



Integration of School Well-Being in PAI Learning: A Holistic Model of Islamic Character Strengthening in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Received: September 7, 2026, *Revised:* September 15, 2026, *Accepted:* September 25, 2026,
Published: September 25, 2026

Abstract: Strengthening school well-being in madrasah ibtidaiyah is a vital agenda for establishing a thriving Islamic primary education ecosystem. Conventionally, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning has often been constrained by unidirectional cognitive-doctrinal transmission that overlooks children's socio-emotional needs, risking boredom and school alienation amid dense curricular loads. This study examines the integration of school well-being into IRE learning and its implications for cultivating students' Islamic character. Using an intrinsic qualitative case study at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islamic Center Indramayu, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and curricular document analysis, involving the madrasah head, the foundation board, teachers, committee members, and students. Data were analyzed inductively through thematic condensation, display, and verification with triangulation checks. Findings reveal that teachers' pedagogical orientation has substantively transitioned toward a compassionate paradigm by embedding Seligman's PERMA dimensions (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment) into Akidah Akhlak instruction. Despite physical classroom constraints and cultural resistance prioritizing quantitative academic grades, the madrasah successfully mitigated these barriers through transformative leadership and parental partnerships. The empirical impact is demonstrated by reduced peer conflict and strengthened honesty, social empathy, and moral responsibility. Theoretically, this study contributes an integrative model of well-being pedagogy positioning Islamic normative values as a spiritual canopy that harmonizes child-friendly governance, affective didactics, and supportive ecosystems to foster sustainable noble character.

Keywords: Islamic religious education; Islamic character; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah; Perma model; school well-being.

Introduction

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah holds a pivotal position in Indonesia's Islamic basic education architecture by integrating religious instruction, moral enculturation, and social values. Primary schooling represents a formative phase for shaping children's affective, moral, and spiritual dispositions. However, this holistic mandate is frequently compromised by an institutional bias that prioritizes scholastic-cognitive performance while neglecting students' subjective well-being. Ecological systems theory asserts that microsystem environments, particularly schools, fundamentally shape children's emotional regulation, resilience, and developmental capacity (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Concurrently, positive psychology posits that educational institutions

must function as nurturing ecosystems that fulfill positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011; Zelenski, 2020). In Indonesia, weak integration between school psychosocial climates and pedagogical praxis prevents madrasah religious capital from fully translating into systemic well-being for young learners (Kurnaengsih et al., 2024; Waters et al., 2022).

In practice, elementary madrasahs face mounting tensions between intensive dual-curriculum demands and the psychological vulnerabilities of young students. The simultaneous load of general subjects and fragmented Islamic studies often triggers academic distress, cognitive fatigue, and emotional burnout. Unmitigated academic pressure within unsupportive school climates precipitates school alienation, where students feel emotionally detached from the learning experience (Morinaj & Hascher, 2022). This vulnerability is further exacerbated by escalating peer bullying, rigid teacher-student interactions, and substandard physical infrastructure lacking child-friendly amenities (Rohman & Putri, 2023). Recent meta-analytic evidence confirms that subjective well-being correlates directly with academic resilience and cognitive performance (Bücker et al., 2023). Disregarding school well-being thus compromises learning motivation and impairs healthy personality development during critical developmental stages.

A critical pedagogical challenge stems from the dissonance between Islamic Religious Education (IRE) goals—particularly in Aqidah Akhlak—and the prevailing affective classroom climate. IRE instructional practices frequently descend into mechanistic routines dominated by textual memorization and normative testing. Such didactic rigidity directly contradicts Islamic pedagogical tenets rooted in gentleness (*rifq*), mercy (*rahmah*), and joyful role modeling (Huda et al., 2022; Sutrisno & Fauzi, 2023). Excluding positive education principles prevents religious instruction from generating inner peace (*tuma'ninah*) and deep learning engagement (*flow*). Empirical evidence demonstrates that moral internalization heavily relies on classroom emotional warmth and empathetic teacher-student bonds (Fitriani & Subandi, 2023; Wong et al., 2022). Without methodologically embedding emotional well-being into religious pedagogy, IRE risks losing its transformative efficacy in cultivating authentic student character (Alfi et al., 2023; Amini & Nurhayati, 2022).

Normatively, Islamic theology establishes well-being as the natural outcome of faith and righteous action. The Qur'an explicitly promises a wholesome, flourishing life (*hayātan ṭayyibah*) to those who cultivate faith and virtue (QS. An-Nahl [16]: 97; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Primary Islamic education frames peer interactions around mutual dignity (*ta'āruf*) and cooperative righteousness (*ta'āwun*) to eliminate school anxiety and social hostility (QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13; QS. Al-Ma'idah [5]: 2; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Furthermore, professional mastery (*al-itqān*) obligates educators to foster uplifting instructional climates (Al-Wattary et al., 2024; Kadir & Rijal, 2023). This theological orientation aligns with recent national policy shifts under Religious Affairs Ministerial Decree No. 347 of 2022 (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022). Along with Child-Friendly Madrasah guidelines, these mandates urge student-centered differentiation and holistic character cultivation (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022). However, implementation remains severely constrained by administrative burdens and limited teacher training (Lian et al., 2023; Mundiri & Zahra, 2022).

