



Integrating Islamic Values and Madurese Local Wisdom in Early Childhood Financial Literacy: Evidence from a Qualitative Multi-Site Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose – Financial literacy in Indonesia remains uneven, while early childhood financial education tends to emphasize cognitive skills and marginalize religious and cultural dimensions, particularly in Muslim-majority contexts. This study examines the integration of Islamic values and Madurese local wisdom through transformative learning in early childhood financial literacy education.

Design/methods/approach – This qualitative multi-site case study involved 15 participants from two Islamic kindergartens in East Java, comprising eight teachers, two principals, and five parents. Data were collected over six months through non-participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. Trustworthiness was enhanced through methodological triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing.

Findings – The analysis identified three interrelated themes. The first concerns a pedagogical paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, mediated by the use of local wisdom as experiential learning resources, through the Beyond Centers and Circle Time model. The second theme highlights experiential entrepreneurship development through activities such as cooking classes, Market Day programs featuring Madurese products, and structured charitable practices. The third theme addresses the integration of values-based financial literacy, in which Islamic economic principles, including halal-haram considerations, charity, and social responsibility, are embedded in everyday financial learning activities. Across these themes, implementation was characterized by variation in children's understanding, ongoing teacher mediation, and developmental constraints.

Research implications/limitations – The findings indicate that values-integrated transformative learning can strengthen early childhood financial literacy by connecting economic concepts with ethical and cultural meanings. However, generalizability is limited by the small sample, Madurese cultural context, six-month duration, and qualitative design.

Practical implications – Early childhood financial literacy in Muslim-majority settings may be enhanced through integrating Islamic values and local culture, supported by teacher capacity building, family-school collaboration, and pedagogical flexibility.

Originality/value – This study contributes to values-integrated financial literacy and transformative pedagogy by showing that ethical, cultural, and economic learning develops through negotiated classroom practices rather than linear processes, with relevance across diverse sociocultural contexts.

Keywords: Transformative learning, Financial literacy, Early childhood education, Islamic values, Local wisdom, Culturally responsive pedagogy

Paper type Research paper

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Received: 6 September 2025; Revised: 25 December 2025; Accepted: 30 December 2025

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2025.112-03>

1. Introduction

Financial literacy constitutes a critical competency for navigating contemporary global economies. However, levels of financial competence among Indonesian adults remain low, with national data indicating that only 38.03% of adults possess adequate financial knowledge and capabilities (T. Kaiser et al., 2020; Otoritas Jasa Keuangan, 2021; Umnov et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2024). These limitations are reflected in problematic financial behaviors, including insufficient savings, high-risk borrowing, and inadequate retirement planning, which existing research has linked to early developmental stages during which foundational cognitive and behavioral frameworks are formed (Gladstone & Barrett, 2023; Sajid, 2025). Despite this recognition, early financial literacy education remains dominated by cognitive-transmission approaches that prioritize technical knowledge acquisition while marginalizing cultural values and spiritual dimensions central to economic reasoning in Muslim-majority societies. This misalignment produces educational experiences that are often disconnected from children's lived realities, raising critical questions regarding pedagogical relevance, cultural responsiveness, and long-term effectiveness, particularly in contexts where financial practices are embedded within moral norms, religious obligations, and culturally situated meanings.

A growing body of scholarship has acknowledged this disjunction but has not yet resolved it. Studies have documented the limited incorporation of religious principles in early childhood financial literacy curricula, yet they do not explain why integration efforts often remain superficial or ineffective (Noviyanti & Ulfiandi, 2024). Other research has identified disconnections between spiritual values and financial practices but has offered little guidance on how to bridge these domains operationally within educational settings (Staverska et al., 2022). Similarly, studies emphasizing the role of Islamic values in character development highlight their importance but do not sufficiently address the mechanisms by which such values are enacted in everyday pedagogical practice or the forms of resistance that may arise (Aldossary et al., 2025a; He et al., 2024). Collectively, this literature reveals a persistent conceptual gap in which Western secular frameworks continue to dominate financial education, despite their documented inadequacy in contexts where economic behavior is inseparable from religious and cultural life. This gap reflects not merely a curricular omission but a deeper epistemological tension concerning how economic knowledge is constructed and transmitted.

Transformative learning theory offers a promising conceptual lens for addressing this tension by focusing on changes in meaning perspectives rather than the accumulation of technical knowledge. However, its foundational formulation emphasizes critical reflection, rational discourse, and experiences that challenge assumptions, which have been primarily theorized within adult education contexts (Carter & Nicolaidis, 2023; Mezirow, 2000; Revell et al., 2022; Umnov et al., 2025). Given young children's limited capacity for autonomous critical reflection, the direct application of transformative learning to early childhood education remains theoretically and practically contested. To address this limitation, the present study adopts a multi-theoretical approach that situates transformative learning within developmentally appropriate pedagogical processes.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, explains how teacher mediation enables children to engage in learning beyond their independent capabilities (Vygotsky, 1978; Xue, 2023). Ausubel's meaningful learning theory further clarifies how new financial concepts acquire meaning when they are anchored in children's existing cultural knowledge and experiential backgrounds (Ausubel et al., 1978; Rifqiansyah & Wijaya, 2025; Switaningsih H et al., 2024). Bandura's social learning theory accounts for how children construct understanding through observation and imitation of economic behaviors modeled by teachers and peers (Bandura, 1986). Together, these complementary perspectives provide an explanatory framework for understanding how transformative learning processes may operate in early childhood settings despite developmental constraints.

