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The Influence of the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Method on the PAK Learning Outcomes of Class VIII Students

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Abstract

Christian Religious Education (CRE) has an important role in shaping students' moral character, spiritual awareness, and value-based decision-making in school life. This study aimed to determine the effect of the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method on the learning outcomes of Christian Religious Education (CRE) and to examine the differences in learning outcomes between students taught using the Problem-Based CTL method and those taught using the conventional lecture method among eighth-grade students at SMP Kristen Palangka Raya. This research employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group design. The sample consisted of 30 students, divided equally into an experimental class and a control class. Data were collected through observation, documentation, pre-tests, and post-tests, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality and homogeneity tests, and the Independent Sample *t*-Test with the assistance of SPSS version 26. The findings revealed that the experimental class achieved a higher mean post-test score (83.13) than the control class (69.80). The Independent Sample *t*-Test produced a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that the Problem-Based CTL method had a statistically significant positive effect on students' Christian Religious Education learning outcomes and that students taught using the Problem-Based CTL method performed significantly better than those taught through the lecture method. The results indicate that contextual and problem-based learning promotes active participation, critical thinking, meaningful learning, and the ability to connect biblical concepts with real-life situations, thereby improving students' cognitive achievement.

Keywords Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Christian Religious Education (PAK), Eighth-Grade Students, Learning Outcomes, Problem-Based Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) has an important role in shaping students' moral character, spiritual awareness, and value-based decision-making in school life. In junior high school, CRE is not only expected to deliver doctrinal knowledge, but also to guide students to

internalize Christian values and practice them in everyday behavior. However, the success of this mission is closely related to the quality of classroom instruction. In many educational settings, learning is still dominated by teacher-centered approaches in which students act mainly as passive recipients of information. Such conditions often limit students' participation, reduce their motivation to learn, and weaken their ability to connect academic material with real-life experiences. In religious education, this issue becomes even more critical because the subject matter is intended not merely to be remembered but to be understood, reflected upon, and lived out in practice. When students are not actively engaged in the learning process, the expected transformation of knowledge into values, attitudes, and behavior may not occur optimally. Therefore, Christian Religious Education requires instructional approaches that are interactive, meaningful, and relevant to students' real contexts so that learning outcomes can improve both cognitively and affectively (Khalid et al., 2020; Kolibu & Stepanus, 2025).

One of the approaches that has received considerable attention in contemporary pedagogy is Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). CTL is designed to help students understand academic concepts by linking lesson content to their personal, social, and cultural experiences. Instead of placing students in a purely theoretical learning environment, CTL invites them to construct meaning through authentic situations, inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and the application of knowledge to everyday life. This approach is particularly relevant for subjects that emphasize the integration of knowledge and values, including religious education. Through contextual learning, students are encouraged to see that what they learn in class is not isolated from their daily realities, but rather provides guidance for understanding themselves, their relationships, and their responsibilities in society. Recent studies show that CTL can improve students' critical thinking, learning engagement, and academic achievement because it places learners at the center of the learning process and encourages them to participate actively in meaning-making. As a result, CTL has become one of the promising alternatives to conventional teaching, especially in secondary education where students need meaningful and experience-based learning to strengthen comprehension and retention (Bustami et al., 2020; Ratnaningsih & Triwahyuni, 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of CTL becomes even more significant when it is integrated with a problem-based learning orientation. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) encourages students to learn through the exploration of authentic problems that require analysis, discussion, interpretation, and solution-building. In this model, students are not merely asked to absorb information, but to use knowledge actively in order to respond to challenges that resemble real-life situations. The integration of CTL and PBL therefore creates a learning environment in which students can connect theory with practice while simultaneously developing critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. In the context of Christian Religious Education, this model is highly relevant because Christian teachings often involve moral dilemmas, social responsibilities, faith-based reflection, and ethical decision-making. By engaging students with contextual and problem-based learning tasks, teachers can help them understand religious concepts more deeply and apply them to everyday life. Previous studies have shown that

contextual and problem-based models significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in religious education because they foster active participation and meaningful reflection rather than rote memorization alone (As-Sa'idah et al., 2022; Kolibu & Stepanus, 2025; Khakim & Kunaepi, 2025).