Prior studies have primarily explored school well-being within secular schooling or treated it as an isolated psychological metric detached from religious curricula (Faizah & Kurniawati, 2022; Santoso, 2017; Wibowo et al., 2021). Conversely, madrasah-focused research often centers on administrative governance or quantitative satisfaction indices rather than instructional moral development (Kholid & Anwar, 2023; Mundiri & Baharun, 2025). Mainstream Islamic education literature also remains heavily theoretical, neglecting empirical intersections between positive psychology and religious didactics (Setiawan & Abidin, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2023). A profound gap exists in empirically operationalizing Seligman's PERMA framework and Konu & Rimpelä's well-being model within elementary IRE classrooms. Addressing this gap, this study formulates an integrative school well-being model based on in-depth fieldwork at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islamic Center Indramayu (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002; Seligman, 2011). This study investigates teacher perceptions, classroom strategies, institutional barriers, and character outcomes. The

novelty lies in articulating a holistic pedagogical framework connecting modern well-being dimensions with Islamic character habits, providing theoretical and practical pathways for flourishing religious primary education.

Recent advances in educational psychology mark a fundamental transition from remediating psychological deficits toward cultivating human potential. Within positive psychology, well-being is no longer interpreted merely as the absence of mental distress or a fleeting emotional state, but as comprehensive human flourishing. Martin Seligman's theoretical framework conceptualizes well-being as a multidimensional construct essential for experiencing authentic happiness and human thriving. Through this lens, educational institutions function not merely as formal spaces for cognitive instruction, but as nurturing environments that expand students' affective capacities, enabling them to navigate developmental and academic challenges resiliently.

This paradigm is operationalized through the PERMA model, encompassing five fundamental pillars: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Positive emotions broaden cognitive horizons and build psychological resilience against academic stress. Engagement reflects an immersive state of deep concentration (*flow*) during learning, while supportive social relationships provide an indispensable emotional safety net. Contemporary well-being science affirms that systematically embedding these five dimensions within school settings establishes a sturdy foundation for students' balanced cognitive, emotional, and social development (Zelenski, 2020).

Institutional well-being models are further enriched by flourishing frameworks that examine how school policies reshape students' psychological climates (Huppert & So, 2013). Implementing positive education in primary schools fosters collective affective growth and psychological endurance against intensive curricular demands (Waters et al., 2022). When educational institutions integrate well-being interventions into their institutional ethos, learners demonstrate enhanced emotional regulation, flexible social adaptability, and sustained cognitive readiness. A flourishing school climate thus acts as a vital antecedent determining educational success rather than a secondary byproduct of academic achievement. Although rooted in universal theory, operationalizing positive psychology in Indonesian education demands cultural and religious attunement. National empirical evidence confirms that Indonesian student well-being is profoundly intertwined with communal cohesion, moral compliance, and familial support systems (Wibowo et al., 2021). In the professional sphere, developing self-compassion and psychological capital mitigates teacher burnout during intensive instructional interactions (Shankland et al., 2022). Consequently, adopting the PERMA framework in Islamic primary schooling requires an integrative reconstruction that harmonizes modern well-being dimensions with transcendental values.

The school well-being construct represents a sociological adaptation of Erik Allardt's welfare model into educational ecosystems (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002). This framework posits that schools fulfill basic human needs across four interrelated dimensions: school conditions (*having*), social relationships (*loving*), self-fulfillment (*being*), and health status (*health*). In primary education, these dimensions form an interlocking foundation of security that directly dictates children's readiness to absorb substantive instructional values. Deficiencies in any single dimension inherently erode students' perceived safety, belonging, and overall comfort within the institutional setting. The dynamics of school well-being are illuminated by ecological systems theory, which posits that child development is shaped through daily interactions within institutional microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). A supportive school climate reflects the quality of administrative leadership and interpersonal cohesion among school members. Recent studies demonstrate that school climate plays a crucial mediating role connecting environmental comfort with active classroom engagement (Faizah & Kurniawati, 2022). Furthermore, transformative and inclusive school leadership significantly elevates primary school students' psychological well-being (Lian et al., 2023).

The material (*having*) and physical (*health*) dimensions play an instrumental role in alleviating somatic tension and motor restlessness among young madrasah pupils. Classrooms equipped with adequate ventilation, natural lighting, clean sanitation, accessible health clinics,

and safe recreational spaces constitute indispensable prerequisites for an effective learning environment (Rohman & Putri, 2023). Substandard physical amenities and overcrowded classrooms trigger anxiety and diminish attention spans. Hence, establishing child-friendly madrasahs requires an institutional commitment to engineering safe, hygienic spaces that honor students' sensory well-being (Mundiri & Zahra, 2022). Psychosocially, the interpersonal (*loving*) and self-actualization (*being*) dimensions govern students' institutional belonging. Experiencing affective warmth from teachers and mutual acceptance among peers cultivates institutional attachment and alleviates academic alienation (Wong et al., 2022). Actualization needs are satisfied when madrasahs provide safe platforms for students to voice ideas and explore non-academic talents without fear of ridicule. Constructive teacher-student bonds enhance children's self-worth, which simultaneously multiplies academic motivation and minimizes alienation (Kholid & Anwar, 2023; Roffey, 2012).

Conceptually, a clear distinction exists between Islamic education as an overarching philosophical-systemic discourse and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) as a formal curricular subject (Kurnaengsih et al., 2024). While Islamic education encompasses lifelong spiritual and moral cultivation, IRE in madrasah ibtidaiyah constitutes structured subject matter—such as Aqidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Quran-Hadith, and Islamic Cultural History—designed to systematically instill religious literacy. Consequently, IRE's efficacy cannot be evaluated merely by cognitive doctrine transmission, but by its capacity to awaken students' moral conscience and spiritual awareness (Al-Wattary et al., 2024). Conventional IRE practices frequently suffer from didactic rigidity, excessive moralizing, and rote memorization that suppress emotional engagement. This necessitates an instructional shift toward compassionate Islamic pedagogy characterized by gentleness (*rifq*), accessibility (*yusr*), and interpersonal warmth (Huda et al., 2022). Implementing joyful learning in primary madrasahs stimulates intellectual curiosity while safeguarding children's affective well-being (Anugraheni & Prasetyo, 2024). Framing religious content through contextual reflection and collaborative inquiry transforms IRE into a source of psychological tranquility and spiritual fulfillment rather than an evaluative burden (Sutrisno & Fauzi, 2023).

