Integrating Social Intelligence Into Character-Based Education: A Contextual Learning Model in Modern Boarding Schools

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Abstract

Objectives: This study designs and evaluates a social intelligence-based learning model for social studies in modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia, addressing the lack of social-emotional integration in faith-based curricula. *Methods/Analysis:* A mixed-methods approach involved 150 participants from five *pesantren*, including students, teachers, and school leaders. Qualitative data were gathered via interviews, observations, documentation, and FGDs, while quantitative data were collected using a validated 25-item Social Skills Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, and Cohen's d assessed effectiveness, with methodological and theoretical triangulation ensuring qualitative validity. *Findings:* The model—integrating social values, interactive strategies, contextual materials, authentic assessment, and teacher facilitation produced significant gains in social intelligence. Problem-solving and tolerance improved most (+1.7 points each), and student participation rose from 42% to 88%. Both students and teachers reported high satisfaction with the collaborative, contextually relevant approach. The questionnaire demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). *Novelty/Improvement:* This study introduces a culturally grounded, faith-based pedagogical framework embedding social intelligence into character-based education. By aligning Islamic values and Acehnese wisdom with 21st-century social competencies it provides a replicable model for enhancing social-emotional learning in similar educational contexts.

1- Introduction

Social Science Education plays a vital role in equipping students with both cognitive understanding and essential social competencies. Beyond transmitting knowledge of social, cultural, and historical dynamics, social studies education emphasizes the development of interpersonal skills such as empathy, communication, and cooperation [1]. In the context of globalization, these social skills are increasingly recognized as critical competencies for navigating diverse and complex societal environments [2]. Integrating cognitive and affective dimensions within social studies, therefore, holds significant potential for shaping students' social character and civic responsibility [3].

Modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren modern*), which combine general academic curricula with Islamic religious values, provide a unique platform to develop students who are both religiously grounded and socially

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competent. In Aceh, Indonesia, this potential is further enriched by the integration of local cultural wisdom, such as the custom of *peumulia jamee* (hospitality), which emphasizes cooperation, empathy, and communal responsibility [4]. Despite these strengths, previous studies indicate that social studies learning in many pesantren remains heavily focused on cognitive content, with insufficient emphasis on the holistic development of students' social intelligence [5]. This imbalance highlights a critical gap and underscores the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate academic content, religious values, and interpersonal skill development in a culturally responsive and systematic way [6].

Social intelligence, encompassing empathy, communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and social awareness, provides a theoretical foundation for addressing this need [7]. Prior research has demonstrated that social intelligence-based approaches can enhance students' ability to engage constructively in diverse social settings, especially when combined with active learning strategies such as group discussions, social simulations, and contextual case analyses [8] . However, limited empirical studies have explored how such approaches can be adapted to the cultural and religious context of modern Islamic boarding schools in Aceh, where education is deeply intertwined with Islamic values and communal traditions.

To address this gap, the present study proposes and evaluates a social intelligence-based social studies learning model specifically designed for modern Islamic boarding schools. The study aims to design a model that integrates contextualized social studies content with pedagogical strategies intended to actively cultivate key social competencies, including empathy, effective communication, cooperation, and problem-solving, while aligning with Islamic teachings and Acehnese cultural practices. In pursuing this aim, the research focuses on four interrelated objectives: identifying the specific needs for implementing social intelligence-based learning in the pesantren context; developing a culturally responsive and contextually relevant learning model; testing the implementation of the model within modern Islamic boarding schools to assess its practical applicability; and evaluating the impact of the model on students' social skills, including their ability to collaborate, communicate, and demonstrate empathy in real-life social interactions.

By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, this study seeks to fill a critical gap in theory and practice by situating social intelligence pedagogy within a culturally grounded, faith-based educational setting. It further contributes to the development of character-based education by offering a structured framework that integrates Islamic values and local wisdom into formal social studies curricula, providing practical guidance for educators and policymakers in designing socially and culturally responsive teaching strategies for 21st-century learners.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the research questions that guide the study, establishing the focus and scope of the investigation. Section 3 reviews the relevant literature and theoretical framework underpinning social intelligence-based learning within the context of modern Islamic boarding schools. Section 4 describes the research methodology, detailing the mixed-methods design, participant selection, data collection instruments, and analytical procedures. Section 5 presents the findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses, while Section 6 provides a comprehensive discussion that situates the results within existing research and examines their theoretical and practical implications. Finally, Section 7 concludes the study, highlighting the main contributions, identifying limitations, and offering recommendations for future research and educational practice.

This research aims to address four primary questions regarding the understanding and development of social intelligence-based social studies learning models in contemporary Islamic boarding schools. These four questions are interrelated to create a social intelligence-based social studies learning model that is relevant, innovative, and applicable in modern Islamic boarding schools, making an essential contribution to the development of value-based education in Indonesia.

- Identifying the needs of social intelligence-based social studies learning in modern Islamic boarding schools.
- Developing a social studies learning model based on contextual social Intelligence.
- Testing the implementation of the learning model in modern Islamic boarding schools.
- Evaluate the Impact of the learning model on the social skills of students.

1-1- Literature Review

1-1-1- Social Science Education and the Development of Social Competence

Social science education is designed not only to convey cognitive knowledge but also to foster students' interpersonal and civic competencies. Research has consistently shown that social studies serve as a key platform for cultivating empathy, communication, cooperation, and civic awareness [9]. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which posits that students construct knowledge through active engagement and social interaction. In this framework, learning is not a passive transfer of facts but a co-construction of understanding shaped by dialogue and shared experiences.

The integration of social values into social studies also draws on character education theory, which emphasizes the simultaneous development of cognitive, moral, and social domains. The integrative social studies approaches linking content to real-life social and cultural dynamics can strengthen students' ability to navigate complex social environments [10]. This dual focus on academic knowledge and social competence positions social science education as a cornerstone for preparing students to function effectively in diverse societal contexts.

1-1-2- Modern Islamic Boarding Schools as a Cultural and Educational Context

Modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia represent a hybrid educational model that integrates formal academic subjects with Islamic religious teachings. This dual curriculum situates pesantren as key sites for both cognitive and character education [11]. Theoretically, this integration reflects contextual learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of connecting educational content to the learners' cultural, social, and spiritual realities to create meaningful learning experiences.

In the Aceh context, pesantren carry the additional layer of local wisdom. Practices such as *Peumulia Jamee* (hospitality towards guests) are incorporated into daily life, transmitting values of cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility [12]. This reflects Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which highlights how cultural tools and communal practices mediate learning. However, despite their potential, many pesantren-based social studies programs remain cognitively oriented, focusing on factual knowledge while neglecting the holistic development of students' social intelligence. This gap underscores the need for pedagogical models that integrate cognitive content with interpersonal and cultural competencies.

1-1-3- Social Intelligence as the Core Theoretical Framework

Social intelligence is defined as the ability to understand, navigate, and manage interpersonal relationships effectively. Its core components, empathy, communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and social awareness are rooted in Thorndike's original concept of social intelligence and expanded in contemporary interpersonal competence frameworks [13]. Embedding social intelligence in education aligns closely with social-emotional learning (SEL) theory, which posits that developing emotional and social competencies enhances not only academic outcomes but also prosocial behavior and long-term well-being. SEL emphasizes five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which overlap significantly with the social intelligence dimensions applied in this study [8]. This theoretical overlap provides a strong foundation for designing a learning model that integrates cognitive, social, and moral dimensions in a holistic educational approach.

1-1-4- Social Intelligence-Based Pedagogical Approaches

A social intelligence-based learning model applies pedagogical strategies aimed at cultivating interpersonal skills alongside academic content. Methods such as group discussions, social simulations, and case-based learning are grounded in Kolb's experiential learning theory, which emphasizes active participation, reflection, and real-world application as critical for deep learning [14]. These approaches allow students to engage in problem-solving and empathy-building activities that mirror real-life social interactions.

Within pesantren, these strategies are further supported by Bandura's social learning theory, which highlights the role of observation, modeling, and social interaction in learning. Teachers serve as social models, and communal living provides a natural laboratory for practicing social competencies. The structured group work and social simulations significantly enhance communication and cooperation, findings that inform the pedagogical design of this study [15]. Preview research report that in pesantren contexts, such approaches can contextualize abstract social studies concepts, making them directly applicable to students' everyday lives [16].

1-1-5- Theoretical Relevance of the Aceh Context

Modern Islamic boarding schools in Aceh offer a distinctive cultural and spiritual context that makes them ideal for implementing social intelligence-based learning. The integration of Islamic teachings with local wisdom creates an environment where character and social-emotional education can be deeply embedded models [17]. This context aligns with critical pedagogy, which advocates for participatory and dialogic learning that empowers students to engage critically and collaboratively with their social realities. Empirical evidence supports this: participatory approaches in Aceh pesantren have been shown to enhance students' social skills, civic responsibility, and moral reasoning [12]. This study builds on these findings by proposing a systematic, contextually grounded model that integrates social intelligence theory, SEL principles, experiential learning, and sociocultural perspectives to address both academic and social-emotional development in faith-based education.

