

The Loving Dimension in School Well-Being at a Pesantren-Based Elementary School

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the loving dimension of school well-being among students at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean Kediri, a pesantren-based elementary school implementing a full-day school system. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that teachers successfully fostered warm and supportive emotional relationships through gentle guidance, positive reinforcement, and personal interactions that promoted a sense of safety among students. Peer interactions occurred naturally and were characterized by cooperation, spontaneous prosocial behavior, and the ability to resolve minor conflicts independently. Students also demonstrated a strong sense of belonging to the school, reflected in their enthusiasm for daily activities and their comfort within the learning environment. The study concludes that the loving dimension significantly contributes to creating a positive school climate and enhancing students' emotional well-being within the context of a pesantren-based full-day school.

Keywords: *School Well-Being; Loving Dimension; Full-Day School; Pesantren-Based Elementary School*

Introduction

Education is essentially a planned process aimed at helping students develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes continuously throughout their lives. The concept of lifelong education emphasizes that learning does not stop within certain spatial or temporal boundaries but continues as an ongoing effort to form a holistic individual (Shukla et al., 2025). In Islamic education, this process is not only oriented toward mastering academic content but also toward cultivating moral character through the internalization of Islamic values in all learning activities and school life (Ulwiayah & Ilahiyah, 2025).

As an educational institution, the school plays a central role in creating a conducive learning environment that enables students to develop their spiritual, personal, intellectual, and practical competencies needed both for themselves and for society (Fomenko & Kyrylenko, 2025). Students' learning motivation is strongly influenced by the quality of the school environment, both physically and socio-emotionally. A comfortable, safe, and emotionally supportive environment has been shown to increase learning enthusiasm, active engagement in class, and reduce negative behaviors such as absenteeism, passivity during lessons, or reluctance to participate in school activities (Pfeifer & Himbert, 2025).

One of the most widely used frameworks for understanding student well-being in schools is the concept of school well-being developed by Konu and Rimpelä (2002), which consists of four key dimensions: having (adequate facilities and resources), loving (warm and supportive social relationships), being (opportunities for self-actualization and participation), and health (physical and mental well-being). Within this framework, students are considered to experience well-being when these basic needs are met in a balanced manner. The loving dimension is particularly important as it relates to students' emotional experiences in forming relationships with teachers, peers, and the wider school community. Feeling accepted, cared for, valued, and included within the school community forms the foundation of a healthy psychosocial climate (Landa-Blanco, 2025).

The urgency of the loving dimension becomes even more pronounced in schools that implement full-day programs, where students spend extended hours on campus. SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean, under the auspices of Yayasan Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Hisan, has implemented a full-day school program since 2011. Students participate in a series of activities from morning to late afternoon, starting with dhuha prayer and Qur'an recitation, followed by formal lessons, snack breaks, communal lunch, nap time, and afternoon diniyah classes, concluding with congregational asr prayer. This extended schedule requires the school to seriously ensure the fulfillment of students' physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs, including the quality of social interactions they experience throughout the day (Nurshifa et al., 2025).

Initial observations and interviews indicate that SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean has made systematic efforts to foster warm social relationships between teachers and students as well as among peers. Teachers, particularly in lower grade levels, serve not only as instructors but also as emotional companions who greet students personally, offer support when they face learning difficulties, and avoid reprimands that threaten children's psychological safety. Students expressed feeling happy, unafraid of making mistakes, and more confident in trying and performing in class due to the emotional support they receive from teachers. Parents also observed that their children became more confident, open, and comfortable at school, while the school leadership emphasized that emotional support is a core principle in their instructional approach.

Meanwhile, peer interactions at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean occur naturally and supportively. Students help each other with classwork, share stationery, remind classmates who fall behind, and play together without forming exclusive groups—whether they are santri residing in the pesantren or full-day school students who return home daily. Minor conflicts during play are typically resolved independently using simple, cooperative strategies. No signs of systemic exclusion were observed, and students from various grade levels stated that they felt the school was like a “second home,” indicating a strong sense of belonging and widespread social acceptance within the school community.

Despite these observations, empirical studies on school well-being in Indonesia remain dominated by research focused on secondary education (junior and senior high school), often using quantitative approaches measuring stress, happiness, or general emotional states. Research that specifically examines school well-being at the elementary level—especially in pesantren-based full-day schools—remains limited. More specifically, in-depth studies on the loving dimension, which includes teacher–student relationships, peer interactions, and students’ sense of belonging within Islamic elementary schools, are still scarce. Yet childhood is a critical developmental stage where social and emotional foundations are formed, influencing students’ future growth.