This well-being-centered pedagogy gains curricular momentum from Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum guidelines (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022). National policies mandate differentiated learning that accommodates diverse affective profiles, aligned with the *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* character profile. Integrating inner peace (*tuma'ninah*) into instructional routines actively reduces performance anxiety during religious assessments (Rahmat & Fahrudin, 2022). This didactical reconstruction fosters an adaptive classroom environment where spiritual internalization unfolds organically within children's developing consciousness (Alfi et al., 2023). The success of this pedagogical transition depends upon IRE teachers' emotional competence and self-efficacy. Religious educators serve not merely as curricular instructors, but as spiritual mentors cultivating the psychological safety necessary for authentic self-expression (Fitriani & Subandi, 2023). Elevated teacher self-efficacy correlates with pedagogical creativity, professional satisfaction, and child-friendly classroom management (Reppa et al., 2023). By embedding well-being principles into Aqidah Akhlak learning modules, educators transform abstract moral doctrines into empathetic, lived classroom interactions (Amini & Nurhayati, 2022).

Contemporary character education requires a balanced integration of moral cognition and affective maturity. Thomas Lickona's framework asserts that virtue cannot be developed through unidirectional preaching; it demands harmony among moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 1991). While moral knowledge enables children to discern right from wrong, moral feeling provides the essential emotional impetus—empathy, conscience, and reverence for goodness. This synergy culminates in consistent, autonomous moral action within daily social life without external coercion. In the Islamic tradition, character is synonymous with noble morality (*akhlāq al-karīmah*), integrating theological conviction, devotional worship, and social ethics. Primary madrasahs emphasize universal virtues: honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness, self-discipline, justice, and social courtesy. Research confirms that character formation succeeds best through cultural habituation (*ta'wīd*) and exemplary role modeling (*uswah hasanah*), such as communal prayer and collaborative philanthropic activities (Setiawan

& Abidin, 2023). Authentic assessment is vital to ensure moral evaluation transcends superficial quantitative grading (Hasanah & Mardapi, 2022).

The core link between school well-being and character formation lies in mitigating children's psychological resistance to virtuous behavior. When madrasah pupils feel secure, respected, and joyful, their affective disposition becomes receptive to internalizing ethical principles (Tamam et al., 2023). A madrasah climate characterized by mutual care and freedom from bullying provides fertile soil for developing social empathy and personal responsibility (Prasetyo & Suyatno, 2023). Furthermore, teachers who foster religious culture through warmth instill enduring character far more effectively than punitive approaches (Suyatno et al., 2022). Sustained character transformation ultimately depends upon ecological cohesion among the madrasah, home, and community. Madrasahs cannot operate as isolated moral islands. Robust tri-center synergy ensures that classroom ethical teachings receive continuous reinforcement through positive domestic parenting (Yuliani & Hartono, 2024). Harmonizing pedagogical objectives with local community values enhances public receptivity to character initiatives (Yusuf et al., 2023). Through collaborative governance and active parental partnerships, the school well-being ecosystem nurtures academically proficient students grounded in moral integrity and psychological resilience (Mundiri & Baharun, 2025).

Method

This study employed a qualitative intrinsic case study design to comprehensively investigate the implementation of school well-being within Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the primary level. A qualitative approach captures experiential meanings, affective nuances, and institutional dynamics governing madrasah well-being. The case study framework enabled an in-depth exploration of real-life contextual boundaries encompassing institutional policies, instructional practices, and psychological experiences (Yin, 2018). Fieldwork centered on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islamic Center Indramayu, an exemplary Islamic primary institution formally committed to child-friendly schooling and religious character habituation. This setting yielded rich analytical descriptions of transforming well-being tenets into IRE pedagogical praxis and student character formation (Sugiyono, 2022).

Participants were selected via purposive sampling to gather multi-perspective insights across the madrasah ecosystem. Informants included the madrasah head, foundation board members, IRE teachers teaching Akidah Akhlak, general subject classroom teachers, fifth- and sixth-grade pupils, and parent committee representatives. Data were gathered through three integrated techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews exploring conceptual understandings and lived experiences; participatory classroom observations documenting instructional dynamics, social interactions, and physical amenities; and documentary analysis examining operational curricula, lesson plans, moral evaluation rubrics, and institutional reports. Triangulating diverse sources and methods ensured empirical authenticity while preventing interpretive distortion (Creswell, 2018; Herdiansyah, 2022).

Data were analyzed inductively and iteratively throughout the research process. Following rigorous thematic analysis procedures, the analytical cycle involved data condensation (selecting, focusing, and abstracting field records), thematic matrix displays across well-being dimensions, and conclusion drawing and verification to formulate an integrative pedagogical model. Data trustworthiness was secured through prolonged engagement, multi-source triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking with administrators and educators. Serving as the primary research instrument, the researcher upheld strict ethical standards, including obtaining written informed consent, guaranteeing informant confidentiality, and maintaining an audit trail throughout the study.

