

Internalizing the value of *Mahabbah* in the implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program at the State Islamic Junior High School in Banda Aceh

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the phenomenon that the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) is often reduced to administrative and technical formalities, thereby neglecting the theological substance of compassion (*maḥabbah*). It aims to analyze the integration of *maḥabbah* values into CFS policies, examine the internalization process among students, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors along with their overall impact. This research employs a qualitative, multi-site design conducted at four State Islamic Junior High Schools (MTsN) in Banda Aceh. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model. The study is grounded in a Three-Tier theoretical framework: *Maḥabbah* Theology as the grand theory, John Goodlad's curriculum representation as the middle-range theory, and Nienke Nieveen's parameters as the applied theory. The findings indicate that: (1) the integration of *maḥabbah* values has developed into an "inner constitution" of the madrasah, supported by both theological and juridical foundations; (2) the internalization process occurs circularly across Goodlad's five curriculum levels, culminating in students' lived experiences, with teachers acting as *murabbī* who apply *al-rifq* (gentleness) and *syafaqah* (tenderness) to create inclusive learning environments; and (3) this process is reinforced by kinship-based social capital despite challenges posed by digital disruption. Empirically, the study demonstrates the formation of moral autonomy, *insan kamil* character, and a "zero bullying" ecosystem. It proposes a Dignified CFS Model that integrates Sharia values with modern pedagogy to enhance both academic excellence and ethical formation (*adab*).

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program has become a global urgency in ensuring that educational environments are safe, inclusive, and supportive of children's holistic development (Apologia et al., 2024; Nasukah & Fidayanti, 2024; Nisa et al., 2025; Sunardianta et al., 2024). The significance of this issue extends beyond administrative compliance; it touches the very soul of Islamic pedagogy, which posits that every child is an *amanah* (trust) from God deserving of compassion, protection, and holistic nurturing. A deeper understanding of how theological values are systematically integrated into institutional policy is therefore essential for enriching scholarly insights and supporting more accurate, value-based policymaking in Islamic education. However, in many contexts, especially in Indonesia, the CFS program is often perceived and implemented merely as a set of administrative-technical formalisms, such as fulfilling checklists and physical infrastructure requirements (Hasan & Mujahidin, 2023; Wahab et al., 2022). This phenomenon creates a significant gap between the policy's outward appearance and its internal psychological and spiritual impact on students. Without a deep philosophical foundation, CFS risks becoming a hollow structure that fails to address the root causes of violence and emotional detachment in schools (Fikri et al., 2025; Gokcekuyu, 2023; Hidayati et al., 2025; Ishari, 2026; Prismadianto et al., 2025; Sriayu et al., 2026). Therefore, there is a pressing need to move beyond technical compliance toward a more substantive approach that touches the heart of education.

In the context of Islamic education, particularly within the *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTsN) in Banda Aceh, the concept of compassion or *maḥabbah* offers a profound theological substance to bridge this gap. *Maḥabbah* is not merely a human emotion but a divine attribute that serves as the foundation for all ethical interactions in Islam (Ananda & Shobahiya, 2025; Farhan, 2025; Nada & Listiana, 2025). When *maḥabbah* is internalized within the CFS framework, the school environment transforms from a rigid legalistic entity into a "home" characterized by genuine care and mutual respect (Izzah et al., 2025; Kholifah, 2026). This research posits that the integration of *maḥabbah* values is essential to reviving the soul of CFS, ensuring that the program fulfills its mission of protecting children's rights while nurturing their spiritual well-being.

Despite the growing body of literature on CFS implementation and Islamic character education, a significant gap persists: most existing studies approach CFS through the lens of policy evaluation, physical safety metrics, or bullying prevalence, without examining the internalization of theological values as the foundational driver of institutional change (Mustafida et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2024). The current state of CFS research often focuses on policy evaluation, physical safety standards, and bullying prevalence, yet it frequently overlooks the role of spiritual and character-based internalization processes. While modern pedagogy emphasizes student-centered learning, it sometimes lacks the transcendental dimension found in Islamic educational traditions (Chande, 2023; Haryanto et al., 2024; Solechan, 2025; Srinio et al., 2025; Yahya et al., 2025). Furthermore, while quantitative studies have measured the outputs of CFS programs, qualitative investigations into the *process* by which spiritual values are embedded into the lived experience of students remain scarce. By examining the integration of *maḥabbah* values, this study fills a critical void in the literature by providing a holistic model that combines Sharia values with modern pedagogical standards (Maharani et al., 2025; Sriwahyuni & Alfiansyah, 2025). This intersection is particularly relevant in Aceh, where the implementation of regional autonomy and Islamic law provides a unique socio-legal backdrop for educational innovation.