The relevance of this issue is clearly reflected in the case of eighth-grade students at SMP Kristen Palangka Raya, where Christian Religious Education learning outcomes were still relatively low. Based on the data presented in the uploaded file, this condition was associated with the dominance of teacher-centered instruction, which limited students' opportunities to participate actively and made it difficult for them to connect learning materials with the realities of daily life. As a consequence, students tended to experience difficulties in understanding concepts deeply and applying Christian values meaningfully in concrete situations. This problem indicates that the challenge of low learning outcomes is not merely related to students' abilities, but also to the appropriateness of the instructional model used by the teacher. A learning method that can stimulate participation, contextual understanding, critical reflection, and collaborative problem-solving is therefore needed to improve the quality of Christian Religious Education learning. In response to this need, the present study focuses on the implementation of the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning method as an alternative strategy to improve student achievement in Christian Religious Education. The study is important because it not only evaluates academic outcomes, but also contributes to the broader effort to make religious education more transformative, student-centered, and relevant to the lived experiences of learners in junior high school (Pebriany, 2025; Ratnaningsih & Triwahyuni, 2025; Hidayati & Khairi, 2025).

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an experimental design to examine the effect of the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method on the Christian Religious Education learning outcomes of eighth-grade students at SMP Kristen Palangka Raya. The research involved two groups, namely an experimental class that received learning through the Problem-Based CTL method and a control class that was taught using conventional instructional methods. The population of the study consisted of all eighth-grade students, while the sample comprised 30 students divided equally into 15 students in the experimental group and 15 students in the control group. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and the administration of pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' learning outcomes before and after the treatment. The collected data were then analyzed using statistical procedures, including normality tests, homogeneity tests, and hypothesis testing through the Independent Sample t-Test with the assistance of SPSS version 26, in order to determine whether there was a significant difference in learning outcomes between students taught through the Problem-Based CTL method and those taught through conventional learning approaches

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Method on The Christian Religious Education (PAK) Learning Outcomes of 8th-Grade Students

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method had a statistically significant positive effect on the learning outcomes of Christian Religious Education (CRE) among eighth-grade students at SMP Kristen Palangka Raya. Statistical analysis using the Independent Sample t-test revealed a significance value of 0.000, which is lower than the predetermined significance level of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Furthermore, the experimental class obtained a mean post-test score of 83.13, substantially higher than the control class, which achieved an average score of 69.80. These findings indicate that the application of Problem-Based CTL effectively enhanced students' cognitive achievement in Christian Religious Education compared to conventional instructional practices. The improvement confirms that meaningful learning occurs when students actively construct knowledge by connecting academic concepts with authentic experiences encountered in daily life. (Johnson, 2002; Sanjaya, 2016; Benyamin, 2020).

The significant improvement in students' learning outcomes can be explained through the theoretical foundation of constructivism, which underlies the Contextual Teaching and Learning approach. Constructivist theory, particularly that proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, argues that knowledge is actively constructed through learners' interactions with their environment rather than passively received from teachers. During the implementation of Problem-Based CTL, students were encouraged to analyze contextual problems related to Christian values, discuss possible solutions collaboratively, and relate biblical teachings to real-life situations. Such learning experiences enabled students to become active participants in constructing understanding instead of merely memorizing theoretical concepts. Consequently, learning became more meaningful because students interpreted knowledge through personal experiences and social interaction, thereby strengthening both conceptual understanding and long-term retention. These findings reinforce Johnson's assertion that contextual learning develops deeper understanding by linking classroom knowledge with students' real-world contexts (Johnson, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1972).

Another important factor contributing to the effectiveness of Problem-Based CTL is the increased level of student engagement throughout the learning process. Traditional lecture-based instruction generally positions students as passive recipients of information, whereas CTL requires students to participate actively in questioning, discussing, investigating, reflecting, and presenting ideas. Such learning activities stimulate higher-order thinking skills and encourage learners to become responsible for their own learning. In Christian Religious Education, where students are expected not only to understand biblical concepts but also to internalize Christian values, active participation is essential. Students who actively engage in solving contextual moral dilemmas are more likely to develop meaningful understanding

because they personally experience the learning process instead of simply receiving explanations from teachers. This active involvement ultimately contributes to improved academic achievement and stronger conceptual mastery (Trianto, 2014; Hidayat & Putri, 2023).

