Ibn Khaldun's Islamic Educational Thoughts and Their Relevance to the Development of Students' Spiritual Intelligence in the Modern Era

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Abstract

This study aims to examine Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational thought and analyze its relevance to the development of students' spiritual intelligence in the modern era. This study stems from concerns about the current state of education, which tends to emphasize cognitive and materialistic aspects, while often neglecting students' spiritual dimensions. In this context, Ibn Khaldun's ideas are crucial because they offer a holistic view of education, integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects in the formation of civilized human beings. This study uses a qualitative approach with library research. The primary data source comes from Ibn Khaldun's monumental work, the Muqaddimah, which is then enriched with various secondary sources in the form of contemporary academic books and journals. Data analysis was conducted using the content analysis method, which focuses on discovering the values of spiritual education in Ibn Khaldun's thought and their relevance to the challenges of modern education. The results show that Ibn Khaldun emphasized a holistic education, which not only develops intellectual intelligence but also shapes the character, morals, and spiritual awareness of students. These spiritual educational values are relevant for application in the modern era to address the challenges of globalization and technological development, through curriculum integration, the creation of a learning environment that supports reflection, and a learning approach appropriate to the developmental stage of students. This study concludes that Ibn Khaldun's thoughts can be used as a guideline for developing an education that balances intellectual and spiritual intelligence, thus producing students who are academically, morally, and spiritually mature.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Spiritual Intelligence, Modern Era

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Introduction

Education, in essence, aims not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape individuals with holistic personalities, namely those who are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually intelligent. In the context of Islamic education, the spiritual dimension holds a crucial position as it serves as the foundation for the formation of character, ethics, and transcendental awareness in students. Amidst the rapid flow of globalization and technological advancement, educational orientation is often reduced to merely academic achievement and technical competence. As a result, spiritual and moral values tend to be marginalized, leading to humanitarian crises such as moral degradation, hedonism, and a lack of social empathy (Hidayat & Rahman, 2024).

In such a situation, the classical ideas of Islamic thinkers need to be reexamined to determine their relevance to the challenges of modern education. One important figure whose thought has had a profound influence is Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406 CE), a Tunisian Muslim scholar, historian, and philosopher known for his monumental work, the Muqaddimah. Ibn Khaldun's thinking emphasized the importance of education as a means of moral formation and the holistic development of human potential, not merely to meet economic needs or social status (Nasrullah, 2023). He believed that the primary goal of education is to cultivate al-'aql (sound reason) and al-nafs al-muthmainnah (a tranquil soul), which form the foundation for spiritual and moral intelligence.

According to Ibn Khaldun, knowledge cannot be separated from ethical and spiritual values, as both are part of human nature. He viewed education as a process of cultivating and honing the potential of reason in harmony with the values of revelation. In this view, reason serves as a tool for understanding reality, while revelation serves as a moral compass that guides humans toward truth. This integration of reason and spirituality makes Ibn Khaldun one of the pioneers of holistic Islamic education, namely education that combines intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Hassan, 2024).

In the context of the modern era, Ibn Khaldun's thoughts become increasingly relevant because today's education tends to be dominated by materialistic and rationalistic paradigms. Education is often oriented toward academic achievement, competitiveness, and economic success, while the spiritual and moral dimensions are often neglected. As a result, the educational process loses its spirit as a means of developing the whole person. This phenomenon is evident in the rise of individualistic behavior, ethical crises, and weak social empathy among students, even those with high intellectual intelligence (Rahman & Zulkifli, 2024).

Ibn Khaldun, in the Muqaddimah (The Introduction), emphasized that the goal of true education is not merely to cultivate the mind, but also to purify the soul and foster moral awareness. He believed that reason and spirituality must go hand in hand, because without the guidance of spiritual values, knowledge will lose its direction and be subject to misuse (Hassan, 2024). In Ibn Khaldun's view, knowledge without adab (good manners) will only produce intelligent individuals devoid of human values. Therefore, education must be directed towards developing civilized individuals, namely those who use their knowledge for the greater good, not merely for their own selfish interests.

