



Project-Based Learning Innovation in Islamic Education: Enhancing Students' Spiritual Competence at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima

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Abstract

Research Objective– This study aims to examine how Project-Based Learning (PjBL) functions as an instructional innovation in Islamic education to enhance students' spiritual competence at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima. The research focuses on understanding the pedagogical processes, learning experiences, and spiritual outcomes generated through the implementation of PjBL in Islamic education classrooms.

Methodology– Employing a qualitative case study design, the research involved Islamic education teachers, students of grades VIII–IX, and school administrators at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, enabling an in-depth exploration of teaching practices and student learning experiences. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, supported by triangulation of sources and methods to ensure credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the findings.

Findings– The findings reveal that PjBL significantly enhances students' spiritual competence through the deeper internalization of Islamic values, collaborative spiritual practices, reflective and critical thinking, and the observable integration of religious values into daily behavior. Students demonstrated increased moral awareness, ethical reasoning, responsibility, social empathy, and active engagement in faith-based practices both inside and outside the classroom.

Research Implications/Limitations– The study highlights PjBL as an effective model for holistic Islamic education but is limited to a single institutional context, restricting broader generalization.

Originality/Value– This research contributes original insights by foregrounding spiritual competence as a core outcome of PjBL within the Muhammadiyah madrasah context, enriching discourse on innovative Islamic education pedagogy.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education occupies a strategic position in shaping students' spiritual, moral, and ethical development, particularly at the level of Islamic junior secondary education (*Madrasah Tsanawiyah*). Beyond the transmission of religious knowledge, Islamic education is expected to cultivate students' spiritual competence, encompassing religious awareness, internalization of Islamic values, and the ability to translate faith into reflective attitudes and daily practices.^{1, 2, 3} However, numerous studies indicate that Islamic education learning in schools often remains dominated by teacher-centered instruction, rote memorization, and cognitive-oriented assessment, which limits students' opportunities to experience meaningful and transformative spiritual learning.^{4, 5, 6}

This pedagogical challenge becomes increasingly significant in the context of contemporary educational reform in Indonesia, which emphasizes learner autonomy, contextual learning, and competency-based education. In response, innovative learning models that actively engage students in authentic and reflective learning experiences are urgently required.^{7, 8} One instructional approach that has gained growing attention is Project-Based Learning (PjBL), a student-centered model that integrates inquiry, collaboration, and real-world problem solving into the learning process. In the broader educational literature, PjBL has been shown to promote higher-order thinking skills, learner motivation, and meaningful learning outcomes.^{9, 10}

Within the domain of Islamic education, several recent studies suggest that PjBL has the potential to enhance students' engagement and support the development of religious

¹ R. Putra, A. L., Asrori, A., & Rusman, "Pembentukan Karakter Siswa Peduli Lingkungan Berbasis Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin SMP Saim," *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (2023): 492–500, <https://doi.org/10.24127/att.v7i2.3003>.

² Agiel Laksamana Putra, Asrori Asrori, dan Rusman Rusman, "Pembentukan Karakter Siswa Peduli Lingkungan Berbasis Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin SMP Saim," *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (2023): 492–500, <https://doi.org/10.24127/att.v7i2.3003>

³ Muhammad Hambal Shafwan and Asrori Asrori, "Implementation of the Al-Salaf Al-Sāliḥ Curriculum and Santri Religious Attitudes in Pesantren," *At-Ta'dib* 20, no. 2 (2026): 53–66, <https://doi.org/10.21111/attadib.v20i2.14909>

⁴ Muhaimin, *Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam: Di Sekolah, Madrasah, dan Perguruan Tinggi* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2012), 45–47

⁵ Asrori Asrori and Riki Dwi Angga Saputro, "The Relationship Between Differentiated Instruction and Academic Achievement in the Teaching of Islamic Education Under Indonesia's Independent Curriculum," *Al-Mudarris: Journal of Education* 8, no. 1 (2025): 82–99, <https://doi.org/10.32478/5728eq20>

⁶ Febriani Suci Islamiati, Asrori Asrori, and Mukhammad Bakhruddin, "Evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education Using Goal-Free Evaluation: An Analysis of Instructional and Non-Instructional Impacts on Students' Development," *Al-Mudarris: Journal of Education* 8, no. 2 (2025): 240–56, <https://doi.org/10.32478/epw0cn83>

