

# The Internalization of Islamic Values in the Development of Students' Existential Intelligence at SMAN 13 Medan

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## Abstract

This study aims to describe the internalization of Islamic values in developing students' existential intelligence at SMAN 13 Medan. The research focuses on how Islamic values are introduced, habituated, and reflected in students' learning experiences and school culture. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data sources consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and school documents related to religious activities. The findings indicate that the internalization of Islamic values was carried out through classroom learning, religious habituation, exemplary behavior, and reflective activities. These processes contributed to students' ability to understand the meaning of life, strengthen spiritual awareness, develop moral responsibility, and relate personal choices to religious values. The study concludes that Islamic value internalization can support existential intelligence when implemented consistently through cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

**Keywords:** *Islamic Values, Existential Intelligence, Students, Religious Education, School Culture*

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## Introduction

Education is not merely oriented toward the mastery of academic knowledge, but also toward the formation of personality, moral awareness, and students' ability to find meaning in life. In the context of national education, the aim of education is directed toward developing students' potential so that they become individuals who have faith, devotion to God Almighty, noble character, knowledge, competence, creativity, independence, and responsibility as citizens (Wahyudi et al., 2024).

This orientation indicates that religious education holds a strategic position in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually capable, but also spiritually and existentially mature. This is in line with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which places faith, devotion, and noble character as essential components of the objectives of national education. In the development of students at the secondary school level, existential issues often emerge in the form of identity exploration, questions about the purpose of life, anxiety about the future, and the need to discover meaning from the experiences they undergo (Tumiran, Siregar et al., 2024).

Students should not merely be directed to understand subject matter, but also need to be guided so that they are able to interpret life experiences meaningfully. At this point, existential intelligence becomes significant, as it relates to an individual's ability to reflect on self-existence, the purpose of life, human values, death, freedom, responsibility, and the relationship between human beings and God. Gardner expanded the theory of multiple intelligences by opening the possibility of existential intelligence as a human capacity to question and give meaning to the fundamental issues of life (Faruq & Subhi, 2022).

The internalization of Islamic values constitutes one relevant approach to developing students' existential intelligence. Values such as *tawhid*, worship, morality, trustworthiness, gratitude, patience, sincerity, responsibility, and social concern can shape students' awareness that life has a broader purpose beyond mere academic achievement. These values should not only be conveyed as normative concepts, but also need to be actualized through learning, exemplary conduct, habituation, reflective dialogue, and a religious school culture. Studies on the internalization of Islamic values in education indicate that the internalization process can be carried out through religious instruction, habituation, guidance, direct experience, and structured religious activities (Thalib et al., 2025).

SMAN 13 Medan, as a secondary educational institution, has the opportunity to develop students' existential intelligence through Islamic Religious Education and school-based religious activities. The internalization of Islamic values at school does not occur only in the classroom, but also through teacher–student interactions, religious activities, habituation of worship practices, and a school culture that emphasizes discipline, responsibility, and social concern. Based on this background, this study is directed toward describing how the internalization of Islamic values is carried out in developing students' existential intelligence at SMAN 13 Medan, the forms of values internalized, and their impact on students' spiritual awareness, meaning-making in life, and behavior.

## Literature Review

### 1) The Internalization of Islamic Values in Education

Value internalization is a gradual process of instilling values until they become part of an individual's awareness, attitudes, and behavior. In Islamic education, internalization is not merely understood as the transfer of religious knowledge, but also as a process of forming spiritual and moral consciousness. The Islamic values taught to students include the values of faith, worship, and morality. The value of faith shapes awareness of the relationship between human beings and Allah. The value of worship guides students in developing spiritual discipline through religious practices. The value of morality directs students to behave honestly, responsibly, caringly, humbly, and respectfully toward others. (Rusydi, 2022).

