

EFFECTIVE LEARNING TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF MORAL BELIEFS IN RELIGIOUS GENERATION Z STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Aqidah Akhlak learning in Islamic junior high schools (MTs) is often dominated by lecturing, making it difficult for Generation Z students to understand abstract concepts and internalize values. This qualitative study with a case study design examines the implementation of concept mapping in Grade VIII at MTs Raudhatul Mujawwidin Rimbo Bujang, Tebo, Jambi. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of instructional tools and concept map products; validity was strengthened through source–method triangulation and member checking. The results indicate that concept mapping improved students' understanding of aqidah concepts (74%), akhlak concepts (82%), and material retention (78%), while also encouraging participation, motivation, and classroom collaboration. The main challenges included limited time, facilities, and variations in students' prior abilities, which were addressed through task differentiation, the use of simple media, and the integration of digital applications when available. Theoretically, concept mapping is positioned as an integrative cognitive–affective–spiritual medium; practically, the study offers an implementation model and formative indicators that can be replicated in madrasahs. These findings enrich the discourse on pedagogical innovation in Islamic Religious Education and provide a foundation for sustainable teacher professional development.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education has a fundamental role in shaping the personality and character of students in Indonesia, considering that the majority of people are Muslim. The subject of Moral Faith occupies a strategic position as a means of instilling faith values as well as fostering morality from an early age. This learning functions to build a solid belief system and develop commendable behavior according to Islamic teachings (Siregar & Hasibuan, 2024). However, empirical reality shows that students often face difficulties in understanding abstract concepts and complex moral principles. These obstacles have an impact on low material mastery and the lack of application of religious values in daily life. Especially for Generation Z who are growing up in the digital era, an innovative approach is needed that is able to integrate their technology-centric characteristics with religiosity values (Yusri et al., 2023). Therefore, the development of effective learning strategies is an urgent need to optimize understanding as well as internalize the material of Akidah Akhlak in a sustainable manner.

The acceleration of globalization and the advancement of information technology demands a more comprehensive and adaptive quality of education. Indonesia faces challenges in producing a young generation that not only excels academically, but also has a strong character, noble character, and is able to adapt to the dynamics of change (Zahrudin et al., 2024). Religious education in Islamic institutions often fails because it emphasizes more cognitive aspects, while the affective and conative dimensions of attitudes and determination to practice religious teachings are often neglected (Sholahudin et al., 2025). Harun Nasution emphasized that religious education focuses more on learning about religion than true religious practices, and is too influenced by Western patterns that emphasize knowledge rather than moral formation. Failure to build a fundamental understanding has implications for the degradation of ethics, the rise of individualism, and the weakening of the internalization of authentic religious values (Haluti et al., 2025). This condition demands the innovation of learning strategies that are holistic, interactive, and in accordance with the characteristics of Generation Z.

Studies of concept maps in the learning of Akidah Akhlak generally affirm their effectiveness in increasing student understanding, retention, and activeness, but most stop at proving learning outcomes without elaborating on the pedagogical mechanisms that produce such improvements in detail (Maula et al., 2024). Sejumlah studi melaporkan bahwa peta konsep membantu siswa memetakan interkoneksi konsep keimanan dan akhlak, memperkuat daya ingat, serta mendorong partisipasi, namun belum banyak yang menelaah secara sistematis bagaimana tahapan persiapan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi dirancang pada kelas Akidah Akhlak yang didominasi karakteristik Generasi Z (Anggraini, 2024). Empirical evidence also rarely focuses on the dynamics of time-constrained implementation barriers, teachers' competence in concept map design, infrastructure availability, and students' preferences for digital media and adaptive strategies to address them (Alt et al., 2022). As a result, implementing recommendations tend to be generic and difficult to replicate across madrasah contexts. This gap demands a process- and context-oriented study. In particular, the analysis of the network of concepts formed in students is still rarely described in contemporary Moral Faith learning.