⁷ Aldo Redho Syam, Idharul Haq Jaya Diningrat, Happy Susanto, and Asrori Asrori, "Buya Hamka's Sufi Thought and Its Relevance to Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Studia Religia: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2025): 203–220, <https://doi.org/10.30651/sr.v9i02.26435>

⁸ Hafshah Safrindra F., Asrori, and Rusman, "Questions Students Have Method: Improvement Creativity and Learning Outcomes in Islamic Education," *Risalah Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 9, no. 2 (2023): 552–64, https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal_risalah.v9i2.478

⁹ John W. Thomas, *A Review of Research on Project-Based Learning* (San Rafael, CA: Autodesk Foundation, 2000), 3–5

¹⁰ Rosa Sánchez-García and Salvador Reyes-de-Cózar, "Enhancing Project-Based Learning: A Framework for Optimizing Structural Design and Implementation—A Systematic Review with a Sustainable Focus," *Sustainability* 17, no. 11 (2025): 4978, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17114978>

character by connecting Islamic teachings with lived experiences.^{11, 12, 13} Research indicates that project-based approaches enable students to actively explore Islamic values, engage in reflective practices, and construct personal meaning from religious concepts rather than merely memorizing doctrinal content.^{14, 15} Nevertheless, most existing studies on PjBL in Islamic education tend to focus on general learning outcomes such as student motivation, critical thinking, or character education, while spiritual competence as a distinct and measurable educational outcome remains underexplored.¹⁶

Moreover, empirical research examining the implementation of PjBL in *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*, particularly within Muhammadiyah educational institutions, is still limited. Muhammadiyah schools are characterized by their emphasis on *Islam Berkemajuan*, which integrates faith, rationality, and social responsibility.¹⁷ Despite this distinctive educational orientation, few studies have systematically investigated how innovative pedagogical models such as PjBL can be aligned with Muhammadiyah values to strengthen students' spiritual competence in concrete classroom settings. Additionally, regional contexts outside major urban centers—such as Bima—remain underrepresented in the literature, resulting in a lack of contextualized evidence on Islamic education innovation in diverse sociocultural environments.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to address existing gaps by examining project-based learning as an instructional innovation in Islamic education aimed explicitly at enhancing students' spiritual competence at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima. Unlike prior studies that emphasize cognitive or character-related outcomes, this research foregrounds spiritual competence as a central pedagogical objective and investigates how PjBL facilitates students' internalization of Islamic values through experiential and reflective learning activities. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of project-based pedagogy, spiritual competence as an analytical construct, and the contextual framework of Muhammadiyah Islamic education at

¹¹ Elvy Gustina, Zulfani Sesmiarni, Siska Margareta, Diana Sartika, and Syafrudin Syafrudin, "Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education: Implementing Religious Moderation Values Through Student Collaborative Projects," *International Journal of Islamic Educational Research* 2, no. 4 (2025): 71–80, <https://doi.org/10.61132/ijier.v2i4.435>

¹² Dawamul Khikam, Asrori Asrori, Shokhibul Arifin, Mohamed Esse Mohamoud, and Lailatul Fithriyah Azzakiyah, "Implementation of Teachers' Emotional, Moral, and Spiritual Competencies Through the *Guru Penggerak* Program," *Thawalib: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2025): 275–86, <https://doi.org/10.54150/thawalib.v6i2.546>

¹³ Saiful Anwar, Asrori Asrori, Moh. Alwi Yusron, dan Lina Nur Sabrina, "Konsep Pendidikan Furusiyah Ibnu Qayyim Al-Jauziyyah dan Relevansinya dengan Pendidikan Kontemporer," *PAIDA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam UNIMUDA* 2, no. 2 (2023): 253–264, <https://doi.org/10.36232/paida.v2i2.4614>

¹⁴ Risliah Izzah Rozanah, Asrori Asrori, dan Rusman Rusman, *Model Case Based Learning (CBL) untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Pemecahan Masalah pada Pembelajaran Al Islam* (Gresik: Zamron Presindo, 2024).