1-1-6- Theoretical Integration for Model Development

By synthesizing these theories, including constructivism, contextual learning, social intelligence, SEL, experiential learning, and sociocultural perspectives, this research develops a model that is both pedagogically robust and culturally

responsive. The model assumes that social competence is not developed in isolation but through continuous interaction between curriculum content, teacher facilitation, peer collaboration, and cultural context [18]. In modern pesantren, where communal living and religious values are integral, these theoretical foundations converge to create a learning environment that simultaneously addresses cognitive, social, and moral dimensions [19]. This integration ensures that the proposed social intelligence-based model is not only theoretically sound but also practically adaptable to the unique dynamics of Aceh's modern Islamic boarding schools.

1-1-7- Global Framework of Social Intelligence

The development of this learning model draws on established global frameworks of social and emotional competencies to provide a strong theoretical foundation. Daniel Goleman's model of Emotional and Social Intelligence (1995; 2006) is used as a primary reference, particularly his emphasis on self-awareness, empathy, social skills, and relationship management as key dimensions for personal and interpersonal effectiveness [20]. These elements inform the integration of empathy, communication, and collaboration as central competencies within the model. In addition, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory (1983) provides a broader perspective by highlighting interpersonal intelligence as a distinct cognitive domain essential for understanding and interacting effectively with others [21]. This reinforces the need for pedagogical approaches that actively cultivate students' ability to interpret social cues, cooperate, and manage group dynamics.

While both Goleman and Gardner offer valuable insights, the model in this study adapts and contextualizes their frameworks to the cultural and religious setting of modern Islamic boarding schools. Unlike generic secular approaches, this adaptation embeds Islamic values (*ukhuwah*, *adab*, and collective responsibility) and Acehnese local wisdom into the development of social intelligence. In doing so, the model extends existing theories by demonstrating how global constructs of social intelligence can be localized within faith-based and communal education systems, offering a culturally responsive alternative to Western-centric frameworks [22].

2- Material and Methods

2-1- Research Approach

A convergent mixed-methods approach was adopted to comprehensively investigate the development, Implementation, and Impact of a social intelligence-based learning model in modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This approach enabled both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected and analyzed in parallel, providing a more holistic understanding of the learning phenomena.

2-2- Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in 5 modern *pesantren* located in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, which were purposively selected for their distinctive integration of formal academic education with Islamic religious teachings. A total of 150 participants were involved in the study, consisting of 100 students (*santri*), 10 *pesantren* leaders, 20 social studies teachers, 10 education personnel, and 10 student organization leaders. To ensure comprehensive representation across key stakeholders in the educational environment, a stratified purposive sampling technique was employed, allowing for the proportional inclusion of each relevant group within the learning ecosystem.

2-3- Quantitative and Qualitative Design and Instruments

A convergent mixed-methods design was used to evaluate the impact of the social intelligence-based learning model on students' social skills while capturing contextual insights from stakeholders (Figure 1). Quantitatively, a one-group pretest–posttest design was applied using a 25-item Social Skills Questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) and an observation checklist measuring communication, empathy, problem-solving, cooperation, and tolerance. Data were collected before and after implementation and analyzed with descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, and Cohen's d in SPSS. Qualitatively, a descriptive design was employed through in-depth interviews, participant observations, FGDs, and document analysis involving students, teachers, and pesantren leaders. The one-group pretest–posttest design was chosen due to the communal learning structure of modern pesantren, where control groups were not feasible or ethically appropriate. The absence of a control group is acknowledged as a limitation; however, threats to internal validity were mitigated through short intervention duration, use of reliable instruments, and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data. While a quasi-experimental design would offer stronger causal inference, the mixed-methods approach and comprehensive triangulation enhanced the robustness and credibility of the findings.

2-4- Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and credibility of the qualitative data, several strategies were employed to enhance trustworthiness and transparency. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participant groups, such as students, teachers, and school leaders. Method triangulation involved cross-verifying data

collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Member checking was performed by returning interview summaries to participants for confirmation and clarification, ensuring the accuracy of interpretations. Additionally, audit trails were maintained by keeping detailed records of each stage of the research process, from data collection to analysis. Together, these strategies strengthened the reliability and rigor of the qualitative findings.

2-5- Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach, which included familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and final interpretation. This structured process facilitated the systematic extraction of patterns and meanings from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. NVivo software was utilized to assist with data organization, coding, and theme development. Meanwhile, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the interpretation phase to enable triangulated insights, allowing for a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the Impact and Implementation of the social intelligence-based learning model.
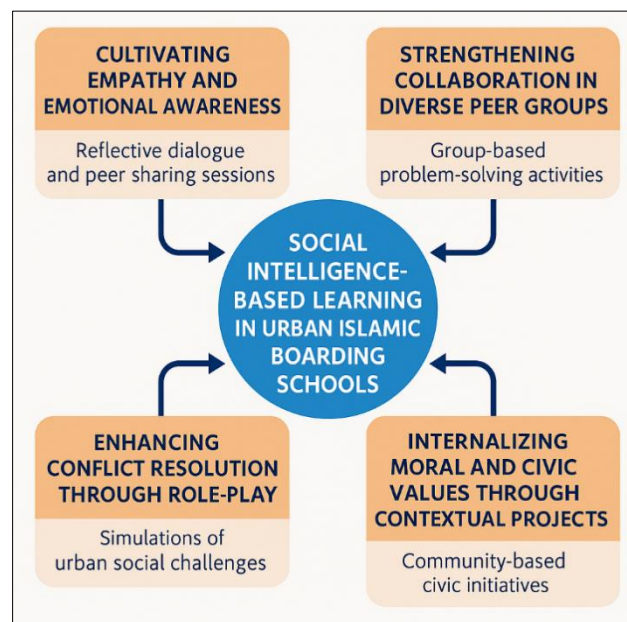

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Social Intelligence-Based Learning in Urban Islamic Boarding Schools. This diagram illustrates the four core thematic components of the pedagogical model developed in this study: (1) cultivating empathy and emotional awareness through reflective dialogue, (2) strengthening collaboration in diverse peer groups via group-based activities, (3) enhancing conflict resolution through role-play simulations, and (4) internalizing moral and civic values through community-based contextual projects. These components interact within the broader framework of social Intelligence, supporting students' interpersonal development in complex urban religious schooling environments.

3- Results and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of a social intelligence-based learning model in modern Islamic boarding schools significantly enhances students' social skills, including communication, empathy, collaboration, tolerance, and social problem-solving. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the findings reveal that contextual learning strategies, the teacher's role as a facilitator, and the use of authentic assessments positively contribute to increased student participation and prosocial behavior. These results highlight the importance of integrating social values and interactive methods into character-based social studies education within the pesantren environment.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of 150 participants from five modern Islamic boarding schools. Most participants were male students aged 16–18 years, with over a year of experience in the pesantren. The majority were active in social activities and had good access to technology. Their understanding of social Intelligence was generally moderate to high. Most lived in dormitories and came from rural areas. Participants were engaged in various extracurricular activities, especially religious and cultural events. This profile reflects a socially dynamic and diverse learning environment.

The findings indicated no significant differences in the effectiveness of the social intelligence-based learning model when analyzed by gender or age group. Both male and female students, as well as younger (12–15) and older (16–18) cohorts, demonstrated comparable improvements across all social skill domains, including communication, empathy,

cooperation, tolerance, and problem-solving. This consistency suggests that the model possesses a high degree of universality within the modern pesantren context, effectively bridging demographic differences through its integration of social values, collaborative learning strategies, and context-based assessments.

Minor variations were observed qualitatively: female students tended to respond more positively to reflective group discussions and social simulations, while male students showed greater enthusiasm for community-based projects. These nuances highlight the potential for tailoring specific activities to optimize engagement without altering the core structure of the model. Overall, the absence of significant demographic effects reinforces the external validity of the findings and indicates that the social intelligence-based learning model can be broadly applied across diverse pesantren populations with minimal modification.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Research Subject

Elements	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	90	60.00
	Female	60	40.00
Age	12–15 years	50	33.33
	16–18 years	75	50.00
	>18 years	25	16.67
Role in Islamic Boarding Schools	Students	100	66.67
	Islamic Boarding School Leaders	7	4.67
	Social Studies Teachers	20	13.33
	Education Personnel	15	10.00
	Student Organization Leaders	8	5.33
Duration as Student/Teacher	<1 year	30	20.00
	1–3 years	60	40.00
	>3 years	60	40.00
Engagement in Social Activities	Very active	50	33.33
	Active	75	50.00
	Inactive	25	16.67
Understanding of Social Intelligence	High	60	40.00
	Moderate	75	50.00
	Low	15	10.00
Access to Technology	Have access	120	80.00
	No access	30	20.00
Educational Background	Related to education	27	66.67
	Unrelated	13	33.33
Student Residency	Dormitory-based	90	60.00
	Commuting	60	40.00
Learning/Teaching Motivation	High	90	60.00
	Moderate	45	30.00
	Low	15	10.00
Santri Region of Origin	Urban	60	40.00
	Rural	90	60.00
Level of Student Education	Junior (SMP/MTs)	75	50.00
	Senior (SMA/MA)	75	50.00
Field Focus (Teacher/Personnel)	Social Studies	27	66.67
	Religious Education	10	25.00
	Other fields	3	8.33
Types of Extracurricular Activities	Religious	50	33.33
	Arts and culture	40	26.67
	Sports	35	23.33
	Others	25	16.67

3-1- Validity of Research Data

Table 2 presents the strategies implemented to ensure the validity and reliability of the qualitative data collected in this study. Multiple forms of triangulation were applied to enhance the trustworthiness of findings. *Source triangulation* was carried out by comparing data from diverse informants, including students, teachers, pesantren leaders, and educational personnel. *Method triangulation* was achieved through the use of complementary techniques, including interviews, observations, documentation, and FGDs, to provide a multifaceted perspective on the learning model. *Time triangulation* added depth by collecting data at different moments of the learning process, including during extracurricular and informal activities. *Researcher triangulation* was conducted by involving more than one analyst in reviewing and interpreting the data, thereby reducing subjectivity and enhancing the reliability of the findings. Finally, *theoretical triangulation* ensured that the interpretations were grounded in relevant frameworks such as social intelligence theory and character-based education. Together, these measures strengthened the credibility and transparency of the qualitative analysis.