Addressing this research gap, the present study focuses on exploring the implementation of the loving dimension of school well-being among students at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean within its full-day school setting. The study aims to: (1) describe forms of social relationships between teachers and students in the learning process, particularly in lower grade levels; (2) uncover the dynamics of peer interactions during academic and non-academic activities; and (3) analyze how students’ sense of belonging and social acceptance emerge within the pesantren-based school culture. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of school well-being studies in Islamic elementary education and practically to guide school administrators and teachers in designing learning environments that support students’ socio-emotional well-being.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth the implementation of the loving dimension of school well-being among students at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean Kediri. This approach was chosen because the phenomenon under investigation involves socio-emotional dynamics that naturally emerge within the school environment, requiring direct observation and intensive interaction with research subjects. The study was conducted at SD Mambaul Hisan, which implements a full-day school program, and research subjects were selected using purposive sampling. The participants consisted of the grade 1-B teacher, students from grades 1-B and 5, parents of students, and the school principal, as they possessed relevant information regarding the formation of social relationships within the school.

Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was carried out during classroom learning activities as well as students’ social interactions outside the classroom—such as during break time and communal meals—to directly observe interaction patterns and emotional climate. In-depth interviews were conducted semi-structurally with teachers, students, parents, and the school principal to explore their subjective experiences related to acceptance, interpersonal relationships, and social dynamics occurring in the school environment. Documentation, including the school’s daily activity schedule, full-day

school program guidelines, classroom photographs, and field notes, was used to support and validate the findings from observations and interviews.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, who was responsible for collecting, understanding, and interpreting data within the context of the field. Supporting instruments included observation guidelines, interview protocols, and field note sheets to ensure systematic data collection. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2020), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed by categorizing information according to main themes such as teacher–student relationships, peer interactions, and students’ sense of belonging to the school community. The data were then presented in narrative form along with direct quotations from informants to portray the actual conditions in the field, followed by repeated verification to maintain interpretive consistency.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (teachers, students, parents, and the school principal), methodological triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation), and member checking by asking informants to review the researcher’s interpretations. In addition, prolonged engagement and persistent observation were carried out to develop an accurate understanding of the context and interpersonal dynamics within the school. These techniques ensured that the data and interpretations produced were credible, trustworthy, and reflective of the real implementation of the loving dimension in school well-being at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean.

Results

The findings of this study show that the implementation of the loving dimension of school well-being at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean has been carried out effectively, as indicated by the emergence of warm social relationships between teachers and students, positive peer interactions, and a strong sense of belonging within the school community. In the learning process, particularly in class 1-B, the teacher served as an emotional companion who created a safe, friendly, and non-threatening learning atmosphere. The teacher welcomed students individually with personal greetings and provided both verbal and nonverbal encouragement that helped students feel cared for and valued. Classroom observations revealed that the teacher never used harsh reprimands when students encountered difficulties in reading or writing. Instead, the teacher accompanied them patiently with gentle words of support. This approach helped students feel unafraid to try, confident to participate, and enthusiastic during lessons. Interviews with students confirmed these observations, as they expressed feeling comfortable, unafraid of making mistakes, and happy to learn because their teacher treated them with kindness and attention.

Peer interactions also reflected strong implementation of the loving dimension. Observations inside and outside the classroom showed that students spontaneously helped each other—for instance, pointing out letters to a friend who was confused,

lending stationery, or reminding classmates about the correct page in their books. During break time, students played together without forming exclusive groups based on background, whether they were boarding students or full-day school students who went home daily. Minor conflicts during play were resolved independently through simple negotiations. These interactions developed naturally, without teacher intervention, and demonstrated genuine peer empathy. The positive social climate was further supported by the routine rotation of seating arrangements, allowing students to interact with different peers and broaden their social connections. Overall, these findings indicate that the school's social environment fosters a sense of safety and emotional comfort among students.

Beyond classroom and peer interactions, students' sense of belonging to the school was also notably strong. Students arrived at school with enthusiasm, showed cheerful expressions, and actively participated in classroom and daily activities such as cleaning duty, watering plants, and communal meals. They displayed pride in their class and showed no signs of withdrawal or social isolation. Interviews with teachers revealed that students frequently demonstrated cooperation, warmly welcomed late-arriving classmates, and showed concern for peers who appeared sad. A fifth-grade student even described the school as a "second home," indicating a deep emotional attachment to the school environment.