The gap in previous research can be seen in the tendency to place concept maps as mere 'visual media', while the dimension of internalization of Aqidah Akhlak values as a substantive learning objective has not been adequately portrayed (Nabila & Hasanah, 2022). The existing literature more often associates concept maps with cognitive achievement (concept understanding and memory retention) and classroom behavior indicators (active, focused, motivated), but has not tested the connection between changes in student-centered learning patterns and the formation of religious meanings that are applicable to students' daily lives (Sultana, 2022). In addition, variations in madrasah learning ecology such as school culture, teacher readiness, heterogeneity of initial abilities, and access to technology make research findings in one institution not automatically relevant to another institution without thick context descriptions and strong data triangulation. Another gap is the lack of mapping of pedagogical constraints as explanatory variables, not just a record of limitations. Therefore, a study is needed that examines concept maps at the level of process, context, and value. In fact, the variation in context affects the acceptance of methods and the quality of teacher-student interaction consistently in the field.

This study seeks to fill the gap through a qualitative study designed as a case study on the learning of Moral Faith in grade VIII at MTs Raudhatul Mujawwidin Rimbo Bujang, Tebo, Jambi, by examining concept maps as a strategy that shifts learning from teacher-centered lectures to participatory learning experiences (Hwang et al., 2020). The novelty of the research lies in the end-to-end implementation mapping, starting from the identification of abstract concepts (monotheism, asthma and moral values), the design of hierarchical structures, to evaluations based on observation of student involvement and teacher reflection, thus allowing causal-procedural explanations of why concept maps improve understanding. Through triangulation of participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, the research produces operational descriptions that can be

transferred as a model of good practice with procedures, teaching tools, and realistic success indicators in madrassas with limited resources (Samsudin, 2024) Another novelty is the emphasis on the religious characteristics of Generation Z as a context variable, with an analysis of visual-digital preferences, collaboration needs, and attention fluctuations. The study also operationalizes technical-pedagogical barriers and their handling strategies, assesses the consequences of conventional versus digital media, and presents implications for classroom regulation and formative assessment.

In terms of scientific contribution, this research offers conceptual and methodological novelty at the same time. First, the concept map is positioned as an integrative medium that connects cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in one learning framework, so that evaluation is not solely based on short-term achievements, but also based on the quality of engagement and meaning (Arif, 2026) Second, the research presents more structured outcome indicators, such as increasing understanding of the concept of faith, moral concept, and material retention as a bridge between qualitative research traditions and the need for accountability in school learning. Third, practical outputs are oriented towards recommendations for adaptable implementation steps: procedures for designing concept maps, collaborative discussion scenarios, and evaluation-reflection strategies for abstract topics. By emphasizing the limitations of the case study and developing a further research agenda, this research enriches the evidence base of pedagogical innovation of Akidah Akhlak and clarifies its contribution to strengthening student-centered learning in madrasahs. This contribution is relevant for madrasah policymakers in designing teacher training and the provision of learning resources in line with the needs of Generation Z, especially in curriculum, digital facilities, and learning supervision

The implementation of innovative learning strategies in the context of Islamic religious education shows significant urgency, especially in optimizing the cognitive competence of Generation Z students who have visual-digital learning characteristics. Research (Hasan & Rozaq, 2024) proves that the application of a Mind Mapping-based cooperative model in learning Akidah Akhlak at MAN 6 Jombang has resulted in a substantial increase in the capacity for interpretation, analysis, and conceptual explanation of the material. The collaborative dimension and visual representation integrated in the model have been proven to strengthen academic engagement and facilitate the development of students' soft skills. The construction of effective Aqidah Akhlak learning requires a holistic understanding of the architecture of the material, the interrelationships of its components, and the integration between textual approaches through literature exploration and contextual approaches that accommodate the reality of students' quotidian lives, so as to achieve a comprehensive and applicable internalization of religious values (Syafi'i et al., 2022)

Responding to the complexity of contemporary learning problems, this study explores concept maps as an innovative and prospective pedagogical approach. Concept maps are conceptualized as structured visual-hierarchical representations, which function to facilitate students' cognitive processes in organizing information, identifying interconnections between conceptual constructs, and constructing a systematic and coherent framework of thinking (Hotimah & Ramadani, 2021) Empirical evidence from previous research confirms that the application of concept maps contributes significantly to strengthening conceptual comprehension across various scientific domains, including the fields of science and social sciences. Based on the conceptual foundation that has been elaborated, this research specifically analyzes the effectiveness of the implementation of concept maps in optimizing the comprehensiveness of Akidah Akhlak learning materials. This study is projected to make a substantive contribution to the development of a more innovative and efficient pedagogical approach in the learning domain of Moral Faith (Wahyu, 2024).

