Designing a Pedagogical Model for Islamic Legal Literacy and Religious Moderation in Contemporary Digital Contexts

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Abstract

This study aimed to design an integrative instructional model to enhance Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah reasoning, and the character of religious moderation character through digital technology. Employing a Research and Development (R&D) approach tailored for Islamic higher education, the research involved needs analysis, model development, expert validation, limited trials, and large-scale implementation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk test for normality, paired t-tests, and N-Gain calculations. Conducted in four teacher education institutions in West Java, Indonesia, the study involved 16 lecturers and 375 students in the initial phase, 20 students in the limited trial, and 127 students with 8 lecturers in the implementation phase. The needs analysis underscored the urgency for an integrative learning model. As a result, the MASLAHAH model was developed—an acronym for eight structured instructional stages: Mapping Readiness, Access Core Texts, Synthesize Concepts, Learn through Cases, Argue with Maqāṣid, Humanize with Moderation, Apply in Community Context, and Highlight Reflections & Evaluate. The model significantly improved Islamic legal literacy (N-Gain = 0.72), maṣlaḥah reasoning (0.72), and moderate character (0.82). Expert validation rated the model's feasibility at 87.4%. This study presents the MASLAHAH model as a novel pedagogical contribution to Islamic legal education, offering a structured and digitally enhanced framework for cultivating contextual, reflective, and moderate educators in pluralistic societies. In a broader perspective, the model also supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive and value-based learning, and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering moderation, tolerance, and social justice in diverse communities.

Keywords: Islamic Legal Literacy, Maṣlaḥah Reasoning, Moderate Character, Learning Model, Islamic Religious Education

Introduction

Islamic legal literacy is a foundational pillar in the education of future religious teachers. However, in many Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), instructional approaches remain predominantly normative and doctrinal, with limited integration of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework or the higher objectives of Islamic law, which refer to the preservation of essential human interests such

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as religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Fahimah, 2024; Yusuf, 2020). Preliminary observations and interviews with 15 lecturers across five TEIs revealed that 76% lacked teaching materials explicitly incorporating *maqāṣid*-based analysis into their instruction. Furthermore, a review of 12 Semester Learning Plans (SLP) found that only two documents included learning outcomes related to *maṣlaḥah*-based reasoning. A survey of 120 pre-service Islamic education teachers from three TEIs in West Java further revealed that only 28% demonstrated a contextual understanding of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, while 72% reported confusion regarding its application—often interpreting it in a literal and textual fashion. These findings reflect a significant epistemological gap between students' mastery of Islamic legal literacy and their ability to apply legal principles contextually (Thabrani, 2018). This inability to connect legal texts with socio-cultural realities fosters a legalistic and exclusivist mindset, which, in multicultural contexts, undermines Islam's universal mission as *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* (Baloach et al., 2012; Thabrani, 2018). There is, therefore, an urgent need for a transformative instructional model in Islamic legal education—one that not only reinforces conceptual understanding but also cultivates *maṣlaḥah*-oriented reasoning and a moderate character, equipping future religious educators to engage effectively in diverse and complex societies.

Previous studies have highlighted the critical role of legal literacy in Islamic education as a foundation for character formation and social awareness (Belladonna, 2020; Pradanna and Irawan, 2024). Obaid et al. (2024) emphasize that Islamic legal literacy contributes to individual character development and the cultivation of ethical norms and socially just behaviors. Similarly, Solamo Antonio, (2023), underscores its strategic role in empowering marginalized groups to recognize and assert their rights within unequal social structures. From a philosophical standpoint, Felsenthal and Agbaria (2025) examine the work of Tariq Ramadan, who advocates for a critical and transformative Islamic education grounded in key concepts such as *jihad (*spiritual and moral striving)*, umma* (the global Muslim community)*, ijtihād (*independent legal reasoning)*, maṣlaḥah (*public interest)*, and *maqāṣid (*objectives of Islamic law)*. Ramadan proposes an epistemological framework that harmonizes faith, critical reasoning, and social consciousness. However, as noted by (Lobah, 2016), the stagnation in the application of *ijtihād* and *maṣlaḥah*-based approaches has contributed to the Muslim world's delayed response to contemporary issues such as governance, environmental crises, and economic justice. In this context, *maṣlaḥah* must be reinterpreted as a foundational principle of Islamic legal theory—emphasizing harm prevention and the pursuit of

public welfare—and serve as a philosophical basis for reconstructing the Islamic legal curriculum to better address the needs of contemporary society.

To address these challenges, it is essential to design an instructional approach that not only enhances conceptual understanding but also bridges the gap between normative teachings and contextual reasoning (Phan et al., 2021). The prevailing pedagogical practices in many Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) have yet to offer structured opportunities for students to internalize Islamic legal principles through real-world applications (Rapi et al., 2024), nor do they cultivate the critical legal reasoning required for interpreting contemporary socio-religious issues through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (Fahimah, 2024). Furthermore, while attitudes of tolerance are generally present, the lack of structured learning experiences that connect textual sources to social realities impedes the development of truly moderate character (Saepudin et al., 2023).

Given this multidimensional gap, there is a growing urgency to develop an integrative instructional framework that meets three essential criteria (Elmahjub, 2021; Nur et al., 2020) : (1) strengthening foundational Islamic legal knowledge (fiqh and *uṣūl al-fiqh*), (2) fostering higher-order *maslaḥah*-based reasoning aligned with *maqāṣid* values, and (3) cultivating inclusive and contextually aware religious character (Putra & Hasanah, 2018; Umar et al., 2024). Such a pedagogical innovation must be rooted in classical Islamic epistemology while simultaneously adapting to digital transformation and promoting student-centered learning (Bhardwaj et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study proposes the design and validation of an instructional model that responds to current epistemological and pedagogical needs in Islamic legal education. The study is guided by the following three specific research questions:

1. What is the current level of Islamic legal literacy, *maslaḥah* reasoning ability, and tendency toward moderate character among prospective Islamic education teachers?