This study pursues three interrelated objectives: (1) to analyze the integration of *maḥabbah* values into CFS institutional policies at MTsN in Banda Aceh; (2) to examine the circular internalization process of these values among students across Goodlad's five curriculum levels; and (3) to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that shape this process and its overall impact on the formation of

insan kāmīl character and a "zero bullying" ecosystem. By addressing these objectives, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, complement previous studies, and offer new perspectives that have not been extensively explored in the existing literature.

The systemic internalization of *maḥabbah* values requires a robust theoretical framework to analyze how abstract theological concepts are translated into daily educational practices (Mahardika, 2024). This study employs a "Three-Tier" theoretical framework: *Maḥabbah Theology* as the Grand Theory, John Goodlad's *Curriculum Representation* as the Middle Range Theory, and Nienke Nieveen's parameters as the Applied Theory. *Maḥabbah Theology* provides the spiritual "why," while Goodlad's framework allows for a multi-layered analysis of how these values move from formal policy to the lived experience of the students (Aminpour, 2023; Aulia et al., 2026; Baihaqi et al., 2023; Cahyani et al., 2026; Muhalli, 2023; Quan et al., 2026). Finally, Nieveen's criteria ensure that the resulting model meets the standards of validity, practicality, and effectiveness.

This research is further guided by the hypothesis that the systematic integration of *maḥabbah* theology into CFS policy—when operationalized through the role of teachers as *murabbī* and reinforced by kinship-based social capital—produces empirically measurable outcomes in the form of reduced bullying, enhanced moral autonomy, and the formation of *insan kāmīl* character. This hypothesis is tested against field evidence drawn from participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis across four MTsN sites in Banda Aceh, using relevant data and methods to provide empirical evidence that supports or challenges existing assumptions in the literature.

The process of internalization is not linear but circular, involving various stakeholders and levels of the curriculum (Ding et al., 2023). According to Goodlad, the curriculum exists at five levels: the ideal, formal, perceived, operational, and experiential. In the context of MTsN in Banda Aceh, the "ideal" level involves the theological vision of *maḥabbah* as a reflection of God's love. The "formal" level translates this vision into written policies and school regulations. However, the true challenge lies in the "operational" and "experiential" levels, where teachers must embody the role of a *murabbī*—a spiritual guide—to ensure that students truly feel the presence of compassion in their daily learning activities (Godfrey et al., 2012; Pastorino et al., 2025).

Teachers as *murabbī* play a pivotal role in the "zero bullying" ecosystem by applying the approaches of *al-rifq* (gentleness) and *syafaqah* (tenderness). These Islamic pedagogical concepts are perfectly aligned with the principles of CFS, which advocate for non-violent discipline and emotional support (Cross et al., 2012; Nigbur et al., 2008). When teachers interact with students through the lens of *maḥabbah*, they move beyond being mere dispensers of information to becoming architects of character. This relationship fosters a sense of psychological safety, allowing students to develop moral autonomy and reach the stage of *insan kāmīl* (the perfect/complete human).

Despite the clear benefits, the internalization of *maḥabbah* values faces significant challenges, most notably from digital disruption and shifting social norms. The digital age has introduced new forms of bullying and emotional detachment that transcend the physical boundaries of the school (Sauri et al., 2022; Sayyi, Fithriyah, et al., 2025). This reality necessitates a strengthening of "social capital" based on kinship and community bonds, which are traditionally strong in Acehnese society. By leveraging this social capital, schools can create a protective buffer against negative external influences, ensuring that the values taught within the classroom are reinforced by the surrounding community.

The policy integration of *maḥabbah* values has evolved into what can be described as an "inner constitution" of the *madrasah*. This means that the values are no longer just external impositions but have become part of the school's institutional identity and collective consciousness (Hasibuan, 2026; Sayyi, Muslimin, et al., 2025). This study examines how this integration is grounded both theologically in the Quran and Sunnah, and juridically in Indonesian national education laws and CFS regulations.

By aligning these two foundations, the *Dignified CFS Model* gains a unique legitimacy that resonates with the local culture while meeting national standards (Safitri & Habiby, 2025; Zulva et al., 2024).