The findings also demonstrate that contextual learning successfully bridges the gap between theoretical religious instruction and students' everyday experiences. Christian Religious Education aims not only to transmit biblical knowledge but also to cultivate Christian character, moral reasoning, and responsible behavior. When students were presented with authentic situations reflecting issues they frequently encounter in school, family, and society, they became capable of interpreting biblical teachings within practical contexts. Rather than memorizing scriptural passages mechanically, they learned to apply Christian principles in analyzing and solving real-life problems. Such contextualization enhances meaningful learning because students recognize the relevance of religious education in their daily lives. Consequently, the learning process promotes both cognitive development and spiritual formation simultaneously, which represents one of the primary objectives of Christian Religious Education (Nainggolan, 2010; Pazmiño, 2016; Benyamin, 2020).

The superior performance of students taught through Problem-Based CTL can also be explained by cognitive learning theory, particularly Bloom's taxonomy and its revised version developed by Anderson and Krathwohl. The learning activities designed within the CTL framework stimulated students to progress beyond simple remembering toward understanding, analyzing, and applying concepts. During classroom discussions, learners interpreted biblical principles, evaluated various moral situations, and formulated appropriate solutions based on Christian teachings. These cognitive processes require deeper mental engagement than conventional memorization, thereby producing stronger comprehension and higher academic achievement. Because knowledge is processed through multiple cognitive pathways—including observation, discussion, reflection, and practical application—it becomes easier for students to retrieve and apply information during post-test assessments. These results support previous studies indicating that meaningful cognitive processing significantly enhances learning outcomes (Bloom, 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bruner, 1966).

Another explanation for the effectiveness of Problem-Based CTL lies in its emphasis on authentic learning experiences. Students were encouraged to investigate actual problems that reflected challenges commonly experienced by adolescents, including interpersonal relationships, honesty, responsibility, forgiveness, and Christian ethics. Through guided inquiry, students examined biblical perspectives, exchanged opinions with peers, and reflected upon possible actions consistent with Christian values. Such authentic learning experiences facilitate knowledge transfer because students immediately perceive the usefulness of classroom learning beyond academic assessment. According to experiential learning theory, meaningful experiences strengthen memory retention and improve conceptual understanding because learning becomes personally relevant. Consequently, students who experience learning directly are more likely to remember concepts over longer

periods and demonstrate better academic performance than students who rely solely on verbal explanations from teachers (Kolb, 1984; Johnson, 2002; Lestari, 2022).

The collaborative nature of Problem-Based CTL further contributed to improved learning outcomes. Throughout the instructional process, students worked in small groups to discuss problems, exchange perspectives, and construct shared understanding. Collaborative learning encourages learners to articulate ideas clearly, defend arguments using evidence, and refine misconceptions through peer interaction. Vygotsky emphasized that cognitive development occurs most effectively through social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners receive guidance from teachers and peers possessing greater understanding. Therefore, classroom collaboration provided valuable opportunities for students to develop higher levels of comprehension than they could achieve individually. Moreover, collaborative discussions in Christian Religious Education promoted respect, empathy, and mutual support, thereby reinforcing both academic learning and Christian character formation (Vygotsky, 1978; Slavin, 2018; Hidayat & Putri, 2023).

Reflection, one of the essential components of Contextual Teaching and Learning, also played an important role in improving students' learning outcomes. At the conclusion of each learning session, students were encouraged to reflect upon what they had learned, identify new insights, evaluate their understanding, and relate biblical teachings to personal experiences. Reflection enables learners to organize newly acquired knowledge systematically while recognizing connections among concepts. Educational psychology suggests that reflective thinking promotes metacognitive awareness, allowing students to regulate their learning strategies more effectively. In Christian Religious Education, reflective activities additionally encourage students to evaluate personal attitudes and behaviors in light of biblical teachings, thereby integrating intellectual understanding with spiritual growth. This combination of cognitive reflection and spiritual contemplation contributes significantly to deeper and more enduring learning outcomes (Schön, 1983; Zimmerman, 2002; Benyamin, 2020).

Overall, the findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence that Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning is an effective instructional approach for improving Christian Religious Education learning outcomes among junior high school students. The significant difference in post-test scores demonstrates that students learn more effectively when instruction integrates contextual problems, collaborative inquiry, reflective thinking, authentic assessment, and meaningful application of biblical principles. These findings support previous empirical research showing that contextual learning promotes deeper understanding, stronger motivation, greater classroom participation, and higher academic achievement compared with teacher-centered instruction. Therefore, Problem-Based CTL may be recommended as an innovative pedagogical approach capable of enhancing both cognitive achievement and Christian character development in Christian Religious Education classrooms (Johnson, 2002; Benyamin, 2020; Hidayat & Putri, 2023; Saputra et al., 2024).

