

Teacher Identity, Islamic Behavior, and Project-Based Learning Methods for Madrasah Teachers: A Phenomenological Approach

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ABSTRACT

Developing students' scientific thinking in *aqeedah* and *akhlaq* (moral theology) is urgent, and a project-based learning method is needed for that process. This study explores how teachers can experience their Islamic behavior with their identities and impact project-based learning methods in learning moral theology in *madrasah aliyah* (Islamic high schools). This study uses a phenomenological approach to explore the Islamic behavior and identity of teachers in *madrasah aliyah* in developing project-based learning methods. A total of 20 moral theology teachers are involved in this study, and in-depth interviews are conducted to uncover the narratives of teachers' practices in utilizing project-based learning methods. The thematic analysis of two-group interviews with 20 teachers showed that Islamic behavior teachers' personal beliefs provided a religiously motivated narrative framework that facilitated interpreting one's experiences. Islamic behavior and teacher identity play a role in developing project-based learning methods based on moral theology. Islamic behavior is the main bond in developing project-based learning methods and the attribution of identity from God-given personality to learning in moral theology. Teacher identity, Islamic behavior, and students' scientific thinking develop when learning moral theology. Islamic behavior and the personal identity of madrasah teachers can improve project-based learning methods.

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INTRODUCTION

Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic senior high school) education seeks to help students develop the skills, knowledge, and values needed for science-based higher-order thinking (Retnawati et al., 2018; Susilowati & Suyatno, 2021). While forging skills that enable students in madrasahs to think of science-based higher order with project-based learning methods is one of the neglected areas in *Madrasah Aliyah*, the development of these abilities also burdens teachers and is found to be an important factor in increasing teaching professionalism (Lu et al., 2021; García-Carmona, 2020; Lamerias et al., 2021; Ro, 2020).

However, while the literature suggests that the unsuccessful use of project-based learning methods in madrasahs may hurt teacher quality, it is unclear which strategies teachers can employ to develop quality learning in the classroom. Instead, research has focused primarily on program evaluation to improve students' quality learning strategies and has paid little attention to teachers' project-based learning methods in madrasah learning (Lu et al., 2021; Yustina et al., 2020). Here, the project-based learning methods of *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers may be a vital resource in addressing the quality of learning and mastery of students' *aqeedah* and *akhlaq* (moral theology) learning materials because research suggests project-based learning methods emphasizing creative and higher-order thinking have a positive effect on the development of learning quality, the success of understanding the material, and increasing the Islamic behavior of students (Ulya et al., 2020; Nuraini & Muliawan, 2020; Simonton et al., 2021; Tanak, 2020; Suhirman & Agus Muliadi, 2020). However, until now, it has not been clear how the madrasah teacher's project-based learning method can improve the quality of learning, the quality of student learning, and the improvement of students' scientific mindsets that contribute to improving Islamic behavior and righteousness.

This project addresses a gap in knowledge by conducting a qualitative exploration of the narrative accounts of teachers of moral theology in *Madrasah Aliyah* to investigate their individual experiences with project-based learning methods and their relationship to Islamic behavior and identity processes in the realm of professionalism. This project provides a comprehensive analysis from an individual's perspective of project-based learning methods in learning moral theology in madrasahs, utilizing their Islamic behavior and identity in a *Madrasah Aliyah* teacher's professional setting.

Teaching with the use of quality project-based learning methods in moral theology learning has been identified as a challenging job (Arood et al., 2020; Ulya et al., 2020; Dehraj & Mahersar, 2018; Ritonga et al., 2019) because the learning material in moral theology is related to issues of Islamic behavior, morality, and divinity, which tend to be metaphysical, and teachers tend to be careful in their teaching-related to the divine word; if it is wrong to teach, it will give birth to a deviant creed (Arood et al., 2020; Mansir & Purnomo, 2020; Amri et al., 2019; Zakariya, 2019). Factors contributing to the quality of learners that are

