

Integrating Inquiry-Based Learning into Fiqh Education to Enhance Conceptual Understanding Among Indonesian Elementary Madrasah Students

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ABSTRACT

Fiqh learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah often still focuses on memorizing laws and arguments without encouraging deep conceptual understanding. This condition shows the need for an innovative approach that can foster understanding and religious character simultaneously. This study aims to analyze the integration of the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model in Fiqh learning to improve the conceptual understanding and Qur'anic values of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, involving one Fiqh teacher and ten fifth-grade students at an elementary madrasah in Karawang. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model through data reduction, presentation, and verification. The results showed that the application of the IBL model increased active participation, critical thinking skills, and students' cognitive understanding of Fiqih laws. In addition, the inquiry process played an important role in shaping religious characters such as amanah (intellectual honesty), sabr (perseverance in learning), and istiqāmah (consistency in effort). This study concludes that the integration of IBL is relevant to the direction of the Merdeka Curriculum and can be used as an innovative pedagogical strategy in basic Islamic education. These findings contribute to the development of a learning model that is in line with the objectives of Islamic education, namely to shape students who are knowledgeable ('ālim), moral (akhlaqiy), and critical thinkers (dhī bāṣīrah).

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education essentially aims not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape Muslim individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and have noble character (Pedaste et al., 2023; Wilmes & Siry, 2018). In this context, Fiqh learning has a strategic role because it teaches the principles of worship and muamalah, which are the behaviors of a Muslim in daily life (Garzón et al., 2020; Ogegbo et al., 2024). However, in practice, Fiqh learning at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level is often still dominated by conventional methods that are oriented towards memorization and lectures, so that

students lack understanding of the meaning and relevance of Fiqh teachings in the context of real life (Constantinou et al., 2018; Twizeyimana et al., 2024).

In line with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes active and contextual learning, there is a need to develop a learning model that is able to integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner (Şimşek & Kabapinar, 2020; Isyraqi et al., 2024). One approach that is relevant to this spirit is Inquiry Based Learning (IBL), which is a learning model oriented towards the process of discovering knowledge through exploratory activities and critical thinking (Suduc et al., 2021; Strat et al., 2024). This model places students as active subjects in the learning process, encouraging them to ask questions, research, and discover the meaning of the concepts being studied (de Jong et al., 2023). In the context of Fiqh learning, the inquiry approach allows students to not only understand Islamic laws theoretically, but also relate them to the context of life and the spiritual values that underlie them (Chandra & Anggraini, 2019; Muhamad Dah et al., 2024).

In the context of Islamic education, the inquiry approach is in line with the concept of "tafaqquh fi al-din", which is an effort to study religious teachings comprehensively and reflectively, rather than just passively accepting information. This approach is also in line with "maqāṣid al-syārīah" or the objectives of Islamic law, which is to understand the wisdom behind every provision of the Sharia so that it can be practiced consciously and meaningfully (Cleverly, 2003; Fadli et al., 2019). Various studies show that the application of Inquiry Based Learning can improve students' analytical thinking skills and understanding of religious concepts. For example, research by (Nzomo et al., 2023) shows that the inquiry model improves students' ability to relate theory to worship practices. Meanwhile, (Tuzahro et al., 2022); (Aidoo bea & Aidoo, 2024) found that integrating the inquiry approach into Fiqh lessons helps students develop stronger reflective attitudes and moral responsibility. Another study by (Handayani & Puspasari, 2020) confirmed that teachers who use inquiry strategies are better able to build meaningful interactions in the classroom and foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn.