Methodologically, this research adopts a qualitative approach with a multi-site study design conducted across four State Islamic Junior High Schools (MTsN) in Banda Aceh. Data collection involved participant observation, in-depth interviews with various stakeholders—including principals, teachers, and students—and extensive documentation analysis. The data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, ensuring a rigorous and systematic interpretation of the findings. This multi-site approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how different school environments adapt and implement the *maḥabbah*-based CFS model.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to transform educational practice by positioning *maḥabbah*-based education as a key driver of academic excellence and ethical formation (*adab*). It suggests that when a student's heart is nurtured with compassion, their intellectual capacity is also enhanced (Idris et al., 2023; Santoso et al., 2025). This holistic approach challenges the prevailing dichotomy between "secular" child protection policies and "religious" moral education, demonstrating that the two are, in fact, inseparable in a dignified educational setting.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the internalization process culminates in students' lived experiences, where they begin to treat their peers with the same *maḥabbah* they receive from their teachers (Nagymzhanova et al., 2025; Syafaruddin et al., 2025). This ripple effect is the ultimate indicator of the program's success. The study empirically demonstrates the development of moral autonomy, where students choose to act ethically not out of fear of punishment, but out of a genuine internalization of love and respect for others. This shift is essential for creating a sustainable "zero bullying" ecosystem that persists even outside the school gates.

In conclusion, this introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of the *Dignified CFS Model*. By integrating Sharia values with modern pedagogy, this research offers a replicable framework for other Islamic and non-Islamic schools seeking to deepen the impact of their child-friendly initiatives. The following sections will detail the findings regarding policy integration, the systemic internalization process, and the supporting factors that make the *maḥabbah*-based CFS model a vital contribution to contemporary educational discourse.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a multi-site study design to capture a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how *maḥabbah* values are internalized within the Child-Friendly School (CFS) framework (Roosinda et al., 2021). Qualitative research is particularly suited for this inquiry as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena, human experiences, and the symbolic meanings assigned to educational practices (Creswell, 2019). By utilizing a multi-site design, the researcher can compare and contrast the implementation processes across four distinct State Islamic Junior High Schools (MTsN) in Banda Aceh, thereby enhancing the robustness and transferability of the findings. This approach moves beyond mere surface-level descriptions to uncover the underlying "inner constitution" and theological grounding that define the unique character of each *madrasah* in fostering a compassionate learning environment.

The research was conducted at four selected MTsN in Banda Aceh (MTsN 1 Banda Aceh, MTsN 2 Banda Aceh, MTsN 3 Banda Aceh, dan MTsN 4 Banda Aceh), chosen for their commitment to the CFS program and their distinctive integration of Islamic values into their daily operations. The subjects of this study included a diverse range of stakeholders: school principals as policy leaders, teachers acting as *murabbī* (spiritual guides), students as the primary subjects of internalization, and school committees representing the broader community. Selecting multiple sites allows the researcher to observe how the

universal values of *mahabbah*—such as *al-rifq* (gentleness) and *syafaqah* (tenderness)—are adapted to different institutional cultures and social dynamics within the Acehnese context. This purposive sampling ensures that the data collected is rich, relevant, and representative of the systemic efforts to create a "zero bullying" ecosystem through spiritual and pedagogical integration (Sari et al., 2025).

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants.

No	Code	School	Status	Gender	Experience/Grade
1	P-MTsN1-01	MTsN 1 Banda Aceh	Principal	M	18 years
2	VP-MTsN2-01	MTsN 2 Banda Aceh	Vice Principal	F	14 years
3	T-MTsN3-02	MTsN 3 Banda Aceh	Teacher	F	10 years
4	T-MTsN4-03	MTsN 4 Banda Aceh	Teacher	M	12 years
5	SC-MTsN1-01	MTsN 1 Banda Aceh	School Committee	M	—
6	S-MTsN3-07	MTsN 3 Banda Aceh	Student	F	Grade 8
7	S-MTsN2-12	MTsN 2 Banda Aceh	Student	M	Grade 9
8	S-MTsN4-05	MTsN 4 Banda Aceh	Student	F	Grade 7

Data collection procedures were executed through three primary techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Moleong, 2017). Participant observation allowed the researcher to witness firsthand the "operational" and "experiential" curriculum levels described by John Goodlad, where the interaction between teachers and students reveals the true presence of compassion in the classroom. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the "perceived" curriculum, capturing the personal beliefs, motivations, and challenges faced by educators in internalizing *mahabbah* theology. Meanwhile, documentation analysis provided a gateway to the "formal" curriculum, including school decrees (SK), lesson plans, and guidance sheets (*lembar bimbingan*) signed by mentors, which serve as the juridical and administrative foundation for the CFS program.

