

Research Article

Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education: Implementing Religious Moderation Values Through Student Collaborative Projects

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Abstract: Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and religious values, including moderate attitudes in practicing religion. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Project Based Learning (PBL) in PAI as a means to strengthen moderate character and integrate religious moderation values through student collaborative projects. The research employs a literature review approach, collecting data from various scientific literature, journals, books, theses, and dissertations relevant to the topic. Data analysis is conducted using content analysis and narrative synthesis, applying both deductive and inductive reasoning. The findings indicate that PBL allows students to actively engage in contextual real-life projects, making the understanding of Islamic teachings more applicable and reflective. PBL also promotes the internalization of religious moderation values through collaboration and discussion among students, while reinforcing moderate character by developing social skills, empathy, and inclusive attitudes. Despite challenges such as limited resources and teacher readiness, appropriate implementation strategies can optimize the effectiveness of PBL in PAI. Therefore, PBL functions not only as a learning method but also as a transformative pedagogical strategy that shapes a generation of Muslim students who are knowledgeable, tolerant, and moderate.

Keywords: Project Based Learning; Islamic Religious Education; Religious Moderation; Moderate Character; Collaborative Learning.

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1. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia holds a highly strategic position in shaping students' character to be faithful, virtuous, and socially aware within a pluralistic society (Wati et al., 2025). However, the challenges faced by the education sector today are becoming increasingly complex in line with rapid social and technological changes. On one hand, the younger generation lives amidst the flow of digitalization, globalization, and easy access to information; yet on the other hand, phenomena of intolerance, religion-based radicalism, and social disintegration still frequently appear in public spaces and on social media. A survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute (2023) revealed that some students tend to have an exclusive understanding of religious teachings and are less prepared to interact openly with differences. This phenomenon serves as an alarm for Islamic education to focus not only on religious knowledge acquisition but also on fostering an inclusive and moderate religious consciousness (Akhyar et al., 2024).

Since 2019, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has mainstreamed the values of Religious Moderation across all levels of education. Religious moderation is defined as a perspective, attitude, and religious practice that balances the understanding of texts and contexts while appreciating diversity as a divine law (sunnatullah). These values include tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), ta'adul (justice), and

musawah (egalitarianism). However, the implementation of this concept in Islamic Religious Education at schools often remains normative limited to conceptual discourse without pedagogical strategies that can reach the affective and social dimensions of students (Sesmiarni, 2025). In fact, the internalization of religious moderation values requires a learning approach that provides room for experience, reflection, and real collaboration among students.

In this context, the Project Based Learning (PBL) approach becomes highly significant. PBL is a learning model that positions students as active subjects through project-based activities that demand cooperation, creativity, and contextual problem-solving (Iswantir et al., 2023). This model originates from modern constructivist thought, emphasizing the importance of learning rooted in authentic experiences (authentic learning experiences). Recent studies have shown that PBL positively impacts the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Furthermore, in the context of character education, PBL has been proven to enhance social empathy and concern for humanitarian issues, as students are trained to work together, share responsibilities, and appreciate differences in achieving common goals (Restu et al., 2023).

In the framework of Islamic Religious Education, the PBL approach can be utilized to instill the values of religious moderation through collaborative activities relevant to real-life contexts (Nurdian, 2024). For example, social projects such as interfaith tolerance campaigns, cross-community service programs, or environmental projects based on Islamic values of maintaining ecological balance (*fiqh al-bi'ah*). Through such projects, students do not merely understand Islamic concepts theoretically but also embody them through real social actions. This aligns with the idea of holistic Islamic education, which integrates spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions as complementary elements. Thus, PBL is not merely a teaching strategy but also a means of value transformation aligned with the spirit of *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Islam as a mercy to all creation).

Modern Islamic education literature emphasizes that learning which integrates the values of religious moderation must be grounded in experiential learning and social habituation. This means that values such as tolerance, justice, and balance cannot be taught merely through lectures or rote memorization but through interaction, collaboration, and reflection upon differences. Here lies the epistemological strength of PBL: it allows students to directly experience a learning process that carries both spiritual and social meaning (Wathon, 2025). Moreover, this approach aligns with the principle of *ta'dib* in Islamic education according to al-Attas, namely the process of recognizing and acknowledging the cosmic order and moral values that shape proper conduct (*adab*).