However, the implementation of the Inquiry Based Learning model in Fiqh learning still faces a number of obstacles. Some teachers do not fully understand the systematic steps of inquiry, such as formulating problems, developing hypotheses, conducting observations, and reflecting on findings (Ardhaningrum & Astuti, 2024); (Karwadi et al., 2025). In addition, the limited availability of contextual learning resources and the lack of inquiry-based pedagogical training have resulted in the suboptimal application of this model. In fact, an inquiry approach integrated with Islamic values can create meaningful learning experiences and foster students' spiritual and social awareness (Miraz et al., 2023a). Although much research on IBL has been conducted in the fields of science and social studies, studies on the application of this model in the context of Fiqh learning, which has both cognitive and affective dimensions, are still very limited (Vieira et al., 2021). This creates an important research gap in understanding how the IBL model can be adapted to strengthen conceptual understanding and foster Qur'anic character in students at the Islamic elementary education level.

Based on this gap, this study was designed to answer the following main questions: (1) How is the integration of the Inquiry-Based Learning model applied in Fiqh learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah? (2) How does it impact students' conceptual understanding of Islamic law? and (3) How does it contribute to the formation of Qur'anic character, such as amanah, sabr, and istiqāmah? Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze the application of the Inquiry-Based Learning model in Fiqh learning to improve the conceptual understanding and religious character of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students. This study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of Islamic inquiry-based learning strategies and provide a practical foundation for teachers in implementing innovative approaches in line with Islamic educational objectives.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth the process of integrating the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model in Fiqh learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Moleong, 2019). This approach was chosen because it is in line with the research objectives, which are oriented towards understanding phenomena in a contextual and natural manner, rather than testing quantitative hypotheses. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher sought to understand the meaning, strategies, and dynamics of applying the IBL model in improving students' conceptual understanding of Fiqh material through direct interaction with teachers and students in their natural environment (Sugiyono, 2019).

This research was conducted at a public Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Karawang Regency, West Java, during the period of July–October 2025 (four months). The research subjects consisted of three Fiqih subject teachers, one madrasah principal, and fifteen fifth-grade students who were directly involved in the learning activities. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, considering the teachers' experience in applying innovative learning strategies and student involvement in the inquiry process. This technique was expected to produce in-depth, contextual data that described the real experience of applying the IBL model in Fiqh learning (Aqib, 2019).

The data collection process was carried out using three main techniques, namely participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Observations were made of learning activities in the classroom to identify the stages of inquiry, such as formulating questions, conducting exploration, collecting data, and drawing conclusions. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and several students to obtain information about their perceptions, learning strategies, and obstacles to applying the inquiry model in the context of Fiqh. Meanwhile, documentation was carried out to obtain supporting data such as lesson plans, learning outcome records, student worksheets, and documentation of learning activities.

The research instruments used were observation guides and interview guidelines, which were compiled based on the inquiry stages and indicators of understanding of Fiqh concepts, covering the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of students. Data analysis was assisted by NVivo 14 software for thematic coding and categorization of interview and observation data. Data validity was tested through source and technique triangulation, namely by comparing the data from observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings. In addition, research ethics were taken into account by obtaining informed consent from all participants and maintaining the anonymity of the institution and participant names to protect the confidentiality of the research data.

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles, 2014). Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the integration of the inquiry model in Fiqh learning. Data presentation was carried out in the form of descriptive narratives, thematic tables, and interview excerpts to strengthen the interpretation. Conclusions were drawn inductively based on empirical findings related to inquiry learning theory and Islamic education principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the *Inquiry-Based Learning Model* in Fiqh Learning

The results of the study show that the application of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in Fiqh learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is carried out systematically through five main stages, namely: problem orientation, question formulation, data collection, analysis of results, and concept reflection.

Each stage is linked to Fiqh themes such as taharah (purification), salat, and fasting to make it more contextual to the students' daily lives.

Fiqh teachers act as facilitators who guide students' scientific thinking processes. Each learning session begins with a contextual problem, such as the questions "Why is wudu a requirement for valid prayer?" or "What are the consequences of performing tayamum without intention?" These questions stimulate students' curiosity and serve as a starting point for the investigation process. Based on observations, approximately 80% of group activities showed an increase in social interaction and active discussion compared to conventional learning. Teachers guided students in exploring arguments from the Qur'an and hadith and relating the results to the context of everyday life. These activities fostered critical and reflective thinking skills regarding the laws of Fiqh.

