PROJECT-BASED LEARNING INTEGRATING ISLAMIC SOCIAL VALUES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL ATTITUDE DEVELOPMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of implementing Project Based Learning (PBL) integrated with the social values of *Surah Al-Ma'un* on elementary school students' social attitudes. Using a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design, the study involved 30 fifth-grade students of SDN Wonoplintahan 2, Sidoarjo Regency, selected through purposive sampling. The intervention was conducted over three learning sessions (six lesson hours) and employed a validated social attitude instrument. Data were analyzed using the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, paired sample t-test, and effect size analysis. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in students' social attitudes after the intervention ($p < 0.05$), with a large practical effect indicated by $\eta^2 = 0.653$. These findings suggest that integrating PBL with the social values of *Surah Al-Ma'un* contributes to the development of empathy, social care, cooperation, and social responsibility, supporting the implementation of contextual and value-based character education in elementary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is a fundamental pillar in shaping a generation that is not only cognitively superior, but also socially and morally mature. At the elementary school level, children's moral and social development is at a crucial stage because they begin to build value systems, empathy, and social orientation through interaction with their surroundings. Moral development theory states that values cannot be formed instantly, but rather through a

process of repeated, contextual, and meaningful internalization (Hendrowibowo Lorensius, 2024; Kristjánsson, 2021). Therefore, it is very important to instill social values such as caring, empathy, tolerance, and cooperation in children to build a balanced and consistent personality (Arthur et al., 2023). Students' social attitudes develop through a process of continuous social interaction in the learning environment. (Vygotsky, 1978) asserts that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people, and then inside the child." This statement shows that social values such as cooperation, responsibility, and empathy are initially formed through social relationships before being internalized as individual attitudes. According to research around the world, planned and integrated character education can improve prosocial behavior, psychosocial well-being, and self-control in young students (Althof & Berkowitz, 2021; Berkowitz & Bier, 2020). Furthermore, character education implemented through meaningful learning has been shown to improve the positive classroom climate, strengthen social relationships among students, and reduce aggressive behavior in elementary schools (Agboola & Tsai, 2022; OECD, 2021). However, various studies also highlight that normative and symbolic character education tends to fail to bring about lasting behavioral change because it does not touch on students' authentic experiences (Hattie, 2023). Therefore, character education requires a pedagogical approach that not only instills values cognitively but also allows students to experience, reflect on, and practice these values in the real context of their lives (Arthur et al., 2023; Kristjánsson, 2021).

The shallow reality of character education is exacerbated by the dominance of conventional learning methods that focus solely on memorization and academic achievement. This approach places students as passive recipients of information, so that moral and social values are only understood at a conceptual level without being manifested in real behavior (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). A number of international studies show that rote learning has a negative correlation with the development of empathy, social awareness, and moral responsibility in students, especially at the elementary school age when they still greatly need concrete experiences (Fasko Daniel, 2025; Hattie, 2023). In the context of character education, a transmission-only approach to values is considered ineffective because it fails to build students' emotional and reflective engagement. Character education actually requires habituation through contextual experiences that allow students to experience moral conflicts, engage in dialogue, and reflect on the meaning of values in their social lives (Banks, 2020; Kristjánsson, 2021). Cross-country studies also confirm that learning that links values to students' social realities has proven to be more effective in enhancing moral internalization and the formation of prosocial attitudes (OECD, 2021). Therefore, the need for applicable, participatory, and meaningful learning strategies is becoming increasingly urgent in efforts to strengthen character education in elementary schools. This underscores the importance of a transformative pedagogical approach that not only transmits values but also continuously transforms students' behavior through authentic learning experiences (UNESCO, 2022; Yusgiantara et al., n.d.).

Context of Pancasila and Civic Education, learning should ideally be able to integrate national values with social sensitivity in a balanced manner. Civic education should teach students not only to be law-abiding citizens but also to be empathetic, caring, and believe in social justice (Banks, 2020; Noviana et al., 2025). International studies show that the affective and participatory aspects of civic education must be emphasized to foster strong social awareness and active involvement in social life (Reichert & Print, 2022; Schulz et al., 2021). However, the practice of civic education in elementary schools is still dominated by lectures and memorization of normative concepts, so that students are less involved in deep appreciation of values (Tirtoni F, n.d.). As a result, civic values are only understood textually and are not internalized in students' daily behavior. This condition contradicts the modern civic education paradigm, which emphasizes learning based on real social experiences, value dialogues, and active student involvement in meaningful activities (Banks, 2020). A number of studies also show that a participatory approach in civic education contributes positively to the development of empathy, tolerance, and mutual cooperation among elementary school students (Arthur et al., 2023; OECD, 2021). Thus, the integration of social values through an

active learning approach is a strategic necessity in revitalizing civic education so that it is more relevant to contemporary social challenges.