Based on the empirical problems in the learning of Akidah Akhlak which is still dominated by lectures, this study formulates three core questions: (1) how the concept map is implemented concretely at the preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages; (2) what obstacles arise during the implementation, including technical, pedagogical, and learning characteristics of Generation Z;

and (3) what adaptive strategies teachers have developed to overcome these obstacles so that learning is more effective; In line with the research questions, this research has three operational objectives: first, to describe in detail the procedure for applying concept maps to the material of Moral Faith, including design decisions taken by teachers and forms of student participation at each stage; second, identify and analyze implementation constraints as explanatory variables, not just limitations, so that their impact on concept understanding and internalization of values can be understood; third, mapping the problem-solving strategies used by teachers and assessing their implications for student-centered learning; The novelty of this research lies in the presentation of a practice model that can be replicated based on case studies and data triangulation: implementation workflows, process-based success indicators (engagement, focus, quality of concept relationships), as well as adaptation recommendations for madrasahs with diverse resources; With this orientation, the research contribution goes beyond claims of effectiveness and offers implementable guidance for teacher professional development and improvement of teaching tools relevant to school policy, learning supervision, and local sustainable curriculum innovation.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a field case study design to understand in depth the practice of learning Akidah Akhlak based on concept maps in grade VIII MTs Raudhatul Mujawwidin Rimbo Bujang, Tebo, Jambi. The case study design was chosen because it allows for a holistic exploration of pedagogical processes, contexts, and interactions without experimental intervention, making it suitable for uncovering the dynamics of concept map implementation in religious Generation Z students (Sugiharto et al., 2025) The analysis unit includes learning activities (preparation, implementation, and evaluation), main actors (Akidah Akhlak teachers and students), and learning artifacts (teaching modules, worksheets, and concept map products) (Dwi, 2024) The focus of the research is directed to the implementation mechanism, various obstacles, and adaptive strategies of teachers, so that the method section emphasizes the research procedure as the basis for the findings, not mixed with the results. The research is carried out in the current semester according to the madrasah academic calendar, with the setting of the classroom and the relevant madrasah environment. Case constraints are set on a single class to obtain data depth.

The selection of informants is carried out purposively with the following criteria: (1) teachers who teach Akidah Akhlak who apply concept maps, (2) grade VIII students who are involved in learning, and (3) supporting informants (e.g. curriculum representatives or homeroom teachers) to enrich institutional perspectives (Zubaid, 2024) The data collection technique uses triangulation methods, namely participatory observation to record classroom practices and student engagement patterns; semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' pedagogical rationales, student learning experiences, and perceptions of the benefits and difficulties of concept maps; as well as documentation studies to check the suitability of teaching design with practice and trace the artifacts of the resulting concept map (Syahri et al., 2025) Data was recorded through field notes, interview guidelines, and school document archives.

Data analysis is carried out iteratively from the beginning of collection through the stages of condensation, presentation, and drawing conclusions, so that each finding is tested for consistency between sources (Hariawan et al., 2025) The coding process is directed to key themes: concept map design, teacher facilitation strategies, forms of student participation, technical-pedagogical constraints, and handling strategies. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, peer discussions to test interpretation, and member checking limited to key informants (Mesuwini & Mokoena, 2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the concept map is carried out by studying the material of the Moral Faith of class VIII, mapping the main ideas of subordinates hierarchically, and preparing visual media (large worksheets, colored stationery, and supporting devices) so that abstract concepts are more concrete for students (Farihin et al., 2022). At the implementation stage, teachers introduce concept maps through demonstrations, explain the relationships between concepts, and activate discussions and questions and answers so that students can contribute to the preparation or improvement of concept maps. Evaluation was carried out through observation, verbal question and answer, and individual/group assignments, accompanied by teacher reflection and student input, with the main challenge of time management and difficulty measuring abstract conceptual comprehension.

