



Integrating Philanthropic Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning Through Project-Based Learning Methods

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Abstract

The Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in higher education has not been optimally implemented. PAI learning still focuses on the cognitive aspect, thus providing less space for strengthening the affective dimension and direct experience of students in actualizing Islamic teachings. Therefore, learning innovation is needed so that students experience and practice Islamic values directly in social life. This study aims to examine the integration of philanthropic values in PAI learning through the application of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach. This study focuses on a social action project in the form of distributing food and charity to orphans at Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School using a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. The research subjects were 28 students taking the PAI course in the Applied Nursing Anesthesiology Study Program at An Nasher University, Cirebon, who were directly involved in philanthropic activities. Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with students and lecturers, and documentation of activities. The results showed that the application of PjBL in philanthropic activities was able to improve students' contextual understanding of Islamic values. Students demonstrated increased empathy, social awareness, and commitment to the value of compassion in Islamic teachings. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of a Project-Based Learning approach with structured philanthropic practices in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction, which presents a contextual learning model based on social action and offers practical implications for the development of Islamic religious education.

Keywords: Philanthropy, Islamic Education, PjBL, Learning Method.

Abstrak

Pendekatan Project-Based Learning (PjBL) dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di perguruan tinggi belum diimplementasikan secara optimal. Pembelajaran PAI masih berfokus pada aspek kognitif, sehingga kurang memberikan ruang bagi penguatan dimensi afektif dan pengalaman langsung mahasiswa dalam mengaktualisasikan ajaran Islam. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan inovasi pembelajaran sehingga mahasiswa mengalami dan mempraktikkan nilai-nilai Islam secara langsung dalam kehidupan sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji integrasi nilai-nilai filantropi dalam pembelajaran PAI melalui penerapan pendekatan Project-Based Learning (PjBL). Fokus penelitian ini pada proyek aksi sosial berupa pembagian makanan dan santunan kepada anak yatim di SD Assidiqiyah Kalimadas dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi kasus. Subjek penelitiannya mahasiswa yang mengikuti mata kuliah PAI sebanyak 28 mahasiswa pada Program Studi Sarjana Terapan Keperawatan Anestesiologi Universitas An Nasher Cirebon dan terlibat langsung dalam kegiatan filantropi. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan mahasiswa dan dosen, serta dokumentasi kegiatan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan PjBL dalam kegiatan filantropi mampu meningkatkan pemahaman kontekstual mahasiswa terhadap nilai-nilai Islam. Mahasiswa menunjukkan peningkatan empati, kepedulian sosial, serta komitmen terhadap nilai kasih sayang dalam ajaran Islam. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi antara pendekatan Project-Based Learning dengan praktik filantropi terstruktur dalam pembelajaran PAI, yang menghadirkan model pembelajaran kontekstual berbasis aksi sosial dan memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pengembangan pendidikan agama Islam.

Kata kunci: Nilai Filantropi, PAI, Project-Based Learning, Metode Pembelajaran.

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in higher education plays a strategic role in shaping the character and identity of students as the nation's next generation of believers and noble morals. However, the reality on the ground shows that PAI learning still tends to be cognitive, focusing on the transfer of knowledge and memorization of religious doctrine without providing sufficient space for personal experience, reflection on values, and real-life application. As a result, there is a gap between students' theoretical mastery of religious material and the practice of Islamic values in their daily social behavior. Several previous studies have attempted to transform PAI learning through the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). A study by Achmad Fauzi demonstrated that PjBL in Islamic education is effective in

enhancing students' independent character and critical thinking skills.¹ Furthermore, research by Elvy Gustina confirms that PjBL can integrate the values of religious moderation through collaborative student projects.² Furthermore, a Scopus-based bibliometric review by Nurhusna Kamil shows that research on PjBL has experienced a significant increase in recent years and has become one of the most developed learning approaches at various levels of education.³

However, most of these studies still focus on improving cognitive, collaborative, and general character skills, and have not specifically integrated Islamic philanthropic values as the primary basis for designing learning projects. Thus, there remains a research gap in examining how PjBL can be developed as an approach that not only enhances understanding but also encourages concrete socio-religious practices. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the integration of philanthropic values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning through a contextual PjBL approach.⁴

One of the central values of Islamic teachings is philanthropy, which is a caring and generous attitude toward others, especially those in need, such as orphans and the poor.⁵ Islam teaches that a person's religiousness is not solely judged by ritual worship, but also by the extent to which they care for others. In numerous verses of the Quran and the Prophet's sayings, the

¹ Achmad Fauzi et al., "Project-Based Learning in Islamic Education : Enhancing Independent Character and Critical Thinking Skills in Junior High School Students" 6, no. 4 (2025): 35–38.