2. How can an instructional model in Islamic legal literacy be systematically and applicably designed to improve *maslaḥah* reasoning and cultivate moderate character?

3. How effective is the instructional model in enhancing *maslaḥah* reasoning skills and strengthening the moderate character of future Islamic education teachers?

Theoretical Framework

Islamic Legal Literacy and Maṣlaḥah Reasoning in Islamic Education

Islamic legal literacy encompasses a comprehensive understanding of *fiqh* and its foundational principles, including *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) and *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) (Iqbal, 2022; Lobah, 2016). Among these principles, *maṣlaḥah* holds a central position due to its orientation toward the prevention of harm (*mafsadah*) and the promotion of social welfare (Elmahjub, 2021; Lobah, 2016). Functioning not only as a legal principle but also as an ethical and hermeneutic tool, *maṣlaḥah* is particularly instrumental in interpreting legal texts in the absence of explicit references in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Lobah, 2016; Zuhdi & Nasir, 2024). This approach synthesizes deontological and consequentialist values, enabling legal derivations that remain faithful to divine objectives while being responsive to evolving social realities (Elmahjub, 2021)

The concept of *maṣlaḥah* has been further elaborated through the theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which emphasizes the overarching aims of Islamic law: the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Baharuddin et al., 2019; Yusuf, 2020). These objectives are categorized into three hierarchical levels: *al-ḍarūriyyāt* (essentials), *al-ḥājiyyāt* (complementaries), and *al-taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishments) (Baharuddin et al., 2019). Within this framework, *maṣlaḥah* reasoning becomes a practical means for realizing these objectives in everyday life (Fahrudin, 2021; Zuhdi and Nasir, 2024). Contemporary Islamic scholars continue to expand this paradigm to address modern challenges, including those related to public policy and education (Ahmad et al., 2020; Muhaemin et al., 2023; Nur et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2012). The dynamic and context-sensitive nature of *maṣlaḥah* reasoning positions it as a vital component of modern Islamic education, supporting the development of a contextual, inclusive, and socially responsive legal mindset.

Maṣlaḥah Reasoning and Religious Moderation Character Education

In the face of increasingly complex modern challenges, Islamic education is called upon not merely to transmit religious texts, but also to shape learners into individuals who are inclusive, just, and humanistic in outlook (Bahri et al., 2023; Ruslan & Irham, 2022; Umar et al., 2024). In this context, *maṣlaḥah* reasoning plays a pivotal role. As a principle of Islamic jurisprudence, *maṣlaḥah* emphasizes the prevention of harm and the realization of benefit for both individuals and society at large (Lobah, 2016). It provides both an ethical foundation and a rational framework for

addressing socio-economic and environmental issues in a contextual manner. Integrating *maṣlaḥah* principles into character education enhances the social significance of learning. Students are guided to understand that ethical behavior is not merely personal but has far-reaching implications for communal well-being. The values embedded in *maṣlaḥah* nurture critical thinking, a consideration of consequences, and a commitment to social responsibility and justice (Meyer, 2024; Rawana et al., 2011).

In parallel, religious moderation character education has emerged as an urgent need in response to the growing discourse of radicalism and intolerance. Religious moderation promotes a balanced approach to faith—eschewing both ideological extremism and exclusivism—while prioritizing peace, justice, and dialogue (Saepudin et al., 2023; Saleh, 2025). Islamic educational institutions, including *pesantren*, play a strategic role in nurturing this character through integrative pedagogical approaches that harmonize classical Islamic values (*turāth*) with contemporary thought (Huda et al., 2024; Nashuddin, 2020). Accordingly, *maṣlaḥah* reasoning and moderate character education must serve as foundational pillars in the design of Islamic education curricula. Together, they not only reinforce spiritual and moral dimensions but also cultivate individuals who are prepared to live peacefully in pluralistic societies and contribute actively to civilizational advancement (Ma`arif et al., 2024; Umar et al., 2024).

Instructional Models for Cultivating Maṣlaḥah Reasoning and Moderate Character

The development of *maṣlaḥah* reasoning and moderate character cannot occur organically without intentional and well-designed pedagogical interventions (Brown et al., 2023; Linkins et al., 2015). Both require a systematic educational approach grounded in instructional models that enable the contextual and reflective internalization of Islamic values (Saada and Magadlah, 2021). As a form of legal reasoning that emphasizes public interest, *maṣlaḥah* reasoning demands cognitive training that encourages students to analyze, infer, and reason through the lens of utility, justice, and social impact (Kavčič, 2021; Sala et al., 2019; Sala and Gobet, 2019). Similarly, the development of moderate character—which emphasizes balance, tolerance, and peace—cannot be achieved solely through moral lectures. Rather, it must be nurtured through learning experiences that activate social awareness and empathy (Sze-Yeung Lai and Chi-leung Hui, 2021; Walker and Venker Weidenbenner, 2019).

Accordingly, there is a need for integrative and participatory instructional models that combine value-based learning, dialogical engagement across perspectives, contextual case studies, and critical reflection on social realities (Mangan and Fitzgerald, 2014; Pamungkas and Widiastuti, 2019). Such models enable learners not only to understand the concepts of *maṣlaḥah* and moderation in theory but also to apply them in decision-making and daily behavior (Hasan and Juhannis, 2024; Lafrarchi, 2023). In other words, instructional design serves as a bridge between normative Islamic values and the real-life actualization of character. Without appropriate pedagogical frameworks, the goal of cultivating rational, moderate Muslims committed to social welfare will be difficult to achieve meaningfully (Muhamad et al., 2024; Supardi et al., 2018).