Interviews with parents reinforced the finding that students felt fully accepted at school. Parents reported that their children frequently shared positive stories about their experiences with friends and teachers and never showed reluctance to attend school. This suggests that students' social experiences at school positively influenced their emotional well-being at home, particularly in building confidence and social bravery. The school principal emphasized that these positive conditions were not incidental but rather the result of deliberate school policies that prioritize warmth, equality, and togetherness as core components of the pesantren-based educational culture.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of the loving dimension in school well-being at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean is well integrated into teaching practices, school culture, and students' daily interactions. Teachers successfully fostered positive emotional relationships, students showed consistent supportive behavior toward one another, and the school community created an inclusive and socially nurturing environment. These findings indicate that fulfilling the loving dimension is a crucial factor in supporting students' emotional well-being within the context of a pesantren-based full-day school program.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the loving dimension within the framework of school well-being has been consistently implemented at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean. These findings can be further analyzed through the lenses of educational psychology, child development theory, and school climate studies (Bjugstad et al., 2025). In Konu and Rimpelä's model of school well-being, the loving dimension

occupies a central position because it relates directly to students' needs for affection, safety, and social support—foundational elements of emotional well-being. The implementation of this dimension is especially significant in elementary schools, given that children aged 6–10 are in a developmental stage marked by strong needs for acceptance, care, and recognition from both adults and peers (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002).

The teacher–student interactions observed in this study reflect affective-oriented pedagogical practice. The grade 1-B teacher demonstrated a supportive interpersonal communication style through personal greetings, patience in understanding children's abilities, and encouragement when students made mistakes. This pattern aligns with Bowlby's attachment theory (2003), which emphasizes the importance of emotional bonds with significant figures in creating a sense of security. Within the school context, teachers serve as secondary attachment figures who provide emotional protection, particularly in the early years of elementary education. When teachers act gently, responsively, and respectfully toward diverse student abilities, they help shape a stable emotional climate that enables children to better cope with academic demands (DeVito, 2025).

The teacher's approach is also consistent with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which posits that positive reinforcement and small mastery experiences strengthen children's confidence. When teachers accompany students who struggle with reading or writing without shaming them, students gain mastery experiences that increase their willingness to try. This explains why students in grade 1-B showed greater courage in participating in class and less fear of making mistakes—an indication that emotional security enhances learning readiness.

Peer relationships at SD Mambaul Hisan also reflected strong peer support dynamics, another key indicator of the loving dimension. Behaviors such as helping friends copy words correctly, sharing stationery, and resolving minor conflicts independently demonstrate the development of students' social competence. According to Vygotsky (1978), peer interaction serves as an important zone of proximal development for cognitive and emotional growth. When children help their peers understand tasks or engage in cooperative play, they build empathy, emotion regulation skills, and collaboration abilities. These findings align with Finn and Zimmer's (2012) research on school engagement, which highlights that peer support enhances learning resilience and reduces negative behaviors such as withdrawal or reluctance to participate.

Students' strong sense of belonging further demonstrates the successful implementation of the loving dimension. Students feel comfortable, enthusiastic about attending school, and regard the school as a "second home." School bonding theory asserts that when students feel included in the school community, they display stronger discipline, higher learning motivation, and greater emotional stability (Wu et al., 2025). This sense of belonging appears to be cultivated through collective routines such as communal lunch, congregational prayer, classroom cleaning duties, and daily full-day

school activities that allow extended interaction with peers, teachers, and the school environment.

Additionally, the pesantren-based context contributes culturally to the creation of a warm social atmosphere. Islamic values such as compassion (*rahmah*), mutual support (*ta'awun*), and respect toward others serve as normative foundations guiding social behavior among students and teachers. The cultural practices of greeting, smiling, and offering warmth—common in pesantren life—are reflected in daily interactions at school. This integration makes the loving dimension not only a pedagogical practice but also a part of the school culture passed down systematically. The blend of academic content and religious atmosphere enriches the emotional support students receive throughout the day.

From the perspective of the full-day school program, the implementation of the loving dimension is even more crucial. Long school hours may potentially create fatigue, boredom, or stress if not balanced with adequate social and emotional support. However, this study found that the extended duration actually strengthened teacher–student and peer relationships because students had more time to interact, play, and learn together. Thus, the success of the full-day school program is closely tied to the quality of the loving dimension, as emotional support functions as a buffer against the heavy schedule and intensive activities.

Overall, the loving dimension at SD Mambaul Hisan not only meets the standards of school well-being but also directly influences students' learning motivation, socio-emotional development, and comfort in participating in the full-day school program. These findings contribute to the literature on school well-being at the elementary level, particularly within pesantren-based schools, which remain underrepresented in school well-being research in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the loving dimension of school well-being is firmly established at SD Mambaul Hisan Badalpandean within its pesantren-based full-day school context. Teachers play a key role in fostering warm, reassuring, and supportive emotional relationships through gentle guidance and positive reinforcement, which strengthens students' sense of safety and confidence in the learning process. Peer interactions likewise develop naturally and constructively, marked by cooperation, spontaneous prosocial behavior, and the ability to independently manage minor conflicts. Students also exhibit a strong sense of belonging to the school, as reflected in their enthusiasm for daily activities and their comfort within the school environment. Overall, the findings indicate that the loving dimension contributes substantially to maintaining a positive school climate and supporting students' emotional well-being in a full-day Islamic elementary school setting.

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