Results and Discussion

Conceptual Understanding of Educators and Institutional Readiness of Madrasah

The understanding of Islamic Religious Education teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islamic Center Indramayu on the concept of *school well-being* is in the positive category, which is characterized by the awareness that the climate of psychological comfort of students is an

absolute prerequisite for the success of character education. PAI teachers no longer limit the meaning of pedagogical tasks to the delivery of religious texts alone, but rather view the classroom as a vehicle for moral protection that fosters a sense of security for children. This affective awareness grows from the empirical experience of teachers when observing the mental saturation of students who are burdened with dense instructional materials. Educators realize that elementary school students need a warm learning atmosphere in order to have an inner readiness to absorb the doctrine of Islamic morality. However, this understanding is still largely intuitive and rooted in individual empathy, not yet formalized in measurable pedagogical performance indicators.

The institutional readiness of madrasas shows the dynamics of varying commitments among madrasah stakeholders. Madrasah heads show transformative leadership orientation by incorporating the child-friendly madrasah agenda into institutional policy direction and encouraging teachers to build dialogue with students. From the perspective of the foundation management, support is realized through the allocation of financing for physical facilities, counseling rooms, and recreational arenas, although the allocation of special budgets for improving teachers' psychosocial competencies is still limited. On the other hand, colleagues of general subject teachers acknowledge the significance of creating a happy learning atmosphere, but complain about time constraints due to the dense national curriculum targets. This disparity in perception reflects that institutional commitment has been built at the philosophical level, but still requires alignment in the realm of operational division of work.

Analytically, these findings are in line with the positive psychology premise put forward by Seligman and Zelenski, where the creation of positive emotions and meaningful social relationships requires structured intervention from institutions. The intuitive awareness of religious teachers proves that the value of compassion in Islamic teachings has a natural resonance with modern welfare constructs (Seligman, 2011; Zelenski, 2020). However, the absence of a technical handbook on welfare didactics has led educators to apply this principle in isolation without standard standardization. This condition limits the replication of good practices among teachers in the classroom. The readiness of madrasas is in an institutional transition phase, namely moving from personal concern to a school climate governance system that demands procedural legitimacy and cross-sectoral integration.

Table 1. Mapping Stakeholder Understanding and Readiness for School Well-Being

Stakeholders	Conceptual Understanding	Concrete Support Forms	Readiness Barriers
Head of Madrasah	Welfare as the foundation of the quality of education and the formation of students' morals	Preparation of child-friendly madrasah policies and periodic evaluation of the learning climate	Limitations of clinical supervision instruments based on affective aspects
Foundation Administrator	Welfare as an instrument of social reputation and long-term investment	Provision of open land, physical renovation of classrooms, and health facilities	Budget for teachers' psychosocial training has not been a priority for financing
Good Teacher	Well-being as a medium for creating inner peace in learning	Personal empathy, appreciation, and interactive discussion methods	Absence of detailed curricular guidance for well-being integration
Peer Teacher	Welfare as a means of reducing students' academic boredom	Creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere and providing opportunities for expression	Curricular administrative burden that takes up the allocation of mentoring time

Source: Field Empirical Data Analysis of MI Islamic Center Indramayu (2024)

Based on the data in Table 1, it is clear that all madrasah entities have an ontological understanding of the urgency of creating a sense of security for students, but face different operational constraints at the practical level. Madrasah heads and PAI teachers are at the forefront of substantive understanding, but their effectiveness is held back by the absence of a standard operational manual that integrates welfare theory into the daily syllabus toolkit. Meanwhile, the foundation prioritizes material support rather than strengthening the pedagogical capacity of teachers. This data confirms that the transformation of the learning climate in madrasah ibtidaiyah requires a convergence between the provision of physical infrastructure facilities and the strengthening of the psychological competence of educators so that the idea of welfare does not stop at administrative discourse.

This phenomenon of the gap between conceptual understanding and implementation capability confirms the findings of the study by Fitriani & Subandi and Reppa et al. (2023), which highlight that the efficacy of teachers in managing classroom emotions is largely determined by the professional training they receive (Fitriani & Subandi, 2023). Without adequate training on the science of well-being, religious teachers are vulnerable to experiencing role fatigue when they have to balance the achievement of curriculum completeness with psychological assistance for students (Shankland et al., 2022). Therefore, madrasahs need to reorganize teacher training programs through periodic workshops that train therapeutic communication skills and empathy-based learning techniques. School management's open attitude towards new concepts is an important social capital to initiate the standardization of child-friendly madrasah governance in a sustainable manner.

Comparatively with the literature on Islamic education, the conditions in this madrasah enrich the findings of (Mundiri & Baharun, 2025) regarding leadership within the cultural boundaries of religious institutions. The readiness of MI Islamic Center Indramayu proves that madrasah ibtidaiyah has adequate cultural modalities to implement *school well-being*, where the values of kinship and obedience of students accelerate the internalization of a supportive climate. The success of the institution in building multi-stakeholder understanding is an important foothold for the next stage of intervention, namely the translation of welfare principles into the instructional design of PAI in the classroom.

Pedagogical Design and *School Well-Being* Integration Patterns in PAI Learning

The pedagogical implementation of *school well-being* in the Islamic Religious Education subject cluster at MI Islamic Center Indramayu is realized through the engineering of active learning methods that glorify the dignity of children. PAI teachers consistently overhaul the conventional teaching style that is characterized by one-way doctrinal lectures into a participatory approach that arouses students' emotional involvement. In the Akidah Akhlak subject, material on manners to others and social care is taught through role simulation techniques, narrative reflection, and group games that stimulate a sense of empathy. Teachers plan to start class interventions by establishing soothing eye contact, asking reflective questions about students' emotional states, and providing positive affirmations of each child's learning efforts without discriminating against their academic abilities.