The Difference in Christian Religious Education (PAK) Learning Outcomes Between Students Taught Using the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Method and Those Taught Using the Lecture Method in the 8th Grade

The second research question sought to determine whether there was a significant difference in Christian Religious Education (CRE) learning outcomes between students taught using the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method and those taught using the conventional lecture method. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference between the two instructional approaches. Students in the experimental class who received Problem-Based CTL instruction achieved a mean post-test score of 83.13, whereas students in the control class taught through the lecture method obtained a mean score of 69.80. Furthermore, the Independent Sample t-test produced a significance value of 0.000, indicating that the observed difference was statistically significant. These findings demonstrate that students exposed to Problem-Based CTL achieved substantially better learning outcomes than those who experienced teacher-centered instruction. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis stating that Problem-Based CTL is more effective than the lecture method was accepted. (Johnson, 2002; Sugiyono, 2019; Benyamin, 2020).

The superiority of Problem-Based CTL over the lecture method can be explained by the fundamental differences in learning orientation. The lecture method primarily emphasizes one-way knowledge transmission from teacher to students, where learners generally act as passive recipients of information. Although lectures are useful for presenting factual content efficiently, they often provide limited opportunities for students to actively process, analyze, and apply knowledge. Consequently, students tend to memorize concepts without developing a deep understanding of their practical relevance. In contrast, Problem-Based CTL positions students as active participants who construct knowledge through inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and authentic problem-solving. This learner-centered approach promotes meaningful cognitive engagement, enabling students to internalize concepts more effectively than passive listening alone. As a result, students taught using Problem-Based CTL develop stronger conceptual understanding and demonstrate higher academic achievement than those instructed through conventional lectures (Sanjaya, 2016; Trianto, 2014; Slavin, 2018).

The difference in learning outcomes also reflects the effectiveness of contextual learning in enhancing knowledge retention. According to cognitive learning theory, information is remembered more effectively when learners actively organize new knowledge by connecting it with prior experiences. During Problem-Based CTL instruction, students continuously related biblical teachings to situations encountered in family life, school activities, friendships, and community interactions. Such contextualization strengthened memory formation because abstract religious concepts became meaningful and personally relevant. Conversely, students in the lecture-based classroom mainly received verbal explanations and were expected to remember information without actively experiencing or applying it. Consequently, the learning process relied heavily on short-term memorization rather than meaningful understanding, resulting in relatively lower academic performance. These findings are

consistent with previous studies indicating that contextual learning significantly improves long-term knowledge retention compared to traditional instructional methods (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bruner, 1966; Nugraha et al., 2023).

Another important factor contributing to the superior achievement of the experimental class is the development of critical thinking skills through problem-solving activities. Problem-Based CTL encourages students to analyze authentic problems, identify possible solutions, evaluate alternatives, and justify decisions using biblical principles. Such activities require higher-order cognitive processes, including analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application, which are rarely emphasized during lecture-based instruction. Students therefore become more capable of interpreting concepts independently rather than depending entirely on teacher explanations. In Christian Religious Education, this ability is particularly important because students are expected to interpret biblical values critically and apply them wisely in complex moral situations. The higher learning outcomes observed in the experimental group indicate that active engagement in critical thinking contributes directly to improved academic performance (Bloom, 1956; Hidayat & Putri, 2023; Facione, 2020).

The findings further demonstrate that collaborative learning within Problem-Based CTL provides educational advantages that are generally absent in lecture-centered classrooms. Throughout the intervention, students discussed contextual problems in groups, exchanged ideas, debated different viewpoints, and jointly constructed solutions based on Christian values. Such collaboration allowed students to clarify misconceptions, strengthen conceptual understanding, and develop communication skills simultaneously. According to Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, learning becomes more effective when individuals interact socially with peers who provide intellectual support within the Zone of Proximal Development. Through collaborative learning, students acquired knowledge not only from teachers but also from their classmates, thereby enriching the learning experience and improving academic outcomes. In contrast, students taught through lectures had fewer opportunities for meaningful interaction, limiting the development of higher-order thinking and collaborative problem-solving abilities (Vygotsky, 1978; Slavin, 2018; Saputra et al., 2024).