² Elvy Gustina et al., "Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education : Implementing Religious Moderation Values Through Student Collaborative Projects," 2025.

³ Nurhusna Kamil, "Bibliometric Study : Project-Based Learning in Education on Learning Outcomes Scopus Publication 2021-2023" 10, no. 2 (2023): 201–11.

⁴ Muhlas Amali, Siswanto Siswanto, and Mohammad Muchlis Solichin, "The Concept of Islamic Education Curriculum Based on Muhaimin's Perspective and Its Relevance in the Context of Contemporary Islamic Education," *Afkaruna: International Journal of Islamic Studies (AIJIS)* 2, no. 2 (2025): 221–35, <https://doi.org/10.38073/aijis.v2i2.2542>.

⁵ Muhammad Fajrin Haikal, Achmad Ghiyats Setiawan, and Udin Supriadi, "Evaluation of Islamic Education in a Pedagogic Perspective (Examining the Purpose and Meaning Behind the Islamic Values-Based Assessment Process)," *AL-WIJDĀN Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 10, no. 1 (2025): 56–80, <https://doi.org/10.58788/alwijdn.v10i1.5726>.

command to feed the poor, provide for orphans, and assist the underprivileged occupies a very high position.⁶ However, in academic settings, this value of philanthropy has not been fully integrated systematically into the learning process, including in Islamic Religious Education courses.⁷

The ideal learning environment for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) serves not only as a means of transmitting religious doctrine, but also as a space for constructing social meaning, enabling students to develop awareness, empathy, and responsibility for the humanitarian issues around them. From the social constructivism perspective developed by Lev Vygotsky, the learning process should occur through social interactions and contextual experiences that foster meaningful understanding, rather than simply passively receiving information.⁸⁹ However, the reality shows that a teacher-centered learning approach tends to hinder this knowledge construction process. Students are positioned primarily as recipients of information, thus providing less space to experience, reflect, and actualize Islamic values in real life. This situation demonstrates the urgent need for learning innovations that can bridge theory and practice, text and context, and the cognitive and affective aspects of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.¹⁰

One relevant approach to addressing these challenges is Project-Based Learning (PjBL). PjBL is a learning method that positions students as active participants in the learning process through the implementation of real-

⁶ Nur Mutiah et al., "Analysis of The Influence of Muslim Sandwich Generation Technology Philanthropy on Poverty," *Proceeding of International Conference on Islamic Philanthropy 1* (2023): 143–59, <https://doi.org/10.24090/icip.v1i1.401>.

⁷ Romansyah et al., "Living Hadith of the Lazismu Movement and Its Influence on Indonesian Society," *Religia* 26, no. 1 (2023): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v26i1.908>.

⁸ Muhammad Sarkawi Hasibuan, "PAI Learning Strategy Based on Effective and Enjoyable for Students in PAI Subjects," *Educationist Journal 2*, no. 1 (2024): 56–65.

⁹ Muh Habibulloh, "The Role of Islamic Education in Building Interreligious Tolerance in Indonesia," *International Journal of Education Management and Religion 1*, no. 2 (2024): 63–82, <https://doi.org/10.71305/ijemr.v1i2.103>.

¹⁰ Dwi Afriyanto and Anatansyah Ayomi Anandari, "Transformation of Islamic Religious Education in the Context of Multiculturalism at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta Through an Inclusive Approach," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (2024): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i1.7142>.

world projects relevant to their social context.¹¹ In PjBL, students are not only asked to understand the material but also to apply it in collaborative activities that have a real impact.¹² This method has great potential for instilling philanthropic values because it involves students in social activities that directly impact people's lives. Through PjBL, students learn not only from textbooks but also from real-life experiences, social interactions, and reflection on their actions.¹³

In this context, one of the universities in Cirebon implemented a PjBL project in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) course that involved students in sharing food with orphans at Assidiqiyah Elementary School, an Islamic-based elementary school located in Kaliwadas Village, Sumber District, Cirebon Regency. This project was designed as a form of integration between learning materials about Islamic with real implementation in the field. Students were divided into several small groups and given the task of designing, preparing, and implementing food sharing activities, starting from menu planning, internal fundraising, cooking processes, to direct distribution to beneficiaries. This activity was carried out with a collaborative and participatory approach.¹⁴

This project aims not only to fulfill course assignments but also to foster empathy, social awareness, and a sense of religious responsibility in students towards the social realities around them.¹⁵ They not only learn about the

¹¹ Imas Masruroh et al., "Needs Analysis for the Development of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through an Android Application to Enhance Fiqh Learning Outcomes," *International Journal Of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* 4, no. 4 (2025): 1510–19, <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.v4i4.1359>.

