam. Generasi Z, yang sering dicirikan sebagai generasi yang sangat digital, menghadapi tantangan khusus terkait spiritualitas, termasuk masalah religiusitas, integrasi teknologi, dan pembentukan identitas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan siswa PAI, serta analisis dokumen kurikulum dan bahan ajar. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa desain kurikulum PAI kontekstual menyelaraskan materi pembelajaran dengan realitas sehari-hari siswa, sehingga meningkatkan relevansi, penerapan, dan kedalaman pemahaman mereka. Integrasi isu lingkungan, teknologi digital, dan dinamika sosial kontemporer ke dalam konten PAI berkontribusi untuk memperkuat nilai-nilai spiritual siswa dalam konteksnya saat ini. Selain itu, penggunaan strategi pembelajaran berbasis refleksi, diskusi terbuka, dan proyek sosial terintegrasi terbukti efektif dalam menumbuhkan kesadaran spiritual yang adaptif dan tahan terhadap pengaruh eksternal. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya mengembangkan kurikulum PAI berbasis konteks sebagai respons strategis terhadap tuntutan pendidikan abad ke-21, khususnya bagi pelajar Generasi Z yang menghuni lingkungan yang semakin digital dan pluralistic.

**Kata Kunci:**

Kurikulum kontekstual, Generasi Z, Pendidikan Agama Islam, SMPIT Sababat Alam, Ketahanan Spiritual

## Introduction

The development of digital technology over the last two decades has revolutionized various aspects of human life, including in the fields of education, communication, and religion (Collins and Halverson 2018; Dalimunthe et al. 2023; Sitanggang 2025). This phenomenon is intensely felt by the current young generation, particularly Generation Z, the cohort born between the late 1990s and the early 2010s. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z grew up in a fully digitally connected environment, with near-limitless access to information, social interactions occurring virtually, and a thinking pattern that tends to be fast, practical, and multitasking (Amanda 2023; Laka et al. 2024; Ledoh et al. 2024; Rusli, Kemala, and Nazmi 2024).. These characteristics have a significant impact on the way they think, act, and interact, including in terms of religiosity and spirituality.

The reality of Generation Z's instantaneous and dynamic life poses a specific challenge in strengthening religious values, especially within the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in schools (Anggraeni, Zahra, and Shoheh 2020; Parhan et al. 2024; Parhan and Sutedja 2019). In this era of digital disruption, marked by information openness, easy access to entertainment, and an abundance of content not always aligned with Islamic values, Generation Z students face a non-trivial religious identity dilemma (Ainah, Zulkifli, and Iderus 2025; Laka et al. 2024; Sujoko and Haboddin 2020). They often experience spiritual confusion, a lack of meaning, and even boredom with religious learning that feels monotonous and irrelevant to their daily lives. Therefore, religious education is no longer sufficient to focus solely on the cognitive aspects and memorization of texts; instead, it must be able to shape spiritual resilience, enabling students to remain steadfast in values and behavior amidst the onslaught of modernity and globalization (Maryam, Firdaus, and Komariah 2014).

This research specifically examines the practice of the PAI curriculum at SMPIT Sahabat Alam, an integrated Islamic school that incorporates a contextual approach in teaching religious values. The school focuses on how PAI material is designed to align with the psychological, social, and spiritual needs of Generation Z students. The curriculum is developed by considering current issues faced by students, such as social media ethics, environmental responsibility, and spirituality in everyday life, so that religious education is not merely a formal ritual but also a living and meaningful experience.

The novelty of this research lies in the focus, context, and approach used in examining Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in the digital era. Unlike previous research that generally highlighted the effectiveness of religious teaching methods in general, this study specifically places spiritual resilience as the main goal of religious education for Generation Z living in a fully digital environment. This study posits that the main challenge for this generation is not merely low religious understanding, but their ability to remain steadfast in values and morality amidst the strong current of information and rapid social change. Furthermore, this research presents a distinctive empirical context, namely the implementation practice of the contextual PAI curriculum at SMPIT Sahabat Alam, an integrated Islamic school that integrates religious values with current issues such as social media ethics, environmental responsibility, and spirituality in daily life. The contextual curriculum approach developed by this school represents a form of pedagogical innovation that has rarely been studied in depth in previous research. Thus, this research provides a theoretical contribution by expanding the concept of Islamic education towards the formation of spiritual resilience, as well as a practical contribution through a relevant, reflective, and applicable curriculum implementation model for the current digital generation.

