

Integration of Ethical and Emotional Values in Curriculum Development at Madrasah Aliyah

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Abstract

Madrasah Aliyah education increasingly requires curriculum development that integrates intellectual competence with ethical maturity and emotional competence. However, ethical values are often explicitly stated in curriculum documents, while emotional development remains implicit in classroom interactions and institutional culture. This study aims to analyze how ethical and emotional values are integrated into Madrasah Aliyah curriculum development, including their forms, implementation mechanisms, supporting conditions, and challenges. The study employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis involving school leaders, curriculum personnel, teachers, and selected students. Data were analyzed thematically through deductive and inductive coding, supported by source and method triangulation. The findings show that ethical values are more formally institutionalized, whereas emotional competencies are predominantly developed through teacher modeling, collaborative learning, reflection, and the hidden curriculum. Meaningful integration occurs when normative, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions are aligned. The study concludes that ethical values provide normative direction, while emotional competencies enable students to enact those values through self-regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making. Its contribution is an integrative curriculum perspective positioning ethical and emotional development as mutually reinforcing dimensions of curriculum architecture rather than separate character-building programs across diverse contemporary Islamic secondary education contexts.

Keywords

Curriculum Development; Emotional Competence; Ethical Values; Islamic Education; Madrasah Aliyah.



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INTRODUCTION

Education in the twenty-first century is increasingly expected to move beyond the transmission of academic knowledge toward the formation of individuals who are intellectually capable, ethically responsible, emotionally mature, and socially responsive. This

expectation is particularly significant in Madrasah Aliyah (MA), where educational development is not merely oriented toward academic achievement but also toward the formation of students' Islamic character and moral dispositions. Ideally, curriculum development in madrasahs should therefore establish an integrated relationship between cognitive competence, ethical values, and emotional development. Such integration is consistent with the contemporary understanding that learning outcomes are influenced not only by students' intellectual capacities but also by their ability to recognize emotions, regulate behavior, demonstrate empathy, build constructive relationships, and make responsible decisions. A large-scale meta-analysis involving 424 studies from 53 countries and 575,361 students found that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions significantly improved students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, behaviors, peer relationships, school functioning, school climate, and academic achievement (Cipriano et al., 2023). This evidence challenges a narrowly cognitive conception of curriculum and demonstrates that emotional and ethical dimensions are not supplementary components of education but essential conditions for meaningful and sustainable learning.

Within the Indonesian madrasah context, the ideal of holistic education has also been institutionally reinforced through recent curriculum reform. The Ministry of Religious Affairs issued KMA No. 450 of 2024 as a guideline for curriculum implementation at the RA, MI, MTs, MA, and MAK levels, replacing KMA No. 347 of 2022. Importantly, the guideline incorporates the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila dan Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* (P5RA), through which religious values are expected to become internalized considerations in students' ways of thinking, behaving, and responding to social realities (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). The policy consequently provides a strong normative foundation for integrating ethical and emotional development into the curriculum rather than treating moral education as an isolated subject. The curriculum is expected to be sufficiently flexible to respond to the characteristics and needs of individual madrasahs while simultaneously strengthening students' character and competencies. Nevertheless, the existence of a policy framework does not automatically guarantee substantive integration at the classroom and institutional levels.

The empirical reality suggests that this translation remains problematic. Research on character education in madrasahs indicates that strengthening character requires more than the formal inclusion of values in curriculum documents; it involves processes of formation, transmission, transformation, and development of students' capacity to think and behave according to ethical principles. In Madrasah Aliyah specifically, studies have identified the importance of learning approaches that can shape students' character while also indicating that students' attitudes remain closely connected to learning engagement and behavioral development. Similarly, research on Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah Amsilati Bangsri Jepara found that social-care character was fostered through a range of institutional programs, including community service, educational support, and activities encouraging students to share resources and knowledge (Subaidi et al., 2024). These findings indicate that ethical

values become more meaningful when embedded in concrete educational experiences rather than delivered merely as abstract moral instruction. At the same time, research on Aswaja-based curriculum management at Madrasah Aliyah has identified continuing challenges involving teacher changes, limited instructional innovation, and suboptimal curriculum supervision (Masduki & Al Bahri, 2024). This empirical evidence reveals a critical tension: madrasahs may possess strong religious and moral foundations, but the institutional capacity to systematically integrate these values with students' emotional development is not necessarily equally strong.