¹⁵ Asrori Asrori, Tobroni Tobroni, Samsurizal Yazid, dan Abd. Hadi, *Kurikulum Pesantren LDII dalam Membentuk Karakter Muslim Sejati di Pondok Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri* (Yogyakarta: Bildung, 2024).

¹⁶ Andriani Andriani, Masita Masita, and Randitha Missouri, "Application of Project Based Learning Method in Improving Students' Learning Motivation in Islamic Religious Education Lessons," *Journal of Instructional and Development Researches* 5, no. 2 (2025): 159–65, <https://doi.org/10.53621/jider.v5i2.507>

¹⁷ Budi Sihabudin and Ahmad Sukandar, "Project-Based Learning Strategy in Islamic Religious Education to Enhance Students' Critical Thinking Skills," *Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.30868/im.v8i02.8447>

the madrasah level, thereby contributing both empirical evidence and conceptual insights to the discourse on innovative Islamic education learning in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to examine the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as an instructional innovation in Islamic education and its role in enhancing students' spiritual competence at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because spiritual competence represents a complex, context-bound construct that involves internal processes such as religious awareness, value internalization, and reflective practice, which cannot be adequately captured through purely quantitative measurement. Qualitative case studies are particularly effective in exploring educational innovations within their real-life settings and in generating in-depth insights into pedagogical processes and meanings constructed by participants.¹⁸

The research was conducted at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima, an Islamic junior secondary school operating under the Muhammadiyah educational framework, which emphasizes the integration of faith, knowledge, and moral action. This institutional context provides a relevant setting for examining the alignment between project-based pedagogy and the Muhammadiyah vision of *Islam Berkemajuan*. The participants included Islamic education teachers, students in grades VIII and IX, and school administrators who were directly involved in the planning and implementation of PjBL activities. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on those who possessed experiential knowledge of project-based PAI learning and its intended spiritual outcomes.¹⁹

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to ensure depth and credibility. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Islamic education teachers and school leaders to explore their pedagogical rationales, instructional strategies, and perceptions of students' spiritual development through project-based learning. Second, non-participant classroom observations were carried out during Islamic education project activities to document students' engagement, collaboration, and observable expressions of spiritual attitudes, such as responsibility, sincerity, and reflection. Third, document analysis was employed to examine lesson plans, project guidelines, assessment rubrics, and students' reflective journals, with particular attention to how spiritual competence was embedded within learning objectives and evaluation criteria. The use of multiple data sources aligns with established qualitative research practices aimed at capturing the complexity of educational phenomena.²⁰

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following an inductive coding process. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were systematically coded to identify recurring themes related to PjBL implementation, learning experiences, and indicators of spiritual competence. These themes were then categorized and interpreted to

¹⁸ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 15–18.

¹⁹ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 158–161

²⁰ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2020), 28–33.

construct a coherent explanation of how project-based learning facilitates the internalization of Islamic values and supports students' spiritual growth. This analytical procedure enabled the researchers to move beyond surface descriptions and develop conceptually grounded insights into the relationship between pedagogical innovation and spiritual learning outcomes.²¹

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, as well as source triangulation involving teachers, students, and administrators. Member checking was conducted to validate the accuracy of interpretations, while prolonged engagement in the field strengthened contextual understanding. Ethical considerations were carefully observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, in accordance with established standards for educational research.²²

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic education at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima produced meaningful improvements in students' spiritual competence, manifested across multiple dimensions including internalization of Islamic values, collaborative spiritual practices, reflective thinking, integration of values into daily life, and overall engagement in learning activities.

Internalization of Islamic Values

The students demonstrated a substantial deepening of understanding and internalization of Islamic teachings through engagement in project-based learning activities. Unlike traditional lecture-based approaches, PjBL required students to actively apply religious principles in concrete, meaningful contexts. During Qur'anic reflection projects, students were encouraged to not only read and memorize selected verses but also to analyze their ethical implications and discuss their relevance in real-life situations. Through these activities, students expressed personal insights on moral conduct, interpersonal relationships, and ethical decision-making, demonstrating reflective spiritual reasoning.