¹² Nur Halimatusyadiyah, Salsabella Wawa Anasya, and Azan Pajri, "The Effectiveness Of The Project Based Learning Model In The Independent Learning Curriculum," *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan* 6, no. 2 (2022): 3.

¹³ Muhammad Yamin, Abd. Halim, and Maemuna Muhayyang, "The Implementation Steps of Project-Based Learning in English Language Teaching at Islamic Boarding School," *Celebes Journal of Language Studies* 3, no. 1 (2023): 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.51629/cjls.v3i1.126>.

¹⁴ Katie Berns, Chiara Rossitto, and Jakob Tholander, "Learning from Other Communities: Organising Collective Action in a Grassroots Food-Sharing Initiative," *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)* 32, no. 4 (2023): 951–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10606-023-09468-5>.

¹⁵ Sri Ilham Nasution and Ahmad Fauzan, "Building Students' Social Awareness through Multicultural Education," *Jurnal Iqra' : Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan* 10, no. 1 (2025): 151–64, <https://doi.org/10.25217/ji.v10i1.4999>.

importance of charity from books but also experience it directly. In this process, values such as sincerity, cooperation, empathy, and social solidarity grow naturally.¹⁶ In examining the effectiveness of this approach theoretically, this study uses Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory.¹⁷ According to him, learning is not simply the transfer of information from teacher to student, but rather an active process of constructing knowledge through social experiences, collaboration, and the use of cultural aids. In the context of this project, students interact with the community (orphans, teachers, and school administrators), collaborate with group members, and experience a socially and emotionally rich learning process.¹⁸

The distinction of this research lies in the development of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model that explicitly integrates the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach with Islamic philanthropic practices in the local social context of Cirebon. Unlike previous research, which generally focused on improving cognitive achievement, collaborative skills, or general character building, this study places philanthropic values at the core of the project-based learning design, ensuring that the learning process is not only participatory but also oriented toward authentic socio-religious experiences. Furthermore, the use of Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory in this study extends beyond the conceptual level but is operationalized as an analytical framework to explain how social interaction, collaboration, and direct experience shape students' knowledge construction and internalization of values. Thus, this research not only offers pedagogical innovation but also makes theoretical and practical contributions to the development of contextual, transformative, and practical Islamic Religious

¹⁶ Ma'zumi; Nurl Fadhilah; Suja'i; Najmudin; Taswiyah, "Implementation Of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Religious Moderation Learning in Fostering Students ' Social Awareness Suja ' i As Future Leaders and Drivers of Societal Progress , Students Are Essential in Fostering a Social Responsibility and Commun" 10, no. 1 (2025): 129–42, <https://doi.org/10.29240/belajea.v10i1.11176>.

¹⁷ Loredana-Ileana Vișcu and Clifton Edward Watkins Jr, "Constructivism in Clinical Supervision. The Supervision Pyramid and the Constructivist Paradigm of Learning," ed. Loredana-Ileana Vișcu and Clifton Edward B T - A Guide to Clinical Supervision Watkins Jr (Academic Press, 2021), 39–49, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-821717-7.00005-4>.

¹⁸ Muh Syauqi Malik et al., "Vygotsky'S Theory in the Development of Social and Cognitive Skills of the Alpha Generation," *Fashluna* 6, no. 1 (2025): 28–39, <https://doi.org/10.47625/fashluna.v6i1.968>.

