

## THE ISLAMIC SCAFFOLDING–BASED REFLECT MODEL FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS’ SPIRITUAL AWARENESS

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic Scaffolding within the REFLECT model (Review, Engage, Focus, Learn, Evaluate, Construct, and Transfer) in fostering students’ reflective and spiritual understanding in Akidah Akhlak learning. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive–interpretative approach using a case study design conducted in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education (PGMI) Study Program at STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, and analysis of learning documents. The participants consisted of lecturers teaching Akidah Akhlak courses and PGMI students actively engaged in the learning process. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through processes of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and meaning construction. The findings indicate that the integration of Islamic Scaffolding within the REFLECT model facilitates a reflective, collaborative, and transformative learning environment, in which lecturers function as spiritual scaffolders guiding students through processes of muhasabah and tazakkur. This study contributes to the enrichment of scaffolding theory by incorporating the dimensions of ta’dib and tazkiyatun nafs, positioning the model as a holistic Islamic learning paradigm oriented toward the development of spiritually aware, reflective, and morally grounded students.

### Keywords

Islamic Scaffolding, Reflect Model, Deep Learning, Social Constructivism, Islamic Education.



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## INTRODUCTION

Akidah Akhlak learning in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI) holds a strategic position in preparing prospective elementary-level madrasah teachers who are not only pedagogically competent but also spiritually grounded and morally exemplary. As future educators, PGMI students are expected to internalize the foundational values of aqidah and akhlak and to translate them into ethical attitudes, reflective awareness, and professional integrity in their educational practices (Asyahidah & Makmur, 2025; Aang Burhanuddin, 2020; Muhsinin, 2013; Nadia Nadawina et al., 2025; and Surana, 2017).

However, empirical conditions observed in the Akidah Akhlak learning process at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education (PGMI) Study Program of STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh indicate that instruction remains predominantly content-oriented, with a strong emphasis on the transmission and memorization of doctrinal concepts. These conditions were identified through preliminary classroom observations and in-depth interviews with students and lecturers conducted during the early phase of this study. The findings reveal that such instructional practices often provide limited space for structured reflection, thereby constraining students' opportunities to develop self-awareness, moral reasoning, and spiritual consciousness. This limitation is particularly critical given the role of PGMI students as prospective madrasah teachers who are expected to function not only as instructors, but also as moral agents and character educators within Islamic elementary education settings.

This empirical condition raises an academic concern regarding the depth of students' reflective and spiritual understanding in Akidah Akhlak learning prior to this study. Preliminary observations and diagnostic interviews with PGMI students at STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh revealed that many students were able to reproduce doctrinal explanations correctly, yet experienced difficulty articulating personal reflections, moral reasoning, or spiritual meaning related to the learning content. Analysis of students' written assignments and reflection notes further indicated that reflective responses tended to remain descriptive and normative, with limited evidence of critical self-examination (*muhasabah*) or internalization of values into personal awareness. This gap suggests that existing instructional practices have not sufficiently facilitated a structured reflective process that connects knowledge, experience, and spirituality. Consequently, this study is driven by the need to explore an alternative pedagogical approach capable of scaffolding students' reflective and spiritual development in a systematic manner. The REFLECT

model, with its stage-based reflective structure and integration of Islamic Scaffolding, is therefore employed to address this pedagogical problem by guiding students from surface-level understanding toward deeper reflective awareness and spiritual meaning-making in Akidah Akhlak learning.

Grounded in Vygotsky’s social constructivism, Islamic Scaffolding extends the notion of learning support beyond cognitive assistance to encompass spiritual and moral guidance that leads students toward value awareness. Vygotsky emphasizes that “learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (Vygotsky, 1978). He further conceptualizes learning as occurring within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of Islamic education, this principle is adapted through Islamic Scaffolding, where guidance is not limited to intellectual mediation but also includes moral and spiritual direction grounded in Qur’anic values, prophetic exemplarity, and ethical dialogue (Azizah, 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2025); (Usman, 2017); (Lukluil Maknun, 2020). Thus, Islamic Scaffolding operates within students’ proximal spiritual and moral development, enabling them to move gradually from external guidance toward internalized reflective and spiritual awareness.