The urgency of this discussion is further strengthened given the importance of equipping the young generation with a religious foundation that is not only dogmatic but also contextual, reflective, and applicable. Spiritual resilience here is understood as an individual's ability to remain steadfast in religious values, possess deep self-awareness, and be able to respond to various challenges and temptations of the era wisely and ethically (Abdurahman et al. 2025; Handoko 2023; Rizal and Amaluddin 2025). In the context of Generation Z, this is crucial because they live in an

era full of value ambiguity, information overload, and rapid social change (Suriadi and Sriwahyuni 2025; Wiranto and Lasterina 2023).

## Methods

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the contextual curriculum design in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and how this curriculum builds the spiritual resilience of Generation Z students at SMPIT Sahabat Alam (Karya et al. 2024; Nasution 2024; Rosyada 2020). The qualitative approach was chosen because of the complex nature of the problem, which requires an exploration of experiences, perceptions, and learning practices in detail and contextually (Nurhayati et al. 2024; Sumilah et al. 2025).

The data used in this research consists of primary data and secondary data sekunder (Waruwu 2024). Primary data was obtained directly from observations of the PAI learning process in class, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers and students, and focus group discussions (Nurhayati et al. 2024). Secondary data includes curriculum documents, syllabi, Lesson Plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran/RPP), teaching materials, and school activity reports related to PAI curriculum development.

The data collection techniques in this study consisted of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Participant observation was conducted by directly observing the PAI learning process in the classroom to capture the actual implementation of the curriculum and the patterns of teacher-student interaction within the context of contextual learning (Pratiwi et al. 2024). In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with PAI teachers and students to explore their perspectives, experiences, and perceptions regarding the curriculum and the development of spiritual resilience through the learning process (Romdona, Junista, and Gunawan 2025). Documentation analysis was also employed by examining written materials related to the design and implementation of the PAI curriculum, including curriculum documents and instructional materials, which served as supporting data for the analysis (RF 2024)

The type of data in this research is qualitative descriptive, consisting of narratives, field notes, interview transcripts, and curriculum documents that will be analyzed to understand the context and meaning behind the phenomena that occur (Sumilah et al. 2025) Data analysis was performed inductively using the thematic analysis technique, which is a data processing procedure that includes the following stages: Data organization by coding important information that emerges from interviews, observations, and documents; Searching for main themes relevant to the research objective, such as contextual learning strategies, aspects of spiritual resilience, and learning challenges for Generation Z; Interpretation and narrative construction to explain how the curriculum design contributes to building students' spiritual resilience. To ensure data validity, the researcher performed the data triangulation technique by comparing findings from various data sources and different collection methods.

## Results

### Implementation of the Contextual Curriculum in PAI Learning

The research findings indicate that the application of the contextual curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMPIT Sahabat Alam is carried out through meticulous planning based on the real needs of Generation Z students. The school recognizes that today's students are growing up in a rapidly changing digital environment. Therefore, curriculum development is directed towards the relevance between Islamic teachings and the realities of daily life. The Lesson Plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran/RPP) prepared by teachers always include the element of contextualization, which is how religious values can be applied in the modern social, technological, and cultural contexts that students face.

The implementation of contextual learning begins with strengthening the connection between text and context. Teachers do not only explain verses or *hadiths* literally but invite students to interpret the moral message according to the current situation. For instance, in the material

about *amanah* (trust/responsibility), the teacher relates it to the issue of personal data security and the ethics of sharing information on social media. With this approach, students more easily understand that Islamic teachings are not just theoretical discourse but practical guidance relevant to their digital lives. This approach makes learning livelier and more meaningful.

Teachers also use learning media that align with the characteristics of Generation Z. Based on interview results, PAI teachers utilize videos, Islamic podcasts, and digital infographics to enrich the learning experience. This keeps students more focused and motivated. In one session, the teacher played a short video about the meaning of *ikhlas* (sincerity) and invited students to discuss its moral message. This process not only improves cognitive understanding but also builds an emotional connection between religious values and the reality they experience.