The research instruments were designed to align with the "Three-Tier" theoretical framework, ensuring that every data point contributes to a deeper understanding of the grand, middle, and applied theories (Sugiyono, 2013). To evaluate the quality of the developed *Dignified CFS Model*, the researcher utilized Nienke Nieveen's parameters, focusing on the criteria of validity, practicality, and effectiveness. These instruments helped in identifying the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the circular internalization process, such as the role of social capital in mitigating the negative impacts of digital disruption (Raco, 2010). By maintaining a rigorous focus on these parameters, the study ensures that the resulting model is not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable to the real-world challenges of modern Islamic education.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). During data condensation, the vast amount of raw information collected from the four sites was coded and categorized based on themes like policy integration, the teacher's role as *murabbi*, and the development of moral autonomy in students. Data display involved organizing the condensed data into structured narratives and tables to facilitate a cross-site comparison of the findings. This systematic process allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns and significant deviations, ensuring that the final conclusions are grounded in evidence and directly answer the research objectives outlined in the introduction (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021).

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the researcher employed several validation techniques, including triangulation of sources and methods, as well as prolonged engagement in the field. Triangulation involved cross-checking information obtained through

interviews with observations and document reviews to ensure consistency and accuracy (Alaslan, 2023). Furthermore, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance, declaring any personal circumstances or potential conflicts of interest that might influence the interpretation of the data. This commitment to ethical and methodological rigor ensures that the study provides a scientifically sound interpretation of how *maḥabbah* values can serve as a transformative driver for academic excellence and ethical formation (*adab*) in the CFS context.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Policy Integration and the Internalization of *Maḥabbah* Values in CFS

The integration of *maḥabbah* values within the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program at MTsN Banda Aceh is not merely an administrative addition but has evolved into an "inner constitution" that governs the institution's spiritual and pedagogical life. This policy integration is grounded in a dual-legal framework: theologically through Islamic jurisprudence and juridically through national regulations such as the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection No. 8 of 2014. Field observations reveal that this integration is manifested in the vision and mission of the madrasahs, which explicitly prioritize the creation of a learning environment characterized by *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (mercy to all creation). This theological grounding ensures that the CFS program transcends technical formalism and touches the substance of human compassion (*maḥabbah*).

The formalization of these values is evidenced by the establishment of the Journal Management Team and specific decrees (SK) that institutionalize the "zero bullying" objective. Interviews with school principals indicate that *maḥabbah* is viewed as the "grand theory" that provides the spiritual "why" behind child protection policies. The principal of MTsN 1 Banda Aceh (informant P-MTsN1-01, interviewed on February 3, 2025) stated: "We do not implement CFS just because of government mandates; we do it because Islam commands us to love and protect our children as an *amanah* (trust) from God." This perspective aligns with the "Ideal Curriculum" level in John Goodlad's framework, where the philosophical foundations of the school are rooted in transcendental values rather than just secular compliance.

This sentiment was further echoed by the Vice Principal for Student Affairs at MTsN 2 Banda Aceh (informant VP-MTsN2-01, interviewed on February 14, 2025), who stated: "Every morning assembly begins with a reminder that this school is a home of love. We train students not to follow rules out of fear, but to genuinely feel that they are loved and therefore must love others." Documentary evidence corroborates this claim: the school's annual program document (*Program Kerja Tahunan*) explicitly includes a "Compassion Culture" (*Budaya Maḥabbah*) pillar as one of four strategic priorities, alongside academic achievement, environmental health, and digital literacy—a document reviewed and signed by the School Committee on January 10, 2025 (Documentary Evidence, MTsN 2, January 2025).

Furthermore, the integration process is visible in the physical and social atmosphere of the madrasah. The "perceived curriculum" among teachers shows a high level of synchronization between religious duty and professional responsibility. Teachers perceive *maḥabbah* as a guiding principle that dictates how they should interact with students, transforming the teacher's role into that of a *murabbī*—a spiritual guide who nurtures the heart along with the mind. Documentation analysis of school guidance sheets (*lembar bimbingan*) confirms that interactions are monitored to ensure they adhere to the principles of *al-rifq* (gentleness) and *syafaqah* (tenderness), which are core components of the *maḥabbah* theology.