Conceptual Linkage between Variables

The integrative relationship between Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah reasoning, and religious moderation forms the theoretical foundation of this study. Islamic legal literacy serves as the cognitive base, equipping learners with foundational knowledge of *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and legal maxims (Riwanda et al., 2025; Zuhdi and Nasir, 2024). However, legal literacy alone is insufficient in shaping socially responsive and ethically grounded individuals (Belladonna, 2020; Yusuf, 2020). Therefore, maṣlaḥah reasoning functions as a mediating process, transforming normative legal understanding into a contextual, critical, and socially aware mode of thinking (Lobah, 2016; Thabrani, 2018). It enables students to bridge textual doctrines with dynamic socio-cultural realities, thus fostering an inclusive and benefit-oriented outlook (Thabrani, 2018).

Through maṣlaḥah reasoning, learners develop the capacity to assess ethical dilemmas, identify public interest, and prioritize harm reduction—principles that align directly with the core values of religious moderation, such as tolerance, justice, balance, and non-violence (Hasan and Juhannis, 2024; Zulfatmi, 2023). Hence, religious moderation is viewed as an affective outcome of a learning process that begins with legal literacy, is internalized through ethical reasoning, and is ultimately expressed through moderate religious behavior.

To illustrate this linkage, Figure 1 presents the conceptual model that underlies the theoretical relationship between the three key variables discussed in this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual linkage: Islamic legal literacy leads to maṣlaḥah reasoning, which cultivates religious moderation.

Despite the promising potential of integrating digital tools into Islamic legal instruction, some scholars and practitioners rooted in legal traditionalism express concern (Albalawee & Al Fahoum, 2023; Fikri et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2025). They argue that digital mediation may dilute the sanctity of classical texts or compromise the integrity of traditional *fiqh* learning, which historically relies on direct transmission (*talaqqi*) and teacher authority (*sanad*) (Abubakari, 2025; Sudan, 2024). These tensions between innovation and tradition require careful pedagogical navigation(Albalawee & Al Fahoum, 2023; Fikri et al., 2024). Rather than abandoning traditional frameworks, this study seeks to augment them with digital technologies that enhance access, visualization, and reasoning without undermining the epistemic depth of classical scholarship.

Method

Research Design

This study was designed as a comprehensive Research and Development (R&D) process, not merely as a product evaluation. This study adopted a Research and Development (R&D) approach based on Borg and Gall (2003) model, which originally consists of ten systematic steps. To suit the higher education context and research constraints, these steps were adapted into five stages: (1) Preliminary Study, (2) Product Development, (3) Product Validation and Revision, (4) Limited Trial, and (5) Wider Trial and Evaluation. This adaptation maintained the essential logic of the Borg and Gall framework while ensuring contextual feasibility. Table 1 summarizes each stage, its activities, and expected outcomes.

Table 1

Research Stages, Activities, and Outputs

No	Research Stage	Key Activities	Output
1	Preliminary Study	Observation, lecturer interviews, analysis of course syllabi (CS), and student surveys	Needs Analysis (map of instructional needs and learning problems)
2	Product Development	Drafting the instructional model and accompanying teaching materials	Initial Prototype (draft instructional model based on legal literacy and maṣlaḥah reasoning)
3	Product Validation and Revision	Expert judgment for content validation and refinement	Validated Prototype (prototype revised based on expert validation)
4	Limited Trial	Pilot implementation of the model, initial evaluation, and revision based on feedback	Prototype Model (improved prototype after limited trial reflection)
5	Wider Trial and Evaluation	Effectiveness testing through pre-test and post-test; quantitative and qualitative data analysis	Suggested Prototype (final instructional model in the form of a *learning guidebook / teaching module*)

Research Setting and Participants

This study was designed as a comprehensive Research and Development (R&D) process, not merely as a product evaluation. It involved four Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in West Java, each contributing at different stages. All four TEIs participated in the needs analysis phase, which revealed variations in instructional objectives, course learning outcomes, instructional outcomes, audience characteristics, typical teaching materials, and syllabi. These findings informed the design of the initial prototype, embedding teaching values of Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah reasoning, and moderation character, with clear criteria distinguishing it from existing materials.

The participants consisted of 16 lecturers and 375 pre-service Islamic education students drawn from the four TEIs. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure participants had characteristics directly aligned with the study's objectives. The lecturers were selected because they actively taught courses within the Islamic legal studies cluster, including *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Islamic legal maxims (*qawāʿid fiqhiyyah*), and principles of legal derivation (*qawāʿid uṣūliyyah*), thereby providing expert perspectives for needs analysis and prototype validation. The students were chosen on the basis that they had completed at least one course in the Islamic legal cluster—such as *fiqh al-ʿibādāt* (ritual jurisprudence), *muʿāmalāt* (transactions), *jināyāt* (criminal law),

munākaḥāt (marriage law)*, siyāsah* (governance), legal maxims, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*)—with a minimum final grade of C.

To provide demographic context, the lecturers comprised 11 males and 5 females, with an average age of 42 years (ranging from 31 to 56). The students consisted of 138 males (36.8%) and 237 females (63.2%), with an average age of 20.1 years (ranging from 19 to 22), reflecting the typical undergraduate profile in Islamic teacher education. Their participation across multiple sites ensured that the needs analysis captured contextual variations and strengthened the validity of the prototype.