Nevertheless, the application of transformative learning to early childhood financial literacy remains constrained by two interrelated obstacles: its predominant orientation toward adult

learners with limited adaptation to young children's cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics, and the scarcity of empirical research examining how values integration unfolds amid real-world implementation challenges such as teacher resistance, institutional constraints, resource limitations, and varying levels of parental support. Consequently, existing studies continue to rely mainly on cognitive-behavioral frameworks that measure knowledge acquisition while positioning religious values as supplementary rather than constitutive elements of economic understanding (Alfarisy & Iswandi, 2025; Elia, 2024; Moslimany et al., 2024). Against this backdrop, empirical insight remains limited regarding how transformative learning that integrates religious values and local wisdom is enacted in early childhood financial literacy education, particularly within contexts shaped by developmental constraints and ongoing pedagogical negotiation.

This study examines the implementation of transformative learning that integrates Islamic values and Madurese local wisdom into early childhood financial literacy education, with explicit attention to inherent tensions and contradictions. The central research question examines how transformative learning approaches shape the development of financial literacy in real-world implementation contexts. Subsidiary questions investigate pedagogical strategies that facilitate or hinder the integration of Islamic economic principles; the use of local wisdom as an authentic learning medium amid teacher uncertainty; and the emergence of entrepreneurial character patterns through values-integrated practices that require ongoing negotiation and adaptation.

This study advances three contributions. First, it synthesizes transformative learning theory, Islamic values education, and local wisdom pedagogy in the context of early childhood financial literacy, domains that have been mainly examined in isolation (Amalia et al., 2022; Sakti et al., 2024). Second, it introduces the Values-Integrated Transformative Financial Literacy framework, extending transformative learning beyond adult education while conceptualizing spiritual and cultural dimensions as constitutive elements of financial meaning-making. Third, it provides empirical evidence that documents both the affordances and constraints of culturally responsive pedagogy, thereby challenging idealized representations of values-based education and offering a balanced account of pedagogical successes and limitations.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design and Approach

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, using a multi-site case study design, to explore the implementation of transformative learning that integrates Islamic values and local wisdom into early childhood financial literacy education. Qualitative methodology was selected to capture meanings, processes, and pedagogical complexities from multiple stakeholder perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Lim, 2025). Case study design enabled a comparative examination across two institutions that implemented similar pedagogical approaches in contrasting geographical contexts, while maintaining cultural continuity through shared Madurese heritage. This methodological choice acknowledges that implementing transformative learning involves contextual negotiations, adaptations, and potential resistance, thereby requiring interpretive investigation.

2.2. Research Sites and Context

Two early childhood education institutions were purposefully selected based on established reputations for values-based financial literacy programs. Nurul Hidayah Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Sampang Regency is located in a rural setting where Madurese cultural traditions remain strongly preserved. Al-Falah Kindergarten in Surabaya exemplifies urban environments in which traditional values coexist with modern educational innovations. Both institutions demonstrated commitment to transformative pedagogical approaches, yet faced distinct implementation challenges related to resource availability, parental expectations, and institutional constraints. The contrasting locations enabled examination of how transformative learning principles adapted across different socioeconomic contexts while maintaining focus on Madurese cultural integration.

2.3. Participants and Sampling Strategy

Data were collected over four months, from July to October 2024, through participatory observation and in-depth interviews. Participatory observation with moderate involvement was conducted three times per week for each family, with visits lasting two to three hours per session.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling to ensure information-rich cases that could provide substantial insights into implementation and challenges. Selection criteria for classroom teachers included at least two years of teaching experience in financial literacy education, demonstrated competence in values-based pedagogy, and active involvement in curriculum development. Principals were selected based on direct participation in Islamic values-based curriculum design and oversight of financial literacy program implementation. Parent participants were selected based on active engagement in school activities, including market-day events, cooking classes, and home-based reinforcement. The final sample comprised 15 participants distributed across both research sites (Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Characteristics and Selection Criteria

Code	Role	Institution	Professional Experience	Key Expertise / Involvement
T1	Classroom Teacher	Nurul Hidayah	4 years	Financial literacy instruction, values-based pedagogy
T2	Classroom Teacher	Nurul Hidayah	5 years	Islamic values integration, BCCT-based learning
T3	Classroom Teacher	Nurul Hidayah	3 years	Entrepreneurship education, local wisdom integration
T4	Classroom Teacher	Nurul Hidayah	6 years	Curriculum development, transformative pedagogy
T5	Classroom Teacher	Al-Falah	7 years	Islamic education, financial literacy, BCCT expertise
T6	Classroom Teacher	Al-Falah	4 years	Transformative pedagogy, educational technology
T7	Classroom Teacher	Al-Falah	3 years	Entrepreneurship facilitation, market day programs
T8	Classroom Teacher	Al-Falah	5 years	Curriculum innovation, financial literacy education
P1	Principal	Nurul Hidayah	12 years (8 as principal)	Curriculum leadership, institutional program oversight
P2	Principal	Al-Falah	15 years (10 as principal)	Policy formulation, program implementation
PA1	Parent	Nurul Hidayah	-	School-based activities, home learning reinforcement
PA2	Parent	Nurul Hidayah	-	Values education support, school involvement
PA3	Parent	Al-Falah	-	Entrepreneurship project support
PA4	Parent	Al-Falah	-	Financial literacy and cooking class participation
PA5	Parent	Al-Falah	-	Market day involvement, home values reinforcement

Note: All participant identities are protected through alphanumeric coding. T1-T4 represent teachers from Nurul Hidayah; T5-T8 represent teachers from Al-Falah; P1-P2 represent principals; PA1-PA2 represent parents from Nurul Hidayah; PA3-PA5 represent parents from Al-Falah.

2.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection spanned six months, from February through July 2024, and employed multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of transformative learning. Non-participatory observation was conducted three times weekly at each institution, focusing on teacher-student interactions, learning activity structures, local wisdom materials integration, and moments revealing pedagogical tensions. Each observation session lasted

approximately three hours and included morning circle time, center-based learning activities, and closing reflection periods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 15 participants, each lasting 45 to 60 minutes, to explore transformative learning patterns, applications of entrepreneurship education, and factors that support or hinder program implementation. Document analysis examined lesson plans, curriculum guides, student work samples, and institutional policies.