A relevant spiritual-transformative approach in strengthening character education is the theology of Al-Ma'un. This theology emphasizes that true faith does not stop at ritual practices, but must be manifested in social actions that provide tangible benefits to others. The letter of Al-Ma'un (Surah. 107) contains a universal moral message in the form of caring for orphans, paying attention to the poor, and criticizing formalistic and hypocritical worship practices. These values are globally relevant to the concept of moral education based on empathy, social justice, and social responsibility, which are widely studied in international literature (Arthur et al., 2023; Noddings, 2020). Al-Ma'un theology also emphasizes the connection between vertical relationships with God and horizontal relationships between humans as a whole ethical unity (Gunawan et al., 2018; Lovat & Toomey, 2020). This approach is in line with the concept of spirituality-based moral education, which has been proven to strengthen students' prosocial behavior, empathy, and social awareness. A number of international studies also show that the integration of spiritual values in learning has a positive impact on character building, especially when these values are internalized through real experiences (Kristjánsson, 2021; OECD, 2021). Therefore, Al-Ma'un values have great potential to be integrated into learning as an ethical and spiritual foundation in shaping students' social character holistically.

Empirical conditions in the field show that the social attitudes of elementary school students are still at an alarming level. Low empathy, weak social responsibility, and a decline in the spirit of mutual cooperation are phenomena that are often found in the daily interactions of students, both in and outside of school (Ariffiando et al., 2023; Nurdin & Munawir, 2023). An international report states that the younger generation lacks significant social experiences in formal education, causing them to lose empathy (OECD, 2021). Many studies show that children who rarely engage in social services and collaborative activities tend to exhibit individualistic behavior and lack concern for their social environment (Dyer et al., n.d.). In addition, preliminary observations and research conducted in various elementary schools show that students are insensitive to the problems faced by their friends, do not like to share, and are unwilling to work in groups that require shared responsibility (Ariffiando et al., 2023; Tirtoni F, n.d.). The aspects of social concern and empathy are often the lowest-scoring indicators compared to cognitive aspects, according to affective assessment evaluations (Hattie, 2023; Nurdin & Munawir, 2023). This condition shows that there is a significant difference between classroom learning practices and the ideal goals of character education. Not only Civics teachers are responsible for this issue, but the entire education ecosystem must participate in designing learning that continuously and systematically addresses students' affective aspects (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

The response to these challenges, a learning strategy is needed that can directly, contextually, and continuously touch on the affective domain of students. One method that is considered effective in improving character education in elementary schools is combining religious values with an active learning approach. (Lovat & Toomey, 2020; Rosyad et al., 2025). International research shows that students' empathy, social awareness, and sense of responsibility can significantly increase when learning integrates spiritual values with real-life activities (Lovat & Toomey, 2020). This method enables students to understand values not only as abstract concepts, but as guidelines for everyday behavior (Arthur et al., 2023; Kristjánsson, 2021). The project-based learning model, which involves students as active subjects in learning through contextual and collaborative projects, is one model that fits this approach. Through problem solving, collaboration, and reflection on learning experiences, PBL has been proven useful for building modern skills (Bell, 2020; Kokotsaki et al., 2021). A number of international studies also confirm that PBL provides space for the internalization of moral values because students are directly involved in real social situations that demand empathy and responsibility (Hernández-Ramos & De La Paz, 2020). As a result, PBL can be

used as a strategic tool for the internalization of authentic and significant character values in Civic Education learning in elementary schools.