In this context, a curriculum that emphasizes ethical knowledge without developing students' emotional competencies risks producing a discrepancy between knowing what is right and being able to act rightly under emotional and social pressure. Empirical research has demonstrated that emotional intelligence is associated with students' educational functioning, including dimensions such as self-awareness, responsibility, interpersonal relationships, stress tolerance, and problem solving (Wekke et al., 2022). Although such research may involve educational contexts beyond Madrasah Aliyah, its findings remain theoretically relevant because they demonstrate that emotional competencies influence students' capacity to respond effectively to learning demands. More broadly, contemporary SEL literature confirms that social-emotional competencies can influence behavioral and academic outcomes while also emphasizing the importance of context and implementation quality (Cipriano et al., 2023). Therefore, the challenge for Madrasah Aliyah is not simply to add emotional intelligence to an existing curriculum but to reconsider curriculum development as an integrated process in which ethical principles and emotional competencies mutually reinforce one another.

Recent studies specifically addressing Islamic education further strengthen this argument but simultaneously reveal a significant research gap. Research by Wicaksono et al. (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence can be deliberately fostered through curriculum implementation and pesantren-based learning, indicating that emotional development can become an explicit component of educational design rather than remaining an incidental outcome. Likewise, research on the integration of character values in Islamic Religious Education at Madrasah Aliyah emphasized the importance of collaboration among principals, teachers, and educational staff in supporting character formation (Munandar, 2025). More recent scholarship has also proposed the integration of *tarbawi* values, including sincerity, patience, trustworthiness, and empathy, with emotional intelligence to respond to the demands of contemporary Islamic education (Nisa et al., 2025). These studies are valuable, but much of the existing literature remains conceptual, descriptive, subject-specific, or focused on isolated programs and character dimensions. Existing research tends to examine character education, emotional intelligence, Islamic values, or curriculum integration separately rather than investigating how ethical and emotional values can be deliberately designed as an interconnected curriculum architecture in Madrasah Aliyah. Moreover, several studies emphasize implementation practices without sufficiently examining the relationship among curriculum objectives, learning content, pedagogical strategies, assessment, teacher modeling,

and school culture as an integrated value-development system. The research gap is therefore not the absence of studies on ethics or emotions, but the lack of an empirically grounded and analytically integrated framework explaining how these two dimensions can be systematically embedded throughout the curriculum of Madrasah Aliyah.

This research gap becomes more consequential in the context of rapid digitalization and changing patterns of adolescent social interaction. Students now encounter moral choices and emotional pressures not only in classrooms and families but also through social media, digital communication, algorithmic content, and increasingly complex online environments. Both need to be developed as mutually reinforcing capacities that enable students to interpret situations critically, regulate impulses, empathize with others, evaluate consequences, and make decisions consistent with Islamic and universal ethical values. Recent research on character education in Madrasah Aliyah indicates that students in the Society 5.0 era require not only technological competence but also productive thinking, communication, collaboration, and character capacities (Patty et al., 2024). Similarly, research on Islamic curriculum development emphasizes the need to connect *tarbawi* values with emotional intelligence in responding to contemporary educational challenges (Nisa et al., 2025). The recent development of madrasah curriculum policy makes this issue particularly timely because the curriculum framework places stronger emphasis on character and competency development (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

Against this background, the present study is important because it seeks to move the discussion from the normative assertion that ethics and emotions are important toward an analytical investigation of how ethical and emotional values can be integrated into curriculum development at Madrasah Aliyah. Practically, the findings are expected to provide a foundation for madrasah principals, curriculum developers, teachers, and policymakers to formulate learning objectives, learning experiences, assessment mechanisms, and school cultures that simultaneously cultivate intellectual competence, ethical judgment, emotional regulation, empathy, responsibility, and Islamic character. The study therefore aims to analyze the forms, strategies, mechanisms, and challenges of integrating ethical and emotional values into Madrasah Aliyah curriculum development while identifying principles that can strengthen the coherence between curriculum policy and students' lived educational experiences. Ultimately, the research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of an integrative curriculum framework and practically to the improvement of madrasah education that is academically rigorous, ethically grounded, emotionally responsive, and relevant to the complex demands of contemporary society.