2.5. Research Instruments

Three primary instruments guided systematic data collection throughout the research period. Semi-structured interview guides were developed around the implementation of transformative learning, strategies for integrating Islamic values, approaches to utilizing local wisdom, and entrepreneurship education practices. Interview questions elicited detailed descriptions of pedagogical decisions, educational philosophies, and practical challenges, including instances in which intended integration failed or required adaptation. Observation protocols documented teacher facilitation techniques, student engagement patterns, characteristics of learning materials, and daily financial literacy activities. Document analysis frameworks systematically examined curriculum documents, lesson plans, student work, and activity records for evidence of values integration and consistency in implementation.

2.6. Visualization and Documentation Tools

The data visualizations in Figures 1 and 2 were designed and redrawn by the research team to accurately represent the analytical findings and align with the thematic analysis outcomes. Figures were created manually by the authors using standard digital design tools to ensure clear visual communication of the framework and analytical procedures. All substantive analytical processes, including data collection, coding, thematic analysis, theme development, and interpretation, were conducted entirely by the research team without the use of automated analytical tools.

2.7. Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis, comprising six systematic stages. The familiarization stage involved repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and document contents to develop a comprehensive understanding of data patterns and contradictions. Initial coding was conducted manually to maintain close researcher engagement with the data, generating descriptive codes that capture meaningful segments related to transformative learning successes and challenges. Theme searching involved organizing codes into potential themes representing patterns across the dataset. Theme reviewing required checking proposed themes against coded extracts to ensure internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Theme definition involved refining theme names and developing clear definitions that capture the essence of each theme. Report writing synthesized analytical findings into a coherent narrative supported by data extracts.

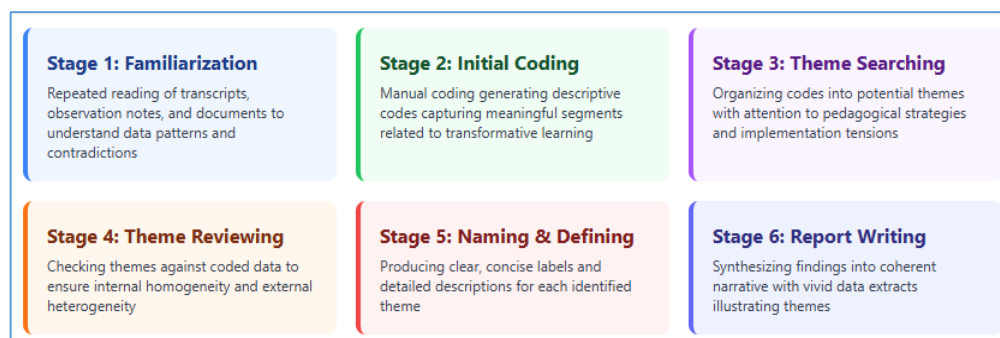


Figure 1. Data Analysis Procedures

Source: Redrawn by authors, adapted from Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis framework

2.8. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to rigorous ethical standards to protect participant confidentiality and privacy. Written informed consent was obtained from institutional leaders, all participating teachers, and parents before data collection commenced. All participants were assigned alphanumeric codes, which were used consistently throughout this manuscript. T1-T8 represent classroom teachers, P1-P2 represent principals, and PA1-PA5 represent parents. No real names or specific identifying information are disclosed. All interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were stored securely, password-protected, and accessible only to the research team. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw, to review their transcripts, and to request the deletion of their data at any time, without penalty.

3. Result

3.1. Transformative Learning Implementation: Pedagogical Shifts and Observed Practices

Both research sites demonstrated a sustained pedagogical shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning through long-term implementation of the Beyond Centers and Circle Time model. Nurul Hidayah Integrated Islamic Kindergarten formally adopted the BCCT approach in 2017, while Al-Falah Kindergarten has implemented it since 1999. In both institutions, daily classroom practices emphasized experiential engagement, including grinding traditional spices using a mortar and pestle, preparing healthy beverages from local ingredients, and interacting with natural materials. Children were encouraged to select activities across multiple learning centers based on their interests, thereby positioning them as active participants in the learning process. However, field observations indicate that this shift was uneven, with some teachers still struggling to relinquish instructional control during student-led activities.

Daily routines in both institutions reflected structured efforts to balance learner autonomy with pedagogical guidance. Al-Falah Kindergarten operated from 06:50 to 10:30 for kindergarten students and 08:15 to 10:30 for preschool students, while Nurul Hidayah scheduled kindergarten from 07:15 to 11:00 and preschool from 07:30 to 10:00. Despite differences in scheduling, both institutions organized learning sequences beginning with circle time for Islamic values introduction, followed by center-based exploration, and concluding with reflection activities. Teacher T1 explained that adopting BCCT repositioned children as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients. At the same time, Principal P1 acknowledged that teachers required sustained institutional support to adapt to facilitation roles, particularly because younger children aged three to four years still needed more structured guidance than older children aged five to six years. This finding underscores that student-centered learning in early childhood contexts operates within developmental constraints rather than as unrestricted learner autonomy.

The comparative characteristics of BCCT implementation across the two institutions are summarized in Table 2. The table illustrates how structural differences shaped pedagogical enactment while revealing shared challenges in practice.

