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Innovation in Aqidah Akhlak Instruction through Islamic Project-Based Learning: Enhancing Islamic Values Understanding and Moral Character Development

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Abstract: Aqidah Akhlak education plays an essential role in developing Islamic faith, moral understanding, and noble character. However, conventional instructional methods often emphasize theoretical knowledge and memorization, limiting opportunities for students to apply Islamic values in daily life. This study aims to examine the implementation and contribution of Islamic Project-Based Learning in improving Aqidah Akhlak instruction, students' understanding of Islamic values, and moral character development. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that Islamic project-based activities provide opportunities for students to connect Islamic teachings with practical experiences through collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. The study also identifies challenges related to instructional time, learning resources, student participation, and behavioral assessment. Islamic Project-Based Learning offers a contextual, participatory, and practice-oriented approach to Aqidah Akhlak instruction, supporting the integration of religious knowledge and moral practice.

Research Highlights:

- Islamic Project-Based Learning integrates Islamic teachings with practical learning activities.
- Project-based activities connect Aqidah Akhlak concepts with students' daily experiences.
- Collaborative projects provide opportunities to develop creativity, responsibility, and cooperation.
- Islamic values are reinforced through contextual and practice-oriented learning experiences.
- The approach supports more participatory and meaningful Aqidah Akhlak instruction.

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INTRODUCTION

Aqidah Akhlak education plays a fundamental role in the development of students' Islamic faith, moral character, attitudes, and behavior(Casudi et al., 2025). As an essential component of Islamic education, Aqidah Akhlak aims to cultivate individuals who possess a strong understanding of Islamic beliefs (aqidah) and demonstrate noble moral values (akhlakul karimah) in their daily lives. Through this subject, students are expected not only to understand the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings but also to internalize and practice values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, compassion, and respect for others. Therefore, Aqidah Akhlak instruction should go beyond the transmission of religious knowledge and emphasize the development of students' spiritual awareness and ethical behavior. However, the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak education continues to face challenges, particularly concerning instructional approaches that predominantly emphasize memorization, theoretical explanations, and

teacher-centered learning. Such approaches may provide students with conceptual knowledge but do not always encourage meaningful engagement or the practical application of Islamic moral teachings. Consequently, a gap may emerge between students' understanding of religious concepts and their ability to demonstrate Islamic ethical values in everyday situations. This condition highlights the need for innovative, interactive, contextual, and student-centered instructional approaches that connect religious knowledge with authentic learning experiences.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) offers an alternative instructional strategy that encourages students to participate actively in meaningful projects, collaborate with peers, exercise creativity, develop critical thinking, and solve problems related to real-life situations(Eswaran, 2024). When integrated with Islamic principles, Qur'anic teachings, Hadith, and moral values, project-based learning can provide opportunities for students to explore religious concepts while practicing Islamic teachings through concrete activities. Accordingly, innovation in Aqidah Akhlak instruction through Islamic Project-Based Learning is important for strengthening the relationship between religious understanding, moral awareness, and actual behavior.

Despite its importance, Aqidah Akhlak instruction frequently encounters several pedagogical challenges that may influence the effectiveness of students' learning experiences. One major concern is the limited engagement of students in conventional classroom activities, particularly when lessons rely heavily on lectures, memorization, and textbook-based explanations(Astuti et al., 2026). Students may understand definitions of Islamic moral values without fully recognizing how these principles should guide their decisions and interactions in everyday life. Furthermore, insufficient opportunities for collaborative activities and practical experiences may limit the development of moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, creativity, and social responsibility. The limited utilization of innovative instructional media and project-based activities can also reduce students' opportunities to explore Islamic teachings through meaningful learning experiences. Another important challenge concerns the assessment of Aqidah Akhlak learning outcomes. Teachers often emphasize cognitive achievement, while students' attitudes, moral awareness, and observable ethical behavior receive comparatively less systematic attention. These challenges demonstrate the necessity of developing instructional strategies that integrate religious knowledge, character formation, and practical moral experiences.