Curriculum documentation shows that PAI learning at SMPIT Sahabat Alam is integrated with current issues such as the environment, social media, and digital responsibility. In the material about *khalifah fil ardh* (stewards on earth), the teacher connects it with an eco-project activity, where students create a digital campaign about the importance of keeping the school and surrounding environment clean. This approach not only instills Islamic values but also builds ecological awareness, which is part of Islamic spirituality.

Table 1. Meaning and Substance of Contextual Curriculum Implementation in PAI Learning

Main Aspect	Description and Educational Essence	Implementation Example	Impact on Students and Learning
Curriculum Foundation and Planning	The curriculum is developed based on the authentic needs of Generation Z, integrating Islamic teachings with contemporary social, cultural, and technological contexts. This approach ensures that religious education is not merely doctrinal but adaptive and relevant to societal transformations.	Lesson plans incorporate contextualized Islamic teachings aligned with students' digital and social realities.	Students perceive Islam as a dynamic and applicable value system, fostering practical understanding relevant to their lived experiences.
Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Strategy	Educators connect religious texts to students' real-world contexts, emphasizing meaning-making and practical application over rote memorization. This strategy fosters a deeper, more relevant engagement with Islamic teachings.	The concept of trustworthiness (amanah) is linked to ethical practices in managing personal data on social media platforms.	Students develop the ability to critically and practically interpret Islamic teachings, applying them to contemporary challenges.
Relating Stage (Connecting to Students' Experiences)	Lessons commence with students' personal experiences to enhance meaningfulness, encouraging self-reflection and grounding religious teachings in real-life contexts.	In lessons on gratitude (syukur), students share personal narratives of overcoming failure with patience.	Cultivates spiritual awareness and emotional connection to religious values through reflective engagement.
Utilization of Digital Media	Instructional media are tailored to Generation Z's digital preferences, leveraging engaging and contextual digital tools to facilitate the internalization of Islamic values.	Educators employ Islamic videos, podcasts, and digital infographics as teaching tools.	Enhances student motivation, focus, and active participation in religious education.
Integration of Contemporary Issues	The Islamic education curriculum incorporates pressing global issues such as environmental concerns, social media dynamics, and digital	The concept of <i>khalifah fil ardh</i> (stewardship of the earth) is connected	Fosters ecological and social consciousness grounded in Islamic principles,

	responsibility, aligning Islamic values with societal challenges.	to digital eco-project campaigns.	promoting responsible citizenship.
Teacher's Role as Facilitator	Educators transition from authoritative to facilitative and dialogic roles, fostering collaborative and reflective learning environments that encourage student agency.	Open discussions address ethical challenges in the digital realm, promoting critical dialogue.	Students develop ownership of religious values and enhance their critical thinking capacities.
Reflective Activities and Practical Application	Reflection is embedded in every learning topic, deepening students' understanding and internalization of values through personal and social engagement.	Students write personal reflections and participate in Islamic social initiatives.	Builds empathy, social responsibility, and spiritual self-awareness among students.
Institutional Support	Schools provide opportunities for teacher innovation and continuous evaluation, ensuring the sustained implementation of a contextual curriculum aligned with institutional vision.	Educators conduct reflective evaluations each semester to assess curriculum effectiveness.	Programs remain adaptive and aligned with institutional goals, supporting consistent and effective implementation.
Implementation Challenges	Time constraints for contextual exploration and alignment with national curriculum standards present challenges, yet these obstacles offer opportunities for pedagogical innovation.	Contextual discussions often require extended time, challenging scheduling constraints.	Teacher commitment and institutional support sustain effective learning outcomes despite implementation hurdles.
Overall Outcomes and Impact	A contextual curriculum renders Islamic education more relevant and meaningful for Generation Z, positioning religion as a practical guide for navigating the digital era rather than a subject of rote learning.	Students perceive religion as a guiding framework for digital life, beyond memorization.	Produces faithful, ethical, and critically engaged students capable of navigating contemporary societal changes with spiritual authenticity.

### Teacher Strategies in Building Students' Spiritual Resilience

The teacher's strategy in building the spiritual resilience of Generation Z students at SMPIT Sahabat Alam is carried out comprehensively through reflective, participatory, and experience-based learning approaches. Teachers realize that it is not enough for students to understand religious teachings theoretically; they need to experience, feel, and make meaning of those teachings in the context of real life. Therefore, the learning strategy is designed to foster spiritual awareness in stages: starting from the introduction of values, internalization of meaning, to practical application in social actions.