The process of internalizing Islamic values in education can take place through three main stages. First, the value transformation stage, namely the transmission of knowledge concerning good and bad values through learning, advice, and teachers' explanations. Second, the value transaction stage, namely a two-way interaction process between teachers and students through dialogue, exemplary conduct, question-and-answer activities, and habituation. Third, the transinternalization stage, namely the stage at which the values learned are no longer understood as external obligations, but have become part of students' self-awareness. At this stage, students do not merely know Islamic values, but also possess an inner motivation to practice them in daily life (Wibowo, 2014).

In the school context, the internalization of Islamic values can be carried out through Islamic Religious Education learning, congregational prayer activities, *tadarus* of the Qur'an, commemoration of Islamic holidays, the culture of greeting, charity programs, social activities, and the strengthening of teachers' exemplary conduct. Previous studies have shown that the internalization of Islamic values in religious learning can be implemented through lectures, advice, habituation, direct experience, assignments, and religious activities that foster students' character. Thus, the success of internalization is largely determined by the school's consistency in connecting the values taught with students' real-life experiences (Wardati & Rhida, 2024).

## 2) Students' Existential Intelligence

Existential intelligence refers to an individual's ability to reflect on fundamental questions concerning life, the purpose of existence, the meaning of suffering, freedom, death, responsibility, and the relationship between human beings and transcendent reality. Within the framework of multiple intelligences theory, Gardner criticizes the view that limits intelligence merely to logical and linguistic aspects. He argues that human beings possess various forms of intellectual capacity, including the capacity to understand life's profound issues. Although existential intelligence cannot always be measured through simple academic instruments, its presence is important in education because it is closely related to the way students understand themselves and determine the direction of their lives (Halim, 2021).

At the secondary school age, existential intelligence is reflected in students' ability to question the meaning of life, understand the purpose of learning, relate their actions to moral responsibility, and realize that life choices have consequences. Students who possess existential intelligence tend not to view learning merely as a formal obligation, but rather as part of the process of building their future and fulfilling their responsibility as human beings. They are also more capable of engaging in self-reflection, understanding their mistakes, improving their behavior, and situating life experiences within a broader framework of values (Rostriana & Harahap, 2023).

Existential intelligence is closely related to religious education because religion provides a framework of meaning through which human beings understand life. In Islam, questions concerning the purpose of life are answered through the concepts of servitude to Allah, responsibility as *khalifah*, and the obligation to do good toward others. These values can strengthen students' existential awareness because they teach that life has a purpose, human actions possess moral significance, and every individual bears responsibility before God and society. Therefore, reflective religious education can serve as an important space for developing existential intelligence (Salimah & Al-kautsar, 2023).

## 3) Islamic Religious Education, Character, and School Culture

Islamic Religious Education in schools has a strategic function in shaping students' character. Religious education is not only intended to enable students to understand Islamic teachings cognitively, but also to guide them in practicing these teachings in everyday life. In the context of character education, the formation of good behavior cannot be achieved merely through moral knowledge; it must also involve moral feeling and moral action. Lickona explains that good character encompasses *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*.

This means that students need to know what is good, love what is good, and habituate themselves to doing what is good (Indarwati, 2020).

School culture is an important factor in strengthening the internalization of Islamic values. A school with a religious culture can provide a consistent learning experience between the material taught in the classroom and the behavior students observe in school life. For example, when teachers teach the value of honesty, this value needs to be reinforced through the practice of honesty in examinations, task completion, and social interaction. When teachers teach responsibility, the school needs to establish a system that trains students to be disciplined, keep their promises, and complete their assignments. In this way, Islamic values do not remain merely as normative knowledge, but become social experiences lived by students (Harahap et al., 2024).

In developing existential intelligence, Islamic Religious Education needs to be designed in a dialogical and reflective manner. Teachers should not merely explain religious laws or concepts, but should also invite students to reflect on the relationship between religious teachings and the realities of their lives. Questions such as “Why do human beings need to do good?”, “What is the meaning of patience in facing problems?”, “What is the responsibility of a student in Islam?”, and “What is the purpose of learning according to religion?” can serve as entry points for developing existential reflection. Thus, religious learning becomes more meaningful because it touches students’ inner experiences and helps them understand the direction of their lives more consciously (Indrawati, 2024).