Project-Based Learning is a student-centered instructional approach that organizes learning activities around meaningful questions, authentic problems, collaborative investigations, and the production of tangible outcomes(Larmer et al., 2015). In Aqidah Akhlak education, this approach can be developed by integrating Islamic values and religious principles into project activities that encourage students to understand and practice Islamic teachings. Projects may include Islamic moral awareness campaigns, digital educational content about akhlakul karimah, community service activities, environmental responsibility initiatives, and collaborative presentations concerning Islamic ethical principles. These activities connect religious knowledge with experiential learning, enabling students to develop understanding through active participation, reflection, and practical application. The integration of Islamic values also ensures that project activities remain consistent with the objectives of Islamic education. In this process, teachers serve as facilitators, mentors, and moral role models who guide students in planning projects, understanding religious references, demonstrating ethical behavior, and reflecting on their learning experiences.

A study by Andrean and Muqowim (2020), entitled "Upaya Guru dalam Membiasakan Karakter melalui Pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak di MI Ma'arif," examined teachers' efforts to develop students' character through Aqidah Akhlak instruction. Using a qualitative approach involving interviews, observations, and documentation, the researchers found that character development could be encouraged through explanations of moral values, habituation, interactive learning activities, and opportunities for students to practice positive behavior. This research demonstrates that Aqidah Akhlak education has an important role in developing students' moral character. However, its primary emphasis was on teachers' strategies for character habituation rather than the systematic implementation of project-based learning as an instructional innovation.

Furthermore, Firda and Pamungkas (2022) conducted research entitled "Penerapan Model Pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak Berbasis Project Based Learning di Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Islam Ngesrep Boyolali." Their study specifically investigated the application of Project-Based Learning in Aqidah Akhlak instruction at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Islam Boyolali. Using classroom action research, the researchers reported that students became more interested in learning, more active in group activities, more

cooperative, and increasingly capable of developing innovative ideas, critical thinking, problem-solving, and time-management skills. This research is particularly relevant because it directly connects Project-Based Learning with Aqidah Akhlak instruction. Nevertheless, further investigation is necessary to understand how project activities systematically integrate Islamic theological concepts with moral internalization and observable ethical behavior.

In addition, Puteri, Kholifah, Royani, and Yatimah (2024) examined the implementation of Project-Based Learning in their study entitled "Implementation of Project-Based Learning to Increase Students' Interest in Learning Aqidah Akhlak at MI Negeri 2 Batam." Their research focused on increasing students' interest in learning Aqidah Akhlak through project-based instructional activities. This study is relevant because it demonstrates the potential of project-oriented instruction to create more engaging learning experiences in Islamic moral education. However, students' interest in learning represents only one dimension of educational achievement. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between learning motivation, understanding of Islamic beliefs, and the practical development of akhlakul karimah.

Similarly, Faqori, Mawati, Sulaeman, and Suryani (2024) conducted a study entitled "Project Based Learning Method to Increase Students' Interest and Understanding in Learning Aqidah Akhlak at MTs Negeri 1 Magetan." This research explored the use of Project-Based Learning to improve students' interest and understanding in Aqidah Akhlak education. Its contribution lies in addressing both students' motivation and their comprehension of Islamic moral and theological materials. Compared with studies that focus primarily on conventional classroom instruction, this research provides a more direct foundation for examining the potential of project-based learning in developing meaningful religious learning experiences. Nevertheless, the connection between students' conceptual understanding and their consistent application of Islamic ethical principles remains an important area for further investigation.

Similarly, Ridwan and Lubis (2026) examined the integration of Islamic values into Project-Based Learning in their study entitled "Integrating Islamic Values into Project-Based Learning for Students' Social Character Development." Using a qualitative case study approach, they investigated how project activities could strengthen students' social character through values such as ta'awun (cooperation), ukhuwah (brotherhood), amanah (trustworthiness), responsibility, discipline, and social concern. Their findings highlight the importance of authentic learning experiences, collaboration, reflection, and teacher facilitation in developing students' social character. This research is closely related to the present topic because it emphasizes the internalization of Islamic values through practical project activities. Nevertheless, the present research seeks to extend this perspective by examining the integration of Islamic creed, moral understanding, and character development within Aqidah Akhlak instruction.