One TEI was then selected for the limited trial to refine the initial prototype through pilot implementation, while three TEIs were involved in the wider trial and evaluation to test the validated prototype on a larger scale. At each stage, the product evolved progressively: from needs analysis, to initial prototype, to validated prototype, to prototype model, and finally to a suggested prototype. The final product was concretely presented as a learning guidebook (module), serving as a structured pedagogical resource that integrates Islamic legal literacy, value-based reasoning, and moderation competencies for Islamic higher education.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

This study employed four main instruments, each systematically aligned with the five stages of the research design to ensure methodological rigor and consistency. The first instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire developed to measure three constructs: Islamic legal literacy (covering fiqh, uṣūl al-fiqh, legal maxims, and derivation principles), maṣlaḥah reasoning (including issue identification, benefit–harm analysis, and maqāṣid-based synthesis), and moderate character (measured through indicators of tolerance, balance between text and context, anti-extremism, and humanitarian justice). Each construct consisted of 20 items, producing 60 items in total. Distributed via Google Forms, the questionnaire yielded 375 valid responses during the preliminary study to map instructional needs, and it was re-administered in the wider trial with 127 students to evaluate model effectiveness. The second instrument was a contextual essay test containing five open-ended questions designed to assess students' maṣlaḥah reasoning. It was applied during the limited trial following the instructional treatment, and the results provided evidence of feasibility while informing prototype refinement. The third instrument, a semi-structured interview guide, was used to explore lecturers' and students' perspectives on the

urgency and relevance of model development. Interviews were conducted during the preliminary study, at the validation and revision stage, and in the wider trial to complement quantitative findings. The fourth instrument, an observation checklist, assessed the presence of maqāṣid-oriented objectives, maṣlaḥah-based reasoning, and moderation values in instructional practices. It was applied during both the limited and wider trials to triangulate data from other sources. Overall, this sequential and stage-specific application of instruments ensured consistency in data collection, captured key indicators across constructs, and provided both statistical and contextual insights into the model's development and effectiveness.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The validation process in this study was carried out through a multi-stage and rigorous procedure to ensure the methodological soundness of both instruments and the prototype model. At the instrument development stage, the questionnaire underwent expert validation by three specialists in fiqh, Islamic pedagogy, and learning evaluation, followed by a pilot administration to 25 non-participant students. The empirical results confirmed acceptable psychometric properties, with item–total correlations ranging from $r = 0.42$ to 0.78 ($p < 0.05$). The needs analysis phase was strengthened through methodological triangulation (survey, interviews, and classroom observations) and subsequently reviewed by experts to guarantee that the identified problems were valid as the basis for prototype development. Before field implementation, the prototype model was subjected to expert judgment, and revisions were made to enhance the clarity of the instructional steps, the alignment of objectives with literacy indicators, and the integration of maṣlaḥah–maqāṣid values. Reliability testing of the questionnaire indicated excellent internal consistency across all constructs: Islamic legal literacy ($\alpha = 0.876$), maṣlaḥah reasoning ($\alpha = 0.841$), and moderate character ($\alpha = 0.884$). In addition, the contextual essay rubric demonstrated strong inter-rater reliability (Cohen's Kappa = 0.82). The credibility of the qualitative instruments—interview and observation protocols—was established through expert validation, triangulation, and member checking. Collectively, this staged validation demonstrates that the instruments and prototype were not assumed to be adequate by default but were rigorously tested and refined prior to their application in exploratory, limited, and wider experimental stages.

Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative and quantitative data analysis was conducted in alignment with the five research stages to ensure methodological consistency. In the preliminary study, interview and classroom observation data were examined through content and thematic analysis, guided by the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, to identify students' instructional needs and challenges. In the product validation and revision stage, expert feedback on the draft prototype and instruments (questionnaire, essay rubric, and observation checklist) was thematically coded and synthesized into categories that informed systematic refinement. During the pilot testing with 20 pre-service Islamic education students, descriptive analysis was applied to evaluate the practical implementability of the model's stages, while qualitative reflections from students and lecturers were thematically analyzed to provide deeper insights and support model improvement. In the large-scale implementation with 127 students and 8 lecturers across four institutions, quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired samples t-tests to assess pretest–posttest differences in Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah reasoning, and moderate character. Prior to hypothesis testing, data normality was verified using the Shapiro–Wilk test (Ahad et al., 2011). The results of this normality test are presented in Table 7. Instructional effectiveness was further determined through N-Gain analysis, while complementary qualitative data from interviews and observations were thematically analyzed to triangulate findings. This stage-specific approach provided both statistical validation and contextual interpretation of the model's impact across all phases of development and evaluation.

Result

Needs Analysis for Model Development

1. Quantitative Findings: Foundation for Instructional Model Development

To strengthen the identification of instructional development needs, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to assess the levels of Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah reasoning, and moderate character among 375 pre-service Islamic education students. The results of this analysis, presented in Table 2, served as the empirical foundation for designing a more targeted and responsive instructional model.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Islamic Legal Literacy, Maṣlaḥah Reasoning, and Moderate Character

Variabel	Dimension	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Islamic Legal Literacy	Fiqh	375	2.91	0.38	1.60	4.44
	Uṣūl al-Fiqh	375	2.77	0.51	1.45	4.34
	Qawāʿid Fiqhiyyah	375	2.79	0.58	1.00	4.28
	Qawāʿid Uṣūliyyah	375	2.65	0.61	1.05	4.16
Maṣlaḥah Reasoning	Problem Identification	375	2.91	0.38	1.60	4.44
	Benefit-Harm Analysis	375	2.77	0.51	1.45	4.34
	Maqāṣid-Based Legal Synthesis	375	2.78	0.49	1.25	4.02
Moderate Character	Religious Tolerance	375	3.20	0.49	1.69	4.77
	Text-Context Balance	375	2.71	0.49	1.38	4.25
	Anti-Extremism	375	3.11	0.59	1.31	5.00
	Humanitarian Justice	375	3.18	0.52	1.75	4.63

The results in Table 2 indicate that students' Islamic legal literacy is at a moderate level. Their understanding of fiqh is relatively strong (Mean = 2.91), but their grasp of legal theory and principles—uṣūl al-fiqh (Mean = 2.77), qawāʿid fiqhiyyah (Mean = 2.79), and qawāʿid uṣūliyyah (Mean = 2.65)—remains limited. Their ability in maṣlaḥah-based reasoning is also moderate, with higher performance in identifying legal issues (Mean = 2.91), but lower scores in analyzing maṣlaḥah-mafsadah and synthesizing maqāṣid-oriented rulings (Mean = 2.77–2.78). In terms of moderate character, students scored relatively high in tolerance and humanitarian justice (Mean = 3.11–3.20), but showed weakness in balancing textual and contextual understanding (Mean = 2.71). These findings highlight the need for an integrative instructional model that addresses three core domains: improving Islamic legal literacy, strengthening maṣlaḥah-based reasoning grounded in maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, and fostering moderate character through a balanced, humanistic, and context-aware religious perspective.