Table 2. Transformative Learning Implementation Comparison

Learning Aspects	Nurul Hidayah (Sampang)	Al-Falah (Surabaya)
Learning Model	BCCT	BCCT + Global Structural Curriculum
Approach Basis	Madurese local wisdom	Quranic verses + local wisdom
Main Centers	6 centers (IMTAQ, Construction, Literacy, Arts, Science, Role-Playing)	06:50–10:30 (Kindergarten), 08:15–10:30 (Preschool)
Learning Duration	07:15–11:00 (Kindergarten), 07:30–10:00 (Preschool)	06:50–10:30 (Kindergarten), 08:15–10:30 (Preschool)
Parent Involvement	High (cooking class, Market Day)	Moderate (Market Day, special programs)
Learning Media	Natural materials (stones, leaves, twigs, spices)	Technology and conventional materials

As shown in Table 2, Nurul Hidayah emphasized Madurese local wisdom and natural materials, supported by high parental involvement through collaborative activities. In contrast, Al-Falah combined Quranic references with local wisdom and incorporated technological and conventional media, with more moderate parental participation. These differences shaped classroom dynamics and learning resources but did not result in fundamentally distinct pedagogical outcomes. In both settings, teachers faced similar tensions in facilitating child-led exploration while maintaining classroom structure and curricular coherence.

The findings indicate that the implementation of transformative learning in early childhood education was characterized by partial, negotiated pedagogical shifts rather than complete transformation. While both institutions formally adopted student-centered approaches and created environments supportive of exploration, the realization of transformative learning remained contingent upon teacher mediation, institutional support, and children's developmental readiness. Rather than representing a linear progression from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogy, observed practices illustrate an ongoing negotiation between instructional structure and learner agency within everyday classroom routines.

3.2. Values Integration: Islamic Principles and Local Wisdom in Daily Practice

The integration of Islamic principles and local wisdom into daily learning practices across both institutions emerged as a contextual and negotiated pedagogical process rather than a uniform or automatically effective strategy. Islamic values were embedded within routine educational activities, including almsgiving, entrepreneurship programs, and daily consumption practices, positioning ethics as constitutive elements of financial learning rather than as supplementary moral instruction. However, empirical data indicate that the effectiveness of this integration depended heavily on teacher mediation, children's developmental readiness, and the extent of contextualization in classroom practice.

Almsgiving practices illustrate the complexity of values internalization in early childhood settings. Al-Falah Kindergarten implemented daily voluntary almsgiving, while Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten conducted almsgiving during weekly worship activities. Teacher T5 explained that each classroom included foster siblings who were orphans, with alms proceeds distributed directly to these children to create authentic social contexts. Teacher T2 emphasized that the primary pedagogical intention of almsgiving was to balance worldly and spiritual orientations, while Teacher T3 stressed that no fixed monetary amount was imposed, prioritizing sincerity over compliance. Despite these intentions, field observations documented that some children engaged in almsgiving mechanically, without a clear understanding of its ethical meaning. Principal P2 noted that younger children often struggled with abstract spiritual concepts and required repeated explanations grounded in concrete examples. This finding suggests that habituation alone was insufficient to ensure internalization of value without sustained pedagogical scaffolding.

Entrepreneurial learning activities further reveal both pedagogical affordances and cognitive constraints. Monthly cooking classes, involving collaboration between teachers, students, and parents, were designed to introduce concepts of production, cost, and value creation through traditional Madurese foods such as petis, rujak, and herbal drinks. Teacher T3 stated that using local products helped children recognize the economic value within their own cultural environment. Parent PA3 similarly observed that children more readily grasped pricing concepts when learning involved familiar cultural foods rather than abstract simulations. Nevertheless, teachers reported persistent difficulties in facilitating children's understanding of more abstract economic notions. Teacher T7 noted that concepts such as profit margins and cost recovery often exceeded children's immediate comprehension, necessitating additional teacher guidance and differentiated instructional support.

Market Day activities provided a broader institutional context for integrating financial literacy, Islamic values, and local wisdom. These events engaged the school community in product preparation, pricing, and transaction management. Teacher T3 explained that Market Day served as an assessment of cooperation between schools and parents and also exposed children to fundamental economic interactions. However, variations in pricing schemes between institutions

reflected differing pedagogical priorities and produced uneven learning outcomes. At Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten, products were priced at a maximum of Rp 3,000, with profits returned to students in proportion to their initial capital contributions. In contrast, Al-Falah Kindergarten sold products at Rp 1,000 and allocated proceeds to class funds supporting orphans. Teacher T7 observed that while some children demonstrated emerging economic reasoning, others remained dependent on teacher intervention to interpret transactional outcomes.

Regular charity practices and daily cafeteria operations reinforced ethical and practical dimensions of financial learning, yet their impact varied among learners. Teacher T6 highlighted the challenge of balancing spiritual education with play-based learning to avoid overwhelming young children, while Teacher T8 emphasized that consistent repetition supported gradual internalization despite significant individual differences. Parental perspectives further confirmed this uneven internalization. Parent PA2 reported that some children began discussing charity and sharing at home, indicating transfer of values beyond the classroom, whereas other children's engagement remained limited to school routines.

The findings indicate that the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom in early childhood financial literacy operates as a gradual, non-linear process shaped by pedagogical mediation and developmental constraints. Rather than producing uniform outcomes, these practices generated varied patterns of understanding and engagement, underscoring that values integration should be understood as an ongoing educational negotiation rather than a finalized or idealized achievement.

3.3. Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurial Learning Outcomes

Financial literacy development in this study was shaped through experiential learning that engaged children in authentic economic activities embedded in daily classroom practices. Across both research sites, children were introduced to core financial concepts, including the use of money, saving, spending, sharing, and production, through contextualized activities. Simulated buying and selling using play money and real products supported children's understanding of money's functions and exchange. However, observations indicated that younger students required more teacher assistance with transaction calculations than older peers. Saving practices were fostered through class piggy banks and visual tracking charts, illustrating how routine-based activities supported the gradual formation of saving habits rather than immediate mastery.