Table 1. Implementation Stages

Stages	Success indicators	Challenge
Preparation	Well structured concept map	Material analysis is time consuming
Implementation	Student participation increases	Limited time management
Evaluation	Student understanding increases	It is difficult to measure abstract understanding

The effectiveness of the concept map can be seen in increasing the understanding of the concept of faith (74), the concept of morality (82), and material retention (78), as well as in the ease of students seeing the relationship of concepts. The presentation of concept maps with applicative examples makes it easier for students to distinguish positive and negative morals through clear visual contrast.

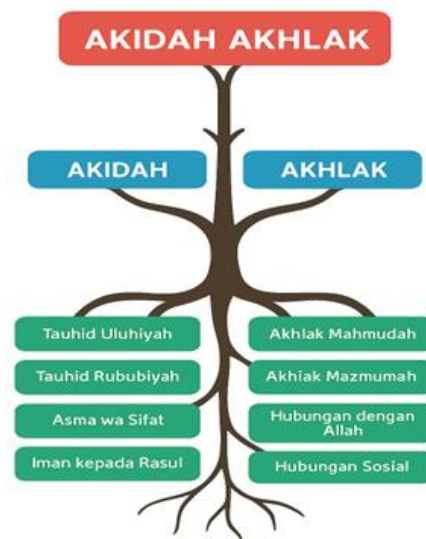
Table 2. Dimension of understanding

Dimensions	Percentage increase	Attainment rate
The concept of faith	74	Good
The concept of morality	82	Excellent
Material retention	78	Good

Student engagement in learning is increased through more active discussions, diverse questions, and learning motivation that is built through a visual-interactive approach (Manavalamamuni, 2021). Interaction between students and teachers becomes more collaborative, creating a conducive atmosphere for the exploration of ideas. However, the implementation of concept maps faces obstacles in the form of limited digital technology facilities, limited time to compile comprehensive maps, and the need for special competencies of teachers in designing effective concept maps. In terms of Generation Z characteristics, obstacles arise in the variation of initial abilities, digital media preferences that make conventional maps less attractive, and focus fluctuations during learning.

To overcome these challenges, teachers make various efforts such as using simple media creatively (paper, color markers, whiteboards), simplifying concept map design according to lesson duration, and improving competence through workshops and peer-teaching (Zulhaini et al., 2023). Collaboration between teachers as a professional learning community is also strengthened,

accompanied by the application of differentiation in the level of complexity of concept maps to suit students' abilities. When facilities are available, teachers integrate digital applications such as Coggle or MindMeister, as well as implement cooperative-collaborative learning with appreciation and feedback to keep student motivation high.



Hierarchical Structure of the Concept Map of Moral Beliefs

The visual representation of the concept map illustrates the organization of the content of Akidah Akhlak in a hierarchical form, with the central idea as the core dispersed into two fundamental domains: Akidah and Akhlak (Lafta, 2025). The realm of Faith includes the sub-concepts of Tauhid Uluhiyah, Tauhid Rububiyah, Asma wa Sifat, and Faith in the Messenger, while the realm of Morality contains the sub-concepts of Morality of Mahmudah, Morality of Mazmumah, Relationship with Allah, and Social Relations. This visual representation maximizes the capacity of students to understand the interrelationship between concepts in the subject of Moral Faith.

DISCUSSION

Data Collection Sources and Techniques

The determination of data sources was carried out through structured classification to ensure the validity and accuracy of the information, with primary data collected through intensive interviews as well as participatory observation combining visual, auditory, and interrogative observations. The triangulation process applied resulted in a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Additional information was obtained from institutional documentation and literature reviews on the teaching practice of Akidah Akhlak, supported by complementary research sources (Afifah, 2025). The use of this additional information aims to strengthen the main findings as well as present cross-examination to optimize the validity and reliability of the research results.

The main information is sourced from original field information that is relevant to the focus of the study, with the core speakers including teachers of the subject of Moral Faith and level VIII learners of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Raudhatul Mujawwidin Rimbo Bujang Tebo who have practical experience in the application of conceptual mapping. Data collection was carried out through methodological triangulation that included three complementary approaches (Schlunegger et al., 2024): participatory observation to obtain direct empirical information related to learning dynamics; structured interviews are limited to exploring the subjective point of view of the source; as well as a documentation review that presents contextual information in the form of learner profiles, class composition, and Akidah Akhlak learning archives as confirmation as well as refinement of the main information.