The systemic nature of this integration is also reflected in the collaborative governance between the school, the mentor, and the school committee. This "Dignified CFS Model" integrates Sharia values

with modern pedagogy, ensuring that child-friendly initiatives are culturally relevant and locally accepted. By embedding *maḥabbah* into the official decree and daily operations, the madrasah creates a legal-spiritual hybrid that is more resilient than standard secular models. This integration serves as the primary driver for academic excellence, as students feel psychologically safe and valued within their educational environment.

At the operational level, the policy is translated into concrete classroom practices. Observations show that every lesson begins and ends with reminders of mutual respect and compassion, framing education as an act of love. This approach minimizes the gap between policy and practice, as the values are consistently reinforced across all organizational layers. The "inner constitution" of the madrasah thus acts as a filter, ensuring that all educational activities—from extracurriculars to formal assessments—are aligned with the core value of *maḥabbah*.

The Process of Internalization of *Maḥabbah* Values among Students

The internalization of *maḥabbah* values among students at MTsN Banda Aceh follows a circular and multi-layered process, moving from external instruction to internal conviction. This process is analyzed through the five curriculum levels of John Goodlad, culminating in the "experiential curriculum" where students live out these values in their daily lives. Initially, students are introduced to *maḥabbah* through formal instruction and the modeling of behavior by teachers. A student at MTsN 3 Banda Aceh (informant S-MTsN3-07, female, Grade 8, interviewed on March 3, 2025) remarked: "We see how our teachers treat us with kindness, even when we make mistakes. It makes us want to treat our friends the same way." She further elaborated: "When I made a mistake once and cried, my teacher did not scold me. She sat beside me and said, 'God loves you, and so do we.' I never forgot that. Now I try to do the same to my younger classmates." This observation highlights the power of the "operational curriculum" where teachers embody the values they teach.

The depth of this experiential internalization is also visible in the students' reflective journals (*jurnal refleksi*), a mandatory weekly assignment at MTsN 3 Banda Aceh. A review of 24 journal entries collected between February and March 2025 revealed that 19 out of 24 students (79%) spontaneously referenced acts of kindness received from teachers as motivation for their own prosocial behavior—a finding that underscores the authentic transfer of *maḥabbah* from the operational to the experiential curriculum level (Documentary Evidence, MTsN 3, March 2025).

Teachers acting as *murabbī* apply a circular approach to internalization, where values are not just taught once but are constantly reinforced through various school rituals and spontaneous interactions. The use of *al-rifq* (gentleness) in discipline is a key factor; instead of punitive measures, teachers engage in restorative dialogues that emphasize the importance of compassion. This method fosters an inclusive learning environment where students feel safe to express their moral autonomy. The internalization process is complete when the student transitions from obeying rules out of fear to acting with *maḥabbah* out of a sense of *insan kāmil* (the perfect/complete human) character.

The circularity of this process is also supported by peer-to-peer interactions. In many of the observed MTsN, "student ambassadors" for CFS were tasked with mediating minor conflicts using the principles of *maḥabbah*. This peer-led approach ensures that the values are horizontally integrated among the student body, making the "experiential curriculum" more authentic and sustainable. When students participate in creating a "zero bullying" ecosystem, they develop a collective identity rooted in empathy and ethical formation (*adab*). This collective identity serves as a social shield against the aggressive behaviors often found in traditional school settings.

Data from participant observations indicate that this internalization manifests in subtle changes in student behavior, such as increased cooperation during group work and a visible reduction in verbal

aggression. The research findings show that students who have internalized *maḥabbah* values are more likely to exhibit moral autonomy, choosing to help their peers without being prompted by authority figures. This shift is critical for the development of *insan kāmil*, where the individual's spiritual and intellectual dimensions are harmonized. The student's lived experience becomes a testament to the success of the circular internalization model.

Furthermore, the process is strengthened by the integration of *maḥabbah* into the hidden curriculum. The way common spaces are used, the tone of school announcements, and even the visual posters on walls all contribute to a continuous "atmospheric" internalization. This holistic environment ensures that the student is constantly immersed in a culture of compassion. By the time students reach the final years of their junior high education, the *maḥabbah* values have typically moved from the "formal" level to the core of their personal character, guiding their decisions both inside and outside the madrasah walls.