Previous studies on Project-Based Learning have generally emphasized its contribution to student engagement, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and academic achievement. Research on Islamic Religious Education and Aqidah Akhlak has also highlighted the importance of character development, religious understanding, and the internalization of Islamic moral values. Nevertheless, further investigation is needed to examine how these dimensions can be systematically integrated into an innovative instructional framework. In particular, the relationship between Islamic theological understanding, collaborative project activities, practical ethical behavior, and character assessment requires greater attention(Ibrahim et al., 2024). The novelty of this research lies in examining Islamic Project-Based Learning as an integrated instructional approach that connects students' understanding of Islamic creed with the practical development of moral values. Rather than focusing exclusively on project completion or academic knowledge, this approach emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of Aqidah Akhlak education. It also considers the role of teachers, authentic learning experiences, and systematic assessment in supporting the implementation of Islamic values.

This research aims to examine the implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning in Aqidah Akhlak instruction and analyze its contribution to improving students' understanding of Islamic creed and ethical values. Specifically, the study seeks to identify how project-based activities support the development of students' moral character, collaboration, creativity, and responsibility. It also aims to evaluate the challenges and opportunities encountered by teachers and students during the implementation of this instructional innovation. Furthermore, the research intends to formulate practical recommendations for strengthening Aqidah Akhlak education through contextual, participatory, and value-oriented learning strategies. Ultimately, this study is expected to contribute to the development of innovative Islamic educational practices that connect religious knowledge with meaningful experiences and the consistent application of noble moral values in students' everyday lives.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning in Aqidah Akhlak instruction(Kurniawati et al., 2026). A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the research focuses on understanding instructional practices, teachers' experiences, students' participation, and the development of Islamic moral values through project-based learning activities. This design enables the researcher to explore how Islamic principles are integrated into classroom projects and how students connect their understanding of Islamic beliefs with practical ethical behavior. The research also examines the instructional strategies employed by teachers, the learning experiences of students, and the challenges encountered during the implementation process. Through an in-depth investigation of the teaching and learning process, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of Islamic Project-Based Learning as an innovative instructional approach in Islamic education.

The research is conducted at an Islamic educational institution that implements Aqidah Akhlak as part of its Islamic Religious Education curriculum. The participants consist of Aqidah Akhlak teachers, students, and relevant school personnel who are directly involved in the instructional process(Abidah et al., 2026). Participants are selected using purposive sampling based on their experience, involvement, and relevance to the implementation of project-based learning. Students are selected according to their participation in Aqidah Akhlak learning activities, while teachers are selected based on their responsibility for planning and implementing instructional strategies. School administrators may also be involved to provide information regarding institutional policies, curriculum implementation, and educational support. The participation of these individuals is intended to provide different perspectives on the effectiveness, implementation, and challenges of Islamic Project-Based Learning. The number and characteristics of participants are determined according to the research setting and the adequacy of information obtained during data collection.

The implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning follows a structured instructional process consisting of seven interconnected stages(Islam et al., 2026). The first stage involves identifying essential questions, in which teachers introduce religious and moral issues related to students' everyday experiences, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social cooperation. These questions encourage students to explore Islamic teachings and identify practical problems that can be addressed through meaningful projects. The second stage involves project planning, where students work individually or collaboratively to develop project ideas, determine learning objectives, identify relevant Islamic references, and establish the expected outcomes. The third stage concerns scheduling activities, during which teachers and students organize project timelines, distribute responsibilities, and determine the resources required for implementation.