Meanwhile, the interview results showed that most students felt that learning became more enjoyable and easier to understand because they were directly involved in the process of discovering concepts. Students stated that learning with the inquiry method made them "better understand the reasons behind the laws," not just memorize the final results. This shows that the application of the IBL model is able to strengthen students' cognitive and affective engagement. The implementation of the IBL model also showed an increase in social interaction in the classroom. Teachers assigned students to work in small groups to research specific Fiqh cases, such as the procedures for purification () or performing congregational prayers. The group work process trained collaboration, communication, and responsibility among students.

Table 1. Implementation of *Inquiry-Based Learning* in Fiqh Education

No	Learning Stages	Teacher Activities	Student Activities	Achieved Results
1	Problem orientation	Presenting contextual Fiqh questions	Discussing and providing hypotheses	Fostering students' curiosity
2	Data collection	Guiding students to find arguments from the Qur'an and hadith	Independently researching legal sources	Students learn to relate arguments and context
3	Analysis results	Facilitating discussion of findings	Concluding Fiqh laws together with the group	Improving thinking skills
4	Concept reflection	Summarizing and clarifying concepts	Expressing understanding and learning experiences	Significant improvement in conceptual understanding

Source: Observation and Interview Data (2025)

Improvement in Students' Conceptual Understanding

Data analysis shows a marked improvement in three key areas: conceptual understanding, participation, and application of Fiqh values. Before the implementation of IBL, the majority of students only memorized the laws without understanding the basis of the Sharia. After IBL was implemented, students demonstrated the ability to explain the reasons and wisdom behind each Fiqh law.

A teacher stated: "The children now not only know the procedure for wudu, but can explain its meaning as a symbol of personal purity." Additionally, interviews with students revealed a change in their learning attitudes. One student said, "Learning Fiqh is now more exciting because we find the answers ourselves from the Qur'an and hadith."

Table 2. Improvement in Students' Understanding of Fiqh Material

No	Understanding Indicators	Before IBL Implementation	After IBL Implementation	Observed Changes
1	Explaining the concept of Fiqh	Memorizing texts without understanding their meaning	Linking concepts to arguments and life contexts	Contextual understanding increased by 75%
2	Participation in discussions	Passive, only answering when called on	Actively discussing, presenting logical arguments	Engagement increased to 85%
3	Application of Fiqh values in life	Limited to ritual practices	Demonstrating clean and honest behavior in accordance with Fiqh values	Religious awareness has increased significantly

Source: Questionnaire Results and Field Observations (2025)

Character Building and Understanding Model through *Inquiry-Based Learning*

Character and Understanding Strengthening Model through Inquiry-Based Learning Field findings confirm that the application of IBL not only improves conceptual understanding but also strengthens Qur'anic character traits such as trustworthiness, patience, and steadfastness. The inquiry-based learning process simultaneously develops reasoning skills and spiritual attitudes. From interviews with teachers, the following statement was obtained: "When students explore arguments, they learn to be honest with their sources and not to guess. This trains them to be trustworthy in their studies".

The value of *ṣabr* is reflected in the students' perseverance in completing complex Fiqh cases, while *istiqāmah* is seen in their consistency in following the stages of investigation until they find the answer. In 70% of the reflection sessions, students wrote that they felt more responsible and understood the wisdom behind the law, not just the law itself. The collaborative process during discussions also fostered empathy, cooperation, and polite discussion manners.

Empirically, students showed an increase in their ability to understand Fiqh laws through an argumentative approach. They no longer simply memorized provisions, but sought to understand the rationality and *maqāṣid* (sharia objectives) behind each legal provision. The investigation process encourages them to relate Fiqh concepts to everyday contexts, such as *muamalah* (transactions), worship, and social issues. Thus, learning becomes more applicable and meaningful. From an affective and spiritual perspective, this model reinforces the Qur'anic values that are internalized during the investigation process. The value of *amanah* (trustworthiness) emerges when students practice being honest with data and legal sources; the value of *ṣabr* (patience) is seen in their perseverance in solving complex problems; and the value of *istiqāmah* (steadfastness) is manifested in their consistency in carrying out the learning process with full responsibility. These three values form a Qur'anic character that emphasizes not only intellectual intelligence, but also spiritual and moral maturity.