Dynamics of Supporting and Inhibiting Factors and the Impact of Internalization

The successful internalization of *maḥabbah* values is heavily influenced by the interplay between local social capital and external challenges. A primary supporting factor is the strong kinship-based social capital prevalent in Acehnese society. This communal bond extends into the school environment, where teachers, parents, and students often share a unified worldview based on Islamic values. Interviews with school committees revealed that the "Dignified CFS Model" is highly supported by parents because it aligns with their domestic upbringing goals. The chair of the School Committee at MTsN 1 Banda Aceh (informant SC-MTsN1-01, interviewed on February 5, 2025) affirmed: *"What the school teaches about love and respect is exactly what we teach at home. There is no contradiction. When the school and family speak the same language of maḥabbah, children absorb it more deeply."* This synergy between home and school creates a "wraparound" support system that accelerates the internalization process.

However, the process is not without significant inhibiting factors, most notably digital disruption. The ubiquity of smartphones and social media has introduced external values that are often at odds with the *maḥabbah* philosophy. Teachers noted that cyberbullying and the "normalization" of aggressive behavior in digital spaces present a constant challenge to the madrasah's "zero bullying" efforts. A teacher at MTsN 4 Banda Aceh (informant T-MTsN4-03, male, 12 years of teaching experience, interviewed on March 10, 2025) described this challenge vividly: *"We found a student who was being cyberbullied through an anonymous Instagram account. The old approach would have been to confiscate the phone and punish the perpetrators. Instead, we held a halaqah (discussion circle), and the perpetrator eventually apologized publicly and voluntarily. That is the power of maḥabbah – it changes hearts, not just behavior."* This adaptive response is documented in the school's disciplinary resolution record (*catatan penyelesaian kasus*), which shows a shift from punitive to restorative approaches: in the 2023–2024 academic year, 87% of behavioral cases were resolved through dialogue-based methods, compared to 54% in 2021–2022 (Documentary Evidence, MTsN 4, School Disciplinary Record, 2024). To counter digital disruption more broadly, schools have had to expand their internalization strategies to include digital literacy and "digital *maḥabbah*," teaching students to apply compassion in their online interactions as well as their physical ones.

The impact of internalizing *maḥabbah* values is profound, resulting in a "zero bullying" ecosystem and the development of *insan kāmil* character. Empirically, the four MTsN sites reported a significant decrease in formal disciplinary cases related to physical or verbal violence. More importantly, the psychological impact on students is visible in their increased confidence and academic engagement. When students are freed from the fear of bullying and feel the genuine *syafaqah* (tenderness) of their

teachers, their cognitive performance improves. This demonstrates that *maḥabbah*-based education is not just a moral endeavor but a key driver of academic excellence.

The study also found that the internalization of these values promotes "moral autonomy," where students develop the capacity to make ethical decisions independently of external rewards or punishments. This is a hallmark of the *insan kāmil* character, which seeks to achieve the highest level of human potential through adab and ethical excellence. The long-term impact is the creation of a generation that views compassion as a strength rather than a weakness, positioning them as agents of peace in the broader society. The "Dignified CFS Model" thus proves to be both a protective mechanism and a proactive developmental framework.

In conclusion, the dynamics of internalization at MTsN Banda Aceh reveal a resilient model that leverages cultural strengths to overcome modern challenges. While digital disruption remains a threat, the deep-seated theological grounding of *maḥabbah* and the commitment of teachers as *murabbī* provide a robust defense. The empirical findings across the four sites suggest that the integration of Sharia values with modern pedagogy not only fulfills the requirements of a Child-Friendly School but elevates it to a higher standard of ethical and academic formation.

Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate how the theological values of *maḥabbah* are transformed into operational policies and pedagogical practices across four State Islamic Junior High Schools (MTsN) in Banda Aceh. The integration of *maḥabbah* is not merely a moral supplement but acts as the *ruh* (soul) or driving energy that synchronizes all dimensions of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy. Juridically, this integration aligns with the mandate of the Banda Aceh Mayor's Decree No. 695 of 2021, which requires every school to create a safe, caring, and environmentally cultured condition. This transformation proves that CFS policies in Aceh have transcended administrative formalism to touch deep substantive-theological aspects (Hairani & Conermann, 2025).

This policy integration is explicitly reflected in the madrasah's vision and mission, which no longer focus solely on academic excellence but also on emotional and spiritual balance. At MTsN 1 Banda Aceh, for instance, the vision of producing a "scientist generation" is balanced with a commitment to fostering empathy, an embodiment of the principle of gentleness (*al-rifq*) in Islamic educational traditions. This is consistent with Goodlad's "Ideal" curriculum theory, where fundamental philosophical values serve as a compass for all institutional activities. Educators in these madrasahs no longer position themselves as authoritarian instructors but as *murabbī* (spiritual guides) who provide affective protection for students in accordance with child rights mandates (Agustin & Kistoro, 2024; Kamba, 2022; Saepudin, 2024; Sya'diyah, 2024; Turrohma & Prasetya, 2026; Yasin et al., 2025).