Education (PAI) learning. The integration of philanthropic values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning through the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach not only enriches students' learning experiences but also makes the learning process more meaningful, contextual, and transformative.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen based on the research objective of exploring in depth the dynamics of integrating philanthropic values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning through the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) method. By focusing on students' direct experiences in social activities sharing food with orphans at Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School, a qualitative approach was deemed most relevant for capturing subjective meanings, perceptions, and experiences that cannot be reduced to mere numbers. Within this framework, Norman K. Denzin's ideas on interpretive and multi-perspectives serve as the epistemological foundation of the research. Denzin emphasized that social reality is multiple, not singular, and shaped by human interactions within specific contexts. Therefore, students' experiences during social projects cannot be viewed as standalone, objective data, but rather as representations of a process of constructing meaning influenced by their backgrounds, values, and social interactions. In this context, the researcher acts as both an observer and a member of the environment, interpreting the data reflectively and openly.¹⁹

The subjects of this study were 28 students enrolled in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) courses and actively involved in social activities involving sharing food and donations to orphans. This activity took place at SD Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas, an elementary school located in Kaliwadas, Sumber, Cirebon Regency. Subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria being students enrolled in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) courses, active participants in philanthropic projects, and students from the Undergraduate Nursing and Anesthesiology Program at An Nasher University. The study was conducted over a seven-week period, allowing researchers to continuously observe the process. Data collection utilized three primary methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. In participant observation, researchers were

¹⁹ Yvonna S Denzin, Norman K; Lincoln, "Handbook of Qualitative Research (Eds)," *Revista Facultad Nacional de Salud Pública* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.rfnsp.289>.

directly involved in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the sharing activity. Observations were conducted not only to record visible actions but also to understand the emotional atmosphere, affective expressions, and social interactions between students, orphans, and teachers at the activity location.

In-depth interviews were conducted with several student project participants, course lecturers, and school officials. These interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions that provided space for informants to share their opinions, personal reflections, and spiritual and social experiences. Documentation of the activities, including photos, videos, and field notes, complemented the narrative and data interpretation. All documents were compiled and analyzed to provide a comprehensive picture of the learning process. The collected data were then interpreted using Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in shaping individual knowledge and awareness. According to this theory, students develop an understanding of Islamic values not solely through lectures or reading, but through collective experiences and social dialogue within their shared activities.

This research was conducted with due regard for the principles of prudence, voluntary consent, and data confidentiality. All informants provided informed consent, and their identities were disguised to maintain privacy. The researcher also maintained an empathetic and non-judgmental attitude during the data collection process, considering that the activities studied involved sensitive emotional and spiritual aspects.

Findings and Discussion

In the following discussion, the findings are grouped into three main themes that reflect the important dimensions of the integration of philanthropic values in Islamic Religious Education learning, namely strengthening the context of Islamic values through social action, transforming philanthropic values into social piety, Islamic religious education within the framework of social experience. Each subsection describes how these activities have a significant impact on developing students' religious, social, and empathetic character simultaneously and sustainably.

1. Strengthening the Context of Islamic Values through Social Action

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, emotional engagement and concrete action are often under-appreciated

elements. Students tend to be taught conceptually about Islamic teachings without being given the opportunity to translate these values into practical life. Through the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) program "Sharing Food and Gifts for Orphans" at Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School, students not only learn about charity in the text but also internalize it through concrete actions. This program is designed for four weeks in one semester. Students are divided into several groups tasked with designing, executing, and reflecting on socio-religious activities. The projects they work on are not merely academic assignments but also become touching spiritual experiences. From observations and interviews conducted with student participants, a significant shift in understanding of Islamic teachings was discovered. They no longer view PAI as a theoretical subject, but as a guide to life.

One student stated: *"I only felt that learning about religion truly touched me when I could directly experience the joy of the orphans receiving the food we distributed. It was then that I realized that Islam isn't just about memorizing, but about action."*

Through the lens of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, this experience becomes a meaningful learning process formed within a social context. Students learn through direct interaction with the community, in this case, orphaned children. Vygotsky's emphasis on the zone of proximal development is reflected in the guidance of the lecturer as a facilitator, as well as the group dynamics that form a supportive structure among students in developing ideas and managing their emotions throughout the activity.²⁰

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the aspects of emotional involvement and real action are often neglected, so students tend to understand teachings conceptually. Through the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) program "Sharing Food and Charity for Orphans" at Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School for four weeks, students not only learned the concept of charity, but also actualized it. The results of observations and interviews showed significant changes: students began to view PAI as a guide to life, not just a theory, as expressed by one student that the direct experience of sharing made him understand Islam as action, not memorization. Theoretically, this finding can be explained through Lev

²⁰ Anik Widiastuti, Nana Supriatna, and Siti K Nurbayani, "Application of Lev Vygotsky's Theory in Social Studies Learning Using Social Action Projects Based on Creative Pedagogy to Increase Student Engagement," *Jurnal Pendidikan* 15, no. 3 (2023): 4164–74, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i3.3429>.