The results of observations and interviews show that collaborative interactions during learning also foster social character traits such as cooperation, empathy, and shared responsibility within the group. Scientific discussions in class become a means for students to practice expressing their

opinions politely and argumentatively, reflecting Islamic manners in the search for truth. Thus, the implementation of IBL has a dual impact: strengthening cognitive aspects (in-depth understanding of Islamic law) and affective aspects (formation of Qur'anic character). These findings reinforce the view that effective Islamic education must touch on all dimensions of human intellect, heart, and behavior.

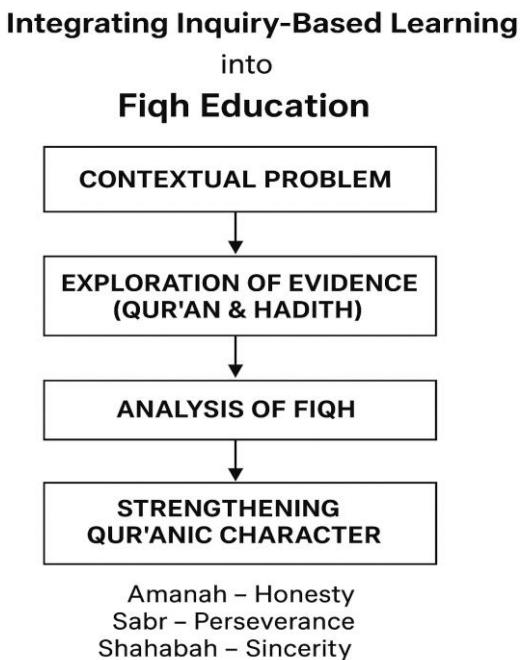


Figure 1. Integrative *Inquiry-Based Learning* Model in Fiqh Learning
Source: Research Analysis Results (2025)

Through the application of the Inquiry-Based Learning model, the Fiqh learning process is no longer limited to the transfer of knowledge, but has developed into an effort to transform the values contained in Islamic teachings. Students not only understand Islamic law concepts theoretically, but also realize that the process of seeking the law is a form of intellectual worship that demands honesty, sincerity, and a spirit of togetherness. They learn that seeking truth in Fiqh must be based on a critical scientific attitude as well as ethics, respecting differences of opinion, and tracing legal sources with full responsibility.

In addition, this model has also proven effective in fostering Islamic character based on Qur'anic values. The value of amanah (trustworthiness) is evident in the honesty of students when tracing sources and presenting the results of their studies. The value of *ṣabr* (patience) is reflected in their patience in undergoing a learning process that requires precision and perseverance. Meanwhile, the value of *istiqāmah* is seen in the students' consistency in trying to find answers and understand the meaning of Islamic law comprehensively. Thus, Inquiry Based Learning can be recommended as an innovative learning approach that is relevant to the objectives of Islamic education. This model helps shape students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have noble character and high reasoning abilities, figures who are *ālim*, *akhlaqiy*, and *dhī bāṣirah* in accordance with the noble ideals of Islamic education.

Overall, the application of Inquiry-Based Learning in Fiqh learning has proven to be effective in improving students' analytical and reflective thinking skills, strengthening moral values, and encouraging meaningful and spiritual learning. These results support the recommendation that IBL be used as an innovative pedagogical strategy in the Merdeka Curriculum for basic Islamic education.

DISCUSSION

The Application of *Inquiry-Based Learning* in the Context of Fiqh Learning

The application of the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model in Fiqh learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah presents a significant paradigm shift in the approach to Islamic education. Teachers shift from their traditional role as knowledge deliverers to facilitators and guides of students' scientific thinking processes. This approach encourages students to become "young inquirers" who actively explore arguments, ask questions, and construct their understanding of Islamic law independently.

