

Internalization of Spiritual Intelligence Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning at SMK Imelda Medan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the process of internalizing spiritual intelligence values in the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMK Imelda Medan. The internalization of spiritual values is essential in shaping young generations who are not only intellectually capable but also possess a profound sense of life's meaning, self-awareness, and social responsibility. This research employed a qualitative approach using library research and interviews with teachers and students, conducted between late June and early August 2025. The findings indicate that the internalization of spiritual intelligence values is manifested through the reinforcement of self-awareness, sincerity in worship, and social concern instilled within the teaching and learning process. The study affirms that PAI learning at SMK Imelda Medan goes beyond mere knowledge transfer, serving also as a means of cultivating integral spiritual character. This research contributes to the development of educational models that emphasize a balanced integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions.

Keywords: *Internalization; Spiritual Intelligence; Islamic Religious Education; Learning; SMK Imelda Medan*

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Introduction

Education serves as a strategic medium in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also mature in spiritual and emotional aspects [1]. In the context of Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role as the foundation for moral development and the cultivation of noble character [2]. This aligns with the goals of national education, which emphasize the holistic development of learners' potential, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

The current phenomenon reveals a degradation of moral values among the younger generation, particularly as a result of globalization and the advancement of information technology that is not always balanced with spiritual resilience. Deviant behaviors, lack of social concern, and weakened religious awareness pose serious challenges to education. Therefore, strengthening spiritual intelligence has become a relevant strategy to balance academic needs with the development of religious character.

Spiritual intelligence (spiritual quotient) is understood as an individual's ability to discover the meaning of life, uphold integrity, and connect with transcendental values [3]. From the Islamic perspective, spiritual intelligence is rooted in the concepts of *tauhid* (monotheism), *taqwa* (piety), and *akhlaq karimah* (noble character), which serve as the foundation of life. The internalization of spiritual intelligence values in PAI learning is expected to produce students who not only master religious knowledge but also embody it in their daily practices [4].

The process of internalizing spiritual values in PAI learning requires appropriate pedagogical strategies, including teacher exemplification, habituation of worship practices, and the creation of a religious learning environment [5]. PAI teachers are not merely conveyors of knowledge but also models of sincerity, patience, and compassion [6]. In this way, students can naturally imitate and internalize these values in their behavior [7].

SMK Imelda Medan, as a vocational secondary education institution, has particular characteristics, with the majority of its students in the phase of identity formation. At this stage, they are highly susceptible to environmental influences, both positive and negative. The presence of PAI learning that integrates spiritual intelligence values is therefore essential to guide students in constructing self-identity grounded in Islamic values and morality.

Vocational education such as SMK typically emphasizes practical skills to support employability. However, the spiritual aspect must not be overlooked. Students who possess technical skills but lack spiritual intelligence may face crises of integrity and difficulties in dealing with moral challenges in the workplace. Thus, the internalization of spiritual values in PAI learning complements academic and vocational skills with a deeper sense of life's meaning and professional honesty.

This study is significant given the limited scholarly attention to the internalization of spiritual intelligence specifically in vocational schools. Most prior research has focused on general schools, while vocational education has its own unique dynamics. By conducting this study at SMK Imelda Medan, a more comprehensive picture can be obtained regarding the practice of spiritual value internalization in PAI learning within the vocational education setting.

The research focuses on how PAI teachers at SMK Imelda Medan integrate spiritual intelligence values into the teaching-learning process, as well as how students respond to and internalize these values in their daily lives. This internalization can be observed through regular worship practices, classroom activities, and social engagement within the school environment. Accordingly, the study seeks to reveal the close relationship between PAI learning theories and their practical implementation in shaping students' spiritual intelligence.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of the school environment and religious culture in supporting the success of spiritual value internalization. A conducive school environment—characterized by religious programs, worship habituation, and institutional

support—plays a significant role. Without such alignment, the efforts of PAI teachers in instilling spiritual values would be difficult to optimize.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze and describe the process of internalizing spiritual intelligence values in PAI learning at SMK Imelda Medan. It is expected to contribute academically to the development of Islamic education theory, while also offering practical insights that may serve as a model for implementation in other vocational schools. Ultimately, the findings are expected to reinforce the role of PAI as a comprehensive character-building instrument, ensuring that young generations are not only prepared to compete in the workforce but also equipped with integrity and strong spiritual depth.