The fourth stage involves project implementation, in which students conduct activities that demonstrate the practical application of Islamic values. Examples include creating Islamic moral awareness campaigns, developing digital educational materials about akhlakul karimah, organizing social service activities, and conducting environmental responsibility projects based on Islamic teachings(Warsah et al., 2024). The fifth stage involves monitoring and guidance, where teachers supervise students' progress, facilitate discussions, provide feedback, and ensure that project activities remain consistent with Islamic educational principles. The sixth stage involves project presentation, during which students communicate their findings, demonstrate their project outcomes, and explain the relationship between their activities and relevant Qur'anic teachings, Hadith, and Islamic ethical principles. The final stage involves evaluation and reflection, where teachers and students assess the learning process, project outcomes, collaboration, understanding of Islamic values, and opportunities for improving ethical behavior in everyday life.

Data are collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation(Chand, 2025). Classroom observations are conducted to examine the implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning, including students' participation, collaborative activities, communication, responsibility, and demonstration of Islamic moral values during the learning process. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with Aqidah Akhlak teachers and selected students to obtain information about their experiences, perceptions, learning challenges, and responses to project-based instructional activities. Interviews with school administrators may also be conducted to understand institutional support and the availability of educational resources. Documentation is used to collect supporting information, including lesson plans, instructional materials, student project products, assessment records, photographs, and other

relevant educational documents. If additional quantitative information is required, questionnaires and achievement tests may be used to examine students' learning engagement and understanding of Aqidah Akhlak materials. The combination of these techniques allows the researcher to obtain comprehensive information regarding the instructional process and its educational implications.

The research instruments consist of classroom observation sheets, semi-structured interview guidelines, documentation checklists, and student project assessment rubrics. Observation sheets are designed to record students' participation, collaboration, responsibility, discipline, and application of Islamic ethical values during project activities(Fariansyah & El-Yunusi, 2023). Interview guidelines contain open-ended questions concerning teachers' instructional strategies, students' learning experiences, perceived benefits, and implementation challenges. Documentation checklists are used to organize relevant instructional records and student project materials. Meanwhile, project assessment rubrics are developed to evaluate students' understanding of Islamic concepts, creativity, cooperation, project completion, presentation skills, and reflection on moral values. The instruments are organized according to the research objectives to ensure that the collected information is relevant to the implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning. To strengthen the quality of the research instruments, the researcher may conduct expert review and preliminary testing before the main data collection process.

The qualitative data are analyzed using an interactive analytical approach involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction is conducted by selecting, organizing, and categorizing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation according to the research objectives(Huberman & Miles, 1983). The data are then organized into thematic categories, including the implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning, students' understanding of Aqidah Akhlak, moral character development, learning engagement, teacher facilitation, and instructional challenges. Data presentation is conducted through descriptive narratives, thematic explanations, and relevant supporting evidence from research participants and documented learning activities. Subsequently, conclusions are drawn by interpreting the identified patterns and examining their relationship with the theoretical foundations of Islamic education and Project-Based Learning. Data triangulation is also applied by comparing information from different data sources and collection techniques to strengthen the credibility and consistency of the findings. If quantitative data are collected, descriptive statistics may be used to summarize students' learning outcomes, engagement, and questionnaire responses. Appropriate inferential statistical procedures may also be employed when the research design and data characteristics support statistical comparisons.

This study follows established ethical principles to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of all research participants. Institutional permission is obtained from the relevant educational institution before conducting observations, interviews, and other research activities(Busher, 2019). Participants are informed about the research objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and their rights to participate voluntarily. Informed consent is obtained from adult participants, while parental or legal guardian consent and appropriate student assent are secured when participants are minors. Confidentiality is maintained by protecting participants' identities and ensuring that personal information is used exclusively for academic research purposes. Participants are also informed that they may withdraw from the study without negative consequences. Furthermore, the research activities are designed to respect Islamic educational values, cultural considerations, and the dignity of students and teachers. All collected information is stored and managed responsibly to maintain data security, research integrity, and the credibility of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning in Aqidah Akhlak Instruction

The implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning in Aqidah Akhlak instruction represents an innovative approach that connects theoretical religious knowledge with practical learning experiences(Busher, 2019). This instructional model emphasizes students' active involvement in identifying moral problems, planning collaborative activities, developing educational projects, and reflecting on the application of Islamic values in everyday life. The learning process begins with teachers introducing the objectives and fundamental concepts of Aqidah Akhlak, followed by discussions concerning contemporary moral issues that are relevant to students' experiences. Topics such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, respect, social cooperation, and environmental awareness provide

contextual foundations for developing meaningful projects. Through this approach, students are encouraged to recognize that Islamic teachings are not merely theoretical concepts to be memorized but ethical principles that should guide their attitudes and behavior.

The instructional activities are organized through project planning, group discussions, implementation, presentation, and evaluation. During the planning stage, students identify project themes, determine objectives, distribute responsibilities, and select appropriate resources(Ivers & Barron, 2010). The projects are designed to reflect Islamic principles and encourage students to demonstrate their understanding through practical activities. Examples include Islamic moral campaigns promoting honesty and anti-bullying behavior, social charity activities emphasizing compassion and generosity, digital Islamic educational content explaining Aqidah Akhlak concepts, and environmental responsibility initiatives inspired by Islamic teachings concerning human responsibility toward creation. These activities provide opportunities for students to explore religious concepts through creative and collaborative experiences.

The integration of Islamic teachings is an essential characteristic of this instructional model. Students are encouraged to connect project themes with relevant Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and Islamic ethical principles. For example, an anti-bullying campaign can be associated with Islamic teachings concerning respect, brotherhood, and the prohibition of humiliating others. Social charity projects can be connected with the values of compassion, generosity, and mutual assistance, while environmental projects can emphasize the Islamic principle of human responsibility as stewards of the earth. Through project presentations, students communicate their understanding of these religious foundations and explain their relevance to contemporary social situations. The teacher facilitates the process by providing guidance, monitoring project development, and ensuring that the activities remain consistent with Aqidah Akhlak learning objectives.

Improvement in Students' Understanding of Aqidah and Akhlak

Islamic Project-Based Learning provides opportunities to strengthen students' understanding of Islamic creed and moral values by connecting conceptual explanations with practical experiences. In Aqidah Akhlak instruction, students are expected to understand fundamental Islamic beliefs, including faith in Allah, angels, revealed scriptures, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine destiny. However, understanding these principles should also encourage the development of religious awareness, responsibility, and ethical decision-making. Through project-based activities, students can explore the relationship between Islamic beliefs and the moral responsibilities associated with their daily lives.

The learning process encourages students to explain Islamic moral concepts using examples drawn from their surroundings(Mahfud & Zahriyah, 2025). For instance, discussions and projects concerning honesty can help students understand the importance of truthful communication, while activities involving social cooperation can demonstrate the relationship between Islamic teachings and responsible social interaction. Students can also examine relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadith to support their arguments and project presentations. This process encourages them to develop a deeper understanding of religious teachings rather than relying exclusively on memorized definitions.

Furthermore, project-based activities provide opportunities for students to apply Islamic ethical principles when responding to real-life problems. Students may analyze situations involving bullying, dishonesty, discrimination, environmental neglect, and a lack of social responsibility(Ramadhani et al., 2024). By discussing these issues and developing practical solutions, they can strengthen their ability to connect religious knowledge with moral reasoning. Nevertheless, improvements in students' understanding should be established through evidence obtained from classroom observations, interviews, learning assessments, or comparisons of pre-intervention and post-intervention results when applicable. Therefore, the contribution of Islamic Project-Based Learning should be examined through both students' conceptual understanding and their ability to explain the practical relevance of Islamic teachings.