Table 2. Qualitative Data Validity and Reliability

Triangulation	Procedures Performed	Purpose
Source Triangulation	Data from various sources, such as students, social studies teachers, pesantren leaders, and education personnel, were compared.	Ensure consistency of information from different perspectives of the research subject.
Triangulation Methods	Data collection methods were used for in-depth interviews, participatory observations, documentation, and FGDs.	Reduce bias and improve data reliability by comparing results from different methods.
Triangulation Time	Collect data at various times, such as during the learning process, extracurricular activities, and informal settings.	Captures variations in data based on a specific time context.
Triangulation of Researchers	Involve more than one researcher to compare and discuss the results of data analysis.	Reduce subjectivity and increase objectivity in the interpretation of research results.
Triangulation Theory	Compare research findings with relevant theories, such as social intelligence theory and character-based learning.	Validate the research results with a theoretical basis to increase confidence in the findings.

Table 3 outlines the validity and reliability indicators of the quantitative data. The Social Skills Questionnaire used in the study demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.87, indicating high reliability. The instrument underwent *content validation* through expert review by three scholars in education, psychology, and social sciences. *Construct validity* was supported by aligning the questionnaire items with five theoretical dimensions of social Intelligence: communication, empathy, problem-solving, cooperation, and tolerance. Statistical analysis showed *high statistical validity*, with significant differences between pretest and posttest scores ($p < 0.05$), and large effect sizes (Cohen's $d > 0.8$), confirming the effectiveness of the intervention. The quantitative design used a 25-item Likert-scale questionnaire, and all data were analyzed using SPSS software. These comprehensive validation strategies affirm the rigor and accuracy of the quantitative findings in measuring student development in social skills.

Table 3. Quantitative Data Validity and Reliability

Validation Aspect	Description	Result/Value
Internal Consistency	Reliability of Social Skills Questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$ (High Reliability)
Content Validity	Instrument reviewed by experts in education, psychology, and social sciences	Validated by three academic experts
Construct Validity	Questionnaire items aligned with the theoretical domains of social Intelligence	5 domains: Communication, Empathy, Problem-Solving, Cooperation, Tolerance
Statistical Validity	Analysis of intervention effect using paired-sample t-test and Cohen's d	Significant differences ($p < 0.05$); Cohen's $d > 0.8$ (large effect)
Measurement Method	Pretest–posttest one-group design using Likert scale (1–5)	25-item questionnaire
Data Analysis Tool	Statistical software used to analyze data	SPSS

3-2- Research Findings

3-2-1- Identifying the Needs of Social Intelligence-Based Social Studies Learning in Modern Boarding Schools

The analysis identified five major areas needing attention (Table 4). First, while social values such as tolerance and cooperation are included in the curriculum, their practical implementation in classrooms is inconsistent, necessitating clearer pedagogical strategies. Second, lecture-based teaching methods dominate, limiting student interaction and indicating a need for more participatory and student-centered approaches. Third, teacher competency remains a challenge, as most educators lack training in social intelligence pedagogy, highlighting the urgency for targeted professional development. Fourth, supporting facilities are inadequate, with limited space and technology for group activities and interactive learning, requiring infrastructure investment. Lastly, student engagement is high for collaborative methods; however, such activities are rarely integrated into formal instruction. Collectively, these findings underscore the need for systemic improvements in curriculum implementation, teacher training, and learning environments to support a contextually relevant and socially intelligent education model.

Table 4. Analytical Table of Needs for Social Intelligence-Based Social Studies Learning in Modern Boarding Schools

Identified Aspect	Key Findings	Narrative Quote	Implications for Model Development
Social Studies Curriculum	Social values such as tolerance and cooperation are included in lesson plans but not consistently applied.	"We include cooperation values in the lesson plan, but not all teachers implement them." (Teacher G3)	Requires explicit and consistent integration of social values into teaching practices.
Teaching Methods	Lecture-based methods still dominate and are less interactive.	"Usually I just lecture because time is limited." (Teacher G1)	Participatory and interactive models should replace traditional lecturing.
Teacher Competency	Teachers need specific training in social intelligence-based learning approaches.	"We have never received training for this kind of model." (Teacher G5)	Teacher training programs are essential for the successful implementation of models.
Supporting Facilities	Facilities such as discussion rooms and interactive media are still limited.	"If we had a dedicated discussion room, the students would be more enthusiastic." (Vice Principal of Curriculum)	Investment in physical and technological infrastructure is needed to support interactive methods.
Student Engagement and Interest	Students show high interest in collaborative learning, but it is not regularly facilitated.	"I prefer group projects and discussions over just taking notes." (Student S2)	Learning models should be designed in alignment with students' preferences for collaborative learning.

The data visualized in Figure 2 provides a quantitative snapshot of current teaching practices, student learning preferences, and infrastructure conditions in modern Islamic boarding schools. Panel A illustrates the strong dominance of lecture-based methods in the classroom, with 75% of teachers still relying on this traditional mode of delivery. This supports earlier qualitative findings that highlight limited implementation of participatory pedagogies. Panel B reveals that the majority of students (82%) prefer collaborative learning activities such as group projects or peer discussions. This preference strongly contrasts with the existing teaching approach, reflecting a misalignment between instructional methods and learner engagement strategies. Panel C highlights the infrastructural constraints faced by schools, with less than half of the institutions having adequate discussion facilities. The highest availability is seen in School A (40%), while School D offers only 10%. These limitations in physical learning spaces further inhibit the potential for implementing social intelligence-based models. Collectively, the findings in Figure 1 reinforce the need for institutional reform spanning curriculum delivery, teacher training, and investment in learning environments to facilitate the integration of socially interactive educational models.
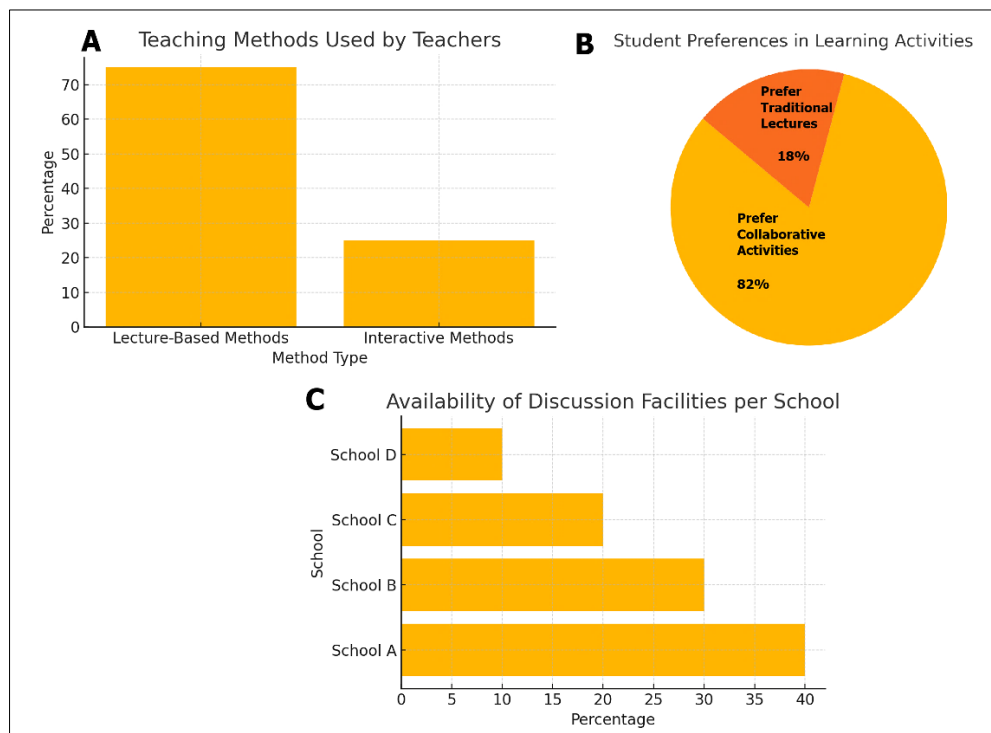

Figure 2. Quantitative Analysis of Pedagogical Practices, Student Preferences, and Facility Availability. A. Distribution of teaching methods used by teachers, showing that 75% still rely on lecture-based instruction, while only 25% apply interactive methods. B. Student preferences in learning activities, with a dominant 82% favoring collaborative methods such as group discussions and projects, compared to only 18% who prefer traditional lectures. C. Availability of discussion facilities across four schools, ranging from 10% to 40%, indicates a limited infrastructure to support interactive learning.