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was selected because the study seeks to understand the process of internalizing Islamic values in the development of students’ existential intelligence in a natural, in-depth, and contextual manner. Qualitative research is relevant when researchers aim to explore meanings, experiences, and social processes within an educational setting. Creswell and Poth explain that qualitative research is used to understand human experiences in particular contexts through the collection of narrative and interpretive data (Creswell, 2012).

The research site is SMAN 13 Medan. The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained from Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and school personnel involved in religious activities. Secondary data are obtained from school documents, schedules of religious activities, instructional materials, and activity documentation. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique employs the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This model is commonly used in qualitative research to organize field data systematically (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2014).

### **Results**

The findings of this study indicate that the internalization of Islamic values at SMAN 13 Medan takes place through intracurricular learning, religious habituation, teachers’ exemplary conduct, and school activities with a religious orientation. In Islamic Religious Education learning, teachers do not merely deliver the material conceptually, but also relate it to students’ experiences. Materials concerning faith, worship, morality, and social responsibility are explained through examples that are closely connected to adolescents’ lives, such as honesty in learning, responsibility toward parents, social ethics, the use of social media, and the importance of maintaining worship practices amid the demands of school life.

#### **1. Forms of Internalization of Islamic Values at SMAN 13 Medan**

The internalization of Islamic values is also carried out through habituation. Activities such as reciting prayers before learning, performing congregational prayers, conducting *tadarus* of the Qur’an, giving charity, commemorating Islamic holidays, and providing

religious advice serve as media for shaping students' spiritual awareness. This habituation functions as a space for practice, enabling students not only to understand Islamic teachings theoretically, but also to experience these values within the school's daily routines. This process is in line with the concept of character education, which emphasizes that values must move from knowledge toward habitual action.

Teachers' exemplary conduct becomes a prominent factor in the internalization process. Students are more likely to accept Islamic values when they observe teachers demonstrating patience, fairness, discipline, politeness, and responsibility. Exemplary conduct has pedagogical power because students do not merely hear about values, but also witness them in real behavior. In this context, Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as educators, moral guides, and figures who demonstrate consistency between words and actions (Abdi Syahrrial Harahap, 2020).

The following table summarizes the forms of internalization of Islamic values identified in this research draft.

Form of Internalization	Islamic Values Emphasized	Impact on Students
Reflective Islamic Religious Education learning	<i>Tawhid</i> , trustworthiness, responsibility, morality	Students understand the relationship between Islamic teachings and the meaning of life
Religious habituation	Discipline in worship, gratitude, patience, togetherness	Students become accustomed to relating school activities to spiritual awareness
Teachers' exemplary conduct	Honesty, politeness, fairness, social concern	Students obtain concrete examples of Islamic behavior
Socio-religious activities	Empathy, mutual assistance, social concern	Students understand that religiosity is also manifested through care for others

The table indicates that the internalization of Islamic values does not take place through a single pathway. Learning provides the cognitive foundation, habituation strengthens the affective dimension, exemplary conduct shapes behavioral orientation, and social activities broaden the meaning of religiosity in communal life. Thus, the internalization of Islamic values in schools is integrative in nature, as it connects students' knowledge, attitudes, and actions.

## 2. The Development of Students' Existential Intelligence

The development of students' existential intelligence is reflected in their increasing ability to understand the purpose of life, give meaning to learning activities, recognize moral responsibility, and reflect on their behavior. Students begin to understand that learning is not merely intended to obtain academic grades, but is also part of worship, responsibility toward parents, and preparation to contribute positively to society. This awareness indicates that Islamic values play a role in constructing a broader meaning of life.