detrimental to teachers are the number and severity of student-teacher confrontations (Sofanudin et al., 2016; García-Carmona, 2020). Here, the research shows that the worse the project-based learning method used, the greater the risk of increasing the scientific mindset, understanding of Islam and creed, students' morals and Islamic behavior, and the quality of learning (Ritonga et al., 2019; Arood et al., 2020; Farida et al., 2017). For example, teachers who did not develop project-based learning methods were found to have greater knowledge stagnation for teaching failure and poor professionalism even when compared to other groups of teachers who failed to teach (Susilowati & Suyatno, 2021; García-Carmona, 2020). Therefore, developing project-based learning methods is essential to maintaining high-level scientific thinking skills, developing students' Islamic behavior, and improving the quality of learning in the classroom environment, which is closely related to the creativity that is imprinted in the teacher (Simonton et al., 2021; Farida et al., 2017; Yustina et al., 2020). This study discusses how *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers can develop project-based learning methods in moral theology and the extent to which personal creativity may be involved in this process. In doing so, this project will add to previous knowledge by understanding how and to what extent the process of using a project-based learning method in moral theology studies has an impact on the quality of learning, the success of students' higher order thinking, Islamic behavior, and religious practice.

The 'project-based learning methods' for learning moral theology in *Madrasah Aliyah* were originally a concept that characterized an individual's creative capacity to teach science-based material (Arood et al., 2020; Chua & Islam, 2020; Doğan & Karabulut, 2019). Recent research has shown that instead of being an attribute of personal identity, the project-based learning method is a complex dynamic relationship between scientific insights and mastery factors in method implementation (Farida et al., 2017; Moubarez, 2020; Eissa & Khalid, 2019). However, while scientific aptitude among children has been extensively investigated, little empirical investigation has addressed project-based learning methods. Evidence from studies that have examined *Madrasah Aliyah* teacher project-based learning methods suggests that various factors are involved in developing teacher teaching methods. For example, studies that describe studies examining the relationship between teachers' personal knowledge, effectiveness, and project-based learning methods (Kurniawan et al., 2020; Faiz et al., 2020; McKay & Sappa, 2020; Mondro et al., 2020) ignore relevant extrinsic factors. In contrast, extrinsic and intrinsic factors such as administrative support, individual values, leadership style, social support, and significant relationships were found to be important in teacher project-based learning methods (Kurniawan et al., 2020; Nuraini & Muliawan, 2020; Simonton et al., 2021). However, although religiosity is associated with project-based learning methods in various contexts such as teaching competence (Parrado-Martínez & Sánchez-Andújar, 2020), Islamic behavior (Tambak & Sukenti, 2020), emotional resilience (Ferreira et al., 2020), and psychosocial Islamic studies (Tambak et al., 2018), the role of a

teacher's Islamic behavior in project-based learning methods in the learning of moral theology has not been studied so far. Since Islamic behavior may be a time and cost effective way to develop the quality of learning, students' scientific thinking, students' higher order thinking, students' understanding of divinity, and the quality of learning in *aqeedah* and morality

The positive effect of project-based learning methods on the quality of learning may be related to the identity processes of *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers. In particular, Jaspal & Breakwell (2014) and Breakwell (2015) suggested that identity experiences such as high-level skills can cause problems establishing one's identity and thus threaten to teach creativity. The threat of identity processes, responding to a structural model of creativity, occurs when the principles of identity in teacher identity are undermined (Breakwell, 2015; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). The principles that underlie the construction of identity found and defined empirically are (1) identity continuity (continuity between past and present self-concepts, i.e., understanding oneself as God's creation), (2) personal uniqueness (specificity; i.e., intentionally created) specifically), (3) self-confidence and control over one's life (self-efficacy; i.e., being able to change events through prayer), (4) personal values (self-worth; i.e., being loved by and justified through God), (5) feelings of closeness and acceptance by others (belonging to; i.e., belonging to the church) and (6) finding meaning and purpose in one's life (meaning; i.e., having a God-given purpose in one's life (Coleman, 2023; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). According to Jaspal and Breakwell (2014), the six basic principles that underlie the construction of this identity make it possible to maintain a positive understanding of oneself. Recent research has shown that personal Islamic behavior and religiosity can contribute to maintaining identity by responding irreversibly to these six basic principles of identity construction, providing a positive view of oneself even in times of distress and trouble. However, while it is known that Islamic behavior, specifically Islam, responds to identity construction and promotes quality learning activities, including quality learning methods, previous research has not examined the underlying process of maintaining identity in *madrasah* teacher project-based learning methods. Here, *madrasah* teachers' Islamic behavior and project-based learning methods in terms of learning quality and student success are important triggers of underdevelopment, contributing to lower quality and creativity.