In addition, students participated in small social service projects, such as organizing donation campaigns for underprivileged community members and conducting school-based environmental initiatives aligned with Islamic teachings. These activities encouraged students to translate theoretical knowledge into action, fostering both moral responsibility and social awareness. Observational data showed that students not only completed the tasks effectively but also proactively proposed new ideas and strategies, reflecting an increasing sense of ownership over their spiritual development.

Analysis of reflective journals and teacher interviews revealed that approximately 85% of students demonstrated increased awareness in applying Islamic principles such as honesty,

²¹ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

²² Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 120–123.

patience, sincerity, and responsibility in daily life. Students frequently wrote about situations where they needed to act ethically in group projects or support peers in morally challenging situations. Furthermore, students' reflections highlighted self-assessment and moral reasoning, showing that they could identify gaps between their intentions and actions and take steps to align behavior with Islamic ethics. These findings suggest that PjBL fosters not only knowledge of religious teachings but also deep personal engagement with moral and spiritual values, providing a foundation for sustained ethical behavior beyond the classroom.

Collaborative Spiritual Practices

The group-oriented design of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) significantly supported the development of collaborative spiritual practices among students at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima. Working in teams to complete projects required students not only to divide tasks and negotiate responsibilities but also to actively support one another in ethically guided decision-making. This collaborative environment fostered the cultivation of interpersonal virtues such as empathy, patience, tolerance, and mutual respect, which were consistently observed during classroom activities and project sessions.

Observation data revealed that students frequently mediated minor conflicts within their groups, often referencing Islamic ethical principles to guide their decisions. For instance, when disagreements arose regarding task assignments, students applied concepts such as fairness (*'adl*) and cooperation (*ta'awun*) to negotiate solutions, demonstrating an ability to apply moral reasoning in social contexts. Structured peer evaluations and group reflections further reinforced these behaviors, as students provided constructive feedback and reminded each other of the importance of sincerity, honesty, and accountability in completing their tasks.

Teachers noted that collaborative projects strengthened social cohesion and moral responsibility, as students became more aware of how their actions affected others. During a project on Qur'anic ethics, for example, one group of students took the initiative to ensure that all members adhered to standards of honesty and fairness in both research and presentation stages. Such behaviors indicate that PjBL fosters a social dimension of spiritual competence, where learning extends beyond individual knowledge to include ethical interaction, mutual support, and shared moral accountability.

Moreover, reflective journals showed that students internalized lessons learned from collaborative experiences, often mentioning insights such as the value of teamwork, patience in resolving disagreements, and the importance of supporting peers in ethically consistent ways. These reflections suggest that the collaborative nature of PjBL not only enhances social skills but also nurtures internalized spiritual attitudes, creating a foundation for sustained ethical and moral conduct in both school and community settings.

Overall, the findings highlight that collaborative PjBL experiences provide students with opportunities to practice Islamic values in real-life group contexts, bridging the gap between theory and practice. By engaging in ethically guided teamwork, students not only develop interpersonal competencies but also strengthen their spiritual awareness through shared moral experiences, which is a crucial aspect of holistic Islamic education.

Reflective and Critical Thinking

Reflective and critical thinking emerged as a key outcome of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic education. Students were encouraged to maintain reflective journals and actively participate in guided reflection sessions to analyze the ethical and spiritual dimensions of their project work. Through these structured reflections, students frequently engaged with moral dilemmas, ethical reasoning, and personal growth challenges, demonstrating an evolving capacity to critically evaluate both their own behavior and that of their peers in alignment with Islamic principles.

For instance, during a social care project, students reflected on how the Qur'anic concept of *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) could guide practical problem-solving within their community initiatives. They discussed scenarios in which helping others might require balancing fairness, effort, and compassion, showing that they were integrating cognitive understanding with affective awareness and spiritual values. Observations by teachers further revealed that students were increasingly willing to question assumptions, consider alternative approaches, and anticipate the consequences of their actions, indicating higher-order thinking beyond rote memorization or superficial comprehension.

Analysis of students' journals demonstrated not only awareness of ethical and spiritual norms but also the ability to plan corrective or improvement actions. For example, several students noted areas where they had previously acted impatiently or self-centeredly during group projects and committed to practicing patience, sincerity, and fairness in subsequent activities. These findings suggest that PjBL fosters metacognitive reflection and moral reasoning, enabling students to internalize Islamic values and apply them thoughtfully across contexts.