2. Qualitative Findings: Empirical Support for Quantitative Results

To strengthen the interpretation of the statistical results, qualitative data were incorporated as part of the product evaluation process, serving both to validate the instructional design and to capture deeper perspectives from students and lecturers. In this regard, in-depth interviews were conducted with 16 lecturers of Islamic legal studies and 10 pre-service Islamic education students. The interviews generated a total of 865 statements, which were systematically coded and categorized into three major themes:

Theme 1: Islamic Legal Literacy – Conceptual and Applied Gaps

Most lecturers reported that students exhibited stronger comprehension in practical aspects of *fiqh* than in theoretical components such as *uṣūl al-fiqh* and legal maxims. This sentiment was expressed by several lecturers:

> "Students find it easier to understand *fiqh al-ʿibādāt* and *muʿāmalāt* because they are practical. But once we enter into *uṣūl al-fiqh* or legal maxims, many become confused with the basic terminology and how to apply it." (Lecturer 5)

> "When we start teaching *uṣūl al-fiqh*, many students become overwhelmed. They are not accustomed to abstract thinking, especially regarding concepts like *ʿillah* (legal cause) or *istidlāl* (legal inference)." (Lecturer 7)

These qualitative insights align with the quantitative data, which showed the lowest mean score in the dimension of *qawāʿid uṣūliyyah* (principles of legal derivation). The students themselves admitted that theoretical legal principles are often perceived as abstract and disconnected from real-life application:

> "I know the legal maxim *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated), but I don't yet understand how to apply it in broader social contexts." (Student 3)

> "Legal maxims are important, but they are often taught without real-life examples, so they feel distant from reality." (Student 5)

Theme 2: Maṣlaḥah Reasoning – Weakness in Synthesis and Justification Ability

The interviews revealed that many students struggle to develop *maqāṣid*-based legal justifications, even though they are generally capable of identifying legal and social issues. Several lecturers expressed concern over this gap:

> "They can identify actual problems in society, but when asked to analyze which aspects are *maṣlaḥah* and how to derive legal conclusions, most are not yet prepared in terms of reasoning." (Lecturer 11)

> "They understand the problems in the community, but they don't know how to relate them to the *maqāṣid* framework." (Lecturer 13)

This perception was echoed by students, who acknowledged their difficulties in applying *maqāṣid* reasoning in legal synthesis:

> "I often get confused when I have to derive legal rulings from real-life situations because I'm unsure about the *maṣlaḥah*-based foundation." (Student 7)

> "When it comes to using *maqāṣid* for analysis, I'm still not confident. I tend to rely on conventional legal approaches." (Student 10)

These findings support the quantitative results, which showed relatively low mean scores in the dimensions of *maṣlaḥah* analysis and *maqāṣid*-based legal synthesis, indicating a significant need for instructional interventions that strengthen students' higher-order legal reasoning

Theme 3: Moderate Character – Tolerant Attitudes but Limited Contextual Understanding

The interviews also revealed that, while students generally demonstrated inclusive attitudes and rejected extremism, they often lacked a deep understanding of how to balance textual fidelity with contextual interpretation in religious understanding. This gap was reflected in several student statements:

> "I'm open to differences, but when it comes to religious texts, I sometimes get confused about what should be preserved and what can be reinterpreted." (Student 6)

> "I feel more comfortable following opinions with direct scriptural evidence, even though I'm sometimes unsure about the social context." (Student 8)

Lecturers shared similar observations:

> "Moderate attitudes are already present, but students still lack sufficient understanding of how religious texts can be interpreted in line with contemporary social contexts." (Lecturer 2)

> "Students are generally tolerant and open to differing opinions. However, not many understand how to reconcile religious texts with social realities." (Lecturer 3)

These qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results, which showed the lowest mean score within the moderate character dimensions in the area of text-context balance. This highlights the need for pedagogical interventions that promote interpretive awareness and contextual sensitivity as integral components of religious moderation.

Based on both quantitative and qualitative findings, students' primary needs are centered on three areas: strengthening the theoretical foundations of Islamic legal studies, enhancing *maṣlaḥah*-

based reasoning, and deepening contextual understanding of religious moderation. These results provide a solid empirical basis for designing a cognitively rigorous and contextually relevant instructional model.

The needs analysis further revealed that existing teaching materials and assessments remain heavily text-centered, with limited integration of higher-order reasoning and contextual values. Lecturers reported that students often struggle to connect fiqh and uṣūl al-fiqh with real-world cases, while students themselves highlighted difficulties in applying legal maxims and maqāṣid principles in contemporary contexts. This gap underscores the necessity of embedding key Islamic values—including fiqh, uṣūl al-fiqh, legal maxims, maṣlaḥah–maqāṣid reasoning, and moderation—into instructional resources. The analysis emphasized three interrelated priorities: (1) reinforcing Islamic legal literacy through systematic engagement with classical sources; (2) fostering analytical skills to identify issues, assess benefits and harms, and construct maqāṣid-based arguments; and (3) cultivating a moderate outlook characterized by tolerance, balance between text and context, and resistance to extremism. Collectively, these findings justified the development of a prototype designed to integrate these values into both teaching materials and assessment tools, thereby ensuring that the instructional model is firmly grounded in Islamic normative frameworks while responsive to contemporary educational challenges.