This project addresses gaps in knowledge by taking an exploratory approach to understanding how *madrasah* teachers' Islamic behavior can impact project-based learning methods with an underlying construction of the identity process (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). While a focus on the individual experiences of *madrasah* teachers will therefore not provide generalizable conclusions that will determine the extent to which teachers' Islamic behavior can impact project-based learning methods, this study will explore how teachers' Islamic behavior and their identities can have an impact on project-based learning methods in learning moral theology in *Madrasah Aliyah*.

METHODS

Design

Qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach (Emery & Anderman, 2020; Lundh, 2020) was used to examine whether and to what extent Islamic behavior and identity processes contribute to developing project-based learning methods for *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers of moral theology and thus contribute to the intellectual understanding of students' and learners learning quality.

Participant

Two group discussions with twenty active *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers were held in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. This sample size is generally considered appropriate for an in-depth examination of patterns and understanding of psychological thinking (Groenewald, 2018) by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Although there are no strict rules, qualitative research analyzed by thematic analysis generally considers twelve to twenty-five participants to be an adequate sample size for testing subjective experience (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

After receiving ethical approval from the University, purposive and modified snowball sampling was used to recruit research informants. Initially, twelve *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers of moral theology in Pekanbaru, Indonesia, were willing to participate in the research. A modified snowball strategy was used to recruit a diverse sample (e.g., cultural differences, denomination, age, length of teaching, and gender). Therefore, the sample was expanded by asking participants to invite others to conduct the study (Lundh, 2020). In this way, eight additional participants were recruited. Twenty informants were between 29 and 58, identified as Muslims with deep Islamic behavior, and certified professional teachers.

Technique

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect descriptions of the informants' first-hand experiences and their reactions to those experiences. The two-group discussion with ten informants lasted 100 and 170 minutes, respectively. The interview schedule was organized into two sub-sessions. In the first stage, participants were asked to speak freely about their beliefs about their coping strategies. The initial question tried to open a dialogue by inviting the informants to freely talk about their experiences with Islamic behavior to develop a project-based learning method for learning moral theology. Therefore, this opening question was framed to stimulate critical discourse involving many groups. During the initial question, follow-up questions that guided the discussion were asked. These follow-up questions were structured around the participants' direct answers.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated from Indonesian to English. The transcribed interviews were sent to the participants for review. After

the participant made minor changes and returned the corrected version, all names (moral theology) were anonymized, and each transcript was analyzed individually by 'thematic analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was the most suitable method because it examines the holistic meaning of phenomena through the description of subjective perceptions (Teker & Güler, 2019). After transcribing qualitative data, the transcripts were read repeatedly to be as close to the account as possible. Initial ideas on main topics and potential themes were recorded using NVivo 13, a qualitative data analysis software. The data is then reread and reviewed to identify potential key ideas that come up again and again. Several mind maps were created to fully understand the nodes' interactions and contextual relationships. In the next step, the nodes were combined into the initial code. By considering the node's contextual information, the resulting code is intended to identify the meaning beneath the semantic surface of the data. The data was coded at this stage by categorizing the interview extracts and identifying possible relationships with the identity creativity process (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Initial themes were identified and defined. However, since one of the criticisms of the thematic analysis was that only the identified themes were sought by the researcher, the initial coding and definition of themes were also carried out by undergraduate students of Islamic religious education independently of the researcher. Concordance and differences in coding are contrasted. A comparison between the categorization of the interview extracts of researchers and graduates of Islamic religious education and the definition of themes shows high inter-rater reliability. The principal investigator and undergraduate students of Islamic religious education coded a total of 76% of the interview extracts either exactly (both raters categorize the text as exact) or equally (both raters categorize the text as including the exact same text) to the same two emerging themes. Two themes identified by researchers and undergraduate students of Islamic religious education were named 'application of Islamic principles and virtue as a strategy for developing project-based learning methods' and 'creativity attribution of god-given personality as a strategy for developing project-based learning methods' and defined. Neither researchers nor students of Islamic religious education identified any other themes during the data analysis process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis showed that, especially in the project-based learning method, teachers' Islamic behavior and religiosity made it possible to develop them in students related to the creative mindset of science and Islamic behavior. Here, personal beliefs are related to developing project-based learning methods in two ways. On the one hand, the informants applied their personal beliefs to the 'Application of Islamic Principles and Virtue as a Strategy for Developing Project-Based Learning Methods.' On the other hand, the participants perceived their