Learning outcomes were observed across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, with notable variation among students. Cognitively, children demonstrated an emerging understanding of basic transactions, monetary value, and halal-haram distinctions during Market Day and simulation activities, although abstract concepts required repeated concrete explanations. Affective outcomes were reflected in increased voluntary charitable behavior and greater social awareness of peers. At the same time, psychomotor development was evident in transactional skills, such as counting, exchanging money, and food preparation, during cooking classes. As summarized in Table 3, perspectives from teachers, principals, and parents consistently highlighted that children's engagement and learning outcomes were strengthened when financial literacy activities aligned with cultural experiences and everyday practices, while also revealing differences in comprehension by age and in the use of in-home-based reinforcement.

Table 3. Stakeholder Perspectives on Transformative Financial Literacy Implementation

Theme	Participant	Direct Quotation	Context
Pedagogical Transformation	T1	<i>"We adopted BCCT to position children at the center of learning, recognizing students as active knowledge constructors rather than passive recipients."</i>	Explaining the shift from transmission-based to facilitative pedagogy
	T3	<i>"This method requires significant teacher adjustment because we must release control and trust children's exploration."</i>	Acknowledging discomfort with student-directed learning

Theme	Participant	Direct Quotation	Context
Cultural Engagement	P1	<i>"Teacher adaptation to facilitation roles required ongoing support and patience."</i>	Recognizing the need for sustained institutional scaffolding
	T4	<i>"Students showed increased engagement when learning activities connected to their cultural experiences, though some struggled with open-ended tasks requiring self-direction."</i>	Observing the impact of cultural relevance on student motivation
	T8	<i>"Consistent daily practice helped children internalize values gradually, though individual comprehension varied significantly based on age and family support."</i>	Identifying factors affecting values integration effectiveness
	T5	<i>"Each classroom includes foster siblings who are orphans requiring financial assistance, with alms proceeds distributed to these children, creating authentic learning contexts."</i>	Describing authentic integration of values and practice
	T2	<i>"Almsgiving's primary purpose involves balancing worldly and spiritual concerns while fostering empathy."</i>	Articulating an integrated economic-spiritual education philosophy
Islamic Values Integration	T3	<i>"No set amount exists for student alms; sincerity proves most important."</i>	Emphasizing internal values over ritual compliance
	P2	<i>"Younger children sometimes struggled to understand abstract spiritual concepts requiring concrete examples."</i>	Identifying developmental limitations in abstract value comprehension
	T6	<i>"Balancing spiritual education with play-based learning requires careful planning to avoid overwhelming young children."</i>	Recognizing pedagogical tension
Local Wisdom and Entrepreneurship	T3	<i>"Using local products helps children understand that economic value exists in their own culture."</i>	Linking local wisdom to economic literacy
	PA2	<i>"Children began discussing charity concepts at home, asking questions about helping others and sharing possessions with those in need."</i>	Observing the transfer of values to the home environment.
	PA3	<i>"Participating in cooking classes allowed observing how children learned pricing and value creation through familiar cultural foods rather than abstract concepts."</i>	Describing parental perspectives on experiential learning
	T7	<i>"Some students demonstrated difficulty understanding abstract concepts like profit margins or cost recovery, requiring additional teacher scaffolding."</i>	Identifying cognitive development constraints
Implementation Challenges	P1	<i>"Budget limitations sometimes forced us to simplify planned activities or postpone Market Day events."</i>	Acknowledging financial constraints
	T4	<i>"Some younger students struggled with transaction calculations requiring teacher assistance, while older students demonstrated more advanced comprehension."</i>	Highlighting the need for differentiated instructional support

Theme	Participant	Direct Quotation	Context
Pedagogical Transformation	PA1	<i>"Some parents struggled to find time to participate regularly due to work commitments."</i>	Identifying external barriers to parental involvement
	PA4	<i>"Children applied financial literacy skills learned at school during family shopping trips, asking about prices and discussing whether purchases were necessary."</i>	Describing transfer of learning to authentic contexts
	PA5	<i>"Children showed increased pride in Madurese cultural products after school activities, preferring traditional snacks over commercial alternatives during family outings."</i>	Observing cultural identity development through learning

Alongside these outcomes, several implementation challenges shaped the uneven realization of learning gains. Teachers reported difficulties in explaining abstract spiritual concepts to young children, maintaining focus during value-oriented activities, and managing group dynamics during collaborative tasks. Institutional constraints, including limited budgets and scheduling pressures, occasionally required simplifying or postponing planned activities, while parental work commitments affected the consistency of home-based reinforcement. As reflected in Table 3, these challenges were recognized across stakeholder groups, underscoring the need for differentiated instructional support and ongoing pedagogical adjustment. Document analysis further showed that lesson plans were frequently revised in response to these constraints, indicating that financial literacy and entrepreneurial learning outcomes emerged through adaptive and negotiated processes rather than uniform implementation.

3.4. Integrated Framework for Values-Based Financial Literacy Development

Analysis across both research sites indicates the emergence of an integrated framework linking transformative learning, Islamic values, and local wisdom in early childhood financial literacy practices. This framework was derived from recurring patterns observed in classroom activities, entrepreneurship programs, and value-oriented routines, reflecting how these elements interact in everyday pedagogical implementation. Transformative learning is the central process by which children gradually construct financial meaning, supported by experiential activities and continuous teacher mediation.

Islamic values serve as foundational ethical references that shape children's economic understanding and behavior. Observational and interview data indicate that principles such as halal-haram distinctions, charity, and social responsibility are consistently embedded in financial learning activities, including market-day transactions, classroom savings practices, and regular almsgiving routines. These values guide children's decision-making processes and provide evaluative criteria beyond numerical calculations. Local wisdom grounds financial concepts in children's lived cultural experiences. Traditional Madurese products, food preparation activities, and culturally familiar market practices serve as concrete learning media that make abstract financial concepts accessible. This cultural grounding enables children to relate formal learning activities to everyday experiences, thereby facilitating the construction of meaning through familiar social and material contexts.