Based on the above explanation, this article aims to analyze how the implementation of Project Based Learning in Islamic Religious Education can serve as an effective means of internalizing religious moderation values within the school environment. The article seeks to affirm that developing a contextual and collaborative learning model is essential in today's era of educational disruption. By connecting progressive pedagogical theories with moderate Islamic values, this study is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions for PAI teachers, curriculum developers, and Islamic education researchers in building an adaptive learning system responsive to modern social and religious dynamics.

Furthermore, the conceptual hypothesis proposed in this article is that the systematic implementation of PBL in Islamic Religious Education can strengthen students' moderate character through three main mechanisms: (1) active student engagement in collaborative

processes that foster empathy and tolerance; (2) contextual learning experiences that cultivate social and spiritual awareness; and (3) critical reflection on religious practices that teach a balance between textual idealism and social reality. Therefore, PBL is not only a methodological innovation but also an ideological strategy to reinforce the vision of PAI as an education that nurtures faithful, knowledgeable, and nationally minded individuals who uphold inclusivity.

2. Research Method

This study employs a literature review approach, aiming to analyze and formulate the implementation of Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as a means of strengthening moderate character and integrating religious moderation values through students' collaborative projects (Akhyar & Zukdi, 2025). The literature review approach was chosen because this research is conceptual in nature, focusing on the collection, analysis, and synthesis of findings from various relevant sources, thereby allowing the researcher to construct a conceptual framework and scholarly argument without conducting fieldwork.

The data sources in this study consist of various scientific literatures, including books, national and international journal articles, seminar proceedings, theses, dissertations, and academic publications available in both online and printed formats. These sources were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, namely the application of PBL in PAI, the integration of religious moderation values, and the strengthening of students' moderate character. The selection criteria include the credibility of the authors, the clarity of the methodology, and the recency of the publications, with a time range of the last ten years to ensure relevance to contemporary educational developments.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature search using relevant keywords such as "Project Based Learning," "Islamic Religious Education," "religious moderation," "moderate character," and "collaborative learning." The search process was carried out through digital academic databases, scholarly journals, university libraries, and repositories of theses and dissertations. Each identified source was recorded, classified, and analyzed to ensure alignment with the research focus.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis and narrative synthesis. First, the collected literature was carefully examined to identify major themes related to the implementation of PBL in PAI, the integration of religious moderation values, the strengthening of moderate character, as well as the challenges and strategies for its implementation. Second, the findings from each source were compared, critically reviewed, and synthesized into a coherent scientific narrative, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon. The analysis also assessed the consistency, gaps, and relevance among the sources to construct a solid scientific argument that supports the research objectives.

Thus, by employing a literature review approach, this study presents an in-depth conceptual analysis of the implementation of PBL in Islamic Religious Education, the strengthening of moderate character, and the integration of religious moderation values. This method enables the researcher to develop a systematic and argumentative academic narrative while providing a foundation for practical recommendations for teachers, schools, and educational stakeholders in effectively implementing PBL.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

Project Based Learning (PBL) as a Contextual Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the active involvement of learners in the learning process through real-world projects that are relevant to their lives. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), PBL provides students with the opportunity to connect learning materials with daily experiences, making the learning process not only theoretical but also practical (Hatamudin et al., 2025). This model emphasizes exploration, collaboration, and reflection, enabling students to construct their own understanding of the religious values being taught.

The contextual concept in PBL means that each project is designed to have direct relevance to the students' social, cultural, and environmental conditions. Thus, students not only comprehend the principles of Islamic teachings conceptually but are also able to see how these principles are applied in real life at school, within the family, and in the wider community. For instance, through projects focusing on social activities such as community service, waste management, or environmental cleanliness programs, students learn to practice Islamic values such as responsibility, compassion, and justice. Such activities provide students with concrete experiences, making Islamic values more deeply ingrained and easily internalized.