Development of Students' Islamic Moral Character

The development of Islamic moral character constitutes one of the central objectives of Aqidah Akhlak education. Islamic Project-Based Learning provides a learning environment in which moral values can be explored, discussed, practiced, and reflected upon through collaborative activities(Yahya et al., 2025). Unlike instructional approaches that primarily emphasize theoretical explanations, project-based learning creates opportunities for students to demonstrate ethical principles through their participation and responsibilities during project implementation.

Several Islamic moral values can be integrated into the instructional process. Honesty (shiddiq) can be encouraged by requiring students to communicate accurate information, acknowledge their contributions, and present authentic project findings. Trustworthiness (amanah) can be developed through the distribution and completion of group responsibilities. Responsibility (mas'uliyyah) and discipline can be strengthened when students follow project schedules, complete assigned tasks, and respect collective agreements. Cooperation (ta'awun) can be practiced through collaborative planning and problem-solving, while tolerance (tasamuh) and respect for others (ikram) can be developed by appreciating different opinions and maintaining positive communication during group discussions. Compassion (rahmah) can also be encouraged through social charity activities and projects that address the needs of others.

The development of these values should be examined through observable indicators rather than relying exclusively on students' statements about their attitudes(Lazarsfeld, 1958). For example, honesty can be assessed through truthful communication and responsible reporting, while cooperation can be examined through students' willingness to assist group members and contribute to shared objectives. Similarly, discipline can be evaluated through punctuality, task completion, and adherence to agreed procedures. Interviews and reflective activities can complement these observations by helping researchers understand students' perceptions of moral development. Consequently, Islamic Project-Based Learning offers opportunities to connect moral knowledge with ethical practice, although sustained character development requires consistent habituation, teacher guidance, and reinforcement beyond individual project activities.

Student Engagement, Creativity, and Collaboration

Student engagement is an important dimension of successful instructional innovation. Islamic Project-Based Learning encourages students to become active participants rather than passive recipients of information. Through project activities, students are involved in identifying problems, exchanging ideas, planning solutions, developing learning materials, and presenting their work. These activities provide opportunities to strengthen their motivation and involvement in Aqidah Akhlak lessons by connecting classroom content with issues that are meaningful to their lives.

Creativity is developed when students are encouraged to transform Islamic educational concepts into different forms of project outputs, including posters, educational videos, digital presentations, awareness campaigns, and community activities. Such assignments enable students to communicate Islamic moral messages through innovative and accessible media. The development of these projects also encourages critical thinking because students must identify relevant problems, select appropriate Islamic references, organize information, and determine effective ways to communicate their ideas.

Collaboration is another important component of this instructional approach(Laal & Laal, 2012). Group-based projects require students to distribute responsibilities, negotiate decisions, appreciate different perspectives, and work toward common objectives. These experiences are relevant to the Islamic principle of ta'awun, which emphasizes cooperation in goodness and righteousness. Project presentations also provide opportunities to strengthen communication skills, confidence, and the ability to explain religious concepts systematically. Furthermore, students can develop problem-solving abilities by examining moral and social challenges and proposing solutions based on Islamic ethical principles. However, the extent of improvement in engagement, creativity, and collaboration should be established through systematic observations, project assessments, and interviews rather than assumed solely from the completion of project assignments.

The Role of Teachers in Innovative Islamic Instruction

Teachers play a central role in ensuring the successful implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning in Aqidah Akhlak instruction. Their responsibilities extend beyond delivering subject matter to include facilitating learning experiences, providing academic guidance, encouraging moral reflection, and demonstrating Islamic ethical behavior. As facilitators, teachers introduce essential questions, explain project objectives, assist students in identifying relevant Islamic references, and guide the development of meaningful project activities. They also ensure that the projects remain aligned with the learning outcomes of Aqidah Akhlak rather than focusing exclusively on creative products.

As mentors, teachers provide continuous guidance throughout project planning, implementation, and presentation. They help students address difficulties, manage group responsibilities, evaluate information, and connect their activities with relevant Qur'anic teachings and Hadith. Teachers also encourage students to reflect on the moral implications of their decisions and actions during collaborative

activities. This guidance is important because project-based learning should not only produce educational materials but also support the internalization of Islamic values.