3-2-2- Developing a Social Studies Learning Model Based on Contextual Social Intelligence

Table 5 presents a summary of the five integrated components of the developed learning model, which aims to enhance social intelligence in social studies education within modern Islamic boarding schools. The model centers on core social values empathy, cooperation, communication, and mutual respect—which align with pesantren principles

like *ukhuwah* and *adab*. Learning strategies focus on active, collaborative methods such as discussions, simulations, and community projects tailored to the santri's real-life and cultural context. The teacher's role shifts from information provider to facilitator and social mentor, guiding reflection and ethical behavior. Learning materials are contextualized with local and Islamic content to enhance relevance and meaning. Lastly, authentic assessments are used to evaluate students' social development through observations, reflections, and project outcomes, emphasizing real-world application over memorization. This model forms a comprehensive, culturally grounded approach to fostering social-emotional skills in pesantren education.

Table 5. Synthesis Table of the Social Studies Learning Model Based on Contextual Social Intelligence

Component	Description	Contextualization in Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren) Setting
Social Values	Core social values integrated include empathy, cooperation, communication, and mutual respect.	Aligned with pesantren values such as ukhuwah (brotherhood), adab (ethics), and collective living.
Learning Strategies	Group discussions, social simulations, community-based projects, and reflective activities.	Incorporates real-life examples from pesantren life, local culture, and Acehnese traditions.
Teacher's Role	Active facilitator who promotes peer interaction, guides reflection, and fosters empathy.	Teachers act as role models (*ustadz/ustadzah*), balancing religious values with social guidance.
Learning Materials	Adapted to students' social realities: topics include local community issues and Islamic teachings.	Emphasizes local relevance and spiritual connection to social responsibility.
Assessment	Authentic and contextual assessments: social interaction observation, group reflection, project-based evaluation.	Focuses on social behavior, group dynamics, and ethical decision-making, rather than relying solely on cognitive tests.

Figure 3 illustrates the practical implementation of the social intelligence-based learning model through classroom and community activities in modern Islamic boarding schools. In Panel A, students are seen engaging in group discussions under the facilitation of teachers who act not as lecturers, but as guides who encourage open dialogue. This interactive method fosters empathy, communication, and cooperative thinking—core values of social Intelligence. Panel B presents simulations of real-life social roles, such as community leaders or conflict mediators, allowing students to experience ethical decision-making and role-play within familiar contexts rooted in their daily lives and cultural norms.

Moving beyond the classroom, Panel C highlights student-led community projects, including environmental campaigns and charity initiatives. These activities strengthen civic responsibility, teamwork, and social engagement, while connecting academic learning to real-world Impact. Lastly, Panel D shows reflection circles held in pesantren courtyards, where students share personal insights after participating in discussions or projects. These sessions allow for introspection, reinforce internalization of social values, and promote emotional Intelligence. The figure emphasizes how contextual and experiential learning can effectively cultivate social Intelligence in ways that are both meaningful and culturally grounded within the pesantren environment.

Figure 3. Classroom and Community-Based Activities Supporting Social Intelligence Learning. A. Group discussion sessions among students guided by teachers acting as facilitators. B. Simulation of social roles to enhance empathy and communication. C. Community project activities conducted by student groups to build cooperation and civic responsibility. D. Reflection circles in pesantren courtyards, where students share insights on social values after learning sessions.

Figure 4 provides a comparative overview of how teachers and students perceive the components of the social intelligence-based learning model implemented in modern Islamic boarding schools. The results indicate a consistently high level of approval from both groups across all dimensions. The highest level of agreement was found in the integration of social values, such as empathy and cooperation, with 92% of teachers and 88% of students expressing strong support for their relevance and importance in social studies education. Similarly, interactive learning strategies (e.g., group discussions and social simulations) received high approval ratings, particularly among students (90%), who found these methods more engaging than traditional lectures. The shift in the teacher's role to that of a facilitator was also well-received, with 80% of teachers and 86% of students recognizing the benefit of this change in fostering deeper interaction and guidance. For contextualized learning materials that incorporate pesantren life and local cultural values, the approval was positive, with 78% of teachers and 84% of students in favor, signifying cultural resonance in the curriculum. Finally, authentic assessment methods, such as project-based evaluations and group reflections, while rated slightly lower, still garnered positive responses (75% from teachers and 82% from students), indicating a growing appreciation for meaningful, real-world evaluations.
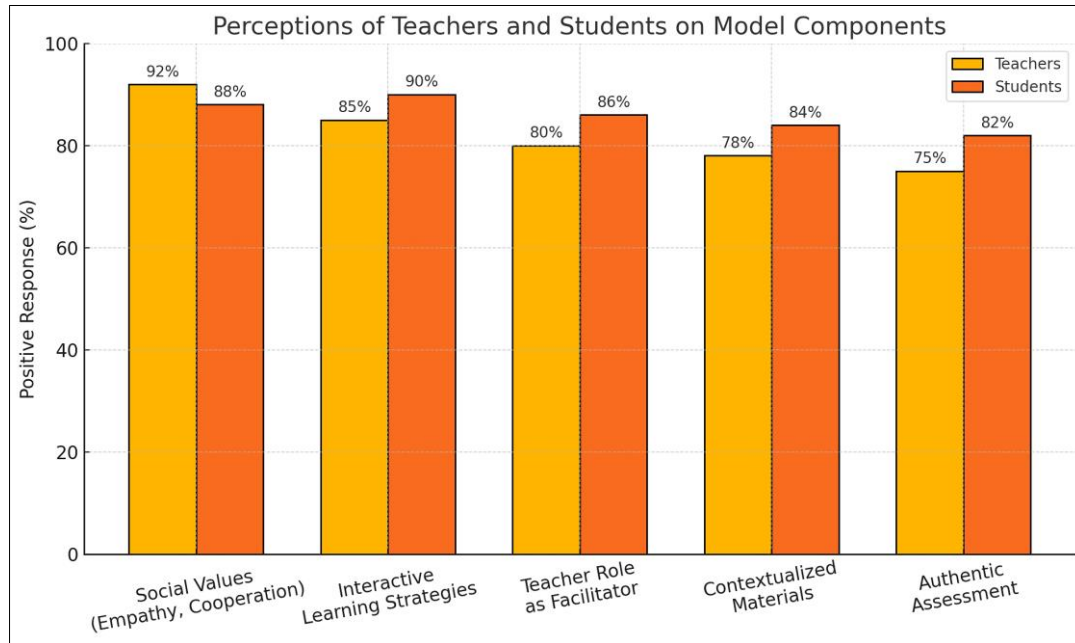

Figure 4. Perceptions of Teachers and Students on Model Components

3-2-3- Testing the Implementation of the Learning Model in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

Table 6 demonstrates a significant increase in student participation following the implementation of the social intelligence-based learning model. Before the intervention, only 42% of students were actively engaged in class. After the model was applied, incorporating group discussions and social simulations, this number rose sharply to 88%. Similarly, the frequency of students asking questions improved from 28% to 74%, indicating a more inquisitive and confident classroom environment. Group participation, a core component of the model, also increased from 36% to 82%, showing a shift toward collaborative learning. Furthermore, peer-to-peer interaction and willingness to share personal opinions both showed more than 45% improvement, confirming the model's effectiveness in enhancing communicative and social dynamics among students. These findings support the model's potential to transform passive classrooms into socially engaging and student-centered learning spaces in the context of modern Islamic boarding schools.