Vygotsky's social constructivism, where learning occurs through social interaction. Involvement in sharing activities, lecturer guidance, and group collaboration reflect the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which encourages students to construct meaning and internalize values more deeply.

2. Transforming Philanthropic Values into Social Piety

One of the main objectives of project-based learning in this Islamic Religious Education (PAI) course is to build a bridge between the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.²¹ Observations show that through involvement in philanthropic activities, students experience a transformation from theoretical understanding to concrete actions reflecting social piety.²² Before the project began, the majority of students admitted to having never directly engaged in social activities with vulnerable groups such as orphans. They understood the concept of charity or doing good as a religious recommendation, but did not yet see the urgency of applying it in their daily lives. This project forced them to step out of their comfort zones, designing fundraising strategies, selecting appropriate food and gifts, and organizing the time and location of the activities.

As a result, during the final project reflection process, nearly all students reported increased empathy, social responsibility, and awareness of the importance of sharing.²³ Students not only touched on aspects of personal religiosity but also began to understand the social dimensions of Islamic teachings. Some student responses reflect this shift:

"I feel more connected to the community. Previously, I felt like studying religion was just for myself. But now I realize that being Muslim means being there for others."

"This activity opened my eyes to the fact that the value of philanthropy is not just something to be written about in papers, but something to be put into

²¹ Siti Maryam Munjiat, "Implementation Of Islamic Religious Education Learning In Higher Education On The Pandemic," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 2 (2020): 285–95.

²² Mutiah et al., "Analysis of The Influence of Muslim Sandwich Generation Technology Philanthropy on Poverty."

²³ Taswiyah, "Implementation Of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Religious Moderation Learning in Fostering Students ' Social Awareness Suja ' i As Future Leaders and Drivers of Societal Progress , Students Are Essential in Fostering a Social Responsibility and Commun."

practice.”

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is effective in fostering empathy and social awareness in students through direct involvement in philanthropic activities. This finding is in line with research by Khusna which states that project-based learning has a positive influence on the affective aspect, including empathy and social concern of students in the context of experiential learning.²⁴ In addition, research by Nabilah also confirms that PjBL is able to develop the affective domain systematically through the active involvement of students in each stage of learning.²⁵ Thus, the results of this study strengthen previous findings that PjBL is effective in developing the affective dimension of students. However, this study provides a new dimension by integrating Islamic philanthropic values explicitly in the learning design, so that empathy develops not only as a social skill, but also as a form of internalization of religious values that are realized in real practice.

3. Islamic Religious Education in the Frame of Social Experience

User One of the key findings of this research is the emergence of a collective awareness among students that religious education cannot be separated from social reality.²⁶ Through this project, the campus becomes a connected space and participates in social issues. Students who previously only knew about orphans from books now face the reality firsthand, seeing the school's modest physical condition, hearing the students' stories, and realizing how little help is needed to make them smile. This interaction provides a critical reflection for students, requiring them to rethink the meaning of the knowledge they are learning.

²⁴ Dwi Astuti, Wahyu Nurhayati, and Rajendra P Shresthai, “New Technologies for Project-Based Empathy Learning in Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn): The Use of InaRISK Application and Biopore Technology,” n.d., 94–110.

²⁵ Edi; Widiahastuti Nabilah; Istiyono, “Redefining Assessment : Creating a Groundbreaking Prototype for Domain Affective in Project-Based Learning” 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–8.

²⁶ Heather Marshall, “Reimagining Religious Education: Integrating Ethnographic and Anthropological Perspectives,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 46, no. 4 (October 1, 2024): 534–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2024.2373778>.