In modern life, marked by technological advances and the rapid flow of information, the development of spiritual intelligence is an urgent need. This intelligence is not only about the ability to practice religion ritually, but also about the ability to understand the meaning of life, maintain inner balance, and cultivate empathy and social responsibility (Hidayat & Rahman, 2024). Through spiritual intelligence, students are expected to be able to face the complexities of modern life with calm, wisdom, and a high level of moral awareness.

Spiritual intelligence, as proposed by Zohar and Marshall (2000), is the human ability to understand the meaning of life, manage values, and act based on a high level of moral awareness. This concept was previously discussed by Ibn Khaldun within the framework of Islamic education, which emphasizes tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul) and adab al-'ilm (ethics in seeking knowledge).

Therefore, this study seeks to deeply explore Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational thought and examine its relevance to the development of students' spiritual intelligence in the modern era. This study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to building an Islamic educational paradigm that is oriented not only toward mastery of knowledge but also toward the formation of individuals with spiritual, ethical, and civilized character.

Literature Review

1. Biography of Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun, or his full name Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami, was born on May 27, 1332 CE, in Tunis, North Africa (now Tunisia), and died in Cairo on March 17, 1406 CE. He is known as one of the most influential Muslim figures in the history of Islamic civilization and is often referred to as the Father of Sociology and the Philosophy of History. Ibn Khaldun's genius lay not only in his incisive socio-political analysis, but also in his philosophical views on education, morality, and the development of human civilization (Hassan, 2024).

Ibn Khaldun grew up in a well-educated family of Andalusian aristocrats who immigrated to North Africa due to political conflict in Andalusia. From childhood, he was educated in a scholarly environment that emphasized mastery of religious knowledge, Arabic, philosophy, and history. He studied the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh, kalam (theology), and classical Arabic literature from great scholars in Tunis, such as Abu Abdillah al-Abili and al-Sharif al-Tilmisani (Nasrullah, 2023). This comprehensive education formed a strong intellectual foundation for Ibn Khaldun and gave birth to an integrative approach to religious and social sciences.

Ibn Khaldun's life was full of dynamics. He was not only a scholar and thinker, but also a political practitioner and state administrator. He served as a secretary, judge, and diplomat in various Islamic kingdoms in North Africa and Andalusia. His long experience in politics and government gave him a deep understanding of human social behavior, the dynamics of power, and the rise and fall of civilizations. This empirical experience later formed the basis for his monumental work, the Muqaddimah (1377 CE), which is still recognized as a scholarly work of intergenerational significance (Ahmad, 2024).

2. Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence is a dimension of human intelligence that plays a crucial role in shaping a holistic, moral, and highly conscious personality. In an educational context, this intelligence is not solely related to religious aspects or rituals, but also involves the ability to understand the meaning of life, control oneself, and act based on values of truth and virtue (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Spiritual intelligence helps humans view life from a broader perspective, transcending material and rational aspects, enabling them to discover a meaningful purpose in life and utilize spiritual experiences as a strength in facing life's challenges (Emmons, 2000).

According to Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall (2000), spiritual intelligence is the "highest intelligence" that guides how a person uses their intellectual (IQ) and emotional (EQ) intelligence meaningfully. A person with spiritual intelligence is not only capable of logical thinking and managing emotions, but also possesses a strong sense of morality and values. In an educational context, spiritual intelligence facilitates students in balancing critical thinking skills with the ability to understand human and divine values.

Spiritual intelligence is also closely related to the Islamic concept of fitrah, the innate human potential to know and worship God. An educational process that fosters spiritual intelligence helps students return to their natural state as beings with both reason and soul. This aligns with Ibn Khaldun's view, which asserts that education must be able to shape civilized individuals eople who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess moral and spiritual awareness (Hassan, 2024).