The interaction among transformative learning processes, Islamic values, and local wisdom unfolds through iterative cycles of experience, guided reflection, and gradual internalization. Teacher mediation plays a central role in facilitating these cycles by scaffolding children's participation, clarifying meaning, and supporting learning progression aligned with developmental levels. These relationships are synthesized in Figure 2, which illustrates the empirically derived framework emerging from the thematic analysis.

Observed learning outcomes within this framework span multiple developmental domains. Cognitive outcomes include children's understanding of the functions of money, basic transactions, and Islamic economic principles. Affective outcomes are reflected in voluntary charitable behavior, empathy toward peers, and pride in local cultural products. Psychomotor

outcomes involve practical skills such as counting money, conducting transactions, and preparing food during cooking classes. Field data also reveal implementation challenges, including variations in teacher facilitation capacity, resource constraints, and differences in children's developmental readiness, all of which require continuous pedagogical adjustments.

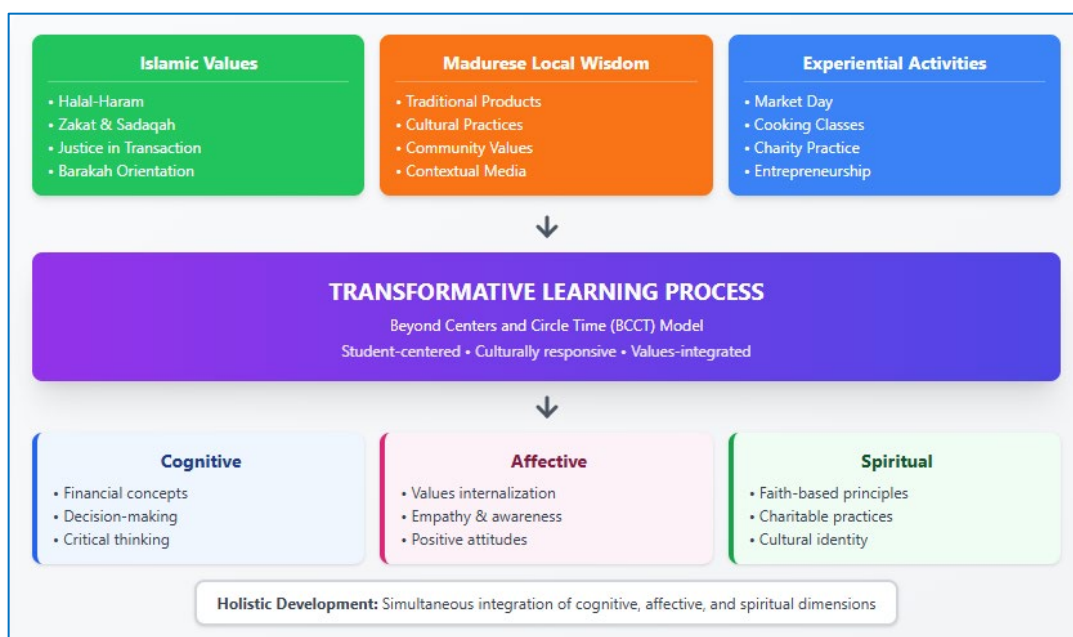


Figure 2. Values-Integrated Transformative Financial Literacy Framework for Early Childhood Education;
Source: Developed by authors based on thematic analysis findings

4. Discussion

This study reveals that financial literacy transformation is an integrated process that synthesizes Islamic values, local wisdom, and experiential learning through transformative pedagogical approaches. Findings extend Mezirow's transformative learning theory beyond traditional adult education contexts by demonstrating how perspective transformation can occur in early childhood when mediated through culturally embedded, values-integrated experiences. Children developed economic understanding simultaneously with moral reasoning and cultural identity formation through iterative cycles of experience, reflection, and meaning-making. This transformation departs from conventional financial education, emphasizing the development of cognitive skills by treating values and culture as constitutive elements rather than supplementary content.

4.1. Transformative Learning Adapted for Early Childhood Contexts

The integrative framework presented in the results section (Figure 2) provides an empirical basis for understanding how transformative learning unfolds in early childhood financial literacy through values-based and culturally grounded practices. This framework serves as a starting point for examining how core principles of transformative learning can be adapted to educational contexts in which learners' capacities for abstract reasoning and independent critical reflection are still developing.

Transformative learning theory traditionally emphasizes critical reflection, rational discourse, and assumption-challenging experiences among adult learners with advanced abstract reasoning abilities (Carter & Nicolaidis, 2023; Revell et al., 2022; Singer-Brodowski, 2023). Findings from this study indicate that these core elements can be adapted for early childhood contexts through developmentally appropriate pedagogical modifications. Although young children are unable to engage in abstract critical reflection or formal rational discourse, teacher-facilitated discussions following experiential activities function as contextually appropriate reflective processes. Empirical observations indicate that children experienced disorienting

moments when questioning price–quality relationships between traditional and commercial products, prompting reconsideration of how economic value is determined within familiar settings.

Perspective transformation in this context emerged through repeated exposure rather than singular revelatory moments commonly associated with adult transformative learning. Children gradually integrated ethical and cultural considerations into their economic reasoning through sustained participation in Market Day activities, cooking classes, and routine charitable practices. Field data indicate a shift from mechanical transaction behaviors toward more deliberate engagement with Islamic economic principles and recognition of cultural value. This pattern reflects the gradual formation of meaning perspectives shaped through socialization and guided experience rather than through accumulated adult life experiences. Guided reflective support appears to play a central role in this process, as structured facilitation supports young learners' meaning-making despite developmental limitations (Sweet, 2023).