work as a calling and anticipated having a divinely created personality that protected them from overwhelming creativity stagnation. This perception is the 'God-given Attribution of Personality Creativity as a Strategy for Developing Project-Based Learning Methods.' However, in both themes, excerpts from interviews were found to respond to the six principles of identity and creativity construction. In this case, elements of belief and religion may have facilitated creative behavior using methods and a positive view of one's work. While teaching creativity using project-based learning methods is considered noble work, personal Islamic behavior and religiosity make it possible to understand one's experience by incorporating Islamic behavior into a narrative framework. This framework provides meaning by making it possible to categorize experiences as part of a larger Divine plan for one's life and extended environment.

Application of the principles and virtues of Islamic behavior in the development of project-based learning methods

Based on the result, all 20 teachers of moral theology in *Madrasah Aliyah* reported that student-teacher creativity is the main basis in teaching and learning, and often it is challenging to implement, including project-based learning methods in the field of moral theology. Teachers and students must work together to develop this method to develop higher-order thinking and increase Islamic behavior. However, all madrasa teachers utilize Islamic behavior and religious values to develop creative learning methods at high escalation levels. T1 explained:

"I say that learning to develop the determination of basic or essential questions must be done, but Salsa is less able to do so. He finds it difficult to know where to begin to formulate essential questions on the material of *aqeedah*. I asked him to look for problematic things in the material being studied. But he said he did not have the skills to do it and asked me to give an example from the material studied. When I tried to explain and take his hand, he responded poorly, found it difficult to do so, and grumbled at my ignorance. I tried to understand it and explain it nicely and calmly, like the example of the Prophet Muhammad. After some time, Salsa calmed down and slowly performed."

This quote exemplifies the inability of students to formulate basic or essential questions in learning morals with the science-based project method. While trying to calm the student down, the teacher received a negative response by relying on his beliefs. In essence, harnessing the values of Islamic behavior allows him to act with patience and accept the situation as it is. In this sense, teachers feel that they will act according to God's will by enduring conflict and acting in the situation they are in at the moment. Assuming that teaching is worship that is beneficial in the afterlife. T14 and T16 explained:

"And then there was one student who didn't listen. I asked him to design a project plan based on his study material, and he said, 'I find it difficult. Please help me to be able to follow this lesson!' I was very surprised and felt that many students could not implement this learning method. Teaching with the new method is difficult and difficult to apply to students, especially in moral theology. But I'm working on my emotions. A few days ago, I held a recitation with the *Majlis Ta'lim* participants, which we routinely do weekly at the mosque with the Ustadz. I'm trying hard to be a better person who doesn't get angry easily. I directed him and the other students to work in groups to plan how their project would be carried out. And that's what I mean when I say that my strong Islamic behavior makes me a better teacher."

This excerpt explains how applying personal beliefs in designing project plans for the moral theology material being studied can increase the stability of self-esteem and identity by utilizing self-efficacy (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014; Fielding & Hornsey, 2016; Salleh, 2021). Challenging situations are seen as opportunities to grow in the virtues of Islam. In this sense, success is defined by controlling one's emotions. Situations in which reflective thinking and applying personal Islamic behavior principles override hasty and emotional responses are characterized as personal accomplishments. It contributes not only to self-efficacy, as a feeling of being in control of one's life and situation, but also to self-esteem, conceptualizing personal growth according to the principles of Islamic behavior as personal success. In this sense, difficult situations can persist even if there is no immediate satisfaction, as suggested by T4:

"Ahmad called me, 'Please help, Sir!'. Of course, I serve with patience and warmth! I create dialogue. Being a teacher is my calling; this is what I have to do. It's not always easy to deal with students, but when I come home and make time for prayer, I know that it's my calling—because I can change lives for the better. And it helped me to persevere, teaching science-based Islamic behavior materials to increase the Islamic behavior of students. So, I continue teaching with the students to make a schedule. Although project-based learning allows students to be creative in determining how their projects are created and implemented, they still have to create a schedule that keeps the project completed properly and efficiently. It is where I train students' thinking skills to be critical and good at estimating what they need to do for preparation and manufacture until their projects can be completed without being delayed by the deadline set by the teacher."