Operationally, this study implements deep learning through an innovative model called REFLECT, which stands for seven stages: Review, Engage, Focus, Learn, Evaluate, Construct, and Transfer. The REFLECT model in this study is an adaptation of the collaborative reflective principle inspired by the REFLECT Model, but it has been developed conceptually and operationally for the context of Islamic education (Luiz et al., 2024); (Muhammad Rudi Syahputra et al., 2024); (Purwati et al., 2024); (Sipuan et al., 2022). The main difference lies in the addition of a spiritual dimension through the Islamic Scaffolding approach and the expansion of the learning stages from four to seven stages to align with the principles of deep learning in Islamic Religious Education. The REFLECT model was developed to foster students’ reflective awareness through a series of learning activities that emphasize meaningful interactions between knowledge, experience, and Islamic values. Each stage in this model contains Islamic Scaffolding strategies that serve as gradual guidance so that students are able to consciously and deeply relate the concepts of Akidah Akhlak

to their life experiences.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Islamic Scaffolding–based REFLECT model in fostering students’ reflective understanding in the MI Akidah Akhlak learning course. By integrating a deep learning approach with Islamic Scaffolding strategies, this study seeks to contribute theoretically to the development of reflective learning models in Islamic education and to offer practical insights for lecturers in designing meaningful, contextual, and spiritually grounded learning processes.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. The selection of this design was intended to provide an in-depth and contextualized understanding of the process of implementing the Islamic Scaffolding–based REFLECT model in Akidah Akhlak learning, rather than to test its effectiveness. As a qualitative case study, this research focused on describing, interpreting, and meaningfully understanding how the model was applied in a real instructional setting and how students constructed reflective and spiritual meanings throughout the learning process. This approach is particularly relevant for exploring complex educational phenomena that involve spiritual, reflective, and value-based dimensions, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement (Handoko et al., 2024).

The research was conducted in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI) at STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. The case under study was the implementation of the REFLECT model integrated with Islamic Scaffolding in the Akidah Akhlak Learning course. Participants consisted of 40 PGMI students enrolled in the course during the research period. Participants were selected purposively based on their active involvement in reflective learning activities and their willingness to share learning experiences. The learning process was carried out over eight instructional meetings, during which the REFLECT model was systematically implemented across its seven stages (Review, Engage, Focus, Learn, Evaluate, Construct, and Transfer), with Islamic Scaffolding strategies embedded at each stage.

Data collection was conducted between 11 July 2025 and 25 October 2025 using three primary techniques: classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations focused on capturing how Islamic Scaffolding was enacted through lecturer guidance, peer interaction, and students’ reflective engagement during learning activities across multiple

instructional sessions. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected students during and after the implementation of the REFLECT model to explore their experiences, perceptions, and reflective interpretations of the learning process. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to articulate their thoughts, spiritual reflections, and perceived meanings freely while remaining aligned with the research focus. Document analysis was carried out on relevant learning artifacts produced throughout the research period, including the Semester Learning Plan (RPS), teaching materials, student worksheets, written reflections, and lecturer feedback documents. These documents were examined to identify the consistency of Islamic Scaffolding implementation and the integration of Akidah Akhlak values throughout the learning process.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman’s interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, field notes, interview transcripts, and documents were coded and categorized to identify patterns related to scaffolding practices and reflective processes. Data display was conducted through narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to illustrate the development of students’ reflective understanding. Conclusions were drawn through interpretative analysis, emphasizing how Islamic Scaffolding facilitated reflective and spiritual meaning construction in Akidah Akhlak learning.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This section presents the findings of the study based on classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis regarding the implementation of the Islamic Scaffolding–based REFLECT model in Akidah Akhlak learning. To provide a systematic and comprehensive overview, the findings are first summarized in a stage-by-stage table that outlines the pedagogical focus, forms of Islamic Scaffolding, lecturer and student roles, and the resulting reflective and spiritual outcomes at each stage of the REFLECT model. This overview is intended to help readers understand the overall structure and flow of the learning process before engaging with the detailed qualitative descriptions of each stage that follow.