Development of the Learning Guidebook Prototype

Based on the needs analysis, and further refined through expert feedback. The prototype produced in this study took the form of a learning guidebook (teaching module) designed to support Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic legal reasoning courses in teacher education institutions. The guidebook combines classical references with contemporary cases and includes structured activities to train students in synthesizing concepts, arguing with maqāṣid, and humanizing through moderation. Each unit embeds explicit Islamic values: fiqh principles, uṣūl al-fiqh methods, legal maxims, maṣlaḥah–maqāṣid reasoning, and moderation norms. The prototype also integrates assessment tools, such as contextual essay prompts and observation rubrics, to measure students' progress in legal literacy, reasoning, and moderate character. This product emphasizes qualitative dimensions, as it defines the criteria, values, and norms of Islamic education to be internalized through instruction. While quantitative measures were applied to test its effectiveness, the central contribution of the prototype lies in its qualitative emphasis on embedding and operationalizing Islamic values within teaching and learning practices.

Prototipe yang dihasilkan dalam penelitian ini menjadi dasar bagi pengembangan model instruksional yang lebih komprehensif. Berangkat dari struktur buku panduan serta nilai-nilai Islami yang telah diintegrasikan di dalamnya, model instruksional dikembangkan untuk menyediakan kerangka pedagogis yang utuh dan konsisten. Apabila prototipe berfokus pada penyajian konten, internalisasi nilai, dan perangkat asesmen, maka model instruksional menitikberatkan pada aspek implementasi, dengan menguraikan langkah-langkah pembelajaran yang secara sistematis mengintegrasikan literasi hukum Islam, penalaran berbasis maslahat, dan prinsip moderasi ke dalam praktik pengajaran di kelas.

Instructional Model Design

Building upon the prototype as a foundational product, the integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated that pre-service Islamic education teachers require targeted strengthening in three key areas: Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah-based reasoning, and the development of moderate character. Although students exhibited commendable attitudes of tolerance and justice, they still showed limitations in their conceptual mastery of uṣūl al-fiqh and legal maxims, as well as difficulties in applying maqāṣid al-sharī'ah to real-world contexts. To address these needs, the MASLAHAH Model was developed—an innovative instructional framework that integrates classical Islamic legal theory, contextual approaches, and digital pedagogy. The model was systematically designed into eight acronym-based stages intended to cultivate critical, ethical, and context-sensitive Islamic legal reasoning. The stages of the model and their corresponding instructional interventions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Stages and Instructional Interventions of the MASLAHAH Model

Letter	Model Stage	Instructional Intervention
M	*Mapping Readiness*	Assess students' initial readiness using digital diagnostic tools via Google Forms.
A	*Access Core Texts*	Engage with classical and contemporary *fiqh* literature through the Maktabah Syamilah app.
S	*Synthesize Concepts*	Summarize *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and legal maxims using mind mapping tools (e.g., Edraw).
L	*Learn through Cases*	Analyze contemporary legal cases with *maṣlaḥah* orientation using interactive forums or online legal simulations.
A	*Argue with Maqāṣid*	Construct *maqāṣid*-based legal arguments using AI-assisted writing tools and peer feedback via Google Docs.

Letter	Model Stage	Instructional Intervention
H	*Humanize with Moderation*	Reflect on moderation values through vlogs, podcasts, and narrative-based discussions; students present legal solutions framed by justice and tolerance.
A	*Apply in Community Context*	Apply learning outcomes through service learning, legal counseling simulations, or digital campaigns (e.g., educational Instagram content).
H	*Highlight Reflections & Evaluate*	Compile digital portfolios including reflective journals, legal analyses, and educational videos; assessment conducted using e-assessment tools.

The MASLAHAH instructional model holistically integrates Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah-based reasoning, and moderate character within a unified, digital-supported framework. It offers five advantages: conceptual-contextual integration, grounding in maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, promotion of moderation values, digital adaptation, and focus on authentic student outcomes. The model targets three domains: cognitive (mastery of fiqh, uṣūl al-fiqh, and legal maxims), reasoning (critical maṣlaḥah-based analysis), and affective (tolerant and balanced religious attitudes). Its relevance lies in preparing future Islamic educators who are intellectually rigorous and value-oriented in a digital age.

Validation and Pilot Testing of the MASLAHAH Instructional Model

To ensure its feasibility and practical implementation, the MASLAHAH instructional model underwent expert validation and initial pilot testing.

Model Validation

The MASLAHAH Model underwent expert validation by specialists in Islamic law, pedagogy, and instructional technology. The evaluation focused on five aspects: content quality, structural coherence, material relevance, technology integration, and learning assessment. With a mean score of 4.37 out of 5 (87.4%), the model was deemed highly feasible for implementation. A detailed summary is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Results of Expert Validation

Evaluation Aspect	Mean Score (Scale 1–5)	Feasibility Category
Alignment with Model Objectives	4.5	Highly Feasible
Clarity of Model Stages	4.4	Highly Feasible
Relevance of Content Substance	4.3	Highly Feasible
Feasibility of Technology Integration	4.6	Highly Feasible
Feasibility of Evaluation and Instruments	4.4	Highly Feasible
Overall Mean Score	4.37	Highly Feasible

Expert validators provided constructive feedback that resulted in several key revisions to the prototype. First, the formulation of the model stages was refined to ensure conceptual clarity and alignment with the overall pedagogical framework. Second, contextual examples were incorporated, particularly within the learn through *cases* and *apply in community context* stages, to enhance applicability and relevance for classroom implementation. Third, the assessment rubric was strengthened, with clearer indicators developed for evaluating both *maṣlaḥah* reasoning and the dimensions of moderate character. These revisions reflect the experts' qualitative emphasis on ensuring that the prototype is pedagogically feasible, contextually appropriate, and aligned with the intended Islamic values.