Table 6. Comparison of Student Participation Before and After Implementation of the Social Intelligence-Based Learning Model

Indicator	Before implementation (%)	After implementation (%)	Improvement
Students Actively Involved in Class	42%	88%	+46%
Frequency of Questions Asked	28%	74%	+46%
Group Participation in Activities	36%	82%	+46%
Peer-to-Peer Interaction	31%	79%	+48%
Willingness to Share Opinions	25%	77%	+52%

Figure 5 shows strong approval from both students and teachers following the implementation of the new learning model. Approximately 88% of students agreed that the lessons became more meaningful, followed closely by 84% of teachers. Interactivity was the most positively rated aspect, with 91% of students and 89% of teachers appreciating the

increased engagement in learning activities. Additionally, 86% of students and 82% of teachers reported enjoying classroom discussions more, indicating the model's effectiveness in enhancing classroom dynamics and fostering collaborative communication. These results reinforce the model's relevance and potential scalability in similar educational settings.
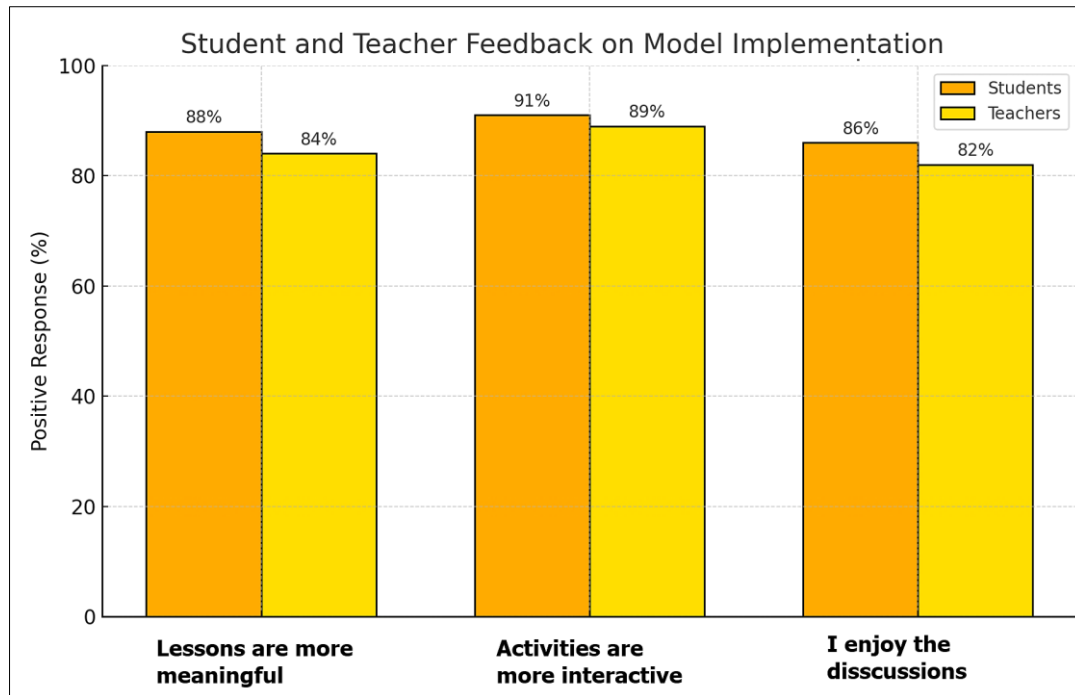

Figure 5. Student and Teacher Feedback on Model Implementation. Bar chart displaying positive responses from students and teachers regarding the implementation of the social intelligence-based learning model in modern Islamic boarding schools. Feedback is categorized into three aspects: the meaningfulness of lessons, the interactivity of activities, and the enjoyment of discussions.

Table 7 summarizes key obstacles encountered during the implementation phase of the social intelligence-based social studies learning model. Five major categories emerged: time allocation, teacher preparedness, facility limitations, digital accessibility, and curriculum rigidity. These constraints reveal structural and systemic issues that require both institutional support and policy-level engagement. At the same time, teachers and students responded positively to the model, but its sustainability and scalability depend on addressing these challenges through curriculum flexibility, targeted teacher training, technological investment, and adequate learning facilities. These findings serve as a valuable reference for other pesantren and educational institutions aiming to adopt socially grounded, student-centered pedagogical approaches.

Table 7. Challenges Faced During Implementation of the Social Intelligence-Based Learning Model

Challenge Category	Description of Challenge	Stakeholder Quote	Implication
Time Allocation	Limited classroom hours made it difficult to conduct extended group discussions or projects.	"We have to finish the curriculum quickly, so time is tight." (Teacher G4)	Requires adjustments to the curriculum or integration into existing subjects.
Teacher Training	Lack of prior exposure and structured training in interactive and social-intelligence models.	"This is the first time I used such a method; I need more guidance." (Teacher G2)	Ongoing professional development is essential for sustainability.
Facility Constraints	Inadequate space and tools for group work and simulations (e.g., no dedicated discussion rooms).	"We share one projector with other classes." (Vice Principal)	Investment in basic infrastructure is needed for effective implementation.
Digital Accessibility	Limited access to devices and unstable internet hinder digital-based simulations.	"Sometimes the internet just cuts off during activities." (Student S5)	Blended models may need offline alternatives and local tech support.
Curriculum Rigidity	The national curriculum is seen as rigid, allowing little flexibility for innovation.	"We still have to follow the fixed syllabus strictly." (Teacher G6)	Policy-level advocacy is needed to enable contextual and flexible learning.

Figure 6 illustrates that both teachers and students positively assessed the effectiveness of the social intelligence-based learning model across all indicators. Student perceptions were consistently higher, with top scores in collaboration (89%), relevance (90%), and engagement (88%), reflecting their active involvement and appreciation for contextually meaningful content. Teachers also gave high ratings, especially for collaboration (85%) and relevance (84%), recognizing the model's strength in fostering interactive and value-driven learning. While motivation scored slightly lower, it remained strong (84% for students and 78% for teachers), indicating overall enthusiasm toward the model. The alignment of perceptions reinforces the model's success in enhancing socially meaningful education within pesantren environments.
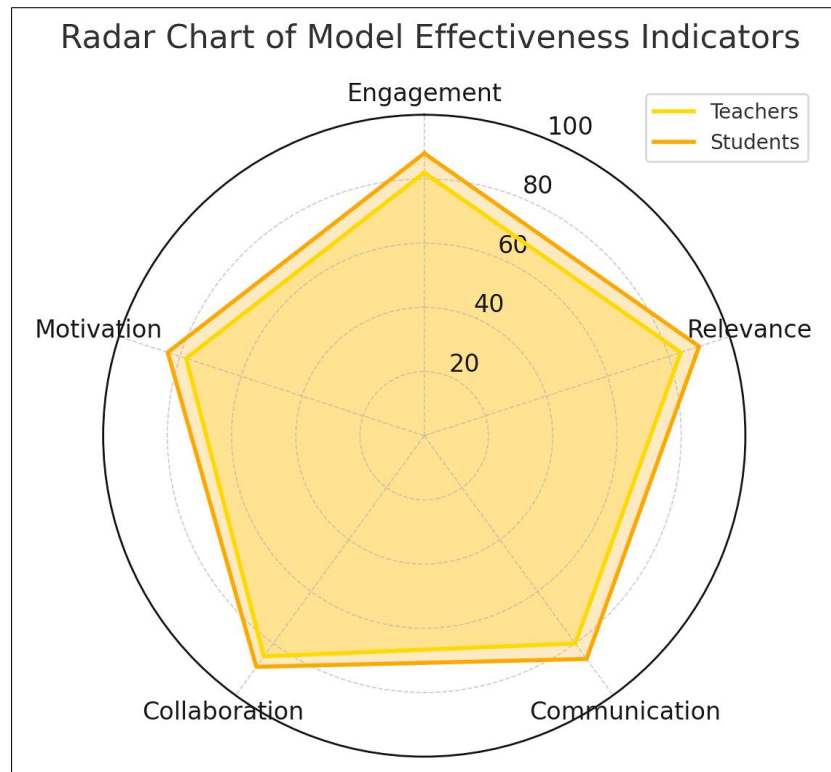
Figure 6. Radar Chart of Model Effectiveness Indicators. This radar chart displays the comparative perceptions of teachers and students on five core effectiveness indicators of the implemented learning model: engagement, relevance, communication, collaboration, and motivation.

3-2-4- Evaluating the Impact of the Learning Model on the Social Skills of Students

Table 8 shows substantial improvement across all five indicators of social Intelligence after implementing the model in modern Islamic boarding schools. The most significant gains were observed in **social problem-solving** and **tolerance,** each improving by 1.7 points. This indicates a strong impact of group simulations and reflective discussions. Similarly, **communication skills** improved notably (+1.6), reflecting the shift to active learning environments. These findings demonstrate that the model not only increased academic engagement but also strengthened students' real-world social competencies, aligned with the values of pesantren education.

Table 8. Improvement in Student Social Skills Before and After Model Implementation

Indicator	Pretest (Mean)	Posttest (Mean)	Improvement	Narrative Summary
Communication	2.8	4.4	+1.6	Students became more confident in speaking, actively listened, and valued others' input.
Collaboration	3.0	4.5	+1.5	Group tasks were completed more cooperatively with fair division of roles.
Empathy	2.7	4.2	+1.5	Increased sensitivity and understanding toward peers with different backgrounds.
Social Problem-Solving	2.6	4.3	+1.7	Students could manage interpersonal conflict through dialogue and reflection.
Tolerance	2.9	4.6	+1.7	Higher acceptance and respect for differences within peer interactions.