**Table 1.** Stages of the REFLECT Model Based on Islamic Scaffolding in Akidah Akhlak Learning

No	REFLECT Stage	Pedagogical Focus	Forms of Islamic Scaffolding	Role of Lecturer	Student Engagement and Outcomes
1	Review	Reflective opening and activation of prior experience	Qur'anic verses, hadith references, and reflective questions linked to daily life	Spiritual guide who initiates value-based reflection	Students connect personal experiences with aqidah concepts and begin spiritual awareness
2	Engage	Emotional and intellectual involvement through real-life cases	Moral dilemmas, prophetic exemplars, and dialogical questioning	Facilitator of reflective dialogue	Students engage cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually with values
3	Focus	Strengthening core values through collaborative reflection	Peer discussion, guided verses/hadith, reflective prompts	Facilitator of peer scaffolding	Students build shared meaning through collective reflection (tazakkur jama'i)
4	Learn	Application of values in pedagogical understanding	Reflective learning design tasks, value-based instructional planning	Mentor guiding value integration	Students translate reflection into pedagogical actions and professional awareness
5	Evaluate	Reflective assessment of understanding and attitudes	Reflective questions, formative feedback, self-evaluation guides	Reflective facilitator	Students develop metacognitive, moral, and spiritual evaluation skills
6	Construct	Construction of new personal and spiritual meaning	Muhasabah journals, Qur'anic and prophetic guidance	Spiritual companion in meaning-making	Students reconstruct self-awareness and internalize Islamic values
7	Transfer	Commitment and application of values in real life and profession	Action plans, value-based commitments, contextual pedagogical designs	Motivator and confirmer of commitment	Students demonstrate value internalization through concrete actions and moral responsibility

Source: Data from interviews and observations.

### Review Stage: Reflective Opening and the Role of Lecturers as Spiritual Guides

The Review stage is the foundation of reflective learning through activities that link Akidah Akhlak material with students' personal experiences. Based on the observation results, lecturers did not directly convey concepts but built value awareness through Qur'anic, hadith, and exemplary story-based reflective statements, for example, through questions such as, "What is the relationship between belief in Qada and Qadar and gratitude in daily life?" Such questions create an academic

discussion atmosphere that becomes a dialogue of worship that fosters students' spiritual awareness because they are emotionally and intellectually involved.

The interview results support these findings, with most students describing a shift in the role of lecturers from mere conveyors of knowledge to spiritual mentors. One student stated, “I feel guided, not taught. Every question from the lecturer makes me think about myself, not just answer questions” (M-07). This process fosters reflective awareness and strengthens more internal motivation to learn. Another student added, “When the lecturer relates the material to verses from the Qur'an, I feel that learning is not just for grades, but for self-improvement.” (M-12).

An analysis of the Semester Learning Plan documents shows alignment with these practices. Learning objectives are explicitly formulated to develop students' spiritual and moral dimensions, for example: “Students are able to analyze the moral problems of MI students through a reflective approach based on the exemplary values of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.” This shows that value and spirituality reflection is not a side effect, but a learning objective that is consciously and systematically designed.

### **Engage Stage: Reflective Engagement through Real-Life Cases**

In the Engage stage, students are invited to actively engage in examining real cases and moral dilemmas that occur in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah environment. This stage serves to foster emotional and intellectual connections between the learning material and real life, while also serving as a gateway to deeper value reflection. Observations show that lecturers act as facilitators who stimulate student participation and reflective awareness through open-ended questions with spiritual nuances. For example, when discussing the topic of “Honesty,” the lecturer did not provide a direct definition, but instead guided students to think critically through questions such as, “What are the consequences of dishonesty for our hearts?” The students' responses showed simultaneous cognitive, emotional, and spiritual engagement, evident from their expressions and seriousness in the discussion.

The interview results confirm that the Engage process becomes a learning experience that touches the inner side of students. One participant said, “I realize that honesty is not just a matter of right or wrong, but a matter of purity of heart.” (M-10). This statement illustrates reflective engagement that connects moral values with personal spiritual awareness. Through guided dialogue and an inclusive classroom atmosphere, students not only understand values conceptually, but also begin to feel them existentially.

Analysis of teaching materials reinforces these findings. The topic of “Honesty” is organized reflectively by integrating moral theory, stories of the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character as al-Amin, and case studies of dishonest behavior in academic settings. This design functions as written scaffolding that helps students build meaningful engagement from the beginning of learning, guiding them from cognitive understanding to contextual and authentic reflection on values.

### **Focus Stage: Strengthening Meaning through Reflective Peer Scaffolding**

The Focus stage is a phase of strengthening meaning, in which students concentrate their understanding on the core values that have been explored previously. Observations show that the group discussion process is an important means of forming reflective peer scaffolding. Students provide each other with understanding, share views, and help their groupmates clarify concepts and values naturally.