Table 1 Impact of the Food Sharing Project on Student Value Transformation

No	Observed Value Aspects	Pre-Project Change Indicators	Post-Project Change Indicators	Real Transformation Form
1	Islamic Philanthropic Values	Lack of empathy towards the condition of orphans	The emergence of a desire to share and care	Provide your own food to share
2	Social Religious Awareness	Be individual in interpreting Islamic Religious Education teachings	Recognizing the importance of faith-based social action	Actively involved in social activities
3	Reflective Ability	Not yet accustomed to reflecting on social experiences	Demonstrate the ability to relate theory to the real world	Writing a reflection on shared experiences
4	Collaboration and Leadership	Less active in group work	Improve team initiative and coordination	Become a social activity coordinator
5	Internalization of Religious Values	Understanding Islamic Education teachings theoretically	Able to internalize values in action	Make sharing a personal habit

This activity encourages lecturers to develop more adaptive and collaborative learning designs. Lecturers are no longer positioned as the sole source of knowledge, but rather as facilitators who provide space for students to explore, make decisions, and reflect on their learning experiences. This facilitative role is concretely realized in the scaffolding process when students face obstacles in the field, such as difficulties in fundraising or when confronted with the social reality of poverty at Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School. In these situations, lecturers provide guidance through reflective discussions, guidance strategies, and motivational reinforcement

without involving the students, while interactions between students also serve as a source of collective support.

Through this mechanism, students experience a shift in identity from mere recipients of knowledge to active learning subjects and actors of social transformation capable of interpreting and responding critically to social realities. Thus, students understand Islam not only as a normative teaching but also as a system of lived values that demands active participation in social practices. Furthermore, these activities also contribute to building sustainable relationships between universities and the community.

4. From Cognition to Action: Internalizing Philanthropic Values through a Social Constructivism Approach

The Transforming Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is not sufficient to stop at a cognitive understanding of Islamic values. Learning that emphasizes memorization and theoretical knowledge often fails to foster social awareness and concrete action in society. In this context, Vygotsky's social constructivism approach provides a strong foundation for building learning based on experience, social interaction, and active participation.²⁷ This is evident in the project of sharing food with orphans carried out by university students as part of project-based PAI learning.

Students not only learn the concept of Islamic philanthropy in the classroom, but are also asked to conceptualize, design, and execute social activities that directly relate to the realities of society.²⁸ This process indirectly places them in the zone of proximal development, where they are guided by lecturers and learn from each other in groups. This interaction opens up a space for active, collaborative, and reflective dialogue in understanding Islamic teachings in a real-life context. In practice, students demonstrate significant affective changes. They begin to realize that values such as compassion, social justice, empathy, and responsibility are not merely theory but must be put into practice. Through observation and reflection after the activity, it was identified that students feel emotionally closer to Islamic teachings because they directly experience the meaningfulness of each value

²⁷ Kalliopi Rigopouli, Dimitrios Kotsifakos, and Yannis Psaromiligkos, "Vygotsky's Creativity Options and Ideas in 21st-Century Technology-Enhanced Learning Design," *Education Sciences* 15, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15020257>.

²⁸ Widiastuti, Supriatna, and Nurbayani, "Application of Lev Vygotsky's Theory in Social Studies Learning Using Social Action Projects Based on Creative Pedagogy to Increase Student Engagement."

taught.

“I now understand that the meaning of charity is not just giving money. But about sincerity, about being there for those in need,” said one student.

Table 2. Integration of Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory in Philanthropic Value-Based PjBL

NNo	Components of Vygotsky's Theory	Implementation in PjBL Activities	Implications for Islamic Education Learning
	Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	Students are guided by lecturers and peers to design social activities.	Increase understanding and courage to take real action
	Scaffolding	Lecturers provide technical guidance and basic Islamic values in sharing	Students are able to act with directed values
	Social Interaction	Collaboration with friends and communication with the orphan community	Developing social competence and empathy
	Collective Construction of Meaning	Joint reflection after the activity is carried out	Students form the meaning of religious values together
	Contextual Learning	Sharing food directly at the location (Assidiqiyah Elementary School)	Religious teachings are understood more contextually and down to earth

On the other hand, this activity also creates a more participatory and enjoyable learning environment. Students learn not under the pressure of exams, but rather in a spirit of collaboration and service. They practice communication, empathy, decision-making, and teamwork all 21st-century skills that are essential in the real world.²⁹ The integration of spiritual and

²⁹ Rigopouli, Kotsifakos, and Psaromiligkos, “Vygotsky’s Creativity Options and Ideas in 21st-Century Technology-Enhanced Learning Design.”

social values within a single activity makes learning more meaningful and relevant to the needs of the times.

Thus, internalizing philanthropic values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning through a social constructivist approach not only makes students recipients of knowledge but also actors of social transformation. They are not merely "taught," but "experienced," and from this experience, an awareness and commitment to making religious values the foundation for acting within society is born. This is what is meant by education that is both liberating and humanizing.