Implementation of Concept Map Strategy in Learning Moral Beliefs

Stages of Concept Map Preparation

The preparation stage is a crucial foundation in the implementation of concept map strategies for learning Moral Faith. Educators conduct a comprehensive study of the substance of class VIII learning which includes the basic principles of Tawheed, the understanding of Asmaul Husna, and moral values in daily practice (Febriani et al., 2022). The identification process is carried out in a structured manner to map the main ideas and their derivatives, building a logical framework that is easy for students to digest. Hierarchical design is designed by placing the central idea at the center, then evolving into more detailed and specific branches of ideas. The preparation of learning facilities includes the procurement of visual media such as large worksheets, colorful stationery, and other supporting materials to concretize abstract concepts into meaningful visual representations for students.

Stages of Learning Implementation with Concept Map

The implementation of learning begins with the introduction of concept maps through practical demonstrations and descriptions of their role in the learning process. Educators present material using projected visualizations, explaining each component and the relationship between its elements. Learning is designed to be interactive by involving the active participation of learners through question and answer sessions, group discussions, and idea contributions (Arif, Aziz, et al., 2023; Tandon et al., 2025). The explanation of the correlation between ideas is presented systematically using connector lines, color variations, and special symbols that make it easier to understand how each concept is interconnected and forms a complete and meaningful knowledge framework.

Stages of Evaluation and Reflection

Evaluation of students' abilities is carried out through direct observation, verbal question and answer sessions, and assignments both individually and collaboratively. Educators assess the effectiveness of the concept map method by observing the intensity of student involvement and the quality of the responses delivered. Input was obtained through class discussions and simple survey instruments, followed by educators' self-reflection on the implementation process. Success indicators include increased student activity and more optimal mastery of the material, while challenges are found in the limited time allocation and substance complexity of some learning topics that require adjustments to delivery strategies.

Table 3. Implementation Stages

Implementation Stages	Success Indicators		Challenges Faced		
Preparation	Well-structured concept map		Material analysis is time-consuming		
Implementation	Increased	student	Limited time management		
	participation				
Evaluation	Improved	student	Difficulty	measuring	abstract
	understanding		comprehension		

The Effectiveness of Concept Maps in Improving Material Understanding

Increasing Understanding of the Concept of Faith

The application of concept maps has proven to be effective in increasing the mastery of Akidah material in students. The understanding of Tawheed Uluhiyah, namely the perception of Allah in the aspect of worship and Tawheed Rububiyah as an acknowledgment of His oneness in creation, becomes more comprehensive through a visual representation of the relationship between the two

(Maula et al., 2024). The mastery of Asma wa Trait of Allah has increased significantly when presented in a structured framework accompanied by applicative illustrations. The understanding of faith in the Apostles also showed substantial progress, with the retention and mastery of material reaching an average of seventy-eight percent of all grade VIII students who attended the course.

Increased Understanding of the Concept of Morality

The presentation of a concept map with applicative examples facilitates the understanding of Mahmudah Morality (patience, honesty, gratitude) and increases the introduction of Mazmumah Morals (hasad, envy, takabbur) through visual contrast with positive morals (Lafta, 2025). In addition, the relationship with Allah and Islamic social relations became more integrated because the relationship between the elements was clearly displayed.

Table 4. Dimension of Understanding

Dimension of Understanding	Percentage Increase	Attainment Rate
The Concept of Faith	74%	Good
The Concept of Morality	82%	Excellent
Material Retention	78%	Good

Increasing Student Participation and Engagement

Student engagement in learning activities shows significant progress, with a sharp increase in the intensity of discussion participation and question-asking (Sartania et al., 2022) Enthusiasm and motivation to learn have significantly increased thanks to the visual and interactive approaches implemented. Constructive interactions between students and with educators have become more dynamic, creating a collaborative and conducive classroom atmosphere. Students' creativity in constructing understanding develops optimally when they are actively involved in compiling or refining concept maps through group work, encouraging the exploration of ideas and critical thinking in learning.