This form of peer scaffolding is not only cognitive, helping to understand moral concepts rationally, but also affective and spiritual. Students not only discuss moral concepts rationally, but also strengthen and remind each other of the importance of practicing values in real life. For example, when discussing patience and self-control, some students shared personal experiences about guarding their speech or forgiving others. This sharing process made abstract moral values more concrete and personally meaningful. The atmosphere of the discussion reflected the spirit of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil) that grew naturally. Students respected each other's views, were open to the spiritual experiences of others, and together built a deeper understanding.

The interview results supported these findings. One student stated, “My friends helped me understand the meaning of patience from their own experiences. I learned from real stories, not theory” (M-15). Another student added that group discussions made them more open and humble in learning. These statements confirm that reflective understanding is formed through social interactions with spiritual nuances, not only through lecturers' explanations. Thus, peer scaffolding functions as a means of *tadzakkur jama'i* (collective reflection) that strengthens social and spiritual connections among students.

Analysis of learning documents shows that Focus stage activities were explicitly planned in the Semester Learning Plan and class activity guidelines. These documents contain instructions for

lecturers to facilitate reflective group discussions, complete with guidelines on verses or hadiths supporting the topic being discussed. In addition, the student discussion sheets contain a “group reflection” column that encourages them to write down their joint synthesis of the meaning of the values being discussed. This design shows that peer scaffolding not only arises spontaneously in class interactions but has been institutionalized as part of the Islamic Scaffolding strategy, which emphasizes collaboration, mutual advice in goodness, and reflective learning with spiritual nuances.

### **Learn Stage: Connecting Reflection Results with Concrete Pedagogical Actions**

The Learn stage is an applied learning process in which students begin to connect their reflections with concrete pedagogical actions. Based on observations, students appear to have begun developing Madrasah Ibtidaiyah learning designs based on Islamic values. They design classroom strategies, rules, and activities that exemplify the principles of justice, compassion, and responsibility. This process shows a shift from reflective understanding to practical application, where the values that were previously analyzed are now translated into learning designs.

The interview results show a new awareness among students about their role as prospective educators who not only teach but also guide morally and spiritually. One participant said, “I want to be a teacher who can guide, not just teach” (M-18). This statement reflects the internalization of moral leadership values in students, as well as an awareness of the ethical responsibilities of their profession as madrasah teachers.

Analysis of assignment documents reinforced these findings. The students' learning designs showed the systematic application of the principles of Islamic scaffolding. Each stage of learning was accompanied by reflection guides based on verses or hadiths, as well as activities designed to foster moral values in students. This structure indicates that the reflective process does not stop at the cognitive level but has been internalized into instructional design and pedagogical strategies.

In addition, students' written reflections show a depth of spiritual meaning that develops along with the learning process. They are able to authentically relate the concept of Akidah Akhlak to their personal experiences. One student wrote, “Materialism is a form of hidden shirk (polytheism) that I often ignore.” This statement illustrates a process of deep muhasabah and tadabbur, indicating that the Learn stage not only hones pedagogical skills but also strengthens students' awareness of faith and moral responsibility as prospective teachers with Islamic character.

### **Evaluate Stage: Reflective Assessment of Understanding and Application of Values**

The Evaluate stage serves as an evaluative moment where students conduct an in-depth assessment of the understanding, attitudes, and practices that have been developed throughout the reflective process. Based on observations, this stage is characterized by feedback and reflective discussion activities, in which students review their learning designs, assess the effectiveness of the value approaches used, and evaluate changes in their thinking and attitudes as prospective educators. Lecturers act as facilitators who help students identify their strengths and areas for development through open-ended questions such as, "How can the strategy you have designed foster the character of students?" or "Have Islamic values been fully integrated into every learning activity?"

The interview results show that students are beginning to be able to engage in metacognitive reflection, that is, assessing not only what they have learned, but also how and why the change in understanding occurred. One participant stated, "I just realized that all this time I was too focused on the method, but forgot to instill values. After this reflection, I know that learning must start from the right intention." (M-20). This statement illustrates the emergence of mature reflective awareness, in which students are able to evaluate themselves morally and spiritually, not just academically. Another student added, "I used to feel that explaining the material was enough, but now I realize the importance of being a role model." (M-17). This statement shows an evaluation of their professional identity as prospective teachers with Islamic character.