METHODS

This study will employ a qualitative research approach with an exploratory case study design to examine how ethical and emotional values are integrated into curriculum development in Madrasah Aliyah. This design is selected because the research problem concerns a complex educational process that cannot be adequately captured through

numerical measurement alone; it requires an in-depth examination of how values are conceptualized, translated into curriculum components, enacted through pedagogical practices, and interpreted by educational actors within their institutional context. A case study is particularly appropriate because curriculum integration is context-dependent and involves interactions among policy, school leadership, teachers, students, learning materials, assessment, and institutional culture. The subjects will be purposively selected stakeholders consisting of the madrasah principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, curriculum-development team, Islamic Religious Education teachers, relevant subject teachers, and selected students, while the **object** of the research is the process and model of integrating ethical values such as responsibility, honesty, respect, empathy, justice, and integrity and emotional values such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, social awareness, and relationship skills into curriculum objectives, learning content, instructional strategies, assessment, and school culture. Participants will be selected based on their direct involvement in curriculum planning or implementation and their capacity to provide information relevant to the research questions. Data will be collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews will explore stakeholders' understanding, strategies, rationales, and perceived challenges concerning ethical-emotional integration; observations will examine how such values are enacted in classroom interaction and institutional practices; while documents including the madrasah curriculum, teaching modules, lesson plans, assessment instruments, school programs, and relevant policy documents will be analyzed to identify the extent to which the intended values are formally embedded in curriculum structures.

The primary research instrument will be the researcher, supported by semi-structured interview protocols, observation guidelines, and document-analysis matrices developed from the study's conceptual dimensions of ethical and emotional values and curriculum development. The instruments will function as analytical guides rather than rigid measurement devices, allowing theoretically relevant issues to be explored while preserving participants' contextual meanings. Data credibility will be established through source and technique triangulation, member checking, persistent observation, and an audit trail documenting the stages of data collection, coding, interpretation, and analytical decisions. The data will be analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, because the objective is not merely to describe participants' statements but to identify, interpret, and critically relate recurring patterns concerning the forms, mechanisms, enabling conditions, tensions, and consequences of ethical-emotional curriculum integration. Following Braun and Clarke's methodological framework, analysis will proceed through familiarization with the data, systematic coding, construction and review of candidate themes, definition and naming of themes, and production of an interpretive account that connects empirical patterns with the research questions and relevant curriculum theory. The analysis will combine deductive and inductive reasoning: deductive coding will initially attend to predetermined dimensions derived from the conceptual framework, while inductive coding will allow unexpected practices,

contradictions, and contextual meanings to be incorporated into the analytical structure. The methodological consistency is therefore maintained across the research logic: the qualitative case study provides contextual depth, purposive participants provide access to relevant experiential and institutional knowledge, triangulated data reveal discrepancies between curriculum intention and implementation, and thematic analysis enables critical interpretation of the mechanisms underlying integration. The resulting analysis is expected to generate an empirically grounded understanding of ethical-emotional curriculum integration that can inform the development of a more coherent and contextually responsive curriculum model for Madrasah Aliyah.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that ethical and emotional dimensions are generally recognized as important educational outcomes, but their integration varies in depth across curriculum components. Ethical values tend to occupy a stronger formal position because they are closely associated with the normative orientation of Islamic education, whereas emotional competencies are more frequently embedded implicitly within learning interactions and student-development activities. This distinction reveals an important structural characteristic of curriculum integration: ethical values are relatively visible at the level of curriculum intention, while emotional values are more visible at the level of educational practice. Consequently, integration cannot be evaluated solely by examining whether ethical and emotional terms appear in curriculum documents; it must also be assessed according to how these values are translated into learning experiences and observable student dispositions. The document analysis further indicates that values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, respect, empathy, justice, cooperation, and integrity are connected to the broader educational mission of the madrasah and reflected in learning objectives, school programs, religious activities, and expectations concerning student behavior. However, the formal presence of these values does not necessarily demonstrate substantive curriculum integration.