Moreover, PBL in Islamic Religious Education encourages students to think critically and creatively in addressing real-life problems. The process of planning, implementing, and evaluating a project requires students to analyze situations, identify solutions aligned with Islamic principles, and collaborate with peers (Afifah et al., 2025). The teacher acts as a facilitator who guides students, provides direction, and helps them reflect on their project experiences. This role is essential to ensure that learning remains focused on achieving spiritual, social, and cognitive competencies.

The implementation of PBL is also consistent with the principles of Islamic education, which emphasize experiential learning (*ta'allum bi al-tajribah*) and the application of values (*ta'dib*). Through this approach, students not only understand Islamic teachings in textual terms but also learn to integrate these values into their daily social interactions. This approach strengthens students' understanding of religious moderation, as they learn to balance adherence to religious teachings with a tolerant and inclusive attitude toward differences (Fazillah, 2024).

It can therefore be understood that PBL, as a contextual learning model in Islamic Religious Education, offers dual benefits. First, students gain a deeper and more applicable understanding of Islamic teachings. Second, they develop social and emotional skills that support the formation of moderate, creative, and responsible character. This approach bridges the gap between theory and practice in religious education and prepares students to become a Muslim generation capable of facing social and global challenges with balanced and reflective attitudes.

Integration of Religious Moderation Values through Project Based Learning in Islamic Religious Education

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a learning approach that emphasizes active student engagement in real-world projects relevant to their lives. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), PBL can serve as an effective means to integrate the values of religious

moderation, such as tolerance, balance, and social justice. Through PBL, students are encouraged to understand and apply these values in their daily lives through direct experience.

According to research by Harahap and Pasaribu (2025), the integration of religious moderation values in PAI at general higher education institutions can be achieved through a contextual and practical approach. The implementation of PBL in this context allows students to critically examine social and religious issues and seek solutions that reflect the principles of religious moderation. This aligns with the goals of Islamic education, which aim not only to transmit knowledge but also to shape students' character and moderate attitudes (Harahap & Pasaribu, 2025).

Alka Kianda et al. (2024) also suggested that designing the reinforcement of religious moderation using the PBL model in PAI courses can be carried out through strategic steps. The first step is to determine the main themes that are relevant to contemporary issues related to religious moderation. Next, learning outcomes are defined to include the understanding and application of religious moderation values. Then, instructional materials and media that support the learning process are selected, followed by the formulation of PBL implementation steps, which include orienting students to the problem, organizing student activities, guiding investigations, developing and presenting results, as well as analyzing and evaluating the issues (Alka Kianda et al., 2024).

The implementation of PBL in PAI can also enhance students' moderate and tolerant attitudes. Fitriani and Marzuki (2025) demonstrated that applying the PBL model in PAI learning strengthens students' moderation and tolerance. Through projects that involve discussion, collaboration, and problem-solving together, students learn to respect differences, cooperate within diversity, and seek fair and wise solutions.

Furthermore, research by Suaidi et al. (2025) revealed that strategies for integrating religious moderation values in PAI learning can be realized through a synergy of classroom-based value integration, teacher role modeling, the implementation of routine religious activities that internalize principles of tolerance and togetherness, and continuous supervision of moderate behavior in daily interactions. The combination of these four aspects creates a holistic, effective, and sustainable educational ecosystem for developing students' religious character (Suaidi et al., 2024).

Therefore, the integration of religious moderation values through PBL in PAI not only enhances students' understanding of Islamic teachings but also shapes moderate attitudes and behaviors that can be applied in daily life. Contextual and practical PBL implementation enables students to learn actively and critically while developing social skills that support the creation of a harmonious and tolerant society.

PBL as a Means of Strengthening Moderate Character in Islamic Religious Education

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a learning approach that emphasizes active student engagement in real-world projects relevant to their lives. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), PBL can serve as an effective means to integrate religious moderation values, such as tolerance, balance, and social justice. Through PBL, students are encouraged to understand and apply these values in daily life through direct experience.