Literature Review

The concept of spiritual intelligence (*spiritual quotient*) refers to the human capacity to give meaning to life, attain inner peace, and confront challenges through transcendental values [8] (Rahmat, 2007). From an Islamic perspective, spiritual intelligence is closely linked to the awareness of *tauhid* (monotheism), obedience in worship, and noble character, which serve as the fundamental basis of education. Previous studies have shown that the internalization of spiritual values in learning can enhance students' learning motivation, foster moral awareness, and strengthen social bonds among peers [9]. Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects with the spiritual dimension, thereby producing learners who are not only academically competent but also spiritually mature. The internalization of such values can be achieved through teacher exemplification, contextual learning strategies, and a school environment that is conducive to the development of religious and social awareness.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach with a field study design using observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection methods. The research focused on the process of internalizing spiritual intelligence values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMK Imelda Medan. Interviews were conducted with PAI teachers and a number of purposively selected students during the period from late June to early August 2025. Data were analyzed using the techniques of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in accordance with the Miles and Huberman model. The validity of the data was strengthened through source and method triangulation to ensure the credibility of the research findings [10]. With this design, the study is expected to reveal the meaning and practical implementation of spiritual value internalization within the context of formal education at SMK.

Result

4.1 Strengthening Self-Awareness through Worship Practices

The findings reveal that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMK Imelda Medan consistently emphasizes worship practices as a means of strengthening students' self-awareness. These practices are not limited to classroom settings but are also integrated into daily school activities, such as morning prayers, *shalat dhuha* (mid-morning prayer), and collective Qur'an recitation (*tilawah*). Such activities function as gateways for students to cultivate spiritual sensitivity and nurture a sense of dependence on God.

PAI teachers stress that worship practices should not be confined to mere formality but must evolve into habits rooted in genuine awareness. In an interview, one teacher remarked: "*Performing shalat dhuha or reciting the Qur'an before class is not just a routine, but our way of teaching students to instill a sense of need for Allah. In this way, they learn to understand that worship is a necessity, not just an obligation.*" (Interview, July 2025).

Students also reported experiencing direct benefits from these practices. A Grade XI student stated: "*When we pray dhuha together, it makes the heart feel calm, and when entering class, we become more focused. Even if we're tired, it still feels lighter.*" (Interview, July 2025).

This demonstrates that the internalization of spiritual values through worship positively impacts students' psychological conditions, including their readiness to engage with subsequent lessons.

Beyond daily worship routines, PAI teachers also utilize special occasions such as the month of Ramadan and other religious events to strengthen students' spiritual awareness. Activities such as *pesantren kilat* (short-term Islamic boarding programs), communal iftar, and congregational tarawih prayers are deliberately designed as educational spaces where students can directly experience religious practices. This aligns with the aim of spiritual value internalization, which emphasizes experiential learning as an effective educational medium.

These worship activities contribute to shaping student discipline and responsibility. Teachers noted that students accustomed to performing dhuha prayers together were more capable of managing their time, were less likely to arrive late, and demonstrated stronger learning ethics. This finding resonates with the principles of spiritual intelligence, which link closeness to God with the strengthening of personal character.

The study also found that students exhibited significant behavioral changes after becoming accustomed to collective worship. For instance, students who were initially negligent of obligatory prayers began showing greater compliance, even outside school hours. A Grade X student remarked: *"At first I was lazy to pray at home. But because we kept being trained at school, over time it became a habit. Now if I don't pray, it feels like something is missing."* (Interview, August 2025).

The internalization process is also influenced by the teaching methods of PAI teachers, who emphasize persuasive approaches and role modeling. Teachers not only instruct students to perform worship but also actively participate in the practices. One teacher explained: *"If we only give orders, the students are less motivated. That's why I join them in prayer, join in tilawah. From there, they feel it's not a burden but a shared experience."* (Interview, July 2025).

The school's religious environment further reinforces the internalization of spiritual values. School policies requiring daily activities to begin with prayer and Qur'an recitation create a conducive atmosphere for the development of students' self-awareness. Such an environment provides positive reinforcement, where students feel immersed in a culture that nurtures spirituality.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. Some students still perceive worship practices as school-mandated routines rather than personal awareness. A teacher acknowledged: *"Not all students become aware immediately. Some still perform worship half-heartedly. But we continue to emphasize sincerity while providing guidance so that gradually they come to understand its meaning."* (Interview, August 2025). This highlights that the internalization of spiritual values is a gradual process requiring patience and consistency.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that strengthening self-awareness through worship practices is an effective strategy in internalizing spiritual intelligence values at SMK Imelda Medan. This process has led to tangible behavioral changes among students, ranging from improved discipline and inner peace to greater compliance with worship obligations. These practices affirm that PAI learning is not merely oriented toward cognitive outcomes but also toward the holistic development of students' spiritual dimensions.