The learning process is carried out in stages through problem orientation, data collection from the Qur'an and hadith, analysis of findings, and conceptual reflection on the laws being studied. Each stage fosters curiosity, intellectual responsibility, and reflective thinking skills. For example, when students are faced with the question "Why is intention a requirement for worship to be valid?", they are encouraged to explore verses, hadith, and the views of scholars, so that the resulting understanding is no longer rote memorization, but rather the result of a process of reasoning (reasoned understanding).

These findings support the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) theory from (Villardón-Gallego, 2021) that IBL is capable of developing analytical and evaluative skills, as well as the creation of new ideas. The inquiry process allows students to not only understand the law textually, but also interpret and apply it in a social context. This is in line with the concept of active learning proposed by (Anchunda & Kaewurai, 2025), where learning is centered on experience and exploration.

Compared to the conventional teacher-centered model, IBL creates dialogic and collaborative interactions between teachers and students. Teachers act as "intellectual mentors" rather than "lecturers of law," thereby fostering ownership of learning and high intrinsic motivation. These findings are in line with a study by (Hinostroza et al., 2024) which confirms that IBL improves students' ability to connect theory with practice and encourages problem-solving-oriented learning. In the context of Fiqh learning, this relationship is manifested in students' ability to understand the relevance of Islamic law to real life, such as issues of cleanliness, honesty in muamalah, and social responsibility in congregational worship.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are also consistent with international research results, such as a study by (Abdullah et al., 2020) on the application of IBL in Malaysian Islamic schools, which showed an increase in spiritual awareness and reflective skills. Similarly, research by (Pedaste et al., 2015) in French Catholic schools found that IBL strengthens students' ability to understand moral teachings contextually. Thus, the results of this study demonstrate the universal relevance of the IBL model in the context of inter-traditional religious education.

To enrich the pedagogical perspective, this model can also be linked to the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework. In the context of modern madrasahs, the integration of IBL with digital media such as interactive tafsir applications or online quizzes based on arguments can broaden students' learning experiences and improve their religious technological literacy. From a value perspective, the integration of IBL in Fiqh learning is also in line with the principle of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, which is to foster an understanding of Islamic law that is oriented towards human welfare. The values of amanah, sabr, and istiqāmah are concrete evidence that IBL is not merely a cognitive method, but also a vehicle for internalizing Qur'anic ethics.

Integration of Qur'anic Values in Shaping Understanding and Character

One of the important findings of this study is that the application of IBL in Fiqh learning not only improves conceptual understanding but also strengthens students' spiritual character through the internalization of Qur'anic values. The inquiry process, which involves searching for arguments and

reflecting on values, naturally contains elements of moral and spiritual education. In each stage of inquiry, values such as amanah, sabr, and istiqāmah emerge as direct implications of learning activities. Students who study Fiqh law must be honest about the sources and arguments they find, show patience in the process of seeking truth, and be consistent in completing the learning process. This shows that IBL is an effective means of integrating learning to know with learning to be, two important dimensions in holistic education according to UNESCO (Miraz et al., 2023b).

Theoretically, the integration of values in the IBL model is also in line with the concept of Islamic tarbiyah (education) proposed by (Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi, 1995), which emphasizes that Islamic education is not only the formation of the mind, but also the cultivation of the soul and morals. In this context, the process of investigating Islamic law becomes a spiritual exercise in which students develop honesty, responsibility, and Islamic thinking ethics. Previous research by (Rezai et al., 2025) in Madrasah Tsanawiyah shows that the inquiry model increases learning activity and conceptual understanding, but has not yet highlighted the character dimension in depth. This study expands on these findings by proving that IBL plays a dual role: in addition to improving the cognitive domain, it also strengthens the affective and spiritual moral domains. In other words, IBL functions as a Qur'anic character pedagogy that nurtures knowledgeable and moral individuals.