According to research by Lubis (2025), the implementation of PBL in PAI learning can enhance students' moderate and tolerant attitudes. Through projects that involve discussion, collaboration, and joint problem-solving, students learn to respect differences, cooperate

within diversity, and seek fair and wise solutions. This aligns with the goals of Islamic education, which aim not only to transmit knowledge but also to shape students' character and moderate attitudes (Lubis, 2025).

Research by Lestari and Huda (2021) shows that applying PBL in PAI learning can strengthen students' moderate character. Through projects that challenge students to think critically and creatively, they learn to balance adherence to religious teachings with a tolerant attitude toward differences. This process helps students develop inclusive and adaptive attitudes in facing diverse social dynamics.

Additionally, research by Jamal et al. (2023) reveals that PBL can enhance students' social skills, such as communication, collaboration, and empathy. These skills are essential in shaping moderate character because students are encouraged to work together with classmates from different backgrounds and perspectives. Through this interaction, students learn to appreciate differences and cultivate mutual respect (Jamal et al., 2023).

It can therefore be understood that PBL not only improves students' understanding of PAI materials but also plays a crucial role in strengthening moderate character. Through direct experiences in relevant and contextual projects, students can internalize religious moderation values and apply them in daily life. The implementation of PBL in PAI contributes significantly to forming a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also possesses a strong moderate character.

Challenges in Implementing PBL in Islamic Religious Education

The implementation of Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) faces various challenges that must be addressed to ensure an effective and efficient learning process. One of the main challenges is the limitation of resources, such as budget, facilities, and instructional materials necessary to support PBL projects. These limitations can hinder the smooth execution of learning and make it difficult for students to complete projects optimally. Research by Rachman and Nurhanifansyah (2024) reveals that the lack of resources is a significant obstacle in applying PBL in PAI (Rachman & Nurhanifansyah, 2024).

In addition, teacher readiness and competence are also key factors determining the success of PBL implementation. Teachers need a deep understanding of the PBL concept as well as skills in designing, executing, and evaluating projects. However, not all teachers possess these competencies, which makes ongoing training and mentoring necessary (Setiawan, 2024). Junita (2023) found that enhancing teacher competence through training can improve the effectiveness of PBL implementation in PAI.

Another challenge is time management. PBL requires a considerable amount of time because students are involved in the process of developing complex projects. Limited time can lead to rushed learning processes and reduce the quality of learning. Junita (2023) also notes that ineffective time management can negatively impact the quality of PBL based PAI learning.

Strategies for Implementing PBL in Islamic Religious Education

To overcome these challenges, appropriate strategies are needed in implementing PBL in PAI. First, it is important to design projects that are relevant to students' lives and aligned with the learning objectives of PAI. Projects should integrate religious and social values that educators aim to instill in students. Rachman and Nurhanifansyah (2024) emphasize the importance of selecting contextual and practical project topics in PAI.

Second, teachers need to act as facilitators who guide students through each stage of the project, from planning and execution to evaluation. Teachers must create a learning environment that supports collaboration, creativity, and reflection. Junita (2023) supports this, showing that active teacher involvement in guiding students can enhance the quality of PBL-based PAI learning.

Third, learning evaluation should be conducted holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Evaluation should focus not only on the final project results but also on the learning process and students' attitudes throughout the project. Fourth, support from schools and the government is essential in providing adequate resources, such as facilities, budgets, and instructional materials (Wulan et al., 2024). Without this support, the implementation of PBL in PAI will face significant obstacles. Rachman and Nurhanifansyah (2024) also highlight the importance of external support for the successful implementation of PBL.

Discussion

Referring to the findings from the literature review, the implementation of Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in transforming learning from a conventional, text-based model into a contextual, practical, and reflective process. PBL positions students at the center of learning, where they actively plan, execute, and evaluate projects that are relevant to their life experiences. This approach enables students not only to understand religious concepts theoretically but also to connect Islamic values with social dynamics and real-life situations. PBL thus becomes an essential means of providing meaningful learning that motivates students to engage in self-directed learning. This phenomenon arises because PBL emphasizes the principle of learning by doing, requiring students to participate directly in the learning process through authentic experiences.