Constraints and Obstacles in the Implementation of Concept Maps

Obstacles from Technical and Pedagogical Aspects

The availability of learning facilities and infrastructure still faces limitations, particularly in the provision of digital technology for interactive and dynamic concept map visualization. Limited time allocation is an obstacle to developing a comprehensive and in-depth concept map structure. The complexity of concept map development requires specialized competencies, while educators' capabilities in designing effective concept maps still require strengthening through ongoing professional training programs to optimize the implementation of this visual learning method in the context of Akidah Akhlak learning.

Obstacles of Generation Z Student Characteristics

The varying levels of students' initial understanding require different adaptive approaches for each learning group. The diversity of student learning styles means that a single concept map is not always optimal for all students. Reliance on digital technology makes static concept maps in conventional media less engaging for some students (Fatawi et al., 2020). Disparities in concentration and focus pose a challenge in maintaining student attention throughout learning activities, necessitating a strategy of varying methods and stimuli that can comprehensively accommodate individual student needs.

Teachers' Efforts to Overcome Obstacles and Optimize Learning

Teacher Strategies for Overcoming Technical Barriers

Media utilization was adapted by creatively optimizing paper, colored stationery, and whiteboards to compensate for the limitations of digital technology. Learning time management was improved through the design of simple yet effective concept maps that could be completed within a limited time (Berthelsen & Tannert, 2020). Developing educator competencies through workshops and peer-teaching discussions contributed to improving capabilities in designing high-quality concept maps. Collaboration among fellow educators facilitated the exchange of experiences and innovative solutions in implementing visual learning methods, creating a mutually supportive professional learning community for continuous improvement in the pedagogical practices of Akidah Akhlak learning.

Generasi Z Teacher Strategies in Accommodating the Characteristics of Generation Z Students

Differentiated learning is implemented through the development of concept maps with varying complexity tailored to individual student capabilities. Digital technology integration is implemented using concept mapping applications such as Coggle or Mind Meister when facilities are available (Veiga et al., 2024). Cooperative and collaborative learning facilitate students with different learning preferences to contribute and complement each other. Motivation and active engagement are strengthened through appreciation, constructive feedback, and leadership opportunities in group activities, making learning more meaningful and aligning with the dynamic, interactive, and collaborative learning experiences that utilize technology in knowledge construction.

The findings show that the implementation of the concept map takes place through three stages of preparation, implementation, and evaluation that form a systematic learning flow and increase student involvement in constructing relationships between the concepts of Akidah Akhlak (Rahayu et al., 2020). This pattern is in line with the literature that positions concept maps as visual-hierarchical representations to organize information and clarify abstract concept relationships. Different from studies that highlight concept maps as media products, this study emphasizes the dimensions of the process: teachers select core concepts, compile hierarchies, and then facilitate collaborative discussions to test the interconnectedness between ideas. His theoretical contribution is the strengthening of Islamic educational pedagogy that combines constructivism with the internalization of values; Concept maps are mediators between cognitive understanding and affective reflection. The practical implication is that teachers need value dialogue, triggering questions, and formative feedback to track and correct misconceptions in a gradual and measurable manner (Dahal, 2025). In addition, student concept map documentation can be used as a learning archive that shows the development of the concept network over time, so that the learning process is more transparent and can be reflected together in each meeting.

In the achievement dimension, the data showed an increase in understanding of the concept of faith (74), the concept of morality (82), and material retention (78) after the application of the concept map. These findings are consistent with previous studies that stated concept maps improve retention and comprehension because the material is more structured, concise, and easy to review. However, this study adds that the improvement is not only due to visualization, but also due to learning interactions: students actively ask questions, negotiate meanings, and correct concept relationships in groups. In the perspective of Islamic education theory, this emphasizes the integration of the dimensions of ta'lim (knowledge transfer) and tarbiyah (character formation) through cognitive activities accompanied by the meaning of values (Ridwan, 2025). Practically, achievement numbers can be read as formative indicators to photograph conceptual progress and help teachers determine remedial and enrichment follow-ups. The use of this indicator is still placed in a qualitative frame, namely as a marker of change trends, not a claim of statistical generalization across populations.