The reflective approach is the main strategy implemented by PAI teachers, where moments of reflection are routinely inserted into lessons to invite students to contemplate values; for instance, students write about personal experiences with *sabar* (patience) and *shukur* (gratitude) in a weekly "My Faith Journal," a practice that has been shown to build self-awareness and link Islamic values to their lives. Furthermore, teachers complement this with an experience-based

discussion strategy in small groups to encourage active involvement, using open questions about topics like *amanah* (responsibility) in the digital world to provoke critical thinking, which results in a livelier learning atmosphere and meaningful student interaction.

Another effective strategy is the implementation of peer mentoring or peer guidance in a religious context. The teacher forms small groups of five to six students where one acts as a spiritual mentor. This mentor is tasked with motivating their friends to participate in worship activities such as *Salat Dhuba* (mid-morning prayer) or morning *tadarus* (Qur'an recitation). Data shows that this approach increases discipline and togetherness in spiritual practice. Furthermore, mentoring activities help students learn to lead with Islamic values and strengthen solidarity among peers.

Routine worship activities (*spiritual routine*) are also an important part of the teacher's strategy. Programs that include congregational prayer, joint supplication, and morning *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) are carried out with the aim of forming spiritual consistency. Through these routine activities, Islamic values are not only understood but are lived out in students' daily lives. Observations show that students who are actively involved in worship activities demonstrate increased calmness and higher moral responsibility compared to before.

In addition to focusing on the learning process in the classroom, teachers involve students in spiritual activities outside of class hours such as Islamic retreats, *qiyamul lail* (night vigil prayer), and spiritual camps. These activities are designed to strengthen the emotional and social dimensions of spirituality. In these activities, students are invited to contemplate their relationship with Allah, family, and the environment. From students' reflection notes, many state that the spiritual experiences outside of class have a profound impact on how they understand the meaning of worship and self-responsibility.

The teacher's strategy is also supported by the use of value-based evaluation. Assessment is not only oriented towards written exam results but also towards students' attitudes and spiritual reflection. Teachers use qualitative assessment instruments in the form of reflection journals, observation notes, and short interviews. This assessment allows the teacher to assess students' spiritual development more comprehensively, not just from the cognitive aspect. In this way, religious education becomes more humane and oriented towards character building.

Table 2. Substance and Meaning of Teacher Strategies in Building Students' Spiritual Resilience

Main Aspect/Substance	Description of Content/Implementation Strategy	Contained Meaning/Value	Impact/Outcome on Students
Comprehensive and Gradual Approach	Teachers design reflective, participatory, and experience-based learning, progressing from value introduction to internalization and social application.	Spirituality is cultivated as an ongoing life process, rather than mere memorization of doctrines.	Students internalize and apply Islamic values in their daily lives, fostering a meaningful connection to their faith.
Reflective Learning Approach	Students maintain a "My Faith Journal" to reflect on values such as patience (sabr) and gratitude (syukur) through personal experiences.	Reflection fosters self-awareness and connects religious values to students' personal realities.	Students demonstrate enhanced empathy, emotional regulation, and spiritual awareness.
Experience-Based Discussion	Teachers facilitate small-group discussions with contextual questions, such as "How can trustworthiness (amanah) be practiced in the digital world?"	Learning becomes dialogic and relevant to the lives of Generation Z students.	Students develop critical thinking, confidence in expressing opinions, and an understanding of

Islamic values in digital contexts.			
Project-Based Learning	Students participate in the Islamic Action Project, creating positive da'wah (Islamic outreach) content for social media platforms.	Spiritual values are manifested through tangible social actions.	Students learn moral responsibility and contribute positively to digital spaces.
Teacher Modelling	Teachers exemplify patience, empathy, and consistent moral behavior, serving as role models for students.	Religious values are transmitted through lived examples, not merely verbal instruction.	Students emulate positive behaviors and internalize teachers' ethical conduct in their daily lives.
Peer Mentoring	Small groups are formed with spiritual mentors who encourage peers to engage in worship and uphold Islamic values.	Leadership and communal bonds are nurtured within an Islamic framework.	Students exhibit greater discipline in worship, mutual support, and strengthened spiritual solidarity.
Narrative Method (Storytelling)	Teachers share stories of the Prophet's companions or inspiring Muslim figures, followed by reflective discussions.	Stories serve as an affective medium for instilling moral and spiritual values.	Students more easily understand and emotionally connect with Islamic values, enhancing retention.
Habituation of Worship and Spiritual Routines	Regular activities such as Dhuha prayer, morning Qur'an recitation, communal dhikr, and Friday reflections are implemented, linking these practices to character values and students' daily lives.	Worship becomes an integral part of students' life rhythm, beyond formal obligations.	Students develop strong spiritual habits, emotional tranquility, and stable moral behavior in social interactions.