Analysis of learning documents and reflection sheets shows that this evaluation process has been systematically integrated into the instructional design. The Student Reflection Sheet at the Evaluate stage contains guiding questions such as: "What changes have you felt after studying this topic?" and "What values have most influenced your way of thinking and behaving?" These questions serve as reflective scaffolding that encourages students to assess their learning outcomes holistically, covering cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects.

In addition, the lecturer's notes show that evaluation is not only carried out to assess results but also the process. Lecturers consciously use a formative reflection approach, encouraging students to see reflection as part of continuous learning, not just a final assessment. This approach makes students feel that they are not being judged but rather guided to continuously improve themselves and deepen the values they have internalized.

The Evaluate stage thus becomes an important phase that brings together the dimensions of academic, moral, and spiritual assessment in an integrated manner. Students not only evaluate the effectiveness of their learning design, but also assess the extent to which Islamic values have truly become part of their way of thinking and acting. This reflective evaluation reinforces the awareness that the success of Akidah Akhlak learning is not measured solely by mastery of the material, but by personal change towards becoming civilized individuals who are aware of their moral and spiritual responsibilities as prospective madrasah educators.

### **Construct Stage: Building New Meaning and Awareness**

The Construct stage represents a pivotal phase in the REFLECT model, where students actively construct new meanings derived from their learning experiences, reflective engagement, and internalization of Akidah Akhlak values. At this stage, learning moves beyond summarizing content toward the formation of personal understanding and spiritual awareness. Classroom observations indicate that this process is primarily facilitated through reflective journal writing and guided contemplation, allowing students to integrate academic knowledge with inner reflection. Students’ writings demonstrate a more contemplative tone, expressing heightened self-awareness and a conscious relationship with God, suggesting that learning is experienced as an inward and transformative process.

Interview data further confirm that the Construct stage serves as a turning point in students’ understanding of Akidah Akhlak learning. One participant reflected, “I realized that learning akhlak is not about memorizing concepts, but about improving myself. Every meeting felt like a mirror reflecting my shortcomings” (M-24). This statement indicates a shift from cognitive engagement to critical and existential reflection, where learning becomes a process of self-evaluation. Another student stated, “Every value I learn becomes a new guideline for my behavior. I have started to refrain from judging others easily” (M-22). Such reflections demonstrate a process of moral and spiritual reconstruction, in which values are reinterpreted and embodied in everyday attitudes.

Document analysis reinforces these findings. Student Reflection Sheets at the Construct stage were intentionally designed to stimulate muhasabah and tadabbur through reflective prompts such as “What does this value mean for your journey as a prospective educator?” and “In what ways have you changed through this reflective process?” Students’ responses reveal their ability to reinterpret Akidah Akhlak values in a deeply personal and applicable manner. For instance, one student wrote, “Materialism is a form of hidden shirk that I often overlook.” This response illustrates the emergence

of deep spiritual insight and ethical self-awareness fostered through reflective learning.

Lecturer observation notes indicate that Islamic Scaffolding at this stage was implemented through value-oriented spiritual guidance. Lecturers facilitated the construction of meaning by connecting students' reflections with relevant Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions, ensuring that personal interpretations remained anchored in authentic Islamic sources. This approach positioned reflection within an Islamic epistemological framework that integrates reason, conscience, and revelation.

The Construct stage marks a transformation of consciousness, in which students reconstruct their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting based on reflectively understood Islamic values. Learning is no longer perceived merely as a cognitive endeavor, but as a spiritual journey oriented toward personal refinement and moral growth. At this stage, students begin to perceive the teaching profession not only as a career choice but also as a trust and a form of worship, reflecting the holistic aim of Islamic education in nurturing intellectually capable, morally grounded, and spiritually aware educators.

#### **Transfer Stage: Implementing Values and Commitments in Real Life**

The Transfer stage constitutes the final phase of the REFLECT model, where students translate reflective understanding and internalized values into concrete actions within their personal lives and future professional roles as Akidah Akhlak educators. At this stage, learning outcomes extend beyond conceptual comprehension toward moral commitment and value-oriented pedagogical practice. Classroom observations indicate that this stage is implemented through reflective presentations, formulation of personal commitments, and the design of instructional strategies grounded in Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, and justice.