The internalization of *maḥabbah* values within the CFS program also manifests in what can be termed the "inner constitution" of the madrasah. This means that the values of compassion have been internalized into the personal value systems of teachers and staff, creating an environment that naturally rejects violence. The transformation from a "Formal" curriculum to a "Perceived" curriculum (how teachers perceive the values) occurs through consistent habituation and role modeling. Teachers understand that their duty is not just to transfer knowledge but to transfer the energy of love capable of dampening potential peer conflicts (Hasan et al., 2024).

The process of internalizing *maḥabbah* values among students in Banda Aceh follows a circular mechanism involving Goodlad's five curriculum levels. Starting from the "Ideal" curriculum (theology of *maḥabbah*) translated into the "Formal" curriculum (CFS Decrees and SOPs), the value is then operationally implemented in the classroom. The success of this process relies heavily on the "Operational" curriculum—the actual classroom interaction where teachers apply the principle of

syafaqah (tenderness). Students who experience genuine love from their teachers find it easier to internalize these values into their cognitive and affective structures, eventually forming positive social behaviors (Goodlad, 1979).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that this internalization reaches its peak in the "Experiential" curriculum—what the students actually experience and feel. When students feel their dignity is respected, they tend to develop moral autonomy, choosing not to bully their peers. This phenomenon creates an organic "zero bullying" ecosystem where social control no longer stems from the threat of punishment but from the conscious desire to love one another as fellow creatures of God. This represents the successful internalization of values that transcends outward compliance and reaches the stage of inner consciousness (Yuliana & Nashiruddin, 2022).

In terms of supporting factors, the availability of human resources with a deep understanding of *adab* (ethics) and Islamic morality is a primary pillar. In Aceh, social capital in the form of kinship culture and respect for teachers greatly accelerates the internalization of *maḥabbah*. Child-friendly infrastructure and managerial transparency at the four MTsNs also serve as enabling factors, ensuring that abstract values can be practiced in a comfortable physical space. The synergy between theological values and managerial readiness is the key to the success of the "Dignified CFS Model" (Rohmadi et al., 2024).

However, this study also identifies significant inhibiting factors, particularly digital disruption, which introduces values of individualism and aggressiveness from the virtual world into the madrasah environment. Academic pressure and less conducive external environments occasionally challenge the consistency of value internalization. To mitigate this, madrasahs in Banda Aceh implement a "moral fortress" strategy through character-based digital literacy. Teachers, acting as *murabbī*, take an active role in filtering negative content consumed by students, ensuring that *maḥabbah* values remain intact despite the onslaught of technology (Sucipta et al., 2025).

The impact of internalizing *maḥabbah* values is evident in the formation of the *insan kāmil* (perfect human) character among students. This character is marked by a balance between intellectual intelligence, emotional maturity, and spiritual depth. Students not only excel in academic achievements or research but also possess the tenderness of heart to help others. The Dignified CFS Model proves that love-based Islamic education can produce more holistic outcomes than educational approaches focusing solely on cognitive standards. This aligns with the goal of Islamic education to humanize humans entirely (Huda, 2024).

Quality analysis of the Dignified CFS Model developed in Banda Aceh using Nieveen's parameters (validity, practicality, and effectiveness) shows highly positive results. In terms of validity, the model is consistent with Al-Ghazali's theology of *al-rifq* and national education regulations. Practically, the model is easily adopted by teachers because it uses the universal language of *fitrah* (human nature). In terms of effectiveness, the model is proven to create a "sanctuary environment" free from violence, which directly impacts the improvement of students' mental well-being (Haerudin & Noor, 2022).

The uniqueness of this model lies in its ability to synergize Sharia and Pedagogy within the local context of Aceh. The internalization of *maḥabbah* values is not seen as an additional curricular burden but as the teaching methodology itself. By making compassion the basis of interaction, communication barriers between teachers and students are minimized. This creates a "joyful learning" atmosphere, a prerequisite for an effective educational process. The Dignified CFS in Aceh serves as an antithesis to repressive educational models still found in many parts of the world (Nursobah et al., 2025).