The integration of the physical and psychological dimensions of the classroom is a major concern in designing a prosperous PAI learning experience. The classroom layout is periodically changed from a classical row model to a circle or horseshoe formation to break down the authoritarian hierarchy of educators and facilitate equal interaction between students. The classroom walls are used as a gallery of works, where drawings, writings reflecting on Islamic values, and students' character achievements are displayed to foster a sense of ownership of space and self-appreciation. The use of interactive learning media based on video shows of the exemplary stories of the prophets and digital quiz platforms has proven to be successful in eroding children's fear of religious memorization. Through a combination of visual stimulation and a friendly classroom atmosphere, PAI learning shifts from a stressful routine to a learning experience that students look forward to.

This instructional pattern confirms the relevance of *positive education theory* which emphasizes the importance of arousing positive emotions to facilitate the absorption of moral values (Waters et al., 2022). PAI teachers at the madrasah consciously insert elements of *joyful*

learning to present a sense of full involvement of students (Anugraheni & Prasetyo, 2024). A pleasant learning experience fosters intellectual curiosity while reducing instructional anxiety that has been overshadowing the evaluation of religious subjects. This proves that the internalization of Islamic teachings does not require a rigid indoctrination approach, but rather finds its effectiveness when presented through compassionate pedagogy that arouses students' inner peace (Huda et al., 2022; Sutrisno & Fauzi, 2023).

Table 2. PERMA Pillar Integration Matrix into PAI Learning Design

Welfare Dimension	PAI Subject Matter	Applied Pedagogical Activities	Affective Impact Indicators
Positive Emotions	Commendable Qualities (Mahmudah)	Begin the class with appreciative prayers, inspirational stories, and moral language games	Students feel cheerful, enthusiastic and free from performance anxiety
Full Engagement	History of the Prophet's Struggle	Project-based learning, exemplary story drama, and group narrative exploration	Study concentration increases and students dissolve into the dynamics of classwork
Supportive Social Relationships	Procedures of Muamalah and Adab	Cooperative group work, cross-discussion of opinions, and the habit of greeting	The growth of group solidarity and the avoidance of exclusive groupings
Significance	Pillars of Faith and Ihsan	Guided reflection on God's presence and good deeds in the surrounding environment	Deep spiritual awareness and understanding of the urgency of doing good
Achievement	Practice of Worship and Purification	Authentic assessment of performance, constructive feedback, and celebration of early childhood learning progress	Proportional self-pride and motivation for behavior improvement

Source: Synthesis of Learning Observation Results and Analysis of the PAI MI Islamic Center Indramayu Module (2024)

As presented in Table 2, the instructional design of PAI teachers shows a substantive correspondence between the five pillars of well-being (Seligman, 2011) and the syllabus of religious education in elementary madrasas. The content of the material on Akidah Akhlak is used as a psychopedagogical instrument to guide students to recognize positive emotions and build healthy social connections. The project-based approach and exemplary drama significantly shifts the orientation of learning from simply remembering historical texts to appreciating the meaning of sacrifice and love for humanity. Recognition of small-scale learning achievements prevents students from feeling inferior, so that every child has an equal opportunity to feel inner satisfaction for their moral progress.

This instructional praxis is in line with the mandate of the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 347 of 2022 which outlines differentiated and flexible learning in the madrasah Independent Curriculum. PAI teachers have succeeded in reducing the stress of cognitive evaluation through the use of reflective portfolio-based evaluations and authentic assessments of daily performance (Hasanah & Mardapi, 2022; Rahmat & Fahrudin, 2022). Students are no longer judged solely by summative test scores, but are judged by their willingness to practice commendable manners in the daily life of the madrasah. This strategy theoretically proves that the fulfillment of *the pillars of being and loving* from the (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002) model is an absolute prerequisite before educators demand the achievement of academic competence from elementary students.

Contextually, the integration between the didactic PAI and the principle of welfare in madrasahs responds to the need for a modern curriculum to strengthen the Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin Student Profile. Educators have succeeded in making the classroom a laboratory for safe moral encounter, where theological values are combined with the fulfillment of children's social-

emotional needs (Alfi et al., 2023; Amini & Nurhayati, 2022). The success of this didactic integration resulted in a positive response from students and teachers, as well as showing a number of real obstacles that need to be mitigated at the institutional level.

Response of the Academic Community and the Complexity of Implementation Obstacles

The application of the concept of *school well-being* has reaped a very positive affective response from the entire academic community of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islamic Center Indramayu. The students showed a drastic increase in enthusiasm to attend the madrasah, active involvement in expressing opinions in class, and openness in expressing personal problems to PAI teachers. The teacher-student interpersonal relationship has been dissolved from a distant instructional relationship into a bond of moral guidance that is familiar and full of mutual trust. On the teacher's side, the adoption of this child-friendly approach increases job satisfaction and pedagogical efficacy, relieves teaching tension, and awakens a sense of meaning in carrying out their professional vocation as a religious educator. Parents of students also responded happily by acknowledging that their children seemed more independent, cheerful, and fond of talking about their school experiences when they arrived home.

Nevertheless, this empirical study identifies a series of internal obstacles that are quite complicated in maintaining the sustainability of welfare programs. The most striking internal challenges stem from the limitations of physical facilities and green open spaces of madrasahs, where some classrooms feel cramped for the size of study groups of more than twenty children and have inadequate air ventilation during the day. The limitations of outdoor recreational facilities and the lack of medical equipment in the school health business space also limit the fulfillment of *the pillars of having and health*. In addition, some teachers complained about the dilemma of allocating face-to-face hours due to the heavy administrative burden of reporting material achievements, so that the time for emotional mentoring sessions for students is often reduced by the demands of completing the syllabus before the semester exam schedule.