This quote exemplifies how to monitor project progress, test learning processes and outcomes, evaluate project-making experiences, or carry out projects in project-based learning methods using moral theology in Islam. Here, teaching resonates with giving meaning and finding meaning and purpose in one's life. It is then possible to develop project-based learning methods by understanding

them from a third-level perspective. Teaching becomes more than just a job. It turns into a calling and, in doing so, responds to meaning as the underlying principle of identity construction (Sternisko et al., 2020; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014).

Strong Islamic behavior is the main key for teachers to improve the project-based learning methods – moral theology – to contribute to changing the quality of students' understanding of Islamic behavior and *aqeedah* based on science. So, in developing a project-based learning method to improve students' higher-order thinking, T20 revealed:

"My students and I (student groups) have to monitor the progress of their projects. Has it gone according to their plan or not? What obstacles were encountered? So what can be done to overcome it? I must continue monitoring the project's progress to provide additional assistance if needed. I don't think about being tired and wasting time. For me, it's part of the *infaq* of time and thoughts that can be charity."

This quote confirms that Islamic teacher behavior is very involved in developing project-based learning methods by monitoring project progress. In addition, the teacher also considers the purpose of teaching as a charity that is done sincerely and applied in activities to increase students' scientific thinking. T19 and 18 revealed:

"In implementing the project-based learning method, I test (evaluate) the learning process and outcomes during the student's implementation and at the end of the project. Both are very important, so I can provide feedback, reinforcement, assistance, facilitation, and the like later. Then I still have to evaluate the acquisition of student learning outcomes in terms of attitudes, skills, and knowledge. I also help students self-reflect to get them in the habit of constantly evaluating their project learning. At the end of the lesson, apart from me doing an assessment (testing the process and learning outcomes) both regarding attitudes, skills, and knowledge, the teacher also facilitates students to think and remember what things they have been able to do while working on a project, then what things still need to be improved, so that future projects that they will implement will run more smoothly and successfully. I do this work sincerely, as taught in Islam.

Attribution of identity to God-given personalities as a project-based learning method development strategy

Understanding oneself as 'chosen to teach' (T8) makes it possible to see oneself as having a purpose in one's struggles. In this case, using the creativity of one's religious identity contributes to maintaining a positive view of oneself and one's work. T7, for example, said:

"Solving problems in a project-based learning method with students takes a lot of time and energy and is sometimes very difficult. We need some special people to get along with children. It gives you some time. But that's

also what I like about him: His God-given personality allows us to teach high-level, scientifically based methods in the classroom, especially moral theology."

This quote shows how understanding oneself as different from others with inherently different traits is a resource for developing project-based learning methods. Strategies for understanding oneself as equipped with special features that allow for developing project-based learning methods in the classroom may have responded to the peculiarities of the underlying identity principle (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). T13 stated:

"Once, there was a big argument that only I could handle. It happened on a Monday morning when two students started arguing in class. Other students tried to mediate so that the debate between the two would not heat up, but they began to argue. I prayed to God that they would hear me and reconcile. They heard me, and there was a moment that was very special. I look them in the eye, and they look into mine, and they stop arguing, and then we can discuss the matter. Sitting down and talking to them wasn't easy; it was a long discussion. I direct their dialogue—I'm very patient, so it's useful! After that day, I felt good about myself and my skills."

This quote exemplifies how perception makes a unique and positive contribution to developing students' project-based learning methods and contributes to positive self-perception. In this sense, the material of moral theology contributes positively to students' scientific thinking. On the other hand, contributing to scientific Islamic behavior development is considered a personal success and is related to one's unique personality. Interestingly, personality in this context relates to understanding identity as a divine prenatal gift. As the following quote will show, this conceptualization of personality can also contribute to identity continuity (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). T11 revealed:

"When I started teaching, I always developed scientific thinking in learning morals. I want this material to be taught not only orthodoxly but also to develop scientific thinking. I always invite my teacher colleagues for this so students will have more Islamic and scientific behavior. My colleagues and teachers are very happy to discuss this with me, and we do this continuously. I've always been like that—I could develop scientific-creative methods. And obviously, I developed this skill further, but it's always been there to some extent. It's just a part of me and who I am, always. Yes. It makes me happy because I can create a more positive atmosphere, and, on the one hand, it makes me feel special."