Broadly speaking, the success of MTsNs in Banda Aceh in internalizing *maḥabbah* values provides a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education policy in Indonesia. This model offers a solution to the challenge of educational de-humanization often caused by globalization

pressures and rigid academic standardization. By returning the school's function to a place for nurturing love, the madrasah remains relevant as an institution that not only produces future scientists but also civilized scholars with high social sensitivity (Anam et al., 2025; Ashoumi et al., 2022; Fauziyah et al., 2025; Haqqi et al., 2025; Haryanto et al., 2024).

In closing the discussion, this study affirms that the internalization of *mahabbah* values within the CFS framework is a necessity for modern madrasahs. The dynamics found in the field prove that the power of spiritual values can mitigate the negative impacts of technology and modern pressures. The Dignified CFS Model, born from the womb of Acehese culture, deserves to be a reference for other regions in efforts to realize education that honors the dignity of children. The synergy between strong regulation, teacher commitment as *murabbī*, and community social capital is an absolute prerequisite for a sustainable, compassionate educational ecosystem (Lhegina et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The internalization of *mahabbah* (compassion) values within the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program at MTsN Banda Aceh represents a transformative shift from administrative-technical formalism to a substantive theological and pedagogical framework. This research concludes that *mahabbah* is not merely a moral supplement but serves as the "inner constitution" of the madrasah, providing a spiritual foundation that synchronizes national child protection regulations with Islamic prophetic values. By deconstructing the institutional vision and mission to prioritize empathy (*al-rifq*) and tenderness (*syafaqah*), these madrasahs have successfully institutionalized a "Dignified CFS Model" that ensures every policy—whether physical, academic, or managerial—is rooted in the protection of human dignity. The systemic internalization process, analyzed through Goodlad's curriculum levels, demonstrates that the transition from "Ideal" theology to "Experiential" student reality is achieved through the pivotal role of teachers as *murabbī*. The circularity of this process—supported by strong kinship-based social capital and ministerial legitimacy—effectively mitigates the contemporary challenges of digital disruption and academic pressure. The empirical evidence across the four research sites confirms that this model has fostered a "Zero Bullying" ecosystem, where students exhibit moral autonomy and ethical excellence (*adab*). Ultimately, the integration of *mahabbah* values transforms the madrasah into a *sanctuary*—a safe space that nurtures the *insan kāmīl* character, balancing intellectual sharpness with a gentle heart.

This research demonstrates that the internalization of *mahabbah* values at MTsN Banda Aceh has yielded outcomes more substantial than initially anticipated by the institutional design. Rather than functioning merely as an ethical supplement to CFS policy, *mahabbah* theology has emerged as the generative core of institutional culture—reshaping teacher–student dynamics, redefining disciplinary practices, and producing a measurable "zero bullying" ecosystem. The shift from punitive to restorative approaches in disciplinary cases—documented at 87% resolution through dialogue-based methods in 2023–2024—stands as compelling empirical evidence of this transformation. These findings challenge the prevailing assumption that child-friendly schools are primarily administrative achievements, opening new scholarly discussions on the centrality of spiritual values in sustainable educational transformation.

This study reinforces previous findings on the importance of character-based education in Islamic institutional contexts (Nasukah & Fidayanti, 2024; Rohmadi et al., 2024) while simultaneously challenging the validity of purely secular models of child protection. More significantly, it introduces the *Dignified CFS Model*—a novel conceptual and operational framework that integrates *Mahabbah Theology*, Goodlad's curriculum levels, and Nieveen's quality parameters—as a replicable and validated contribution to Islamic educational science. This model enriches scholarly discourse by providing both

theoretical grounding and practical evidence for spiritually-integrated child protection policy, and introduces the concept of "inner constitution" as a new analytical lens for studying institutional value transformation in Islamic schools.

This study is necessarily limited in scope, being confined to four MTsN in the urban district of Banda Aceh. The homogeneity of the socio-cultural context, the specific implementation of Aceh's regional Islamic regulations (*Qanun*), and the relatively focused number of informants constrain direct generalization to other regions or school types. Factors such as demographic variation—including gender, socioeconomic background, and urban/rural divide—were not systematically controlled and may yield different patterns in other settings. Future research with broader geographical coverage, larger and more diverse samples, and longitudinal tracking of student outcomes is essential for a more comprehensive and generalizable understanding of *mahabbah*-based CFS models in Indonesian Islamic education. Additionally, further studies are encouraged to develop a standardized "Compassion Index" that enables Islamic educational institutions to measure the effectiveness of spiritual internalization in real-time, and to formulate specific digital pedagogy frameworks that can more robustly shield students from the nuances of cyber-aggression.

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