Furthermore, teachers are expected to assess students through an integrated evaluation approach that considers cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Cognitive assessment examines students' understanding of Islamic beliefs and moral concepts, while affective assessment considers their attitudes, appreciation, and awareness of ethical principles(Rohim & Al Madzaly, 2025). Behavioral assessment focuses on observable indicators such as honesty, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for others. Teachers' personal example is equally important because Islamic character education requires consistency between religious instruction and everyday behavior. By demonstrating honesty, fairness, compassion, and responsibility, teachers provide practical examples that students can observe and emulate. Therefore, the effectiveness of Islamic Project-Based Learning depends not only on instructional procedures but also on teachers' pedagogical competence, moral integrity, and ability to create supportive learning environments.

Challenges in Implementing Islamic Project-Based Learning

Although Islamic Project-Based Learning offers various educational opportunities, its implementation may encounter several challenges. One of the most common difficulties concerns limited instructional time. Project-based activities generally require sufficient time for planning, collaboration, implementation, presentation, and reflection(Aksela & Haatainen, 2019). These activities may be difficult to accommodate within conventional classroom schedules, particularly when teachers must also complete other curriculum requirements.

Differences in students' abilities, learning interests, and levels of participation may also influence project implementation. Some students may demonstrate strong creativity and communication skills, while others may experience difficulties expressing their ideas, completing responsibilities, or participating in group discussions. Such differences require teachers to provide appropriate guidance and distribute responsibilities fairly to ensure that all students have meaningful opportunities to participate.

Another challenge involves the availability of instructional facilities and resources. Digital projects, educational videos, and multimedia presentations may require internet access, electronic devices, and supporting software that are not equally accessible to all students(Memon & Memon, 2025). Teachers may also experience difficulties adapting conventional teaching practices to student-centered project-based approaches, particularly when they have limited experience in designing authentic projects and assessing multiple dimensions of learning.

The assessment of moral development presents another important challenge. Islamic ethical values such as honesty, sincerity, responsibility, and compassion cannot always be measured through written tests or short-term classroom activities. Teachers therefore need systematic observation procedures, behavioral indicators, reflective assessments, and supporting documentation to evaluate students' moral development more appropriately. In addition, there is a possibility that students may focus excessively on producing attractive project outputs without sufficiently understanding the Islamic principles underlying their activities. To address this issue, teachers must ensure that each project has clear religious learning objectives and includes opportunities for discussion, reflection, and practical application. These challenges indicate that successful implementation requires adequate preparation, institutional support, teacher training, appropriate learning resources, and continuous evaluation.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The implementation of Islamic Project-Based Learning in Aqidah Akhlak instruction can be understood through several educational theories and Islamic educational principles. From the perspective of constructivist learning theory, students develop understanding through active engagement, interaction, and the construction of knowledge based on meaningful experiences. Project-based activities encourage students to investigate moral problems, exchange ideas, interpret Islamic teachings, and develop solutions collaboratively(Al Mubarok & Saputra, 2025). This approach positions students as active participants in the learning process and enables them to connect new religious knowledge with their existing understanding and experiences.

The approach is also consistent with experiential learning theory, which emphasizes learning through concrete experiences, reflection, conceptual understanding, and practical application. In Aqidah Akhlak instruction, students do not merely learn about honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and compassion through theoretical explanations. Instead, they are provided with opportunities to practice these values during project activities and reflect on their significance. For example, social charity projects

can provide practical experiences of compassion and generosity, while collaborative environmental activities can encourage responsibility and collective action. These experiences help establish connections between Islamic moral knowledge and everyday behavior.

Furthermore, the instructional model reflects the fundamental principles of Project-Based Learning, particularly authentic problems, student autonomy, collaboration, sustained investigation, meaningful project products, and reflection. The integration of Islamic values gives these principles a religious and ethical orientation. Projects are not designed merely to produce creative outputs but also to encourage students to understand the moral purposes underlying their activities. This integration is important in ensuring that instructional innovation remains consistent with the broader objectives of Islamic education.