This quote exemplifies how being a teacher becomes an expression of an individual's personality rather than seeing the individual as a teacher. It is possible to allocate strategies for developing superior project-based learning methods specific to the nature of the teacher and, in doing so, increase self-esteem and self-efficacy. Hence, the anticipation of specific inherent traits as conditions

for a career can resonate with the continuity of principle identity and, in doing so, provide self-esteem-enhancing rationality (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). Individuals can build a sense of belonging by separating inherently different 'types' of people and associating themselves with these categories. This situation makes group membership an inherited right that forms group cohesion, even when developing creativity using project-based learning methods. T15 explained:

"Teachers get along pretty well because we think the same way. And that's important – to get along well, to be part of our team, our gang of teachers, if you want to call it that. Especially in terms of being developers and creators of quality project-based learning methods, we pay attention to each other. Like when a student finds it difficult to follow the lesson! We are in the teacher's room together in dialogue to provide solutions. It is just an example of how important being part of a team is."

This quote aligns with previous literature suggesting social support is important in developing a teacher's project-based learning methods (Ozório et al., 2021). In particular, this quote shows that having identity as the underlying construct of identity (Shpeizer, 2019; Rapoport & Yemini, 2020) becomes critical for developing project-based learning methods. While the anticipation of similarity in thought patterns and personalities facilitates the attribution of group cohesion through similarity, membership in a group provides a sense of security. It is also possible to make a stark separation from former teachers who followed other career aspirations and left school. T16 explained:

"But then we also have teachers like Yahya. Yahya is not teacher material. He is a handsome man with good Islam, but not teacher material. His class, the less creative students, and the daily complaints overwhelmed him. He didn't have the personality to do it – he did the training but couldn't do it in the real world. He's been off for a very long time – tired or so, no school, the right place for him. He's now some kind of manager somewhere."

As this quote exemplifies, the anticipated absence of a given teacher's personality justifies a misfit for this role. In this sense, the role of teacher training in relevant skills can be reduced. On the other hand, if a teacher does not develop sufficient resilience to develop quality learning methods, then this teacher is part of an outside group that God did not choose to teach. Therefore, the rationale that only a certain part of the population is created to teach makes it possible to understand the differences in aspirations and career development.

The findings indicate that religious and Islamic coping strategies can contribute to project-based learning methods in moral theology by responding to identity construction principles. Thus, religion, Islamic coping strategies, and narratives can develop quality project-based learning methods, contribute to identity maintenance, and increase students' scientific understanding of *aqeedah* and morality. Therefore, teachers apply their personal beliefs to develop project-based learning methods and use religious narrative frameworks that justify their

innate and distinctive suitability for their profession. Teaching to be in this way is conceptualized as a challenge to grow in the virtues of Islam in addition to the vocation one is chosen or born to do.

The positive effect of project-based learning methods on the quality of learning may be related to the identity process of *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers. In particular, Jaspal & Breakwell (2014) and Breakwell (2015) suggested that identity processes and experiences, such as high-level skills, can cause problems in establishing one's identity and thus threaten to teach creativity. The threat of identity processes responding to a structural identity model occurs when the principles of creativity in teacher identity are undermined (Breakwell, 2015; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). The principles that underlie the construction of identity that are found and defined empirically are (1) identity continuity (continuity between past and present self-concepts, i.e., understanding oneself as God's creation), (2) personal uniqueness (specificity; i.e., intentionally created) specifically), (3) self-confidence and control over one's life (self-efficacy; i.e., being able to change events through prayer), (4) personal values (self-worth; i.e., being loved by and justified through God), (5) feelings of closeness and acceptance by others (belonging to; i.e. belonging to the church) and (6) finding meaning and purpose in one's life (meaning; i.e. having a God-given purpose in one's life (Coleman, 2023; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014). According to Jaspal and Breakwell (2014), the six basic principles that underlie the construction of this identity make it possible to maintain a positive understanding of oneself.