No fewer complex challenges arise from the external environment of the madrasah, especially those rooted in the socio-cultural determinants of the local community. The mindset of some parents is still confined to a reductionistic paradigm that deifies report card scores in the form of cognitive scores above the child's mental health. There is an assumption from some parents that group game activities or relaxation in the classroom are a waste of study time that does not have an impact on the success of the entrance exam. The communication gap between the madrasah and the family causes the habituation of positive emotions at school to be often interrupted by permissive or authoritarian parenting styles in the home environment. This external condition shows that the transformation of the madrasah learning climate is vulnerable to being hampered if it is not supported by the collective pedagogical awareness of the family and the surrounding community.

Table 3. Taxonomy of School Well-Being Implementation Constraints and Applied Resolution

Obstacle Dimensions	Field Determinants	Manifestation of Problems in Madrasah	Institutional Resolution Strategy	Obstacle Dimensions
Physical Facilities & (Having Health)	Limited land and budget allocation for madrasah infrastructure investment	Warm classrooms, minimal ventilation, and limited UKS facilities	Periodic air circulation arrangements, sanitation improvements, and health facility partnerships	Physical Facilities & (Having Health)
Managerial & Curricular	High teaching hour load and cognitive syllabus	Teachers feel chased by exam materials and emotional counseling	Harmonization of instructional schedules and integration of affective indicators into formal assessments	Managerial & Curricular

Obstacle Dimensions	Field Determinants	Manifestation of Problems in Madrasah	Institutional Resolution Strategy	Obstacle Dimensions
	completion target	sessions are cut short		
Educator Competencies	Variation in pedagogical understanding and lack of affective science training	Senior teachers tend to revert to the classic lecture instruction method	Implementation of child-friendly didactic workshops and peer mentoring	Educator Competencies
Cultural & Family	Parents' mindset is oriented solely to numbers (<i>ranking mindset</i>)	Low appreciation of parents for programs to strengthen children's welfare	Establishment of periodic class forums and child-friendly parenting education for parents	Cultural & Family

Source: In-Depth Interview and Madrasah Environmental Observation Recapitulation (2024)

The taxonomic explanation in Table 3 shows that the obstacles to the implementation of *school well-being* are not single, but are interrelated between the limitations of material infrastructure and the resistance of cultural perspectives. The problem of room temperature and classroom ventilation significantly reduces the concentration range of children at the last class hour, emphasizing the linear relationship between physical comfort and affective stability of students. At the same time, the dominance of numerical orientation from students' parents proves that school climate reform programs always face pragmatic expectations of the community. The mitigation measures formulated by the madrasah require a smart combination of the reallocation of the foundation's budget, engineering academic scheduling, and intensification of dialogue with the madrasah committee.

Theoretically, the dynamics of these barriers confirm the ecological system model of (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) which places the alignment between the classroom microsystem and the family mesosystem as the key to child development. These field findings prove the argument of Rohman & Putri that the management of child-friendly facilities is an absolute and non-negotiable foundation in the development of a healthy school climate (Rohman & Putri, 2023). Furthermore, this study is in line with the analysis of Yuliani & Hartono who underlines the urgency of the synergy of the tricenters of education to ensure that the values of civility built in madrassas gain legitimacy from home-based parenting (Yuliani & Hartono, 2024). When madrasah and family communication is successfully harmonized, cultural resistance gradually softens and turns into collective support for the process of student growth and development.

The synthesis of the identified responses and challenges indicates that achieving school well-being in madrasah ibtidaiyah requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach that extends beyond conventional classroom-based interventions. School well-being should be understood as a collective condition involving the physical environment, psychological comfort, social relationships, leadership practices, and the overall educational culture of the madrasah. Therefore, efforts to improve students' welfare cannot be separated from the capacity of school leaders to respond strategically to existing limitations and challenges. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in identifying physical and infrastructural deficiencies, developing appropriate solutions, and mobilizing available resources to create a supportive learning environment. At the same time, improving well-being requires continuous efforts to strengthen the awareness and participation of teachers, students, parents, and other members of the madrasah community. In this regard, leadership resilience becomes essential, particularly in managing constraints without compromising educational quality. Ultimately, a successful school well-being program depends on the ability of the madrasah to address material limitations while simultaneously developing a caring, responsive, and collaborative educational ecosystem that supports the holistic development of all its members (Mundiri & Zahra, 2022). Understanding this spectrum of

constraints is a very basic empirical foundation in examining the real impact of the application of the concept of welfare on the essential output of Islamic education, namely the formation of students' Islamic character.

Transformation of Students' Islamic Character and Reconstruction of Holistic Models

The implementation of school well-being in PAI learning at MI Islamic Center Indramayu resulted in a substantive impact in the form of a transformation of students' Islamic character which was reflected in daily speech and behavior. Long-term behavior evaluation recorded a significant decrease in the number of incidents of physical and verbal disputes between students in the madrasah environment. The atmosphere of interaction between friends was characterized by a strong attitude of mutual respect, willingness to share a play space, and familiarity with the words please, sorry, and thank you without direct instruction from the teacher. In terms of honesty, students showed higher integrity when doing independent tasks and dared to admit misbehavior in a sportive manner. A sense of moral responsibility was also observed from compliance with running class cleanliness pickets and voluntary involvement in the dawn infak program and madrasah social philanthropy.