From the results of data triangulation, these strategies proved effective in forming students' spiritual resilience. Reflection fosters self-awareness, discussion trains critical thinking, social projects strengthen moral action, while the habituation of worship solidifies the dimension of daily spirituality. The combination of these four elements creates a balance between the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects within the students. When all three are integrated, a robust spiritual resilience emerges, capable of wisely facing external influences.

### **Response and Spiritual Transformation of Generation Z**

The implementation of the contextual curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPIT Sahabat Alam has a real impact on changes in the way Generation Z students think, act, and behave. Data from interviews, observations, and reflection analysis show that students experience an increase in spiritual awareness, social empathy, and discipline in carrying out Islamic teachings. This transformation did not happen instantly but through a repeated, reflective, and experience-based learning process that they underwent both inside and outside school.

Another aspect that has improved is the sense of social empathy and responsibility towards others. After participating in the *Islamic Action Project* social project, many students admitted to better understanding the meaning of social worship like *sadaqah* (charity), mutual help, and environmental care. In group interviews, students recounted their experience visiting an orphanage, which made them more grateful and motivated to help others. One student expressed,

*"It turns out helping people brings peace to the heart. I only understood the meaning of sadaqah after actually doing it."*

This statement illustrates the process of value internalization through direct experience.

Besides empathy, spiritual maturity also appears to increase in how students manage emotions and cope with pressure. The Counseling Guidance teacher noted that students who follow the contextual PAI learning are more emotionally stable and less involved in conflicts. They are better able to calm themselves when facing problems, both academic and social. Some students even start using *dhikr* or prayer as a way to overcome anxiety. This indicates that religious teachings have become a practical source of inner strength in their lives.

Change is also apparent in how students interact in the digital space. Through a learning approach that links *akhlak* (moral conduct) with social media ethics, students start to be more cautious in using technology. They avoid provocative uploads, respect others' privacy, and more often share positive, Islamic-themed content. Teachers observed that some students even become role models among their peers by creating small *dakwah* (preaching) accounts on the school's social media. This shows that the instilled spiritual values have transcended the classroom boundaries and transformed into meaningful digital life practices.

Psychologically, students also show an increase in self-confidence and meaning in life. After undergoing a learning process that encourages reflective thinking, students feel more capable of understanding the purpose of life and their position as a Muslim generation in the modern era. In an interview, one student said,

*"Learning PAI now doesn't just make me afraid of sin but also motivated to be better. I feel that Islam gives direction to life."*

This statement reflects a transformation of understanding from merely religious obligation towards spiritual awareness that provides existential meaning.

Furthermore, there is also a change in the pattern of critical thinking and a tolerant attitude towards differences. When the teacher invites students to discuss sensitive social issues such as differing views within Islam or the phenomenon of societal diversity, students show open-mindedness. They learn to appreciate different opinions without losing their own conviction. This is an indicator that the spiritual resilience being built is not rigid but flexible and inclusive, in line with the principle of *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to the worlds).

Spiritual transformation is also evident from the increase in students' personal initiative in religious activities. Some students start actively becoming committee members for school Islamic activities, such as commemorating the Prophet's Birthday (*Maulid Nabi*) and the Friday Blessings program. They also proposed a *Spiritual Talk* program, a relaxed discussion forum among students to discuss trending religious issues. Teachers view this initiative as a sign that students not only understand Islamic values but are also capable of translating them into constructive collective action.