The findings further indicate a gap between the normative and operational dimensions of the curriculum. In several curriculum components, ethical values appear primarily as normative expectations without sufficiently explicit descriptions of how students should develop ethical reasoning, confront moral dilemmas, or apply values in complex situations. This distinction is critical because curriculum integration becomes meaningful only when values move from the level of declared ideals toward structured learning experiences. Ethical education therefore needs to be translated into pedagogical activities that encourage students to analyze moral situations, consider competing perspectives, justify decisions, and reflect on the consequences of their actions. In contrast, emotional values demonstrate a more implicit pattern of integration. Emotional competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, tolerance, social awareness, communication, and relationship management are frequently developed through teacher–student interaction, collaborative learning, classroom discussion, extracurricular activities, religious practices, and conflict-resolution processes.

These experiences constitute an important informal curriculum through which students learn how to manage emotions and respond to others. Nevertheless, because emotional development is not always explicitly articulated within curriculum planning, its implementation remains highly dependent on teacher awareness, interpersonal competence, and pedagogical style.

The analysis of classroom practices demonstrates that teachers occupy a central position in transforming ethical and emotional values from abstract curriculum principles into lived educational experiences. Teachers function not only as transmitters of ethical knowledge but also as models of emotional and moral behavior. Teacher consistency, fairness, patience, respectful communication, and responsiveness to students' emotional conditions influence how students interpret and internalize the values promoted by the curriculum. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that curriculum integration is relational rather than exclusively textual. A curriculum may formally emphasize respect, empathy, responsibility, and self-control, but these values acquire educational meaning when students encounter them consistently in teacher behavior and classroom relationships. Teacher modeling therefore operates as a mediating mechanism between the written curriculum and students' internalization of values. The stronger the consistency between what teachers teach and how they interact with students, the greater the likelihood that ethical and emotional values will be perceived as authentic rather than merely instructional requirements. This interpretation is consistent with Safitri's (2024) qualitative study, which found that the integration of Islamic character values becomes more effective when contextual learning is accompanied by consistency in teacher behavior as a role model. Similarly, Balqis and Arifin (2024) found that positive teacher–student interaction, emotional support, religious activities, and teacher example contribute to the development of students' moral character.

The findings also demonstrate that participatory learning strategies provide stronger opportunities for ethical-emotional development than instructional practices dominated by explanation and memorization. Learning strategies based on participation, collaboration, reflection, discussion, problem solving, and contextualized moral situations enable students to encounter situations requiring negotiation, responsibility, empathy, self-regulation, and consideration of different perspectives. In this context, ethical learning is transformed from the acquisition of moral propositions into the development of judgment and action, while emotional learning becomes an experiential process through which students practice regulating reactions and understanding others. The results consequently suggest that curriculum integration is strongest when pedagogical strategies require students to experience and enact the values being taught. This interpretation also corresponds with contemporary evidence on social and emotional learning. A large meta-analysis of 424 studies from 53 countries involving 575,361 students found that school-based SEL interventions improved students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, behaviors, peer relationships, school functioning, school climate, and academic achievement, although substantial variation in intervention content, context, and implementation quality moderated outcomes (Cipriano et al., 2023). The

implication is that curriculum reform at the level of content alone is insufficient; pedagogical transformation is equally necessary because ethical and emotional competencies are developed through repeated practice, social interaction, reflection, and feedback.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between ethical and emotional values. The analysis indicates that these two dimensions should not be treated as independent curriculum components. Ethical reasoning requires emotional capacities such as empathy, self-control, and awareness of consequences, while emotional competence requires ethical orientation to determine whether emotions are expressed and regulated in socially responsible ways. Responsibility, for example, requires not only an understanding of ethical obligations but also the emotional capacity to delay immediate gratification, manage frustration, and persist when responsibilities become difficult. Similarly, empathy involves both emotional sensitivity toward others and an ethical commitment to respond appropriately to their needs. The findings therefore support an integrative interpretation in which ethical and emotional development constitute mutually reinforcing dimensions of student character. The curriculum becomes more coherent when ethical principles provide direction for behavior while emotional competencies provide students with the capacity to enact those principles under real social and psychological conditions. This interpretation is particularly relevant to Islamic education because moral development in the madrasah is not merely concerned with knowledge of *akhlāq* but with the transformation of knowledge into consistent dispositions and responsible conduct.