Another explanation for the observed difference lies in students' learning motivation. Motivation plays a central role in determining the quality of learning because motivated students devote greater attention, persistence, and effort to academic activities. Problem-Based CTL naturally enhances intrinsic motivation by presenting meaningful challenges that stimulate curiosity and encourage independent exploration. Students become interested because learning activities resemble real-life situations they frequently encounter, making classroom experiences more enjoyable and personally relevant. By contrast, prolonged reliance on lecture-based instruction often reduces students' enthusiasm because learning becomes repetitive and teacher-dominated. Increased motivation among students in the experimental class likely contributed to greater classroom participation, stronger commitment to learning tasks, and ultimately higher post-test scores. These findings align with previous

research demonstrating that contextual learning positively influences student motivation and academic performance (Yuniwati, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Lestari, 2022).

Within the context of Christian Religious Education, Problem-Based CTL also facilitates the integration of cognitive learning with character formation more effectively than the lecture method. Christian Religious Education seeks not merely to transmit doctrinal knowledge but to cultivate Christian attitudes, ethical decision-making, compassion, honesty, forgiveness, and responsibility. Through contextual problems, students actively examined moral dilemmas that reflected genuine social realities and evaluated appropriate responses according to biblical teachings. Such learning experiences encouraged students to internalize Christian values while simultaneously strengthening conceptual understanding. Conversely, lecture-based instruction generally emphasized theoretical explanations of biblical principles without providing sufficient opportunities for students to practice moral reasoning in authentic contexts. Consequently, Problem-Based CTL produced richer educational experiences that supported both academic achievement and holistic character development (Nainggolan, 2010; Pazmiño, 2016; Benyamin, 2020).

The findings of this study are consistent with numerous previous empirical investigations demonstrating the superiority of contextual and problem-based learning approaches over conventional instructional methods. Earlier studies have consistently reported that Problem-Based CTL improves students' conceptual understanding, critical thinking, classroom participation, collaborative skills, motivation, and academic achievement across various educational settings. The present study extends these findings specifically to Christian Religious Education at the junior secondary level, providing empirical evidence that contextual pedagogical approaches are equally effective in religious education. This consistency with previous research strengthens the validity of the conclusion that Problem-Based CTL represents a highly effective instructional strategy capable of improving students' cognitive achievement significantly beyond what can be accomplished through lecture-based teaching alone (Ismatunsarrah, 2020; Sinaga et al., 2023; Siregar, 2024).

Overall, the results clearly indicate that there is a significant difference in Christian Religious Education learning outcomes between students taught using the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning method and those taught using the conventional lecture method. The higher mean achievement obtained by the experimental group confirms that instructional approaches emphasizing contextual experiences, collaborative inquiry, authentic problem-solving, reflection, and active student participation produce substantially better learning outcomes than teacher-centered lectures. Therefore, Christian Religious Education teachers are encouraged to adopt Problem-Based CTL as an innovative pedagogical strategy capable of fostering meaningful learning, improving students' cognitive achievement, strengthening critical thinking skills, and promoting the practical application of Christian values in everyday life. The implementation of this instructional approach is expected not only to improve academic performance but also to contribute to the holistic spiritual and character

development of students, which represents the fundamental objective of Christian Religious Education (Johnson, 2002; Sanjaya, 2016; Benyamin, 2020; Saputra et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method has a significant positive effect on the Christian Religious Education (CRE) learning outcomes of eighth-grade students at SMP Kristen Palangka Raya. The statistical findings demonstrated that students taught through Problem-Based CTL achieved significantly higher learning outcomes than those taught using the conventional lecture method, indicating that contextual and problem-oriented instruction is more effective in enhancing students' cognitive achievement. By actively engaging students in authentic problem-solving, collaborative learning, inquiry, reflection, and the application of biblical values to real-life situations, the CTL approach promoted meaningful learning experiences that strengthened students' understanding, critical thinking skills, knowledge retention, and classroom participation. Furthermore, the findings support constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through meaningful experiences and social interaction rather than passively received through teacher-centered instruction. Within the context of Christian Religious Education, the implementation of Problem-Based CTL not only improved academic performance but also encouraged students to internalize Christian values and apply them in everyday life. Therefore, Problem-Based Contextual Teaching and Learning is recommended as an innovative and effective instructional approach for improving both the cognitive learning outcomes and the holistic development of students in Christian Religious Education.

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