Observable Integration of Spiritual Values in Daily Life

One of the most significant outcomes of PjBL was the observable integration of spiritual values into students' everyday behavior. Teacher observations and project assessments indicated that students were increasingly able to translate religious teachings into consistent, practical actions. Punctuality in prayer, ethical conduct in group tasks, voluntary participation in school religious activities, and proactive social service engagement were among the behaviors that reflected students' internalized spiritual competence.

Students frequently demonstrated initiative and responsibility, applying lessons learned from project experiences to peer interactions and community engagement. For example, during a project on Qur'anic ethics, students voluntarily organized follow-up activities that promoted honesty, cooperation, and mutual respect within their school environment. Such behaviors illustrate that PjBL not only enhances cognitive understanding but also bridges the gap between learning and practice, allowing students to embody Islamic values authentically in their daily lives.

Furthermore, reflective journals corroborated these observations, as students documented moments when they consciously chose ethical responses in challenging situations. Several students described how they applied patience, empathy, and fairness in resolving conflicts with peers or helping classmates in need. This behavioral manifestation of spiritual competence demonstrates that PjBL provides a structured yet flexible platform for

students to practice and reinforce moral and spiritual values through active participation, collaboration, and real-life application.

Overall, the findings indicate that PjBL in Islamic education at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima facilitates a holistic spiritual development, combining knowledge acquisition, reflective thinking, social collaboration, and practical ethical behavior. This approach enables students to not only understand Islamic teachings intellectually but also internalize, embody, and act upon these principles consistently, which is central to fostering meaningful spiritual competence.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic education at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima has contributed meaningfully to the development of students' spiritual competence, extending beyond cognitive knowledge to include moral reasoning, reflective capacity, and practical application of Islamic values. These outcomes align with existing research that emphasizes the holistic benefits of PjBL in religious education, particularly in fostering reflective, collaborative, and contextualized learning experiences. For instance, prior studies have shown that PjBL not only enhances students' active engagement and critical skills in PAI but also cultivates deeper engagement with religious content through meaningful, real-world projects.^{23,24,25}

The internalization of values and collaborative spiritual practices observed in this study supports arguments in the literature that project-based approaches facilitate the integration of moral and social dimensions within learning contexts. Study on PjBL in Islamic education, found that collaborative project work supports the internalization of religious moderation values, fostering social skills, empathy, and inclusive attitudes that are part of spiritual-ethical development.^{26, 27, 28} This resonates with the current findings where students regularly negotiated ethical decisions and supported one another in ways grounded in Islamic ethical principles, suggesting that spiritual acquisition in PjBL is not solely individual but inherently social.

²³ Ahmad Izzul Haq, M. Yusuf Tahir, and Nursalam, "The Influence of Project-Based Learning on Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Islamic Religious Education," *Journal of Islamic Education* 10, no. 2 (2025): <https://doi.org/10.35723/jie.v10i2.691>

²⁴ Sharifah Aini, Rusman Rusman, dan Asrori Asrori, *Model Scramble pada Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Membentuk Berpikir Kritis Siswa* (Gresik: Zamron Presindo, 2024)

²⁵ Dewi Fannisa Putri Rohim, Asrori Asrori, dan Moch. Charis Hidayat, *Model Pembelajaran Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) untuk Meningkatkan Pemahaman Siswa dalam Membaca dan Menulis Al-Qur'an* (Gresik: Zamron Presindo, 2024).

²⁶ Elvy Gustina et al., "Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education: Implementing Religious Moderation Values Through Student Collaborative Projects," *International Journal of Islamic Educational Research* 2, no. 4 (2025): <https://doi.org/10.61132/ijier.v2i4.435>

²⁷ Asrori, A. "The Concept of Spiritual Education in the Thought of Said Nursi." *Al-Lubab: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Dan Keagamaan Islam* 11, no. 1 (2025): 17–27. <https://doi.org/10.19120/al-lubab.v11i1.6171>.

²⁸ Asrori, Asrori., & Tho'at, Stiawan. "The Concept of Learning Islamic Education Based on Multicultural in Establishing Religious Moderation." In *Annual Conference on Islamic Education*, 819–31. PPPAI, 2022. <http://acied.pp-paiindonesia.org/index.php/acied/article/view/42>.