The Inquiry Based Learning model is a learning approach that is in line with Islamic epistemology. In Islam, the search for knowledge is carried out through the processes of tadabbur (contemplation), tahqiq (investigation), and tafakkur (reflection), all of which describe the essence of inquiry (Mahmudulhassan & Abuzar, 2024). Thus, IBL is not only relevant in modern pedagogy but also compatible with the Islamic intellectual tradition that values reason as a means of understanding revelation. The results of this study reinforce the constructivist learning theory proposed by (Lourenço, 2012) and (Mamun, 2022), that knowledge cannot be transferred passively but must be constructed through active experience and social interaction. In Fiqh learning, students do not accept the law as dogma, but build understanding through a process of discussion, argumentation, and proof based on sharia sources. The social interaction that takes place during group discussions also strengthens the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where students learn from peers who better understand the concept.

The results of this study also enrich previous findings in the field of Islamic education. Research by Mulyadi (2022) found that the inquiry model can improve critical religious thinking among madrasah students. Meanwhile, Wahyu (2021) a study by highlighted that IBL encourages reflective spirituality in the learning of Aqidah Akhlak. However, this study combines both cognitive and spiritual dimensions in the context of Fiqh, showing that IBL can function as an integrative Islamic education model that touches on the realms of 'aql, qalb, and 'amal.

A synthesis of the overall findings shows that the integration of IBL in Fiqh learning produces synergy between knowledge, manners, and faith. Inquiry-based learning makes students not only knowers but also believers and actors, namely individuals who understand Islamic law with sound reasoning, believe in it with a sincere heart, and practice it with spiritual awareness.

This process shows that effective Islamic education is not merely dogmatic teaching, but the formation of a complete scientific and religious personality. Thus, IBL becomes a bridge between modern research-based pedagogy and the classical Islamic educational vision that aims to produce perfect human beings.

Overall, the application of the Inquiry-Based Learning model in Fiqh learning is not only a methodological innovation but also a philosophical transformation in Islamic education. This model brings together modern research-based pedagogy with Islamic spiritual values, producing a generation that thinks critically, reflectively, and has Qur'anic morals, individuals who understand, appreciate, and practice Islamic law holistically.

CONCLUSION

The research findings show that the application of the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model in Fiqh learning can improve the conceptual understanding and critical thinking skills of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students. Through the inquiry stages, starting from problem formulation, data collection, analysis, to drawing conclusions, students become more active in discovering the meaning of Fiqh law and relating it to daily life practices. Teachers act as facilitators who guide the exploration process, rather than being the sole source of knowledge. In addition, the implementation of this model also fosters Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation in learning.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of an Islamic IBL Framework that integrates three main dimensions in Islamic epistemology: tadabbur (contemplation of verses and context), tahqiq (scientific investigation of arguments), and tafakkur (spiritual reflection on the meaning of law). This framework strengthens the position of IBL not only as a modern pedagogical approach but also as a method of Islamic education that is in line with the values of revelation and scientific rationality. In terms of implications, the results of this study emphasize the relevance of the inquiry approach in basic Islamic education. This model is not only effective in improving learning outcomes, but also serves as a means of internalizing Islamic values through meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia develop IBL-based Fiqh modules for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers as practical guidelines for applying this model in the classroom. In addition, madrasahs can form IBL learning communities to support continuous and collaborative pedagogical innovation among educators.

Based on the research results, Islamic Education teachers are expected to expand the application of the IBL model with the support of professional training and the development of contextual teaching tools. Madrasahs can integrate the inquiry approach into local curricula and extracurricular activities that foster active and reflective learning. Future researchers can develop comparative studies between IBL and other models such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to assess their relative effectiveness in the context of Fiqh learning. The limitations of this study lie in its narrow scope, involving only one madrasah with a limited number of participants, and not including quantitative pre- and post-test data analysis. Therefore, further research using a mixed methods design is recommended to obtain more measurable and comprehensive results and to test the effectiveness of this model in the context of madrasahs in different regions. Thus, this study provides direction for future research to develop IBL-based assessment instruments and evaluate their long-term impact on the development of students' religious character.

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