Pilot Testing

The revised MASLAHAH model was pilot tested with 20 pre-service Islamic education teachers at a partner Teacher Education Institution (TEI) to evaluate its practical implementability. The trial focused on three key stages—Synthesize Concepts, Argue with Maqāṣid, and Humanize with Moderation—reflecting the model's cognitive, analytical, and affective domains. Students' performance in these stages was assessed through a contextual essay test, in which they were asked to construct written arguments in response to case-based prompts. Their responses were evaluated using a rubric specifically designed to measure *maṣlaḥah* reasoning across four dimensions: problem identification, benefit–harm analysis, maqāṣid-based justification, and contextual application. Results showed successful implementation across all stages, with performance rated from "good" to "very good." Details are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5.

Pilot Testing Results

Model Stage	Implementation Rate (%)	Description
Synthesize Concepts	92.0%	Implemented very successfully
Argue with Maqāṣid	88.5%	Successfully implemented
Humanize with Moderation	90.3%	Implemented very successfully

Overall, students demonstrated active engagement and enthusiasm toward the contextual learning approach introduced by the model. They were able to critically respond to legal cases and effectively reflect on moderation values through digital media. Feedback from the pilot testing reinforced the conclusion that the model is not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable within the context of higher religious education in the digital era.

Large-Scale Implementation of the MASLAHAH Model

After validation and pilot testing, the MASLAHAH instructional model was implemented on a larger scale across four Teacher Education Institutions (LPTKs) in West Java, involving 127 students and 8 Islamic law lecturers over one academic semester. The full implementation encompassed all stages of the model—from Mapping Readiness to Highlight Reflections and Evaluate. Lecturers were equipped with enhanced digital instructional tools such as interactive Flipbook modules, scoring rubrics, and evaluation instruments. Students participated in a structured learning process that combined classical Islamic texts, contemporary case analysis, value-based reflection, and maṣlaḥah-oriented project work. A summary of the implementation outcomes is presented in Table 6:

Table 6

Descriptive Analysis of Large-Scale Implementation Results

Variabel	Period	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Islamic Legal Literacy	Pre-Test	127	1.91	3.16	2.50	0.25
Islamic Legal Literacy	Pos-Test	127	4.11	4.62	4.30	0.09
Maṣlaḥah Reasoning	Pre-Test	127	1.90	3.24	2.48	0.26
Maṣlaḥah Reasoning	Pos-Test	127	4.11	4.62	4.30	0.09
Moderate Character	Pre-Test	127	2.45	3.98	3.24	0.27
Moderate Character	Pos-Test	127	4.39	4.86	4.68	0.09

Descriptive statistics in Table 6 reveal significant learning gains across all three target variables following the implementation of the MASLAHAH instructional model among 127 pre-service Islamic education students. Islamic Legal Literacy improved markedly from a mean of 2.50 to 4.30, with a reduced standard deviation indicating more consistent performance. Maṣlaḥah Reasoning showed a similar increase, from 2.48 to 4.30, reflecting enhanced analytical skills fostered through case-based and maqāṣid-driven activities. Moderate Character also rose substantially from 3.24 to 4.68, suggesting strong impact on students' inclusive, just, and balanced religious outlooks. The narrow score ranges in the post-test confirm the model's effectiveness in promoting uniform and deep-rooted development across domains. Overall, these findings suggest that the MASLAHAH instructional model has had a positive impact on students' conceptual understanding, analytical skills, and internalization of moderate Islamic values—three essential competencies for future Islamic education teachers in contemporary pluralistic societies.

Model Effectiveness Testing

Building on the descriptive findings, inferential statistical analysis was conducted to test the significance of score improvements across variables. Before applying the paired samples t-test, data normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results, detailed in Table 7, confirmed the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis.

Table 7

Shapiro–Wilk Test for Normality

Variable	Statistic (Shapiro-Wilk)	df	Sig. (p-value)
Pre-Legal Literacy	0.994	127	0.872
Post-Legal Literacy	0.986	127	0.231
Pre-Maṣlaḥah Reasoning	0.992	127	0.718
Post-Maṣlaḥah Reasoning	0.981	127	0.080
Pre-Moderat Character	0.996	127	0.969
Post-Moderat Character	0.980	127	0.058

The normality test results ($p > 0.05$) indicated that the data were normally distributed, thereby justifying the use of parametric procedures. The data analyzed in this section were obtained from a 60-item Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure students' Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah reasoning, and moderate character. A paired samples t-test was then conducted to examine the significance of differences between pre-test and post-test scores across all variables. This analysis aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the MASLAHAH model in improving students' competencies. Detailed results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Paired Samples t-Test Results

Paired Differences	Mean Diff	Std. Dev	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre vs Post – Legal Literacy	1.82	0.26	80.59	0.000
Pre vs Post – Maṣlaḥah Reasoning	1.80	0.24	84.92	0.000
Pre vs Post – Moderate Character	1.44	0.26	62.30	0.000

Table 8 confirms statistically significant improvements across all variables following the implementation of the MASLAHAH model. Islamic Legal Literacy increased by 1.82 points ($t = 80.59$; $p < 0.001$), Maṣlaḥah Reasoning by 1.80 points ($t = 84.92$; $p < 0.001$), and Moderate Character by 1.44 points ($t = 62.30$; $p < 0.001$). All p-values were < 0.001, and confidence intervals excluded zero, indicating that the gains are attributable to the instructional model rather than random variation. These results affirm the model's effectiveness in strengthening students'

conceptual, analytical, and affective-moderative capacities. To further assess practical impact, Normalized Gain (N-Gain) was calculated to measure the relative improvement across participants. The N-Gain results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

N-Gain Analysis Results

	Variabel	N	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Mean	Effectiveness level
	Islamic Legal Literacy	127	0.56	0.81	0.03	0.72	High
N-Gain	*Maṣlaḥah* Reasoning	127	0.67	0.81	0.02	0.72	High
	Moderate Character	127	0.63	0.90	0.04	0.82	High

Table 9 shows that all N-Gain values exceed 0.70, placing them in the high effectiveness category. This indicates that the MASLAHAH instructional model generated substantial learning gains across cognitive and affective domains. The consistently high N-Gain scores affirm the model's effectiveness in deepening students' mastery of Islamic legal concepts, enhancing maṣlaḥah-based reasoning, and internalizing moderate character values.