Moral transformation in the educational process occurs through a gradual internalization of values that integrates children's cognitive abilities with their affective sensitivity. This process demonstrates that moral development cannot be achieved merely by providing students with knowledge about moral values, but must also encourage them to internalize those values as part of their personal awareness and attitudes. Drawing on Thomas Lickona's theory, character education consists of three interconnected components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These dimensions function together as a continuous process in shaping an individual's moral character. Within the context of this madrasah, character formation does not stop at students' ability to recognize and understand concepts of right and wrong. Rather, such understanding is developed further through the cultivation of inner sensitivity toward moral values, enabling students to appreciate and feel the importance of doing good. This moral awareness subsequently encourages them to translate values into concrete actions in everyday life. Therefore, education is directed toward a comprehensive transformation that moves from knowledge to awareness, internalization, and practice. This process of moral internalization illustrates that the success of character education is reflected in students' ability to make moral values a meaningful basis for decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and daily behavior. Through this process, moral values gradually become embedded as enduring elements of students' character and identity (Lickona, 1991).

A prosperous classroom climate stimulates the growth of moral feelings, where students feel proud when doing good deeds and feel discomfort of conscience when hurting the feelings of their peers. The positive affection experienced by students during the learning of Akidah Akhlak dilutes psychological resistance, so that the doctrine of Islamic teachings can be transformed into concrete moral actions carried out on independent awareness, not because of fear of the threat of educator sanctions. From the perspective of Islamic education, this habituation of ethics emphasizes that the achievement of inner peace (*tuma'ninah*) is the main catalyst for the cultivation of commendable morals. The experience of deep spiritual involvement during congregational dhuha prayers and morning tadarus in madrasahs presents emotional stability that strengthens students' self-control when facing social friction outside the classroom. Divine values are no longer lived as a burden of formalistic obedience, but rather become a personal moral compass that guides human relationships. This integration proves that the fulfillment of mental well-being in Islamic elementary schools is a golden bridge that connects theological purity with the elegance of students' social ethics (Al-Wattary et al., 2024; Kadir & Rijal, 2023).

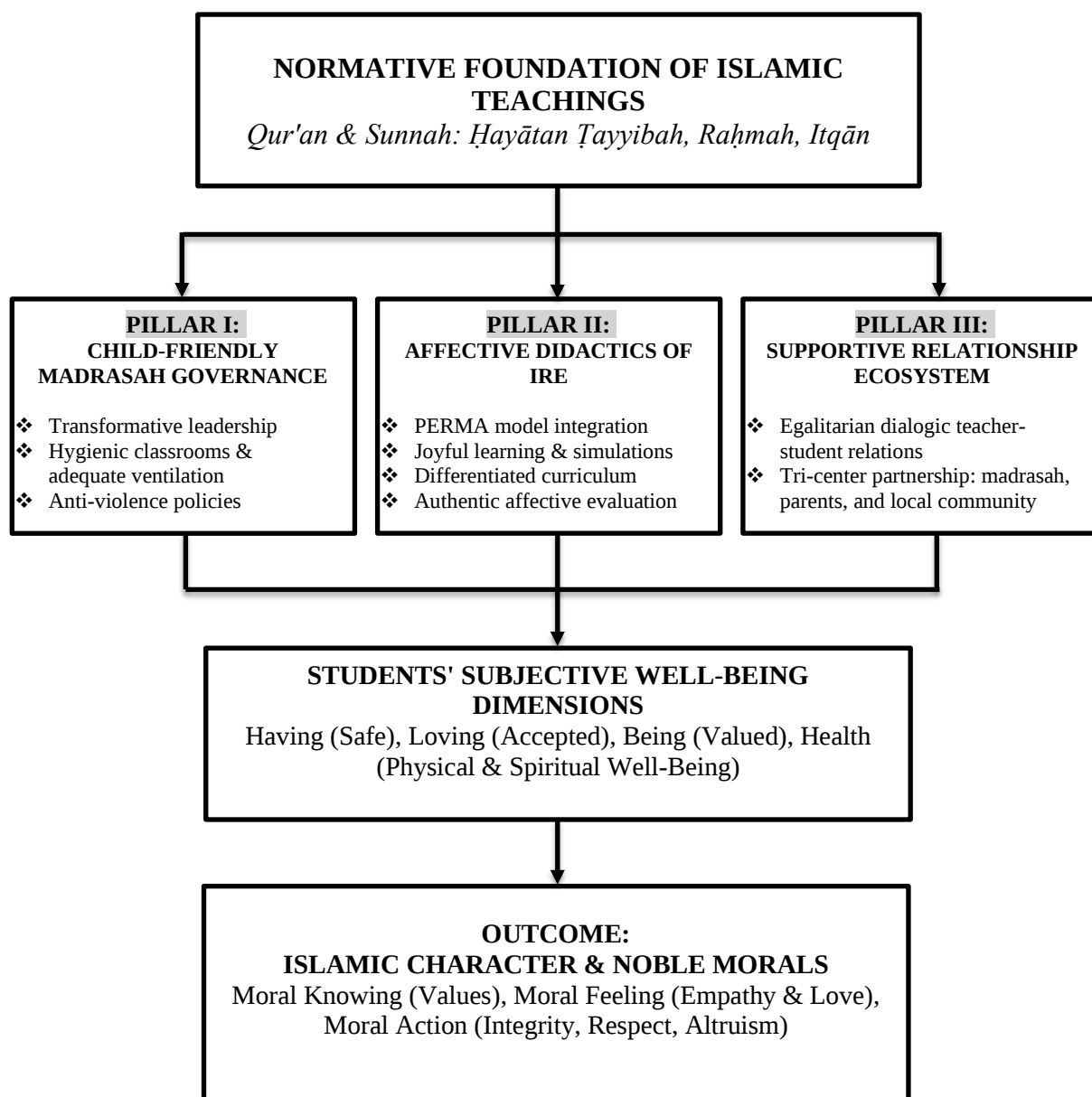


Diagram 1. Integrative Synthesis Model of School Well-Being Based PAI Learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