From the perspective of Islamic character education, the development of noble moral behavior requires the integration of knowledge, attitudes, and actions. Students should understand Islamic ethical principles, appreciate their importance, and demonstrate them through responsible behavior. This educational orientation is reflected in several Qur'anic teachings. Surah Al-Qalam (68:4) emphasizes the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary moral character, establishing noble conduct as an important foundation of Islamic education. Surah Al-Ahzab (33:21) presents the Prophet Muhammad as an excellent example for believers, highlighting the importance of moral role modeling in character formation. These teachings support the role of teachers as moral examples who demonstrate Islamic values through their everyday actions.

Similarly, Surah An-Nahl (16:125) emphasizes the importance of inviting others through wisdom and appropriate instruction. This principle provides a foundation for teachers to develop educational approaches that are contextual, constructive, and respectful of students' learning needs. Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:2) encourages cooperation in righteousness and piety, which is relevant to collaborative project activities and the development of ta'awun among students(Rahman et al., 2026). Meanwhile, Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) emphasizes human diversity, mutual understanding, and respect, providing an ethical foundation for tolerance and positive social interaction in collaborative learning environments.

The application of PjBL in Aqidah Akhlak instruction, highlighting its relevance to student participation and collaborative learning. Puteri et al. (2024) and Faqori et al. (2024) addressed the contribution of project-based learning to students' interest and understanding of Aqidah Akhlak. Meanwhile, Al Fikri et al. (2024) emphasized the potential of PjBL to develop critical reasoning and learning achievement in Islamic Education. These studies provide a foundation for understanding the educational value of project-oriented instruction.

The present research extends this discussion by emphasizing the systematic integration of Islamic creed, ethical understanding, authentic project activities, and character-oriented assessment within Aqidah Akhlak instruction. Its theoretical contribution concerns the development of an integrated instructional perspective that connects cognitive understanding, affective internalization, and behavioral application of Islamic values. Its practical contribution concerns providing teachers with a framework for designing projects that are relevant to students' experiences while remaining grounded in Qur'anic teachings, Hadith, and Islamic ethical principles. For Islamic educational institutions, this approach offers an opportunity to strengthen student-centered learning, encourage meaningful participation, and promote the practical application of akhlakul karimah. Ultimately, Islamic Project-Based Learning can serve as an innovative instructional alternative for connecting religious knowledge with character formation, provided that its implementation is supported by appropriate pedagogical planning, systematic assessment, and consistent moral guidance.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights Islamic Project-Based Learning as an innovative instructional approach for strengthening Aqidah Akhlak education through the integration of religious knowledge, practical experiences, and moral character development. The approach connects students' understanding of Islamic beliefs and ethical principles with meaningful project activities, including Islamic moral campaigns, social charity programs, digital educational content, and environmental responsibility initiatives. These activities provide opportunities for students to explore Qur'anic teachings, understand Islamic moral values, and practice principles such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, and compassion. Collaborative projects also create meaningful learning experiences that encourage student engagement, creativity, communication, and social interaction. The successful implementation of this approach requires teachers

to function as facilitators, mentors, evaluators, and moral role models who guide students throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, challenges involving limited instructional time, learning resources, differences in student participation, and the assessment of moral development require appropriate attention. Therefore, Islamic education teachers are encouraged to develop contextual projects grounded in Islamic values, while schools should provide adequate facilities and institutional support. Teachers should also integrate cognitive assessments with affective and behavioral observations. Future research should investigate the effectiveness of Islamic Project-Based Learning across different educational levels and institutional contexts to strengthen its contribution to Islamic education.

AUTHORS' DECLARATION

Authors' Contributions and Responsibilities

The author was responsible for conceptualizing the study, developing the research design, conducting data collection, analyzing and interpreting the findings, reviewing relevant literature, and preparing the manuscript.

Competing Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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