In line with previous research, analysis of narrative reports shows a variety of challenging situations teachers face that would require developing project-based learning methods to maintain personal well-being (Ozório et al., 2021; Shpeizer, 2019; Kang et al., 2020). However, while previous research has focused primarily on how foreign and intrinsic factors can contribute to the development of quality, scientifically project-based learning methods in the Islamic field (Amri et al., 2019; Chua & Islam, 2020; Farida et al., 2017; Shpeizer, 2019), this study extends previous knowledge by examining the possible relationship between personal Islamic behavior and teaching identity.

In particular, the results show that personal beliefs and religiosity can respond to the underlying constituents of identity construction and self-development by using project-based learning methods. An extensive series of studies on identity maintenance shows that project-based learning methods contribute to students' greater scientific thinking and Islamic behavior (Cronjé et al., 2017; Ndlovu, 2014; Zakariya, 2019; Arood et al., 2020; Azim et al., 2021; Tambak & Sukenti, 2020). However, this study furthers this idea by showing that individual beliefs in using project-based learning methods contribute to personal development and growth in harmony with the principles of identity construction, including self-esteem and self-efficacy. In this sense, narrative stories show that Islamic virtues are conceptualized as more understanding, reflective, and creatively developing for the quality of project-based learning methods in moral theology.

Therefore, controlling oneself, emotions, and reactions in the scientific learning method of moral theology with feelings of self-efficacy and morality. In addition, personal interpretation of Islamic doctrines, combined with Islamic behavior in these doctrines, contributes to project-based learning methods by stabilizing identity when motivation is low and expectations are high. Fundamentally, Islamic doctrine makes it possible to form narrative arcs that facilitate reflection on student behavior and contribute to evaluating the meaningfulness of a teacher's work. When using project-based learning methods in morals, individual interpretations of Islamic religious texts are used to understand the teachings scientifically and, consequently, to increase Islamic behavior. Here, an essential factor is to see oneself as a divine choice to become a teacher. Therefore, teachers define themselves through their work. Instead of understanding teaching from the perspective of a contractually required job identity, being a teacher is described as being imperatively tied to one's identity, similar to gender identity (Eissa & Khalid, 2019; Farida et al., 2017; Howarth, 2016).

Thus, being a teacher becomes a comprehensive picture of the personality inherent in a person and the creation of Allah SWT. This notion is critical to maintaining a positive view of one's identity, even in times of struggle, and thus responding to the underlying identity maintenance process. In conclusion, in addition to identity creativity at the time of teaching and high emotionality (Mosqueiro et al., 2015; Tambak et al., 2022; Pessotti et al., 2018; Yusri et al., 2020), personal Islamic behavior and religiosity play a role in the development of the teacher's project-based learning method on moral theology.

CONCLUSION

Identity processes at the time of teaching and high Islamic behavior played a role in developing the *Madrasah Aliyah* teacher's project-based learning methods on moral theology. Applying Islamic behavior is the main bond in developing project-based learning methods and attributing identity from a God-given personality to learning in moral theology. Teacher identity and Islamic behavior develop project-based learning when learning moral theology. However, although these findings have outlined the relationship between Islamic behavior and creativity in teacher identity, many caveats need to be considered when using project-based learning methods in moral theology. As qualitative research with a relatively small sample size of 20 teachers with strong beliefs, this research is limited in its generalization ability. This warning is especially important in the recruited population because all moral theology teachers who declare themselves believers are deeply affiliated with Islam. It is still possible that similar accounts could be obtained from highly affiliated individuals of other Islamic denominations or individuals with different strong beliefs.

Similarly, it may be questioned whether other self-identified and highly affiliated moral theology teachers would agree with the statements of the interviewed individuals. However, despite these limitations, this study offers a new

perspective on researching project-based learning methods for teachers of moral theology by linking personal Islamic behavior with identity construction. While it is not suggested that Islamic behavior can be the only way to develop a teacher's project-based learning methods, it was found to be a useful addition that could contribute to a teacher's creative method and would merit further examination. Therefore, future researchers may wish to carry out large-scale studies investigating the possible relationship between the process of religiosity, project-based learning methods, and identity and examine the possible benefits of implementing moral theology in teacher training courses. This condition will make it possible to outline the possible effects with a quantitative and representative sample to provide more generalizable conclusions.

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