Figure 7 presents a radar chart comparing teachers' and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the social intelligence-based learning model across five key indicators: engagement, relevance, communication, collaboration, and motivation. The chart highlights a high level of agreement between both groups, with all indicators receiving positive ratings above 75%. The highest scores were observed in collaboration (students: 90%, teachers: 87%) and engagement (students: 88%, teachers: 85%), reflecting the model's success in fostering active participation and peer interaction. Relevance of the learning materials to students' lives also received favorable responses (students: 86%, teachers: 82%), supporting the contextual grounding of the curriculum. Communication and motivation were similarly well-rated, although slightly lower, indicating areas for further enhancement through more personalized guidance and structured reflection activities. The radar chart highlights the model's widespread adoption and effectiveness in fostering socially and educationally meaningful learning experiences within contemporary Islamic boarding schools.
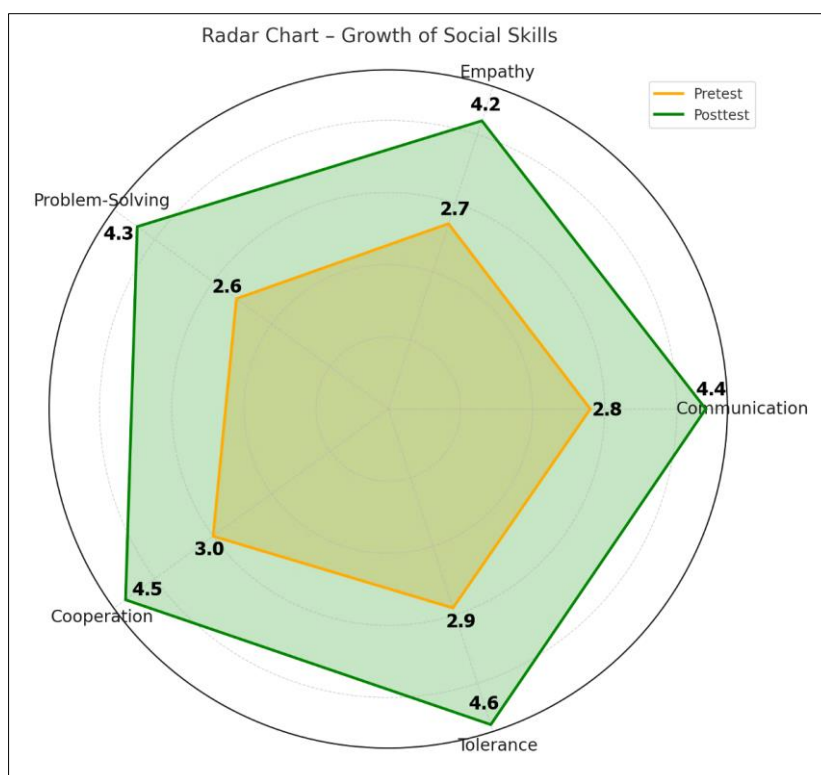
Figure 7. Radar Chart of Model Effectiveness Indicators

3-3- Discussion

This study confirms the effectiveness of a social intelligence-based learning model in enhancing students' social competencies within modern Islamic boarding schools. Through the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, the model demonstrated significant improvements in communication, empathy, collaboration, tolerance, and social problem-solving. These results not only highlight the relevance of social values in character-based education but also underline the need for pedagogical reform, teacher development, and supportive infrastructure to sustain a culturally grounded and student-centered learning environment.

The findings demonstrate that the social intelligence-based learning model significantly enhanced students' social skills in modern Islamic boarding schools. Table 8 shows substantial improvements across all five indicators of social intelligence, with the largest gains observed in social problem-solving and tolerance, each increasing by +1.7 points. These outcomes confirm that experiential strategies such as group simulations, structured reflection, and collaborative tasks are highly effective in strengthening interpersonal competence and empathy [23]. The emphasis on participatory and contextual learning fostered a deeper understanding of social dynamics and promoted constructive prosocial behavior among students.

A critical factor driving these improvements was the implementation of the teacher-as-facilitator model, which shifted classroom dynamics from passive knowledge transmission to active, student-centered interaction. Teachers guided discussions, encouraged peer collaboration, and modeled prosocial behavior, creating an environment that nurtured communication, empathy, and cooperative problem-solving. This facilitative approach enabled students to engage in reflective dialogue and experiential activities, directly contributing to the observed increases in social intelligence, particularly in problem-solving and tolerance. Qualitative findings further reinforce this impact, as students reported greater confidence in expressing opinions, collaborating with peers, and engaging in meaningful dialogue when teachers assumed the role of mentors rather than sole sources of knowledge.

The emphasis on tolerance and problem-solving aligns with Mugabekazi et al. (2025) [24] and Ruiz-Montero et al. (2025) [25], but this research adds new insight by showing how the pesantren's communal culture amplifies these gains. The results confirm that student-centered, culturally grounded methods enhance prosocial behavior and are adaptable to faith-based education. This study also addresses a gap in earlier research by offering a pedagogically robust and culturally relevant model tailored to modern pesantren, bridging theory and practice while reinforcing local cultural and spiritual values.

Furthermore, Figure 6 reinforces these outcomes by presenting highly positive feedback from both students and teachers. Collaboration received high approval from students (89%) and teachers (85%), while the relevance of the learning content to students' real-life experiences scored even higher, with approval from students (90%) and teachers

(84%). These results align with previous studies showing that collaborative, student-centered methods and contextually relevant materials enhance engagement and social-emotional development [26]. This study extends prior research by embedding social intelligence pedagogy within the pesantren context, integrating cultural and Islamic values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *adab* (ethical conduct), which amplifies the effectiveness of collaborative strategies compared to secular models [27]. The findings confirm that aligning interactive methods with local cultural and spiritual contexts produces stronger engagement and prosocial outcomes than generic approaches. This alignment supports the notion that contextually grounded, value-based instruction effectively promotes prosocial behavior, echoing previous research demonstrating that integrating social and moral values into learning significantly enhances student participation and social competencies. In the pesantren context, these values resonate deeply with Islamic principles such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *adab* (ethical conduct), and collective responsibility, making the model both academically practical and culturally relevant [28].

The implementation of the social intelligence-based learning model received strong approval from both students and teachers, particularly regarding its core components. As shown in Figure 4, there is a high level of agreement on the integration of social values, interactive learning strategies, and the redefined role of teachers as facilitators. The most notable consensus is on the incorporation of social values—empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect—with 88% of students and 92% of teachers affirming their relevance in social studies education. This indicates that these values not only align with the moral framework of pesantren education but are also perceived as essential for students' holistic development [29].

Interactive learning strategies, such as group discussions and social simulations, were also highly favored, with 90% of students expressing a preference for these methods over traditional lectures. This reflects a broader shift in educational thinking, where student-centered and collaborative learning environments are recognized for fostering engagement, critical thinking, and social-emotional growth [24]. Moreover, the shift in the teacher's role from knowledge transmitter to learning facilitator was positively received, suggesting that students benefit more when teachers model prosocial behavior and create spaces for dialogue and reflection [30]. The strong perceptions across all model dimensions validate its cultural fit and pedagogical strength within the pesantren setting.

The implementation of the social intelligence-based learning model brought about substantial behavioral changes in santri, particularly in terms of classroom engagement and active participation. As presented in Table 6, the percentage of students who actively participated in class activities rose dramatically from 42% to 88%, while the frequency of students asking questions increased from 28% to 74%. These results align with studies that found that experiential and collaborative strategies significantly boost participation and social interaction. This study adds to previous research by showing that embedding social intelligence pedagogy within the pesantren context, integrating values like *ukhuwah* and *adab*, further amplifies these effects, demonstrating that culturally grounded approaches achieve stronger engagement than generic interactive models [31]. The improvements highlight a clear shift in classroom dynamics from passive absorption of information to a more student-driven, interactive learning environment. Such changes are consistent with findings from prior research, which emphasize that learning models rooted in social-emotional engagement tend to foster greater student initiative, curiosity, and collaboration [32].

Figure 3 further illustrates how the model was translated into daily school practice. Group discussions, social simulations, community-based projects, and reflection circles were integrated into learning activities, offering diverse and experiential opportunities for students to develop emotional and social competencies. These strategies not only increased classroom interactivity but also promoted real-world application of social skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and moral decision-making [25]. By engaging in these activities, santri learned to navigate interpersonal challenges, lead peer collaboration, and express their thoughts more openly, skills that are crucial in both educational and broader social contexts. Thus, the behavioral shifts observed underscore the effectiveness of the model in nurturing a more participatory and emotionally intelligent learning culture within pesantren.

The successful implementation and sustainability of the social intelligence-based learning model require addressing several systemic challenges. As shown in Tables 4 and 7, three primary barriers were identified: the continued dominance of lecture-based teaching methods, limited availability of supporting facilities, and insufficient teacher preparedness. These constraints reflect structural limitations within the pesantren educational system, which hinder the widespread adoption of more interactive, student-centered approaches. The lack of teacher training in social intelligence pedagogy emerged as a critical issue, underscoring the necessity for targeted professional development programs that equip educators with the tools and mindset to implement reflective and participatory teaching strategies [33]. Without capacity building, even the most well-designed models may fail to achieve their intended Impact.

Moreover, the need for infrastructural support is evident in Figure 2C, which shows that fewer than half of the pesantren surveyed possessed adequate facilities for collaborative learning. School D, for instance, reported only 10% availability of suitable discussion spaces, an environment clearly unfit for implementing socially interactive learning methods. This finding aligns with previous studies, which indicate that physical learning environments have a significant influence on student engagement and the success of collaborative learning strategies [34]. Therefore, beyond curriculum

reform, strategic investment in educational infrastructure such as flexible classroom designs, access to multimedia tools, and designated collaborative areas is essential. These systemic improvements are critical not only for enhancing the model's effectiveness but also for ensuring its long-term integration into the educational culture of Islamic boarding schools.