Source: *Construction of Researchers' Theoretical Models Based on Dissertation Findings (2024)*

The construction of the model in Diagram 1 shows that the achievement of Islamic character in madrasah ibtidaiyah is supported by a systemic architecture that places Islamic normative values as the main spiritual umbrella. Divine values flow into the three pillars of support that operate simultaneously: child-friendly madrasah governance that ensures the fulfillment of physical facilities, affective didactic learning PAI that adopts the PERMA pillar into the learning process, and an ecosystem of supportive relationships that unites the roles of teachers and parents. The integration of these three pillars results in the fulfillment of the four dimensions of basic student well-being (*having, loving, being, health*). The estuary of this entire prosperous ecosystem is the birth of an authentic transformation of noble character, in which the child's knowledge, feelings, and moral actions are harmoniously integrated in the personality of a pious and resilient young Muslim.

This conceptual model emphasizes the empirical findings of (Tamam et al., 2023) and Setiawan & Abidin who stated that strengthening the religious character of elementary school-age children requires a cultural habituation approach supported by a conducive environmental climate (Setiawan & Abidin, 2023). Contemporary character formation theory has been proven to find its

optimal applicability when paired with a subjective welfare approach that frees children from mental distress (Prasetyo & Suyatno, 2023; Suyatno et al., 2022). The results of this research present a new theoretical contribution that refutes the old assumption that Islamic education is always puritanical, doctrinaire, and overlooks the psychological happiness of students. On the contrary, this research proves that the peak of Islamic religious education is the realization of authentic happiness that is fused with the glory of ethics. Overall, the findings of these four analytical themes confirm that the integration of *school well-being* into PAI learning is not just an additional methodological choice, but a paradigmatic necessity in the reorientation of basic madrasahs in the modern era. The alignment between the sensory, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of children is the key to the success of madrasahs in producing a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has strong moral resilience and moral nobility in facing the dynamics of the times.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating school well-being into Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the primary madrasah level successfully transforms conventional cognitive-scholastic schooling into a humane, flourishing educational ecosystem. Teachers' pedagogical mindset has evolved from unidirectional doctrinal transmission toward empathetic, participatory engagement. This shift elicited enthusiastic responses from pupils and parents, as evidenced by increased motivation to learn and warmer teacher-student relationships. Despite physical classroom constraints and cultural pressures prioritizing numerical academic grades, the madrasah mitigated these challenges through transformative leadership, flexible instructional scheduling, and proactive dialogue with parent committees. Consequently, this integrative climate catalyzed tangible growth in Islamic character, organically embedding honesty, social empathy, and moral responsibility into pupils' daily behavior. Theoretically, this research contributes an integrative framework harmonizing positive psychology, multidimensional school well-being, and Islamic educational philosophy. It dismantles the false dichotomy between completing the religious curriculum and children's socio-emotional flourishing. Positioning Islamic normative values as an overarching spiritual canopy, this model substantiates that inner peace (*tuma'ninah*) and psychological safety are vital prerequisites for activating cognitive, affective, and behavioral moral dimensions (moral knowing, feeling, and action). This conceptual synthesis demonstrates that *tarbiyah* praxis inherently converges with modern well-being science, maximizing instructional efficacy when divine tenets translate into lived experiences of positive emotions, deep engagement, and supportive social connectedness.

Practically, these findings mandate institutional governance reforms and continuous pedagogical development. Religious educators require operational manuals and targeted training in affective didactics to embed well-being principles into Akidah Akhlak instructional modules. Simultaneously, madrasah administrators and foundation boards must prioritize upgrading physical learning environments, ensuring adequate spatial ventilation, hygienic sanitation, and dedicated counseling facilities. At the policy level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs should refine the Child-Friendly Madrasah movement and Kurikulum Merdeka implementation by instituting clinical supervisory tools that evaluate classroom psychosocial quality rather than mere administrative compliance. Furthermore, cultivating robust tri-center collaboration among madrasahs, families, and communities is essential to reinforce noble character habits across domestic and social spheres. This study is limited by its qualitative, single-site focus at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islamic Center Indramayu, which may not capture broader institutional disparities across diverse Indonesian regions. Future research should expand spatial coverage across varied urban and rural madrasah typologies to evaluate the cross-contextual transferability of this model. Additionally, employing mixed-methods or experimental designs would quantitatively measure the direct impact of well-being-infused IRE interventions on students' character metrics and psychological health. Such empirical inquiries will further solidify the scientific credibility of school well-being as a foundational pillar for sustainable, holistic Islamic educational reform. Ultimately, embedding school well-being within Islamic primary education transcends mere didactic innovation; it represents a profound moral imperative to restore the compassionate essence of Islamic pedagogy.

By reconciling religious instruction with children's psychological and developmental realities, madrasahs can fulfill their authentic mission as nurturing sanctuaries of spiritual enlightenment and ethical refinement. This holistic paradigm ensures that academic excellence and religious piety develop in harmony with emotional resilience and human flourishing, preparing future generations of young Muslims to embody noble virtues (*akhlāq al-karīmah*) with authentic conviction, compassionate hearts, and dignified social agency.

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