PBL can be applied in the context of integrating Al-Ma'un values through social projects such as the "Care and Share Movement," which directly involves students in social care activities. Students are motivated to identify social problems in their environment, plan concrete actions, and consider the value of their activities. Activities such as collecting and providing assistance in the form of clothing, stationery, books, or basic necessities to orphans and the community do not provide practical experience of the values of empathy and social responsibility (Celio et al., 2021; Furco & Norvell, 2022). International studies show that student involvement in social service projects (service learning) has a positive impact on the moral development, empathy, and social awareness of elementary school students. Such projects are also in line with the main message of Surat Al-Ma'un, which emphasizes the importance of caring for vulnerable groups and sincerity in worship (Gunawan et al., 2018). By directly experiencing the practice of sharing, students not only understand religious values cognitively, but also internalize them through concrete actions (Kristjánsson, 2021; Noddings, 2020). Research also shows that meaningful social experiences in learning contribute to long-term character building and sustainable prosocial behavior (Arthur et al., 2023; OECD, 2021). Therefore, the "Care and Sharing Movement" project is a concrete form of integrating Al-Ma'un theology and PBL in Civics Education learning.

Despite extensive research on Project Based Learning and character education, empirical studies that integrate PBL with Al-Ma'un theological values and directly measure elementary students' social attitudes remain very limited (Hernández-Ramos & De La Paz, 2020; Kokotsaki et al., 2021). Existing studies predominantly focus on cognitive outcomes, while affective and spiritual dimensions receive insufficient attention. On the other hand, research on Islamic values in education is often separated from contemporary pedagogical models, resulting in a dichotomy between religious content and learning methodology (Al-hulul et al., 2025; Sagala R, n.d.). This gap indicates the need for empirical research that examines how PBL infused with Al-Ma'un values influences students' social attitudes at the elementary level. However, international research shows that the combination of spiritual values and active pedagogy is very important for developing students' character holistically (Arthur et al., 2023; Lovat & Toomey, 2020). This discrepancy highlights the importance of direct research assessing how effectively religious values are incorporated into active learning models, especially at the primary education level. Furthermore, Indonesia's religious social and cultural context provides an extraordinary opportunity to develop a character education model based on Islamic values that are relevant to local and global needs (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). As a result, the incorporation of Al-Ma'un values in PBL is part of strategic research and has significant theoretical and practical benefits.

This study aims to empirically examine the effect of Project Based Learning incorporating Al-Ma'un values through the "Care and Share Movement" project on the social attitudes of elementary school students. Using a pre-experimental quantitative design, this study measures changes in students' social attitudes before and after the learning intervention. Factors such as social responsibility in students' daily interactions, cooperation, empathy, and caring are the focus of measurement (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Standar et al., n.d.). International research suggests that empirical data is essential for measuring the effectiveness of character education (Hattie, 2023; OECD, 2021). Researchers can identify changes in social attitudes caused by learning interventions using a pre-experimental design (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). This study also uses active pedagogical methods to add to the literature on values-based character education. The results will show how effective the integration of PBL and Al-Ma'un values is in improving students' social attitudes (Arthur et al., 2023). Therefore, this study does not only focus on measuring the results; it also provides a scientific basis for developing a contextual and practical character learning model.

Given the connection to global social issues such as rising intolerance, empathy crisis, and declining social solidarity around the world, this research is increasingly urgent. Education strengthens character based on moral and

spiritual principles relevant to students' real lives and plays a strategic role in addressing these issues (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). Project-based learning (PBL) integrates the values of Al-Ma'un. This contextual method meets the requirements of the times and the characteristics of elementary school students' development. Religious values help students do good together through their direct experiences in social projects (Noddings, 2020). Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of an integrative character education model that connects pedagogical, social, and spiritual elements (Arthur et al., 2023; Lovat & Toomey, 2020). The results of this study are expected to serve as guidelines for teachers and policymakers to create more relevant, practical, and sustainable Civic Education learning. Therefore, this study not only meets academic needs but also contributes to efforts to build a moral, empathetic, and socially responsible generation amid increasingly complex challenges in the world.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach because the data produced is numerical and analyzed statistically to test hypotheses objectively (Sugiyono, 2021). This approach was chosen to systematically measure the influence of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model integrated with the values of Surah Al-Ma'un on the social attitudes of elementary school students (Prapsetyo et al., 2025). The research was designed in a structured manner through the use of standardized instruments, inferential statistical analysis procedures, and empirical findings that demonstrate the effectiveness of the quantitative approach in evaluating PBL in the context of 21st-century learning.