Discussion

The development of the MASLAHAH instructional model began with a systematic needs analysis, which revealed epistemological gaps between students' mastery of Islamic legal texts and their contextual application. Findings from surveys of 375 students and interviews with lecturers indicated that pre-service teachers were relatively stronger in practical aspects of *fiqh* but weaker in *uṣūl al-fiqh* and legal maxims. This gap fostered a legalistic tendency and limited their ability to connect texts with social realities. Consequently, the prototype was designed to integrate Islamic legal literacy with *maqāṣid*-based reasoning skills, consistent with earlier studies emphasizing the importance of contextual approaches in Islamic legal education (Foley, 2025; Irham, 2025; Riwanda et al., 2025).

The initial prototype was developed as a digital learning guidebook that not only contained classical Islamic legal texts but also incorporated technology-based learning media, such as access to Maktabah Syamilah, the use of digital mind-mapping tools (Edraw, MindMeister), and the creation of reflective e-portfolios via Google Classroom. The integration of these tools strengthened the media characteristics of the MASLAHAH model, enabling students to read, analyze, and discuss Islamic law with the support of visualization and digital learning records. Expert validation involving specialists in Islamic law, pedagogy, and instructional technology

rated the model highly feasible, with an average score of 87.4%. Suggestions were made to refine stage clarity, contextual examples, and the rubric for evaluating *maṣlaḥah* reasoning (Ma`arif et al., 2024; Nashuddin, 2020; Nasution et al., 2024).

Small-scale pilot testing with 20 pre-service teachers was conducted to examine the practical applicability of the model, focusing on the Synthesize Concepts, Argue with Maqāṣid, and Humanize with Moderation stages. Students were assessed through reading-based essay tests derived from Islamic legal texts, rather than questionnaires, requiring them to identify problems, analyze benefits and harms, and justify rulings using *maqāṣid* reasoning. Results showed improvements in average scores, ranging from "good" to "very good." The use of digital media, such as interactive online forums and reflective vlogs, also promoted more active and engaged participation. These findings confirm that authentic legal texts and interactive technology provide a more valid and effective measure of literacy and reasoning, aligning with research emphasizing case-based and argumentative learning for higher-order Islamic legal reasoning (Foley, 2025; Suryani & Bukhori Muslim, 2024; Watson et al., 2017).

The large-scale implementation with 127 students further confirmed the model's effectiveness. Results from the pretest–posttest design demonstrated substantial improvements: Islamic legal literacy (from 2.50 to 4.30), *maṣlaḥah* reasoning (From 2.48 to 4.30), and moderate character (from 3.24 to 4.68). Paired sample t-tests indicated highly significant differences across all variables ($p < 0.001$), and N-Gain scores were consistently high (>0.70). These results validated that the use of a workbook grounded in Islamic legal corpus texts and supported by digital technology significantly improved students' competencies, while also highlighting the role of media innovation in facilitating the internalization of values(Irham, 2025; Nasution et al., 2024; Suryani & Bukhori Muslim, 2024).

Moderation character was explored in a balanced manner within the MASLAHAH model through three dimensions: (1) tolerance, cultivated through dialogical engagement and the analysis of diverse legal opinions; (2) text–context balance, practiced through reading classical legal texts followed by contextual discussions; and (3) anti-extremism, instilled through reflective digital outputs such as vlogs or podcasts emphasizing justice, peace, and humanity. This approach illustrates that moderation is not merely a passive stance but must be actively nurtured through

learning experiences that integrate authentic texts, critical analysis, and participatory media (Ma`arif et al., 2024; Saepudin et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the MASLAHAH instructional model integrates three essential dimensions: (1) Islamic legal literacy grounded in classical texts, (2) maṣlaḥah reasoning enhanced through digital learning media, and (3) the strengthening of moderation character through a balanced and systematic approach. The findings indicate not only significant quantitative improvements in students' competencies but also qualitative enrichment of their reflective and moderate dispositions. Accordingly, the MASLAHAH digital workbook stands as a pedagogical innovation that is both replicable and scalable, offering a robust framework to prepare future Islamic education teachers who are conceptually grounded, analytically skilled, and committed to moderation (Buchori & Setyawati, 2015; Foley, 2025; Saepudin et al., 2023). Moreover, the MASLAHAH model contributes to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) by advancing inclusive and value-based Islamic education, and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by nurturing tolerance, anti-extremism, and social justice in pluralistic societies.

Conclusion

The findings confirm that the MASLAHAH instructional model is effective in enhancing Islamic legal literacy, maṣlaḥah-based reasoning skills, and moderate religious character among pre-service Islamic education teachers. The model effectively integrates conceptual and contextual approaches grounded in maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and enhanced by digital technologies. Expert validation indicated high feasibility, and both the limited and large-scale implementations produced significant and consistent improvements across cognitive, analytical, and affective domains. Therefore, the MASLAHAH model is well-positioned for broader application as a pedagogical innovation to cultivate reflective, scholarly, and moderate-minded Islamic educators in the digital age. In addition, the model directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) by advancing inclusive, relevant, and value-based pedagogy, and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering tolerance, moderation, and social justice in diverse societies.

Recommendation

Future studies should explore the adaptability of the MASLAHAH instructional model across diverse educational levels and institutional contexts. Experimental designs with control groups are crucial to validate its effectiveness, while qualitative studies may provide deeper insights into value internalization. Further innovation is recommended through the development of specialized assessment instruments and integration with digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI), to meet the evolving demands of transformative education in the digital era.

Limitation

This study was limited to teacher education programs in West Java and conducted over a single semester, thus offering only short-term insights into the model's impact. The assessment of moderate character may involve subjective bias. Moreover, the integration of digital tools was influenced by unequal access to infrastructure and varying levels of digital literacy among participants, potentially affecting implementation consistency.

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