## Discussion

### Contextual Islamic Education and Spiritual Resilience of Generation Z

This study confirms that a contextual PAI curriculum effectively addresses Generation Z's spiritual challenges by harmonizing reason (*'aqil*) and heart (*qalb*), echoing Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy (Indiana and Mustofa 2024; Jalaldeen and Al-Hidabi 2025). By grounding Islamic teachings in students' social and technological realities (Sahin 2018; Al Zeera 2001), this approach fosters the self-awareness and self-regulation necessary for spiritual resilience. This aligns with Lickona's emphasis on practicing the truth (Lickona 2013), as evidenced by the reflective practices at SMPIT Sahabat Alam which successfully transform religious norms into internalized moral fortitude.

Furthermore, the experiential learning strategy applied by the teacher reflects the approach proposed by Kolb, which suggests that genuine knowledge emerges from experience processed reflectively (Kolb 2013; Kolb and Kolb 2018). In the context of Islamic education, spiritual

experiences such as social activities, communal worship, and real-action projects become crucial mediums for instilling the value of faith. Students learn that piety is not solely a private affair but also a social responsibility. This type of learning forms an active, dynamic spirituality capable of adapting to the complexities of the age.

From a contemporary Islamic education perspective, this contextual approach reflects the integrative spirit that Islamic education must be oriented towards the complete development of human *fitrah* (innate nature) (Mujahidin 2018; Al Zeera 2001). A contextual curriculum allows Islamic teachings to be understood not merely as dogma, but as a guide for life that directs the intellect, heart, and action. Students are invited to recognize Islam as a value system that underpins social, cultural, and technological life. Thus, religious education is no longer just the transmission of texts but a transformation of meaning that encourages students to become faithful, intelligent, and compassionate individuals.

Religious education must remain anchored in strong Islamic epistemology so that the values taught do not lose their theological bearing (Demirel Ucan and Wright 2019). Therefore, the teacher needs to act as the guardian of epistemological balance on one hand, opening up space for reflection and dialogue so students can interpret Islamic values contextually, and on the other hand, ensuring that this interpretation remains grounded in the Qur'an, Hadith, and authentic Islamic scholarly heritage. With this balance, Islamic religious learning is not only adaptive to social change but also remains firm in profound religious principles.

### **Supporting Factors in Strengthening Spiritual Resilience**

The success of implementing a contextual curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMPIT Sahabat Alam is not merely the product of curriculum design but the outcome of complex interactions between internal and external factors that operate synergistically. This finding is consistent with broader curriculum studies which demonstrate that effective curricular change requires supportive institutional conditions and socio-cultural alignment (Demirel Ucan & Ucan, 2019)

First, institutional support emerges as the most decisive factor. Leadership commitment from the school principal functions as a structural enabler for pedagogical innovation. By facilitating curriculum evaluation meetings, teacher training, and policy flexibility, the principal fosters a school climate that encourages experimentation, reflection, and responsiveness to student needs. This finding aligns with educational leadership theories that emphasize the role of principals as instructional leaders who shape school culture and learning quality (Hallinger, 2011). In the context of religious education, such leadership is crucial for ensuring that spiritual objectives are not marginalized by academic pressures but are instead integrated holistically into the curriculum.

Second, the professional competence of PAI teachers significantly influences the success of contextual learning. Teachers at SMPIT Sahabat Alam demonstrate a combination of strong religious scholarship, pedagogical adaptability, and digital literacy. Their ability to frame Islamic teachings as lived experiences rather than abstract doctrines resonates with constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners construct meaning through active engagement and reflection (ErliAtun & Anggraeni, 2025; Masuwai et al., 2024). The teachers' self-perception as inspirers and spiritual mentors further reinforces the moral and affective dimensions of learning, positioning PAI as transformative education rather than mere knowledge transmission.

Furthermore, a religious and participatory school culture is also an important factor in supporting students' spiritual resilience. Islamic values are internalized not only in PAI lessons but also in routine school activities. Every morning, students start the day with joint prayer, *tadarus*, and spiritual motivation. This religious atmosphere makes students accustomed to living in an environment full of moral values. Teachers and school staff serve as role models in applying noble *akhlak*, so students feel consistency between teaching and practice. Such an environment is proven to strengthen a healthy spiritual climate.

Another major external factor is support from parents and the school community. Parents are involved in various religious programs, such as parent spiritual classes and joint social activities. Through these activities, parents gain a common understanding of the importance of contextual learning. They also help supervise the application of Islamic values at home. Interview data shows that 82% of parents feel their children have become more disciplined and ethical after participating in the contextual PAI program. This indicates the continuity of spiritual education between home and school.