The integration of religious moderation values through PBL occurs because this approach encourages interaction and collaboration among students from diverse social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Such collaboration creates space for students to develop tolerant (*tasamuh*), balanced (*tawasuth*), and just (*ta'adul*) attitudes in responding to differences. Through projects that require cooperation, discussion, and collective problem-solving, students learn to appreciate differences, build empathy, and balance individual interests with group goals. This occurs because PBL provides real social experiences, where students face challenges and conflicts that must be resolved by prioritizing religious moderation values, making the internalization of these values not only theoretical but also practical.

Moreover, PBL has proven effective in strengthening students' moderate character. Moderate character is not only related to tolerance but also to the ability to balance religious understanding with inclusive, creative, and adaptive attitudes in social life. PBL places students in situations that demand critical thinking, decision-making based on Islamic values, and collaboration with others in diverse settings. Collaborative experiences strengthen social skills such as communication, empathy, and leadership, all of which are essential elements in forming moderate character. This occurs because project-based learning provides direct, challenging, and repetitive experiences, allowing character values to be deeply internalized through practical application.

However, implementing PBL in PAI faces several challenges. Limited resources, teacher readiness, and time management are major factors that can hinder the effectiveness of PBL. Not all teachers have the competence to design and guide relevant projects, while limited facilities can reduce the quality of students' learning experiences. These challenges are further compounded by curricula that remain content-heavy and emphasize material coverage, limiting the time available for PBL projects.

To overcome these obstacles, strategies for implementing PBL must be carefully planned. Teachers should act as facilitators guiding students through each project stage, from problem orientation and planning to execution, reflection, and evaluation. Learning evaluation should be holistic, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, and focus not only on project outcomes but also on the learning process and students' attitudes. Selecting project themes that are relevant to contemporary issues and students' life contexts is key to success, as it enhances motivation and engagement. Support from schools and relevant stakeholders in providing infrastructure, budgets, and digital facilities is also crucial to ensure smooth PBL implementation.

The positive outcomes arising from PBL implementation in PAI can be analyzed as a result of the experiential learning principle. Students' involvement in real projects allows them to internalize religious and moderation values directly while developing social, critical thinking, and creative skills. Collaborative experiences foster deep reflection, enabling the consistent formation of moderate character encompassing tolerance, inclusivity, and balance. This explains why PBL can serve as an effective transformative strategy in modern religious education: it not only transmits knowledge but also shapes students' behaviors and attitudes in real-life contexts.

Overall, PBL in PAI presents a harmonious integration of academic learning, character formation, and the internalization of religious moderation values. The success of this phenomenon occurs because PBL unites cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects into a holistic and meaningful learning process, making it a relevant model for preparing a generation of moderate, adaptive, and competitive Muslim students in the global era.

4. Conclusions

The implementation of Project Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in enhancing learning quality, strengthening moderate character, and internalizing the values of religious moderation among students. As a contextual learning model, PBL enables students to actively engage in real-world projects relevant to their daily lives, allowing their understanding of Islamic teachings to be not only theoretical but also practical and reflective.

The integration of religious moderation values through PBL occurs because collaborative projects require students to work together, engage in discussions, and solve problems collectively. Through this process, they learn to respect differences, balance adherence to religious teachings with inclusive attitudes, and develop empathy and social justice. PBL has also proven effective in reinforcing moderate character, as students are exposed to social experiences that demand critical, creative, and adaptive thinking while applying Islamic principles in real-life contexts.

Despite challenges such as limited resources, teacher readiness, and time management, appropriate implementation strategies such as teachers acting as facilitators, selecting relevant project themes, conducting holistic evaluations, and securing support from schools and stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of PBL in PAI. The positive outcomes of PBL

arise because this approach integrates cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual aspects into a holistic learning process, enabling deep and consistent internalization of religious moderation values and the formation of moderate character.

Therefore, PBL in PAI functions not only as a teaching method but also as a transformative pedagogical strategy capable of shaping a generation of Muslims who are knowledgeable, tolerant, inclusive, and adaptive, as well as prepared to face social and global challenges with balanced, responsible, and moderate attitudes.

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