The method used was pre-experimental with a single group pre-test and post-test design. Research subjects were measured before and after the learning intervention without a control group. The PBL intervention based on the values of Surah Al-Ma'un was carried out during three meetings (6×35 minutes). This design was chosen because it allows for a direct comparison of the students' initial and final conditions, is relevant to classroom research with time and ethical constraints, and has been proven to reveal improvements in students' social attitudes in previous educational research. The following is a diagram of the design used:

Table 1. Skema One Group Pretest-Posttest Design

One-group pretest-posttest design			
Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Eksperimen	O1	X	O2
	(Before treatment)		(After treatment)

Description:
O1   = Pretest → Initial measurement before treatment
X   = Treatment → In my study: The effect of PBL on Surah Al-Ma`un in students' social attitudes
O2   = Posttest → Measurement after treatment
Group   = The study only used one class/subject, there was no control group

The research population consisted of all fifth-grade students at SDN Wonoplintahan 2 in the 2025/2026 academic year who were relatively homogeneous in terms of curriculum, age, and learning environment. A sample of 30 students was determined using purposive sampling with the following criteria: never having received Surah Al-Ma'un-based learning, being actively enrolled as fifth-grade students, and willing to participate in the entire research process. This technique was chosen because it was effective in obtaining subjects that were in line with the research objectives and intervention characteristics.

The research instrument consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions developed based on PBL indicators, the values of Surah Al-Ma'un, and Grade 5 Civic Education competencies. The content validity of the instrument was ensured through expert judgment by experts in Civic Education and Islamic Education who assessed the suitability and relevance of each question item to the indicators being measured (Dewi et al., 2022), while the reliability of the

instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data, where primary data was obtained directly from students and official school documents, while secondary data was used to enrich the context of the analysis. The combination of these two data sources increased the validity of the research through source triangulation (Rosyad et al., 2025). Data analysis was performed using SPSS 25 through Pearson Product Moment validity test, Shapiro-Wilk normality test, paired t-test, and eta-squared (η^2) effect size calculation to determine the strength of the intervention (Acedo-carmona & Gomila, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion sections are presented in an integrated manner to emphasize the relationship between empirical findings and theoretical interpretations. This presentation is not intended to repeat the methodological description, but rather to interpret the results of statistical analysis within the framework of character education. The application of Project-Based Learning containing the values of Surah Al-Ma'un is positioned as a pedagogical intervention oriented towards the formation of social attitudes through authentic and reflective learning experiences. This method is in line with the idea that the internalization of values will be successful if students are directly involved in meaningful social practices (Althof & Berkowitz, 2021; Arthur et al., 2023; Hattie, 2023; Kristjánsson, 2021; OECD, 2021).

Problem-oriented project-based learning provides opportunities for students to increase their awareness of values by participating in real-world situations. This method allows students to improve their affective and social dimensions simultaneously, because values are not only learned as ideas, but also practiced as meaningful social practices. Instructional learning does not shape students' attitudes and character better than learning that involves students as active participants in real social situations (Mustika Laila, 2024).

With the aim of instilling awareness, empathy, and social responsibility in students, the social project "Care and Share Movement" is closely related to improving students' social attitudes. The initial interpretation of Surah Al-Ma'un serves as an ethical foundation that connects religious teachings with the social reality of students. This process allows values to go beyond the conceptual level and develop into moral awareness that is relevant to everyday life (Gunawan et al., 2018; Lovat & Toomey, 2020; Noddings, 2020). This finding aligns with Noddings' ethics of care, which argues that moral development emerges through relational experiences involving empathy, attentiveness, and responsibility toward others. Through the "Care and Share Movement," students were not merely taught social values but engaged directly in caring practices, enabling moral learning through lived experience rather than abstract instruction.

Table 2. Results of the Normality Test of Student Social Attitude Data

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRETEST	.168	30	.030	.898	30	.007
POSTTEST	.194	30	.006	.806	30	.000

The prerequisite stages of analysis were fulfilled, and hypothesis testing was conducted using a paired sample t-test to determine whether there was a significant difference between students' social attitudes before and after the implementation of PBL containing Al-Ma'un Surah values. The results of the analysis showed a significant increase in students' social attitude scores after the treatment was given. The mean difference value of -19.067 indicates that the posttest scores were consistently higher than the pretest scores, signifying a positive change in students' social attitudes.

The calculated t-value of −9.957 with 29 degrees of freedom (df) and a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000 reinforces these findings. A significance value that is much smaller than 0.05 indicates that the difference in scores is not caused by chance alone, but is a direct result of the treatment given. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that the application of PBL containing Surah Al-Ma'un values affects the social attitudes of elementary school students can be accepted empirically and statistically.