During reflective presentations, students articulated not only pedagogical ideas but also spiritual insights derived from their learning experiences. The classroom atmosphere reflected a heightened spiritual awareness, as students expressed an understanding of teaching as a moral and religious responsibility. One student stated, "Today's discussion reminded me of my essence as a servant of Allah. I want every teaching activity to be part of worship" (M-26). This reflection illustrates a shift from knowing values at a cognitive level to embracing them as lived principles. Similarly, another participant remarked, "I feel more responsible because every word and action of a teacher can become an example for students" (M-19), indicating the internalization of ethical responsibility within professional identity formation.

Findings from in-depth interviews further confirm that the Transfer stage functions as a bridge between reflection and real-life application. Several students reported changes in daily behavior, particularly in communication, self-discipline, and social interaction. One participant noted, “I have become more careful in speaking, because I realize that every word can be worship or sin” (M-09). This statement demonstrates that reflective learning supported by Islamic Scaffolding directly influences students’ moral awareness and conduct beyond the classroom context.

Document analysis of reflective journals and learning assignments reveals continuity between reflection, conceptual understanding, and action. Students developed concrete pedagogical plans that translated Islamic values into applicable instructional strategies, such as cultivating discipline through collective prayer before lessons and fostering honesty through reflective student journals. These learning designs indicate students’ capacity to contextualize moral values within practical educational settings.

Lecturer observation notes further identify the Transfer stage as an indicator of the effectiveness of Islamic Scaffolding. Lecturers observed positive changes in students’ attitudes, empathy toward peers, and sensitivity in designing learning activities. What initially emerged as internal reflection gradually evolved into deliberate commitments to apply Islamic values in both personal conduct and future teaching practice. This progression reflects the role of lecturers as spiritual scaffolders who guide students toward reflective awareness and value-based action.

The Transfer stage affirms the transformative potential of the Islamic Scaffolding–based REFLECT model. Students not only understand and reflect on Akidah Akhlak values but also embody them through moral commitment and intentional action. This stage demonstrates that learning becomes a means of integrating knowledge, faith, and behavior, shaping prospective educators who are intellectually competent, spiritually conscious, and morally responsible.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the application of Islamic Scaffolding within the REFLECT model facilitates a transformative learning process in Akidah Akhlak education. Learning is not limited to conceptual understanding but extends to the internalization of spiritual and moral values through structured reflective stages. This confirms the core assumption of scaffolding theory, as developed by Vygotsky and later elaborated by Bruner and colleagues, that learning occurs most effectively when learners receive appropriate, gradual support that is responsive to their developmental needs (Wood et al., 1976); (Bruner, 1983). In this study, scaffolding is not confined to

cognitive assistance but is expanded to include spiritual and moral guidance, which is essential in the context of Islamic education (Mutmainna et al., 2025; Sandika et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Vygotsky's grand theory, scaffolding operates within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), namely the distance between what learners can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance from more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). The REFLECT model adapts this concept by situating the ZPD not only within cognitive development but also within students' moral and spiritual development. Lecturers act as mediators who assist students in moving from surface-level moral awareness toward deeper spiritual consciousness through reflective questioning grounded in Qur'anic values and lived experiences. This aligns with contemporary interpretations of Vygotskian theory that emphasize the sociocultural and affective dimensions of learning (Xi & Lantolf, 2021).

The role of lecturers as spiritual scaffolders represents a contextual modification of classical scaffolding theory. In conventional educational psychology, scaffolding primarily supports task completion and conceptual mastery. However, in Akidah Akhlak learning, scaffolding functions as value mediation and spiritual mentoring. Through reflective prompts, moral dilemmas, and Qur'an- and hadith-based dialogue, lecturers guide students in engaging in muhasabah (self-evaluation) and tazakkur (remembrance). This process enables learners to operate within a spiritually oriented ZPD, where guidance helps them transcend external compliance toward internalized faith-based awareness. Such an approach reflects the integration of psychological theory with Islamic epistemology, in which learning involves reason ('aql), heart (qalb), and revelation (wahy).

The reflective dialogue embedded throughout the REFLECT stages also corresponds to the principles of transformative learning theory. Mezirow's framework emphasizes critical reflection as a catalyst for perspective transformation, allowing learners to reassess their assumptions, beliefs, and identities (Singer-Brodowski, 2025). In this study, students' reflections reveal shifts in how they perceive their roles as learners and prospective educators. They no longer view Akidah Akhlak as a subject to be memorized, but as a moral and spiritual journey that shapes personal character. This transformation resonates with the Islamic concepts of tazakkur naqdiyy (critical remembrance) (Khan & Ahmed, 2025; Muniroh, 2024) and yaqzhah nafsyyah (spiritual awakening) (Farhan, 2025), both of which orient learners toward tazkiyatun nafs and the cultivation of noble character (Alhamuddin et al., 2022); (Aji, 2025); (Khoiriyah et al., 2025); (Nurhabibi et al., 2025).