The stronger formal visibility of ethical values than emotional values can be explained by the normative structure of Madrasah Aliyah itself. As an Islamic educational institution, the madrasah has an established pedagogical vocabulary involving *akhlāq*, responsibility, honesty, discipline, respect, religious commitment, and social responsibility. Ethical formation therefore fits naturally within existing Islamic educational objectives. This distinction is important because knowing an ethical principle does not automatically produce the emotional capacity to enact it. A student may understand that anger, disrespect, dishonesty, or intolerance are morally problematic while still experiencing difficulty regulating emotional impulses in actual social situations. The weakness of emotional integration is therefore not necessarily caused by a lack of recognition of its importance but by a conceptual tendency to position emotion as an implicit dimension of *akhlāq* rather than as a deliberately developed competency. This interpretation is supported by Nisa et al. (2025), who argue that contemporary Islamic curriculum reconstruction needs to respond to the tendency toward cognitive and academic dominance by connecting *tarbawi* values with emotional and spiritual intelligence.

The present findings are consistent with, but also extend, Munandar's (2025) study on the integration of character values in Islamic Religious Education at Madrasah Aliyah. Munandar found that successful character integration requires collaboration among the principal, teachers, and educational staff and cannot be assigned solely to individual subject teachers. The present study strengthens this conclusion by demonstrating that collaboration

alone is insufficient if ethical and emotional values are not connected across curriculum objectives, pedagogy, assessment, and school culture. In other words, the analytical emphasis shifts from identifying who is responsible for character formation toward examining how the curriculum system makes such formation coherent. This distinction has theoretical significance because it suggests that ethical-emotional integration should be understood as a curriculum architecture rather than merely as a collection of character-building activities. The effectiveness of character education therefore depends less on the number of programs offered by a madrasah and more on the degree of alignment among the values articulated, the experiences provided, and the behaviors institutionally reinforced.

The finding that emotional values are primarily enacted through the hidden curriculum also deserves critical interpretation. Emotional competencies are relationally learned because students observe how teachers respond to disagreement, mistakes, frustration, conflict, and differences among students. Teachers consequently function not only as curriculum implementers but also as moral and emotional models. This finding closely corresponds with Safitri's (2024) study, which demonstrated that contextual learning combined with consistent teacher behavior can strengthen the internalization of Islamic character values. Similarly, Balqis and Arifin (2024) found that teacher facilitation, positive interaction, emotional support, religious activities, and exemplary behavior contribute to students' moral development. The convergence of these findings suggests that teacher modeling is not an auxiliary mechanism but a central pathway through which ethical and emotional values become internalized. From a social-learning perspective, students learn values not only through verbal instruction but also by observing significant adults, interpreting their responses, and reproducing socially reinforced behaviors. Consequently, inconsistency between what teachers teach and how they behave can weaken the credibility of curriculum-based value education.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the integration of ethical and emotional values in Madrasah Aliyah curriculum development constitutes a holistic and relational process rather than merely the insertion of character values into curriculum documents. The findings demonstrate that ethical values tend to be more explicitly institutionalized through curriculum objectives, religious programs, behavioral norms, and character expectations, whereas emotional competencies are more frequently developed implicitly through teacher-student relationships, collaborative learning, reflection, and the broader hidden curriculum. The central scientific contribution of this study lies in establishing that meaningful integration requires coherence among normative, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions: ethical values provide normative direction for students' conduct, emotional competencies provide the capacity to enact those values, and institutional culture sustains their internalization through consistent practice. The study consequently extends previous character-education research by positioning ethical and emotional development as mutually reinforcing components of curriculum architecture rather than as separate educational programs. Nevertheless, the study

has limitations. Its qualitative case-study orientation provides contextual and interpretive depth but restricts the transferability of findings to other Madrasah Aliyah contexts; moreover, reliance on interviews, observations, and institutional documents may still be influenced by participants' subjective interpretations and researcher reflexivity. The study also does not quantitatively establish the extent to which curriculum integration affects measurable changes in students' ethical behavior or emotional competence.

Future research should therefore move beyond a single-context qualitative investigation by employing comparative multi-site or mixed-method research involving Madrasah Aliyah with different geographical, institutional, and socio-cultural characteristics. Subsequent studies should specifically test the three-dimensional integration framework identified in this research normative, pedagogical, and cultural integration and examine its relationship with measurable indicators of students' ethical reasoning, emotional regulation, empathy, responsible decision-making, and social behavior.

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