The research methodology employed in this study demonstrated a high degree of validity and rigor, both in qualitative and quantitative aspects. As shown in Table 2, qualitative data were validated through comprehensive triangulation strategies, including source, method, time, researcher, and theoretical triangulation. This aligns with recommendations emphasizing multi-layered triangulation as key to robust educational research [35]. Unlike many studies that focus on limited triangulation types, this research applies all five, capturing contextual variations and anchoring findings in social intelligence theory, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness and rigor of the qualitative results [36].

In the quantitative domain, Table 3 presents strong evidence of instrument reliability and statistical validity. The Social Skills Questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, which exceeds the threshold for acceptable reliability in educational research [37]. Furthermore, the instrument underwent expert review by professionals in education, psychology, and social sciences, ensuring robust content validity. The statistical analysis showed significant differences between pretest and posttest results, with large effect sizes (Cohen's d > 0.8) indicating a substantial impact of the intervention. These results confirm that the measurement tools used in the study were both reliable and valid in assessing changes in students' social intelligence, a critical aspect for evaluating educational interventions [38].

Figure 2B highlights that 82% of students expressed a strong preference for collaborative learning activities. This finding highlights the natural alignment between social intelligence-based instructional strategies and students' preferred learning styles. Collaborative methods such as group discussions, peer projects, and simulations not only cater to students' social interaction needs but also foster deeper engagement and intrinsic motivation [39]. When students participate in learning activities that reflect their preferred learning styles, they are more likely to be enthusiastic, retain information more effectively, and apply what they learn in meaningful ways.

This congruence between pedagogy and learner preference reinforces the effectiveness of socially grounded approaches in the pesantren context, where communal life and shared values are integral to the educational environment. As supported by research on student-centered learning, tailoring instructional strategies to learner preferences leads to higher satisfaction, academic achievement, and social skill development [40]. Therefore, implementing collaborative, socially interactive methods within social studies classes can serve as a powerful vehicle to enhance both cognitive and emotional outcomes among students in modern Islamic boarding schools.

Findings from Table 1 and Table 5 emphasize that while social values such as cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect are already documented within the lesson plans (RPP), they are not consistently enacted in classroom practice. To bridge this gap, contextual learning strategies must support curriculum implementation, redefined teacher roles, and authentic assessment methods that align with students' lived experiences and communal values [41]. This shift requires moving beyond traditional documentation toward a dynamic, practice-oriented model that actively fosters social intelligence through experiential and culturally grounded approaches.

These findings carry significant implications for curriculum and educational policy, especially in character-based education settings, such as Islamic boarding schools. Policymakers and curriculum developers must ensure that social-emotional competencies are not merely theoretical ideals but are embedded in teacher training, resource development, and classroom practices [42]. Institutional policies should prioritize professional development programs that equip educators with the skills to facilitate social learning, and curriculum guidelines must mandate the use of authentic assessments that reflect students' moral reasoning and social behavior. Through such reforms, social intelligence education can become a transformative force in religious educational institutions, aligning pedagogical goals with societal needs for empathetic, cooperative citizens.

Figure 8 illustrates the dual significance, both theoretical and practical, of the contextual pedagogy model designed to integrate social Intelligence into character-based education in modern Islamic boarding schools. Theoretically, the model enhances the conceptual framework of social intelligence by incorporating key competencies, such as empathy, cooperation, communication, tolerance, and problem-solving, into daily learning experiences [43]. These competencies align with the Islamic boarding school (pesantren) values of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *adab* (ethical conduct), grounding social-emotional learning in a cultural and religious context [44].

On the practical side, the model emphasizes the transformation of teacher roles into facilitators and mentors, supporting active student engagement and contextual reflection [45]. The use of authentic assessments, such as group reflections and project-based evaluations, allows for measuring real-world social competence rather than rote memorization. Institutional enablers, including teacher training and facility improvements, are also necessary for successful Implementation [46]. The upward progression in the figure denotes the model's scalability and adaptability for broader applications in culturally grounded educational settings, offering a promising approach to holistic and value-driven pedagogy.
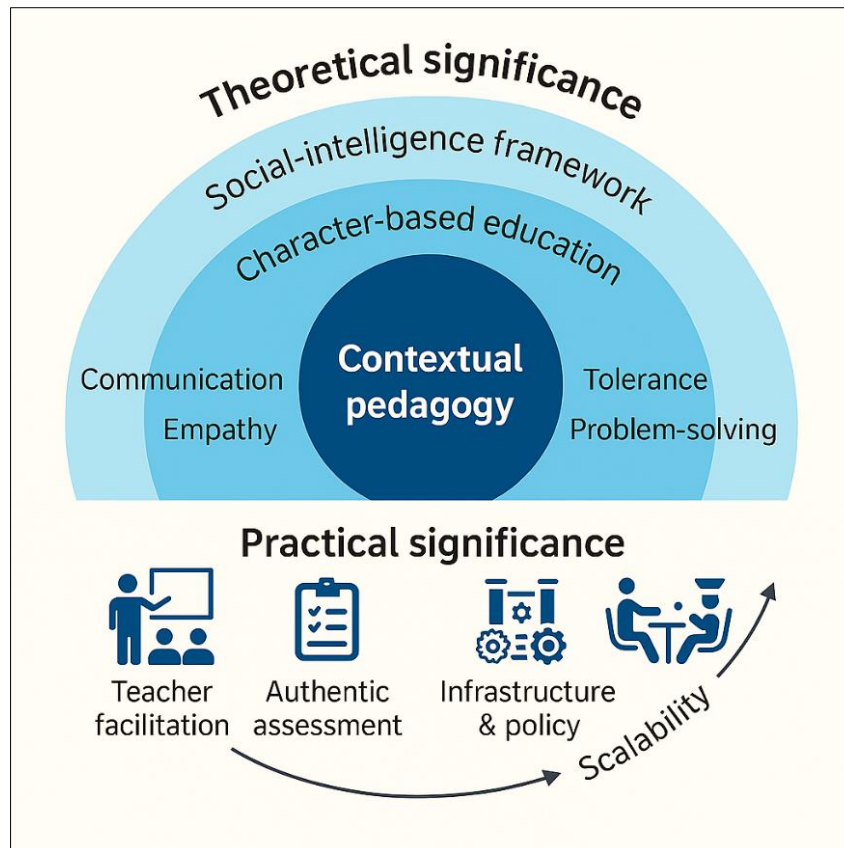
Figure 8. Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Contextual Pedagogy Model in Social Intelligence-Based Character Education

The broader application of the social intelligence-based learning model to pesantren outside Aceh or to secular schools requires deliberate consideration of ethical, cultural, and systemic factors to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. Ethically, the model emphasizes inclusivity and respect for institutional values; therefore, any adaptation must safeguard alignment with local religious teachings, community norms, and parental expectations. In secular contexts, religiously grounded content should be substituted with culturally neutral or contextually relevant values to uphold diversity and avoid imposing a specific belief system.

Culturally, the model is grounded in Aceh's pesantren traditions, which integrate collective living with Islamic principles such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *adab* (ethical conduct). When adapting the model in other regions, these cultural elements should be contextualized to reflect the local socio-religious environment. For pesantren beyond Aceh, incorporating local wisdom and traditions will help maintain authenticity. In secular schools, the focus should shift to universal social competencies such as empathy, cooperation, and tolerance while retaining the model's core objective of cultivating social intelligence through experiential and participatory learning.

Addressing the systemic challenges identified in the study, including rigid curricula, limited teacher training, and inadequate facilities, several practical recommendations are proposed at both policy and institutional levels. At the policy level, curriculum flexibility should be prioritized to integrate social-emotional competencies and contextually relevant learning strategies. National and regional education authorities are encouraged to embed social intelligence development as a central component of social studies education, accompanied by guidelines for culturally grounded, character-based pedagogy. Policy frameworks should also mandate and fund continuous professional development focusing on social-emotional learning and interactive teaching methods for teachers in religious schools.

At the institutional level, pesantren management should allocate resources to create collaborative learning spaces, integrate digital tools, and facilitate project-based and experiential activities that reinforce social skills. Partnerships with local education authorities and NGOs can provide teacher training workshops, curriculum enrichment, and infrastructure support. Additionally, embedding authentic assessments that measure social competencies into institutional policies will ensure the learning focus extends beyond cognitive outcomes to holistic character development.

These ethical, cultural, and systemic considerations highlight the importance of contextual adaptation, curriculum reform, teacher capacity building, and infrastructure investment to ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of the model in diverse educational settings, including pesantren outside Aceh and secular schools.

4- Conclusion

This study demonstrates that implementing a social intelligence-based learning model in social studies education within modern Islamic boarding schools significantly improves students' social competencies, including communication, empathy, collaboration, tolerance, and social problem-solving. The integration of contextual learning strategies, the teacher's role as an active facilitator, and the use of authentic assessment methods were shown to enhance active participation and foster prosocial behavior among students. The findings also highlight that aligning academic content with the cultural and religious context of pesantren strengthens the relevance and effectiveness of character-based education. Positive responses from both students and teachers reinforce the model's suitability and its potential to create a more interactive and socially engaging learning environment compared to traditional lecture-based methods.