Furthermore, these findings reinforce Al-Attas’s concept of ta’dib, which posits that the ultimate aim of Islamic education is the formation of adab rather than the mere transmission of knowledge (Rakhmat, 2023). Islamic Scaffolding within the REFLECT model operationalizes ta’dib by providing gradual moral guidance that integrates knowing, believing, and acting. When lecturers assist students in uncovering the spiritual meanings behind values such as honesty, patience, and tawakal, they function simultaneously as mu’allim (knowledge transmitters) and murabbi (character educators) (Nurhabibi et al., 2025); (Khoiriyah et al., 2025); (Kholifah et al., 2022). This dual role highlights a key modification of scaffolding design in Islamic education, where instructional support is inseparable from ethical and spiritual mentorship.

In addition to lecturer-led scaffolding, the emergence of peer scaffolding during the Focus and Learn stages underscores the social dimension of learning emphasized in Vygotsky’s social constructivism. Knowledge and meaning are constructed through interaction, dialogue, and shared experiences (Saleem et al., 2021); (Irawan et al., 2025); (Hasan, 2021). In this study, peer discussions enabled students to exchange personal reflections, reinforce moral insights, and co-construct spiritual understanding. From an Islamic perspective, such collaborative learning reflects the principle of *التعاون على البر والتقوى*, where learners support one another in goodness and piety (Rasheed et al., 2021); (Ismail, Hapzi Ali, 2022); (Maisyanah et al., 2024); (Syafi’i & Darnaningsih, 2025). This demonstrates that the REFLECT model effectively integrates sociocultural learning theory with Islamic communal values.

The internalization of values observed in students’ reflections aligns with Lickona’s three-stage model of moral education: knowing the good, feeling the good, and doing the good (Junaidin et al., 2025; Prabowo, 2024). Islamic Scaffolding facilitates this progression by creating a learning environment that encourages emotional engagement, ethical sensitivity, and real-life application. The supportive role of lecturers, the reflective classroom climate, and the structured stages of the REFLECT model collectively provide conditions conducive to deep moral learning. As a result, students experience values not merely as abstract principles but as lived commitments that influence their behavior and professional aspirations.

Theoretically, this study extends scaffolding theory by contextualizing it within Islamic education and positioning spirituality as a central dimension of learning. Islamic Scaffolding represents a conceptual bridge between Vygotskian constructivism and the Islamic philosophy of education grounded in ta’dib. Practically, the REFLECT model demonstrates how scaffolding can

be systematically designed to nurture reflective awareness, moral sensitivity, and spiritual responsibility among prospective Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers. By integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains, this model offers a holistic pedagogical framework that is responsive to the aims of Islamic education (Muhtarudin & Muhsin, 2019); (Harahap, 2021).

The findings contribute to the development of Islamic pedagogical theory by presenting Islamic Scaffolding as an adaptive modification of classical scaffolding theory. The REFLECT model illustrates how psychological grand theory can be meaningfully integrated with Islamic values to produce transformative learning experiences. This integration not only enriches the discourse on scaffolding in educational psychology but also provides practical guidance for teacher education programs seeking to cultivate educators who are intellectually competent, morally grounded, and spiritually conscious.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Islamic Scaffolding–based REFLECT model facilitates a reflective and transformative learning process in Akidah Akhlak education by integrating cognitive understanding, affective engagement, and spiritual awareness. Through structured reflective stages, students are guided to internalize Islamic values beyond conceptual knowledge, while lecturers function as spiritual scaffolders who provide gradual, value-oriented guidance within a supportive learning environment. Grounded in Vygotskian scaffolding and adapted through the principles of ta’dib and tazkiyatun nafs, this model supports not only higher-order thinking but also moral sensitivity and spiritual self-awareness. Students demonstrate a balanced development of knowing, feeling, and practicing values, indicating the integration of knowledge, faith, and action. Overall, the Islamic Scaffolding–based REFLECT model offers a meaningful pedagogical framework that contributes theoretically to Islamic education discourse and practically to the formation of prospective educators who are intellectually competent, morally grounded, and spiritually conscious.

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