4.2. Multi-Theoretical Integration Supporting Developmental Transformation

Transformative learning theory provides an overarching framework that explains perspective shifts in financial literacy development. However, complementary theoretical lenses illuminate the specific mechanisms through which transformation occurs despite cognitive limitations. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development explains how teacher mediation facilitates children's learning progression beyond independent capabilities. Field observations documented teachers providing scaffolding during transactional activities, modeling ethical decision-making processes, and facilitating peer discussions that connected economic concepts to Islamic values and cultural practices. This mediation proved essential for enabling perspective transformation among young learners who lacked the cognitive capacity for autonomous critical reflection. The paradigm shift from behaviorist to constructivist learning aligns with Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction and on cultural tools that mediate cognitive development (Xue, 2023).

Ausubel's meaningful learning concept clarifies how new economic knowledge connects to existing cultural understandings and experiential foundations (Ausubel et al., 1978; Ribeiro et al., 2024). Local wisdom integration created authentic contexts in which children recognized that familiar cultural products possess commercial value and support sustainable livelihoods (Ma et al., 2021; Rizka et al., 2025). This approach facilitated meaning-making processes central to transformative learning by providing recognizable reference points that enabled children to reconstruct economic understanding, incorporating ethical and cultural dimensions (Aldossary et al., 2025b; Borg & Samuelsson, 2022). Abstract financial concepts became meaningful through connections to tangible cultural products and community economic practices familiar from children's daily experiences.

Bandura's social learning theory reveals how observation and imitation enable skill acquisition, supporting behavioral transformation accompanying perspective shifts (Bandura, 1986; Grusec, 1992; Hornby, 2011). Authentic economic activities, such as Market Day events and cooking classes, enabled children to observe and practice economic behaviors in safe, controlled environments. Children observed teachers and peers modeling Islamic economic principles and applications of local wisdom, and then imitated and internalized these behaviors through repeated practice. Kaiser et al. (2023) note that understanding basic financial concepts taught from an early age provides a strong foundation for developing responsible financial behaviors. Together, these complementary frameworks constitute an integrated theoretical foundation that addresses how transformative learning operates despite developmental constraints. This multi-theoretical integration represents a methodological strength, providing a comprehensive explanation of complex phenomena that require multiple analytical lenses.

4.3. Islamic Values as Constitutive Elements of Economic Understanding

Islamic values in this study function as constitutive ethical infrastructures that shape how children construct and enact economic meaning, rather than as external moral prescriptions added to technical financial knowledge. This positioning resonates with perspectives in Islamic economics that locate ethics within economic reasoning itself, rather than as supplementary

normative layers (Anami, 2024; Furqani et al., 2020; Kobiyyh & El Amri, 2023; Putra, 2025). Empirical findings indicate that children spontaneously referenced halal-haram principles, charity obligations, and notions of transactional justice during Market Day and entrepreneurship activities, suggesting that ethical considerations were embedded in everyday financial decision-making. This pattern contrasts with didactic religious instruction, which often treats ethical principles as abstract knowledge disconnected from lived economic practice. It supports a transformative learning view in which meaning change involves shifts in underlying frames of reference rather than the accumulation of moral rules (Lazurko et al., 2025)

At the same time, the integration of Islamic values into early childhood financial literacy learning emerged as a gradual and negotiated process rather than an automatic outcome. Teachers' practices demonstrate the need for sustained pedagogical scaffolding, repeated exposure across learning contexts, and continuous adaptation to children's developmental capacities. By embedding Islamic economic ethics across financial activities rather than separating them into a distinct instructional domain, teachers enabled children to evaluate economic decisions beyond profit-oriented calculations, incorporating spiritual and social considerations. Challenges related to explaining abstract spiritual concepts and balancing values education with play-based learning were addressed through concrete examples and authentic social contexts, such as charity practices directly linked to peers' welfare. This pattern aligns with broader understandings of values transformation as a longitudinal process involving identity formation and sustained engagement rather than immediate internalization (Mujahid, 2021).

4.4. Local Wisdom as Cultural Grounding for Economic Meaning-Making

Madurese local wisdom in this study functioned as an experiential anchor that connected abstract economic concepts to children's lived cultural realities, rather than merely serving as illustrative examples. Learning activities involving petis, rujak, and traditional herbal drinks created authentic economic contexts in which children recognized that cultural products possess commercial value and contribute to sustainable livelihoods. This form of cultural grounding enabled children to reconstruct economic meaning by integrating financial considerations with cultural preservation, thereby supporting perspective transformation through tangible reference points. These findings reinforce arguments that contextual learning strengthens connections between formal and informal knowledge (Yatim et al., 2025), and extend them by showing that the integration of local wisdom simultaneously fosters economic understanding and cultural pride (Nuriyanto et al., 2025; Rangkuti et al., 2025).

At the same time, the use of local wisdom revealed pedagogical tensions between traditional production methods and modern market expectations that required careful navigation. Children questioned price differences and perceived quality between traditional and commercial products, prompting reflection on how value is determined beyond simple cost calculations, including cultural significance and sustainability. Such moments functioned as disorienting experiences that stimulated critical economic thinking through culturally grounded inquiry. Teachers facilitated these discussions without providing definitive resolutions, instead supporting children's reasoning through additional scaffolding when inconsistencies or confusion arose. While experiential learning has been associated with enhanced creativity and problem-solving (Williams et al., 2016), the findings indicate that these benefits emerged unevenly across participants, underscoring the need for differentiated instructional support aligned with children's developmental readiness.

4.5. Pedagogical Transformation and Implementation Realities

The implementation of the BCCT model catalyzed a pedagogical transformation from transmission to facilitation while exposing teachers' uncertainties about relinquishing instructional control. Some educators embraced facilitation roles effectively, while others struggled to relinquish authority and occasionally intervened unnecessarily during student-directed activities. This variation suggests that transformative pedagogy demands changes in teacher dispositions alongside methodological shifts, representing a professional development challenge that requires sustained attention. Bhardwaj et al. (2025) emphasize that student-

centered approaches require an institutional culture that supports educators' risk-taking and experimentation. Findings reveal that implementation success depended substantially on administrative patience with adaptation processes, peer support networks among educators, and willingness to tolerate pedagogical messiness that accompanies genuine student exploration.