Thus, the interpretation of the findings maintains descriptive depth and at the same time accountability of learning in the context of the local madrasah.

Increased student participation and motivation reinforce the argument that concept maps are relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z who tend to be visual, collaborative, and quickly lose focus on monotonous learning (Arif, bin Abd Aziz, et al., 2023; Lotfi et al., 2025). This is in line with the literature that emphasizes the need for a student-centered approach and creative activities to respond to 21st-century learning. This study shows that engagement increases when teachers give clear roles in the group (core concept compilers, relationship liaison, and presenters), so that learning responsibilities are distributed and classroom control is more effective. From the perspective of Islamic education, participation is not just classroom management, but a prerequisite for internalizing morals through attitude training (Joshi et al., 2024): discipline, mutual respect, and dialogue manners. The practical implication is the use of a participation rubric that assesses the quality of contributions, the accuracy of concept relationships, and the ethics of scientific communication in the classroom. With this rubric, students learn that the accuracy of arguments and manners in expressing opinions is as important as the courage to speak, so that learning has *tarbawi* value, not just cognitive. This practice helps build a civilized, reflective collaborative learning culture.

Although effective, the implementation of concept maps faces technical and pedagogical obstacles, especially time constraints, variations in teachers' competencies in designing concept maps, and limitations in digital infrastructure. These barriers are in line with studies that highlight that learning innovation is often hampered by educators' resources and readiness, so that success is determined not only by methods, but also by school ecology (Bamgboye & Avellán, 2025). This research operationalizes constraints as an explanatory factor: complex material demands a simplification of the hierarchy, while differences in students' initial abilities require task differentiation. In terms of Islamic education theory, the constraint emphasizes the principle of *maslahat* and gradual (*tadarruj*), namely that innovation must be realistic, proportional, and not burdensome. The practical implication is that madrasahs need institutional support in the form of concept map design training, template banks, and flexible time allocation for high-value abstract topics (Ramzeddine, 2025). This support also includes academic supervision that provides feedback on the quality of the concept map, so that good practice standards are maintained and do not depend on one teacher on an ongoing basis in the local madrasah.

Teachers' adaptive strategies of optimizing simple media, implementing differentiation, and integrating concept map applications when facilities are available show that concept maps can be applied across resource conditions without losing their pedagogical essence (Jackson et al., 2023). These findings expand on previous research by emphasizing that the key to innovation sustainability lies in teachers' design skills, not just media choices. Theoretically, this research contributes to the theory of Islamic education by positioning concept maps as an integrative tool that facilitates the connection of faith-science-charity: students map concepts, reflect on meaning, and then discuss applicative examples in everyday life (Qomusuddin et al., 2025). Practically, madrasahs can adopt implementation packages: preparation (concept analysis), implementation (collaborative discussion), and evaluation (reflection and feedback), accompanied by selective use of digital. Further research can assess the sustainability impact on moral behavior outside the classroom as well as school-family partnerships. This agenda is important to assess whether conceptual understanding is truly transformed into stable moral habits in the social context of students. In addition, longitudinal evaluations can map environmental factors that reinforce or weaken internalization.

Implications in the Context of Moral Faith Education for Generation Z

Moral Faith Education must be used to teach Generation Z fundamental values, tolerance, and peace in order to achieve healthy and balanced religious moderation (Rehayati et al., 2023). The implementation of concept maps in learning *Akidah Akhlak* contributes significantly to the formation

of students' character with quality and noble morals in accordance with Islamic values, including integrity, discipline, personal responsibility, and multicultural tolerance. Concept maps facilitate holistic learning that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in one cohesive and comprehensive learning framework, so that students not only understand concepts academically but also internalize those values in the manifestations of their daily living practices consistently.