Table 3. Results of the Paired Sample t-Test on Students' Social Attitudes

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRETEST - POSTTEST	-19.067	10.488	1.915	-22.983	-15.150	-9.957	29	.000

Beyond statistical significance, this study highlights the importance of effect size to demonstrate the practical relevance of the findings. The eta-squared (η^2) value of 0.653 indicates a large effect of Project Based Learning (PBL) integrated with Surah Al-Ma'un values on students' social attitudes, meaning that 65.3% of the variance in social attitude improvement is explained by the learning intervention. This result shows that the increase in students' social attitudes was substantial and not limited to minor behavioral changes. Through direct involvement in social projects and collaborative activities, students internalized values experientially, enabling the development of empathy, cooperation, caring, and social responsibility. Such findings reinforce that social project-based learning is more effective in fostering prosocial attitudes than purely theoretical character instruction (Celio et al., 2021; Furco & Norvell, 2022).

Table 4. Calculation Results *Effect Size* (*Eta Squared*)

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PRETEST * POSTTEST	Between Groups	(Combined)	4313.164	5	862.633	9.024	.000
	Within Groups		2294.303	24	95.596		
	Total		6607.467	29			

Measures of Association

	Eta	Eta Squared
PRETEST * POSTTEST	.808	.653

PBL contains Surah values, as indicated by the effect size in the very large category. Al-Ma'un can change students' social attitudes. These results indicate that the learning model is not only statistically effective, but also

practically significant in basic education. The large effect size shows that changes in students' social attitudes occur across the board, not just in certain areas. Therefore, if applied regularly, this model can have a long-term impact.

From the perspective of Kohlberg's moral development theory, the observed improvement in social attitudes indicates a shift from conventional moral reasoning based on rules toward higher levels of moral awareness grounded in concern for others and social responsibility. Problem-oriented social projects allowed students to face moral situations that required cooperation, empathy, and decision-making, thereby supporting moral reasoning development through social interaction and reflection. This supports social constructivist views that values are shaped through interaction and meaningful participation (Banks, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Mustika Laila, 2024). When students engage in important social activities such as discussions, group work, and joint reflection, values such as empathy and social responsibility are not only understood but also demonstrated in their behavior.

Despite these positive findings, this study has several limitations. First, the use of a pre-experimental one-group design without a control group limits causal generalization, as external variables cannot be fully controlled. Second, the study was conducted in one elementary school with a relatively small sample size, which may limit broader generalization to different educational contexts. Third, students' social attitudes were measured using a self-report instrument, which may be influenced by social desirability. Future research is recommended to employ quasi-experimental or experimental designs with control groups, involve multiple schools, and combine quantitative measures with qualitative observations to obtain deeper insights into students' moral and social development.

In practical terms, the findings of this study have significant implications for Civic Education teachers and teachers who teach in elementary school classrooms. The integration of PBL with the values of Surah Al-Ma'un can be used as a pedagogical strategy to strengthen character education through active and contextual learning. In order for the learning impact to be sustainable, the implementation of this model needs to be supported by the school culture and the exemplary behavior of teachers in instilling values of social awareness (Mustika Laila, 2024).

Overall, the results and discussion confirm that the application of PBL containing the values of Surah Al-Ma'un is a useful and relevant learning method that can improve students' social attitudes in elementary schools. In addition to having a theoretical basis that is in line with contemporary character education principles, this model is supported by strong empirical evidence. Therefore, PBL based on religious principles can be considered an integrative approach to building meaningful and sustainable character education (UNESCO, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the integration of Project-Based Learning (PBL) with the social values of Surah Al-Ma'un not only functions as an instructional model, but also as a character-building framework that allows students to experience and practice social values concretely through authentic social engagement, which has been proven to be more effective in increasing empathy, cooperation, concern, and social responsibility compared to merely transmitting concepts. These findings are reinforced by statistical evidence showing consistent and significant changes, thus confirming values-based PBL as a transformative pedagogical approach in primary education, while also providing practical implications for Civic Education teachers to adopt it as a strategic alternative to conventional teaching in order to strengthen the affective domain through social projects that support sustainable character development, as well as policy implications that emphasize the importance of curriculum design and teacher professional development based on experiential character education by integrating active learning, religious values, and local culture so that social competence is prioritized alongside academic achievement in shaping responsible and empathetic citizens.

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