Resource limitations and institutional constraints shaped the realities of implementation, requiring continuous negotiation and adaptation. Budget constraints occasionally necessitated simplification or postponement of activities, affecting program consistency. Parental time constraints limited participation in collaborative activities, despite their recognized importance in reinforcing school-based learning. These practical challenges demonstrate that values-integrated transformative learning implementation requires sustained commitment and resourcefulness rather than merely adopting new pedagogical frameworks. Teachers developed creative solutions, including simplifying activities without compromising learning objectives, modifying schedules to accommodate parents' availability, and using locally available materials, thereby reducing costs. Such adaptations maintained transformative learning principles while acknowledging contextual realities, demonstrating that successful implementation requires pragmatic flexibility alongside theoretical fidelity.

4.6. Research Contribution

Transformative learning principles can be adapted for early childhood financial literacy education through culturally embedded and values-integrated practices that account for developmental constraints. While transformative learning has been predominantly theorized within adult education contexts emphasizing rational discourse and critical reflection (Carter & Nicolaidis, 2023; Colomer et al., 2020; McClain, 2024; Toka & Gioti, 2023), the findings indicate that perspective transformation in early childhood occurs through experiential engagement, value habituation, and cultural grounding mediated by pedagogical scaffolding. In this context, transformation is not driven by abstract reflection but by repeated participation in meaningful activities embedded in children's everyday experiences. This study contributes to broader debates on values-based transformative learning in early childhood education by illustrating how financial meaning-making can be shaped through culturally embedded and ethically grounded practices. It is relevant beyond the Indonesian context insofar as similar dynamics emerge in educational settings where learning is closely intertwined with cultural identity and moral formation.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study also offers practical implications for educational contexts in which spiritual, cultural, and cognitive development are closely interconnected. The findings suggest that transformative learning principles can be operationalized through concrete pedagogical strategies, including experiential entrepreneurship activities, systematic integration of values, and sustained collaboration among schools, families, and communities. The adaptation of the Beyond Centers and Circle Time model demonstrates how globally recognized pedagogical approaches can be localized through cultural and religious values without compromising developmental appropriateness. At the same time, the analysis highlights that implementation involves continuous negotiation in response to teacher readiness, institutional constraints, and contextual variability. Consistent with perspectives emphasizing the holistic integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions (Rapina et al., 2023), the findings underscore the need for flexible and context-sensitive approaches to translating transformative learning into early childhood practice.

This study contributes to theory by proposing a transformative learning framework integrating Islamic values and local wisdom into early childhood financial literacy education. The framework demonstrates how experiential activities, values-based pedagogy, and culturally rooted learning media adapt transformative learning principles for young learners. By integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions, the model broadens financial literacy research, which has largely emphasized cognitive development, and supports future studies on values-oriented pedagogy in early education.

4.7. Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations that affect the interpretation and transferability of the findings. The small sample size of 15 participants from two institutions in East Java with Madurese cultural characteristics restricts generalizability across regions with different cultural contexts. The descriptive qualitative approach does not permit statistical measurement of learning outcomes or controlled comparison with conventional teaching models. The six-month research period limits observation of sustained behavioral changes over extended periods. Potential researcher bias inherent in qualitative case study methodology and the transferability of findings to non-Islamic educational settings represent additional constraints requiring consideration.

4.8. Suggestions

Future studies should integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess the effectiveness of transformative learning using measurable indicators. Comparative research across instructional models and the development of age-appropriate financial literacy assessment tools are recommended. Expanding research sites across diverse cultural regions and educational settings will strengthen the transferability of findings and enhance the understanding of how values and local wisdom shape financial literacy education for young children.

5. Conclusion

This study indicates that transformative learning approaches integrating Islamic values and Madurese local wisdom can support the development of early childhood financial literacy in a holistic and context-sensitive manner. Through the implementation of the Beyond Centers and Circle Time model, children engaged in experiential learning activities such as Market Day, cooking classes, and routine charitable practices that provided concrete contexts for financial meaning-making. Islamic values, including halal-haram considerations and charitable norms, functioned as ethical reference points shaping economic understanding, while entrepreneurship activities grounded in traditional products enabled children to relate value creation to familiar cultural practices. Rather than producing uniform outcomes, these learning processes were mediated by teacher facilitation, developmental readiness, and contextual conditions, underscoring the situated nature of transformation in early childhood settings.

At a theoretical level, the study contributes to ongoing discussions of transformative learning by illustrating how its principles may be interpreted beyond adult education and adapted to early childhood financial literacy contexts. The Values-Integrated Transformative Financial Literacy framework incorporates spiritual and cultural dimensions into experiential pedagogy, responding to critiques of cognitive-only approaches without positioning itself as a universal model. Practically, the findings suggest that values-based financial literacy requires sustained institutional support, collaboration with families and communities, and continuous pedagogical negotiation rather than one-time curricular interventions. As a contextually grounded contribution, this framework offers analytically transferable insights for educational settings in which learning is closely connected to cultural identity and moral formation, while remaining open to further empirical testing and critical refinement.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Ria Astuti: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Project administration.

Ardhana Reswari: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing.

Muammar Qadafi: Validation, Supervision, Writing - Review & Editing.

Selfi Lailiyatul Iftitah: Investigation, Data curation, Writing - Original Draft.

Lutfatun Nisa': Data curation, Writing - Review & Editing.

Funding statement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study, including interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation, are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to ethical considerations and the involvement of children and community members, raw data is not publicly archived.

Declaration of interests statement

All authors declare that they have no financial or personal interests that could influence the work presented in this manuscript.

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