Moreover, reflective and critical thinking, another central outcome in the present study, reflects broader evidence in PjBL research that this model encourages higher-order cognitive processes. While much of the literature on PjBL in Islamic education contexts emphasizes improvements in critical thinking and academic achievement,²⁹ the current findings extend this by showing how reflection is intertwined with spiritual reasoning and ethical self-evaluation. Students' reflective journals revealed deep engagement with moral dilemmas and value application in daily life, which suggests that orienting PjBL tasks toward ethical and spiritual questions encourages reflective spiritual growth rather than mere task completion.

Additionally, the observable translation of spiritual values into daily behaviors reinforces arguments that experiential learning models like PjBL effectively bridge theory and practice. Students demonstrated increased punctuality in prayer, ethical conduct, and voluntary participation in school religious activities, indicating that internalized values were manifest in observable behavior. This supports broader pedagogical discussions that positioning learning around real-world, faith-aligned projects can create enduring behavioral and spiritual effects, not only cognitive gains.^{30,31}

However, while these findings underscore the potential of PjBL to strengthen spiritual competence, they also point to challenges in operationalizing spiritual outcomes in formal religious education. Unlike cognitive or skill-based outcomes that are often measurable through standardized instruments, spiritual competence is contextually and experientially constructed, requiring nuanced interpretive approaches. This underscores the need for future research to develop validated instruments and frameworks that can systematically capture spiritual growth within innovative pedagogies such as PjBL.

In sum, this study's findings contribute to a growing body of evidence that innovative, student-centered pedagogies in Islamic education can enhance not only academic and critical skills but also spiritual awareness, moral reasoning, and value embodiment. The integration of PjBL with Islamic principles offers a promising avenue for educators seeking to advance holistic learning outcomes that are aligned with both religious goals and contemporary educational expectations.

CONCLUSION

This study provides evidence that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an effective instructional approach for enhancing spiritual competence in Islamic education at MTs Muhammadiyah Bima. The findings demonstrate that PjBL facilitates the internalization of Islamic values, nurtures collaborative spiritual practices, promotes reflective and critical

²⁹ Budi Sihabudin and Ahmad Sukandar, "Project-Based Learning Strategy in Islamic Religious Education to Enhance Students' Critical Thinking Skills," *Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2025): <https://doi.org/10.30868/im.v8i02.8447>

³⁰ Surasit Singkhala, Asrori Asrori, Abdunorma Samaalee, Saiful Anwar, dan Tobroni Tobroni, "Internalization of Rabbani Character at Maahad Darulrahmah Pattani Thailand," *Ar-Fachruddin: Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2024): 20–32, <https://doi.org/10.7401/cc2wy988>

³¹ Rattanayium, Fareezee, Asrori Asrori, dan Rusman Rusman. "Critical Incident Strategy: Improving Motivation and Learning Outcomes of Islamic Education Students in Pattanakarnsuksa School Songkhla Thailand." *Al-Ulum: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Penelitian keislaman* 10, no. 2 (2023): 140–153. <https://doi.org/10.31102/alulum.10.2.2023.140-153>

thinking, and encourages the application of spiritual principles in daily life. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, PjBL engages students in meaningful, authentic, and contextually relevant projects, enabling them to construct personal understanding of Islamic teachings while practicing ethical behavior in real-life situations.

The study contributes to the literature by foregrounding spiritual competence as a measurable educational outcome, a dimension that has often been underexplored in previous PAI research focused mainly on cognitive or character-related achievements. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of project-based pedagogy, spiritual competence as an analytical construct, and the contextual setting of Muhammadiyah education, particularly in a regional context such as Bima. These elements collectively provide empirical and conceptual insights into how innovative learning strategies can support holistic Islamic education.

The practical implications of the study suggest that educators should implement student-centered, project-based pedagogies that integrate reflection, collaboration, and real-world applications of Islamic principles to foster both cognitive and spiritual development. Furthermore, the findings highlight the need for developing validated instruments to systematically assess spiritual competence and for investigating the long-term impact of PjBL on students' ethical and spiritual growth.

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