5. Finding the Meaning Behind Philanthropic Actions

Based The philanthropic activities carried out by students in the form of distributing food and gifts to orphans at Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School are not simply social routines that result in photo documentation or assignment grades. Behind these concrete activities lies a complex and layered process of meaning-making, extending beyond the instrumental dimension of education to touch on existential, ethical, and relational realms. This sub-discussion attempts to re-read how that meaning is born, develops, and becomes internal capital for students in understanding the role of religion as a social practice.

Meaning emerges from direct experience with the experience of meeting orphans face to face seeing their plight, hearing their varied stories, and experiencing the joy of receiving food creates an unforgettable emotional experience. According to Vygotsky's social constructivism perspective, this kind of experience is intersubjective: meaning is not formed solely by the individual, but through the interaction between the individual and their social environment.³⁰ When students hand over portions of food and witness genuine smiles, the construction of the meaning of charity shifts from a normative category to a lived moral experience. Charity is no longer merely a recitation of verses or definitions in a textbook, but rather an act that humanizes oneself and others.

The process of reflection plays a crucial role in finding meaning. PjBL activities don't stop with the action; lecturer direct students to conduct structured post-activity reflections: writing experience journals, discussing in small groups, and presenting the lessons learned. In this reflective stage, students are given space to make sense of their experiences—connecting

³⁰ Malik et al., "Vygotsky'S Theory in the Development of Social and Cognitive Skills of the Alpha Generation."

feelings, actions, and knowledge. For example, a student might initially view sharing as merely a religious obligation; through reflection, they realize that giving also touches on human identity, enriches gratitude, and opens awareness of social inequalities. This reflection is what transforms the experience into lasting learning, moving from simply doing to understanding, from understanding to commitment.

Meaning is constructed through ongoing social dialogue. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction in cognitive and affective development. In this project, these interactions occurred at several levels: among group members, between students and lecturers, and between students and the community at Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School. Intense group discussions encouraged students to challenge each other's assumptions, compare perspectives, and refine their understanding. Conversations with lecturers provided scaffolding, guiding concepts and values, that helped students critically articulate their experiences. Interactions with children and teachers at the school provided students with contextual information that enriched their understanding of social reality. This combined dialogue created a collective meaning that was richer and more layered than individual meaning alone.

In the local context, Assidiqiyah Kaliwadas Elementary School is not just a setting; the school itself has specific characteristics, needs, and cultures that influence how aid is perceived and responded to. Students learn to respond to specific needs, such as appropriate food for children, the most appropriate timing, or a respectful delivery method. This contextual sensitivity teaches that meaningful philanthropic actions must be responsive to the recipient's specific situation. The meanings discovered are not static, universal, but rather dynamic and contextual.

The implications of meaning also lie in follow-up and sustainability. Many students, after the project, demonstrated initiative in continuing their social activities, establishing regular sharing groups, raising funds for orphanage scholarships, or advocating for similar programs in their communities. This indicates that the meaning they found was not temporary, the PjBL experience had fostered values that foster sustainable behavior. From an educational perspective, this is a key indicator of success, not just temporary changes but shifts in disposition that lead to sustainable action. Furthermore, discovering the meaning behind philanthropic acts means understanding education as a holistic process of transformation are intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual. Philanthropy-based projects

demonstrate that religious learning can be enriched if designed as an experience involving reflection, dialogue, context, and continuity of action. The meaning thus developed becomes the foundation for students to live as individuals of character who not only understand religious teachings but also live according to those teachings in their daily interactions.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the integration of philanthropic values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach has proven effective in developing students' social and religious awareness, as stated in the research objectives. Within Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism framework, students not only understand Islamic teachings theoretically but also internalize them through direct practice in real-life social contexts. Sharing activities with orphans provides a learning space that allows students to develop empathy, concern, and social responsibility through reflection and collaboration. These findings confirm that contextual and experiential Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can encourage a paradigm shift in student learning, from mere understanding to action. The integration of philanthropic values through PjBL not only strengthens cognitive and affective aspects but also shapes more applicable socio-religious character. In practical terms, these findings recommend the need to strengthen Islamic Religious Education curriculum policies in universities to better integrate social project-based learning that involves the community, so that students not only learn to understand Islamic teachings but also implement them in real life.

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