In the context of the modern era, rife with technological advancement, individualism, and a value crisis, developing spiritual intelligence is an urgent need. Education that emphasizes intellectual aspects without a concomitant strengthening of spirituality risks producing a generation that is logically intelligent but lacks empathy and meaning in life (Rahman & Zulkifli, 2024). Therefore, Islamic education in the modern era must be oriented toward a balance between reason, heart, and good deeds. By integrating spiritual values into the learning process, students can be guided to understand knowledge not merely as a means of earning a living, but also as a path to drawing closer to God and serving humanity.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach with library research. This approach was chosen because the focus of the research lies in a conceptual analysis of Ibn Khaldun's ideas as outlined in his classic works, particularly the Muqaddimah, and an interpretation of their relevance to the development of students' spiritual intelligence in the modern era. Library research allows researchers to explore philosophical, historical, and pedagogical thinking in depth through textual analysis, both primary and secondary sources (Sugiyono, 2023). A qualitative approach was used to interpretively understand the meaning and values contained in Ibn Khaldun's thought. Researchers sought not only to describe the content of his thoughts but also to interpret their relevance to contemporary issues, particularly in the development of students' spiritual intelligence in the modern era (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data collection technique used was documentation, which involved collecting, identifying, and reviewing various relevant written sources. All data obtained was analyzed and classified according to the main research theme. After data collection, it was analyzed using content analysis. To ensure data validity, researchers use source triangulation techniques, namely comparing and evaluating data from various literature sources to obtain valid information and objective interpretation.

Results

1. Ibn Khaldun's Islamic Educational Thought

Research results show that Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational thought emphasizes the importance of character development and student spirituality as the primary foundation of education. According to Khaldun, education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but also the development of morals, discipline, and a strong social awareness (Khaldun, 1377 AH/1958 AD). This concept is reflected in his theory of 'asabiyyah' (living in harmony) and moral education, where a spiritually and morally strong society will be able to develop sustainably.

Ibn Khaldun divided education into two important aspects: formal education provided through teachers and institutions, and social education acquired through interaction with the environment and life experiences. These two aspects are complementary, as learning that focuses solely on theory without social practice or spiritual development will produce individuals who are intellectually intelligent but morally and spiritually weak (Alatas, 2015).

Ibn Khaldun emphasized that education must be tailored to the developmental stage of the students. Education for children focuses on habituation and character building, while education for adolescents and adults places greater emphasis on developing critical thinking skills and social awareness. In other words, education is progressive, taking into account the psychological and spiritual stages of students (Alatas, 1977).

2. Relevance to Developing Spiritual Intelligence in the Modern Era

In the modern context, Khaldun's thoughts remain relevant, particularly in developing students' spiritual intelligence. The digital era and globalization bring challenges in the form of information dominance, shifting values, and high social pressure. Therefore, spiritual education is crucial for developing individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess

integrity, empathy, and ethical awareness (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). The application of Khaldun's concepts in the modern context can be achieved through several approaches:

a. Integration of Moral and Spiritual Education in the Curriculum: Learning materials should not only emphasize cognitive aspects but also instill ethical values, tolerance, and self-control.
b. Developing a Learning Environment that Supports Spirituality: Schools, as educational communities, must create an atmosphere that encourages reflection, collaboration, and social responsibility.
c. Personalization and Developmental Stage Approach: Teachers need to adapt educational methods to the character and psychological development of students, in accordance with Khaldun's principles of progressive education.

By applying these principles, students' spiritual intelligence can grow alongside their intellectual intelligence, enabling them to become individuals with integrity, creativity, and the ability to face modern challenges without losing their moral values. The results of this study indicate that Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational thinking possesses universal values that can be applied in the modern era. Education that focuses on character building and spiritual intelligence enables students to become not only intellectually intelligent but also possess spiritual depth. This is crucial in addressing modern phenomena such as increasing stress, consumerism, and the decline of moral values in adolescents (Nasution, 1990). Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's approach emphasizes the importance of education that is appropriate to the individual's developmental stage. This aligns with modern educational theory, which emphasizes developmentally appropriate practices, namely adapting learning methods to the abilities and psychological needs of students. By integrating spiritual values, modern education can produce a generation that is not only academically competent but also morally and spiritually resilient.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational thought emphasizes the importance of character development and students' spiritual intelligence as an integral part of the educational process. Education that is appropriate to the individual's developmental stage allows for optimal moral development, discipline, and social awareness. In the modern era, Khaldun's principles are relevant to addressing the challenges of globalization and technological development, particularly in the development of spiritual intelligence that supports students' integrity, empathy, and social responsibility. The implementation of these spiritual educational values can be achieved through curriculum integration, the creation of a learning environment that encourages reflection, and a learning approach that is appropriate to students' psychological development. Thus, Ibn Khaldun's thoughts can serve as a guideline for developing an education that balances intellectual and spiritual intelligence, in order to produce a generation that is academically and morally mature.

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