The implementation of contemporary learning strategies for Generation Z demands the integration of digital technologies that are in line with their cognitive preferences. The adoption of Learning Management Systems (LMS) provides flexible learning accessibility, while gamification apps such as Quizizz and Kahoot have been shown to accelerate students' intrinsic motivation through fun competitions (Arif, 2024; Sari, 2025). Furthermore, the use of Instagram and TikTok social media platforms facilitates the dissemination of Akidah Akhlak learning content creatively and contextually. These findings confirm that the integration of technology in PAI learning not only answers the challenges of digitizing education, but also builds a dynamic, participatory, and student-centered learning ecosystem according to the religious characteristics of Generation Z. The adoption of digital technology includes learning applications, interactive videos, and Islamic content on social media that are able to optimize the engagement of Generation Z students. Although digital technology increases student active participation, its implementation requires strict supervision to anticipate the negative impact of unmoderated use of technology, so that learning goals are still optimally achieved.

The innovative Design For Change method offers a transformative strategy for PAI educators in integrating religious humanistic values to Generation Z through classroom learning that adopts a diversification of technology-based methods and media (Sabrina & Nurfuadi, 2023). The implementation of this approach results in a significant increase in student enthusiasm for learning, fostering religiosity, sensitivity to humanitarian problems, and collaborative ability in problem solving. The diffusion of awareness of these values is amplified through the internet and social media platforms that are the digital ecosystem of Generation Z, allowing learning to expand beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom to the virtual space they access in their daily lives.

Effective learning strategies integrate character building approaches through habituation and example. The implementation of Ta'lim Muta'alim learning in constructing the attitude of ta'dzim indicates that educators design Expository Learning Strategies (SPE) and Inquiry Learning Strategies (SPI), utilize learning media based on the Book of Bare and Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim Translations, and apply lecture, deductive, bandongan, and sorogan methods (Andrean & Muqowim, 2020). The cultivation of students' ta'dzim attitudes is operationalized through two main patterns: habituation and modeling. The manifestation of students' ta'dzim attitude towards educators is reflected in respecting knowledge and teachers, avoiding walking ahead or bowing when passing in front of the teacher, executing the teacher's instructions such as contributing to cleaning the madrasah area, reciting the waqiah letter before the Dhuha prayer, carrying out the Dhuha prayer in congregation, folding the carpet, and actively participating in activities that are congruent with the vision and mission of the madrasah. These findings recommend educational institutions and practitioners to explore the development of a more comprehensive learning approach in shaping ta'dzim attitudes in Generation Z. The integrated approach combines digital technology, innovative Design for Change methods, and habituation and examples to build a holistic learning ecosystem for Generation Z. With this comprehensive strategy, students not only understand the Moral Faith theoretically, but also experience character transformation reflected in daily behavior, so that a generation with intellectual insight, noble character, religious, and socially sensitive is formed according to Islamic teachings.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the concept map strategy in learning Akidah Akhlak has proven to be effective as a transformative pedagogical instrument for grade VIII students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah, by shifting the orientation of conventional learning towards a progressive approach that

places students as active subjects in the construction of knowledge. Through systematic stages ranging from planning, interactive execution, to continuous evaluation, the concept map facilitates the achievement of optimal learning outcomes by increasing the understanding of faith by 74%, mastery of moral material by 82%, and knowledge retention by 78%, and reflected in active participation and intrinsic motivation of students. Despite facing infrastructure limitations, time management, and the heterogeneity of Generation Z's learning style, educators are able to develop adaptive approaches through simple media optimization, digital technology integration, and the application of inclusive cooperative models, so that concept maps become a holistic medium that unites cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions.

The novelty of this research lies in the mapping of the implementation of concept maps end-to-end (preparation-implementation-evaluation) in the context of religious Generation Z students, by operationalizing technical-pedagogical constraints and teachers' adaptive strategies as an integral part of the learning process. The contribution can be seen in the availability of a Akidah Akhlak learning practice model that is responsive to the characteristics of Generation Z while providing achievement indicators for formative evaluation, with practical implications in the form of strengthening teacher capacity through continuous training, time management, facilitation of value discussions, and institutional support in the provision of digital learning resources. The limitations of the study include the scope of a single case study, the focus of the results is more pronounced on concept understanding and class participation than the internalization of values outside of learning, as well as the influence of limited means and variations in students' abilities. Follow-up research recommendations include multi-site replication, longitudinal studies, comparison of the effectiveness of paper-based and digital concept maps, and a combination of qualitative approaches with more structured formative assessment instruments.

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