4.2 Fostering Social Concern in Classroom Activities

The findings of this study reveal that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMK Imelda Medan emphasize a learning process that is not only oriented toward cognitive aspects but also cultivates social concern. This strategy is implemented by integrating the principles of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil), and *ta'awun* (mutual assistance) into both classroom and extracurricular activities. In this way, students not only comprehend the concept of social concern theoretically but also experience it directly through practical engagement.

PAI teachers encourage students to help one another in study groups, especially when some struggle to grasp the material. One teacher explained: *“We emphasize that learning is not merely a competition but a matter of togetherness. If someone does not understand, their peers are obliged to help. That is part of social worship.”* (Interview, July 2025). This statement underscores that social concern is instilled as an integral component of the learning process.

Students also perceive the benefits of this practice. A grade XI student expressed: *“If a friend is struggling, we are encouraged to help. So it’s not just the teacher who teaches, but we also care for one another. It feels good, more familiar.”* (Interview, July 2025). This indicates that social activities within the classroom foster solidarity and reduce individualism among students.

Beyond classroom activities, PAI teachers initiate simple sharing programs, such as collecting voluntary donations when a student is ill or in need of assistance. These activities are intended to cultivate students’ empathy and instill the awareness that caring for others is part of faith. A grade X student remarked: *“When one of our friends was sick, the teacher invited us to visit together. It was a memorable experience because it made us feel closer and more caring.”* (Interview, August 2025).

Social activities are also extended to the school environment through collective work initiatives. PAI teachers relate classroom and school cleaning activities to religious values, such as the hadith stating that cleanliness is part of faith. This demonstrates that social concern is not limited to helping others but also includes caring for the surrounding environment as a trust that must be preserved.

Field observations indicate that students actively involved in social activities display positive behavioral changes. They become friendlier, more cooperative, and show greater empathy than before. A PAI teacher emphasized: *“We see a difference in students who genuinely participate in social activities. They become more sensitive to their friends’ conditions, even outside school.”* (Interview, August 2025).

The cultivation of social concern is further reinforced through the integration of PAI materials with current social issues, such as helping disaster victims or supporting the poor. Teachers connect lessons on *zakat*, *infaq*, and *sadaqah* with students’ real-life activities. Thus, students not only understand the concept of social worship theoretically but are also motivated to apply it in their daily lives.

Nevertheless, the study found challenges in the varying levels of student participation. While some students were active and enthusiastic, others remained passive and showed little concern. A PAI teacher noted: *“Indeed, some students are still difficult to mobilize; they participate only because they are invited, not out of awareness. But we continue to encourage them, so eventually, that sense of care grows from within.”* (Interview, July 2025).

A supportive school environment emerged as a key factor for successfully fostering social concern. The presence of a religious school culture, support from the principal, and the involvement of other teachers in social activities further reinforced the internalization of caring values. This atmosphere of togetherness helps students perceive social concern not only as a demand from PAI teachers but also as part of the school’s positive culture.

Overall, this study demonstrates that instilling social concern in PAI learning at SMK Imelda Medan successfully nurtures empathy, solidarity, and a spirit of cooperation among students. Classroom activities integrated with real-life experiences shape the mindset that caring is an act of worship and an embodiment of faith. Consequently, PAI learning serves not merely as a transfer of religious knowledge but also as a space for developing socio-spiritual character relevant to students’ lives.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the internalization of spiritual intelligence values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMK Imelda Medan is realized through strengthening self-awareness in worship and fostering social concern in classroom activities. The strategies

employed by teachers extend beyond the delivery of cognitive material, encompassing role modeling, habituation, and practical engagement that shape students' spiritual character. Accordingly, PAI learning in this school succeeds in balancing knowledge acquisition with the development of transcendental values that are highly relevant to students' lives amid modern challenges. The study recommends that the internalization of spiritual intelligence be adopted as a sustainable model for PAI education in secondary schools, thereby producing a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also spiritually and morally mature.

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