Despite these promising outcomes, the study also identifies systemic challenges that must be addressed to ensure the model's sustainability and scalability. Limited learning facilities, the prevailing reliance on lecture-centered pedagogy, and the lack of structured teacher training programs present significant barriers to full implementation. These issues underscore the critical need for curriculum reform and policy-level support to embed social intelligence as a core component of character education in faith-based institutions. Investments in teacher professional development, infrastructure, and resource allocation are essential to implement the model on a broader scale. By offering a culturally grounded and pedagogically robust framework, this research contributes to bridging the gap between theory and practice in character-based education. Furthermore, it provides actionable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to cultivate socially competent and ethically responsible students, aligning educational practices with local values and preparing learners to meet the complex social demands of the 21st century.

4-1- Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and planning future research. First, the study was conducted in five modern Islamic boarding schools located in a specific region, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other pesantren in Indonesia, especially those following traditional or salafiyah educational models. Second, although the mixed-method approach enriched the data, integrating qualitative and quantitative findings posed challenges in aligning subjective perspectives with objective outcomes. Third, the measurement of students' social skills was conducted shortly after the intervention, which may not capture the long-term Impact of the learning model on students' real-life social behaviors. Fourth, other influencing factors, such as family background, peer influence, and local cultural contexts, were not thoroughly explored, even though they may significantly affect the development of social Intelligence. Therefore, future research is recommended to include a broader sample, extend the study duration, and incorporate an in-depth analysis of contextual variables.

5- Declarations

5-1- Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.B.R. and R.Y.; methodology, S.B.R., R.Y., and M.A.M.; validation, R.Y., M.A.M., and M.S.; formal analysis, S.B.R.; writing—original draft preparation, S.B.R.; writing—review and editing, S.B.R., R.Y., and M.S.; funding acquisition, S.B.R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

5-2- Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

5-3- Funding

5-4- Acknowledgements

5-5- Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

5-6- Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

5-7- Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies have been completely observed by the authors.

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Appendix I. Qualitative Research Assessment Instrument

1. Identifying the Needs of Social Intelligence-Based Social Studies Learning

Purpose: To explore the needs of implementing social intelligence-based social studies learning in modern Islamic boarding schools.

Guiding Questions:

- How do you perceive the relevance of social intelligence in social studies learning within modern Islamic boarding schools?

- Which social values (empathy, cooperation, communication) are included in the curriculum but are not effectively applied in classroom practices?

- What are the main challenges in integrating social intelligence-based learning into teaching?

- What forms of support (teacher training, facilities, learning media) are most needed to implement this model effectively?

Assessment Aspects:

- Consistency of responses across different sources (teachers, students, school leaders).

- Identification of curriculum, teaching method, and infrastructure needs.

2. Developing a Social Studies Learning Model Based on Contextual Social Intelligence

Purpose: To gather insights for developing a contextual learning model based on social intelligence.

Guiding Questions:

- In your opinion, how can empathy, cooperation, communication, tolerance, and social problem-solving be effectively integrated into social studies learning?

- Which teaching strategies are most relevant to the pesantren context (group discussions, social simulations, community-based projects)?

- What should be the teacher's role in supporting this model (facilitator, social mentor, discussion guide)?

- What forms of assessment are most appropriate to evaluate students' social skills?

Assessment Aspects:

- Suitability of the model with the cultural and religious context of the pesantren.

- Recommendations for teaching strategies and authentic assessment methods.

3. Testing the Implementation of the Learning Model

Purpose: To explore teachers' and students' experiences in applying the social intelligence-based learning model.

Guiding Questions:

- What has been your experience in implementing the social intelligence-based learning model in the classroom?

- What changes have you observed in students' participation in discussions and collaborative activities?

- What challenges did you face during implementation (time allocation, facilities, teacher/student readiness)?

- How relevant were the learning materials to students' daily lives and cultural context?

Assessment Aspects:

- Effectiveness of the model in enhancing active participation.

- Identification of supporting and inhibiting factors during implementation.

4. Evaluating the Impact of the Learning Model on Students' Social Skills

Purpose: To assess the impact of the model on students' social intelligence and character development.

Guiding Questions:

- What changes have you observed in students' communication, empathy, cooperation, and tolerance after implementing this model?

- How do students resolve social conflicts after experiencing this learning approach?

- Have you noticed behavioral changes outside the classroom (in dormitories or community activities)?

- To what extent does this model contribute to value-based character education in the pesantren?

Assessment Aspects:

- Evidence of behavioral and social skill improvement.

- Impact on students' daily interactions and real-life social contexts.

- Contribution to character-based education aligned with local values.

Instrument Components:

- In-depth interview guide for teachers, students, and school leaders.

- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide.

- Participatory observation sheet for tracking social behavior indicators.

- Qualitative analysis framework (coding → categories → themes).

Appendix II. Quantitative Research Assessment Instrument

1. Measuring the Needs of Social Intelligence-Based Social Studies Learning

Purpose: To quantify the current status and perceived needs for integrating social intelligence in social studies learning.

Instrument: Needs Assessment Questionnaire

- Format: 15 items, 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)
- Sample Items:
    - "Social values such as empathy and cooperation are consistently applied in my school's social studies lessons."
    - "Teachers are provided with adequate training to integrate social intelligence into their teaching."
    - "Our learning environment supports collaborative and interactive learning methods."

Output: Mean score to identify gaps and prioritize interventions.

2. Developing a Social Studies Learning Model Based on Contextual Social Intelligence

Purpose: To evaluate the alignment of the developed model with student and teacher expectations.

Instrument: Model Relevance and Feasibility Survey

- Format: 20 items, 5-point Likert Scale
- Dimensions:
    - Relevance of integrating social intelligence
    - Cultural/contextual suitability
    - Feasibility of teaching strategies (group discussion, simulation, community projects)
    - Teacher readiness

Sample Items:

- "The proposed learning strategies align with the cultural and religious values of the pesantren."
- "Group-based and interactive methods are feasible to implement within the current curriculum."

3. Testing the Implementation of the Learning Model

Purpose: To assess the impact of the model on student participation and classroom dynamics.

Instruments:

a) Social Skills Pretest-Posttest Questionnaire

- Format: 25 items, 5-point Likert Scale
- Dimensions: Communication, Empathy, Cooperation, Tolerance, Social Problem-Solving
- Sample Items:
    - "I actively listen and respond during group discussions."
    - "I work cooperatively with my peers to complete tasks."
    - "I can mediate conflicts between peers effectively."

b) Classroom Observation Checklist

- Indicators (rated 0–5):
    - Number of students actively participating
    - Frequency of questions asked
    - Engagement in group activities
    - Quality of peer interaction

4. Evaluating the Impact of the Learning Model on Students' Social Skills

Purpose: To measure the improvement in social intelligence dimensions and perceived impact.

Instrument: Social Skills Growth Scale

- Format: Pretest–Posttest, 25 items mapped to 5 domains

- Scoring: Mean comparison (paired t-test), effect size (Cohen's d)

Sample Items per Domain:

- *Communication:* "I can clearly express my ideas in a group."

- *Empathy:* "I can understand how my peers feel in different situations."

- *Cooperation:* "I share responsibilities fairly in group projects."

- *Tolerance:* "I accept different opinions without conflict."

- *Problem-Solving:* "I can help find solutions when disagreements arise in the group."

Teacher and Student Feedback Form:

- Items rated 1–5 on perceived effectiveness of:
  - Social value integration
  - Interactive strategies
  - Teacher facilitation
  - Relevance of materials
  - Authentic assessment methods

Data Analysis Plan:

- Reliability: Cronbach's α for internal consistency.

- Validity: Expert review for content validity, alignment with social intelligence constructs for construct validity.

- Statistical Tests: Descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, Cohen's d for effect size.

Appendix III. Respondent Sheet – Social Skills Questionnaire

Research Title:

Integrating Social Intelligence Into Character-Based Education: A Contextual Learning Model in Modern Boarding Schools

Respondent Code: _____

Pesantren: _____

Age: _____

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Role: ☐ Student ☐ Teacher ☐ Leader ☐ Education Staff

Instruction:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement by circling the number that best describes your opinion.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

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Part A: Social Skills Dimensions

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Communication	I can clearly express my opinions during group discussions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I actively listen when others are speaking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Empathy	I try to understand my peers' feelings in different situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I help classmates when they are having difficulties.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaboration	I enjoy working together in group projects.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I share responsibilities fairly with my peers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tolerance	I respect opinions that are different from mine.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I can maintain good relationships despite differences in background.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problem-Solving	I can help find solutions when there are disagreements in the group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I can manage conflicts without confrontation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part B: Feedback on Learning Model

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	The learning activities are more meaningful compared to traditional methods.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	The lessons are more interactive and engaging.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	The teacher's role as a facilitator helps me learn better.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	The materials are relevant to my daily life and pesantren context.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Group discussions and social simulations improved my social skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open-Ended Questions:

1. What did you like the most about this learning approach?

2. What improvements would you suggest for future implementation?