From a technological perspective, learning facilities and digital infrastructure provide added value by increasing student engagement and relevance. Multimedia tools, digital classrooms, and controlled internet access allow Islamic teachings to be contextualized within students' lived digital experiences. However, this advantage simultaneously reveals disparities in teachers' digital competencies. This challenge reflects broader issues in educational digital transformation, where technological availability does not automatically translate into pedagogical effectiveness without sufficient teacher capacity-building (Koehler et al., 2013).

Despite these strengths, several internal constraints require attention. Time limitations imposed by the national curriculum reduce opportunities for deep reflection and project-based learning, both of which are central to contextual and spiritual education. This tension illustrates the ongoing challenge of balancing standardized academic demands with holistic educational goals. Furthermore, variations in students' spiritual readiness highlight the affective complexity of reflective learning. Gradual scaffolding strategies adopted by teachers demonstrate pedagogical sensitivity and align with differentiated instruction principles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Additionally, external socio-cultural influences, particularly exposure to popular culture and unfiltered digital content, pose significant challenges to students' spiritual resilience. The integration of Islamic digital literacy represents a strategic response, equipping students with ethical discernment and critical thinking skills (Sanusi et al., 2024). This approach echoes contemporary discussions on religious education in the digital age, which stress the importance of guiding learners to navigate technology responsibly rather than rejecting it outright. Overall, the school's commitment to continuous evaluation and teacher collaboration serves as an important form of social capital. The internal learning community not only sustains innovation but also enhances institutional adaptability. This finding supports the argument that educational resilience is rooted in collective reflection, shared vision, and ongoing professional learning (Nadeem, 2024).

In synthesis, the success of the contextual PAI curriculum at SMPIT Sahabat Alam is not solely determined by curricular design but by the alignment of leadership, teacher professionalism, school culture, technological readiness, and community engagement. The challenges encountered function as reflective entry points for program improvement rather than structural barriers. Consequently, context-based Islamic education proves capable of nurturing strong spiritual resilience and responding meaningfully to the moral and spiritual challenges faced by Generation Z in the digital era (Arief & Hidayatullah, 2023).

## Conclusion

This research concludes that the application of a contextual curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMPIT Sahabat Alam successfully builds the spiritual resilience of Generation Z students in a tangible way. Religious learning, which was originally focused on cognitive aspects and memorization, has transformed into a process that is reflective, participatory, and based on life experience. By linking Islamic values to the context of modern life, students not only understand religious teachings theoretically but are also capable of practicing them in social life and the digital world. This makes PAI not just a compulsory subject, but a means of strengthening faith, character, and morality.

Students' spiritual resilience is evident from the increase in self-awareness, moral responsibility, and the ability to cope with social pressure and digital culture. Learning that emphasizes reflection, dialogue, and social activities encourages students to internalize Islamic

values deeply, making religion not a rigid rule, but a guide for life that shapes empathy, wisdom, and integrity. Thus, religious education serves as a power that balances rationality and spirituality within the young generation. The success of this curriculum implementation is influenced by institutional support, teacher professionalism, and a religious school culture. The principal provides space for innovation, teachers act as value facilitators, and students are active in both reflective and social activities. Although there are challenges such as time constraints and digital competency gaps, the collaborative spirit among the school community is able to maintain the program's continuity. Overall, this research confirms that contextual PAI is an effective strategy for building the spirituality of the digital generation. This type of curriculum is capable of instilling Islamic values functionally, contextually, and yet theologically sound, resulting in students who are intellectually smart and spiritually resilient in facing the complexities of modern life.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations, including its focus on a single school context, which may limit the generalization of the findings, and its reliance on qualitative data that are subject to interpretation and self-report bias. In addition, students' spiritual resilience was assessed mainly through observable behaviors and perceptions rather than standardized or long-term measurements, and the study did not quantitatively compare contextual PAI with conventional learning models. Therefore, future research is encouraged to involve multiple schools, apply mixed methods, use more systematic measurement instruments, and examine the role of digital religious literacy more deeply in order to better understand the effectiveness and adaptability of contextual PAI across diverse educational settings.

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