In the learning process, teachers develop existential intelligence through reflective questions. Students are invited to think about the relationship between Islamic teachings and their life experiences. For example, when discussing the concept of patience, teachers do not merely explain its definition, but ask students to relate it to their experiences in facing failure, friendship conflicts, academic pressure, or family problems. When discussing trustworthiness, students are encouraged to understand that school assignments, promises, parental trust, and religious obligations are part of the responsibilities that must be fulfilled.

Existential intelligence also develops through religious activities that provide contemplative space. *Tadarus* of the Qur'an, collective prayers, and religious advice can create an inner atmosphere that encourages students to reflect on themselves. Although these activities are routine in nature, their meaning becomes stronger when teachers provide

reflective explanations about their purposes. Thus, habituation does not turn into mere formality, but becomes a spiritual experience that helps students understand their relationship with God.

This finding is in line with Gardner's idea that human intelligence is not limited to conventional academic abilities, but also includes the capacity to understand life's deeper issues. In the context of Islamic education, existential intelligence gains a strong foundation because Islamic teachings provide normative and spiritual answers to questions concerning the purpose of life, human responsibility, and the meaning of actions. Therefore, the development of existential intelligence through Islamic values is not only related to the ability to think reflectively, but also to the formation of a life orientation grounded in faith and morality (Agustia et al., 2023).

### **3. Supporting Factors, Obstacles, and Educational Implications**

The process of internalizing Islamic values in the development of existential intelligence is supported by several factors. First, there is the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers who act not only as instructors, but also as spiritual and moral guides. Teachers who are able to build open communication with students find it easier to engage them in dialogue about life issues. Second, school religious activities serve as a space for value habituation. Third, the school culture supports discipline, politeness, and social concern.

The internalization process also faces several obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the tendency of some students to perceive religious activities as merely formal routines. When religious activities are carried out only as school obligations, the values contained in them do not always enter students' consciousness. Another obstacle is the influence of the digital environment, which may shape an instant lifestyle, weaken self-reflection, and divert students' attention from value formation. Under these conditions, teachers need to use a more dialogical approach so that Islamic values can be connected to the realities of adolescents' lives.

The educational implication of these findings is the need to strengthen Islamic Religious Education learning so that it becomes more reflective, contextual, and transformative. Teachers need to develop learning strategies that are not only oriented toward memorization of material, but also toward meaning-making. Case discussions, experiential reflection, spiritual journals, social projects, and problem-based learning can be used to connect Islamic values with students' lives. This approach is important because the development of existential intelligence requires an open, in-depth, and relevant space for thinking that is connected to real-life experiences (Harahap, 2022).

In addition, schools need to ensure that religious culture is not merely symbolic. Religious culture must be manifested in fair, humanistic, and educational patterns of interaction. Islamic values need to be reflected in the way teachers treat students, the way the school resolves problems, the way students interact with one another, and the way school activities are designed. Thus, the internalization of Islamic values can shape a more comprehensive existential awareness, namely the awareness that life has a purpose, human beings bear responsibility, and religiosity must be reflected in real behavior (Rahman, 2019).

The findings of this study indicate that the internalization of Islamic values makes an important contribution to the development of students' existential intelligence at SMAN 13 Medan. Islamic values provide a spiritual foundation, reflective learning offers a space for meaning-making, and school culture provides an environment for habituation. These three elements complement one another in shaping students who not only understand religious teachings, but are also able to use those teachings as a basis for interpreting life, making decisions, and developing responsible behavior.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the presentation of the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the internalization of Islamic values plays an important role in developing students' existential intelligence at SMAN 13 Medan. This process takes place through learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, and a religious school culture.

- 1) First, the Islamic values internalized include *tawhid*, worship, morality, trustworthiness, responsibility, gratitude, patience, and social concern.
- 2) Second, the development of existential intelligence is reflected in students' ability to understand the purpose of life, recognize moral responsibility, and relate learning experiences to spiritual values.
- 3) Third, the success of internalization is strongly influenced by teachers' consistency, religious activities, and school culture. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education needs to be developed in a reflective, contextual, and applicative manner so that religious values do not remain merely as knowledge, but become part of students' life consciousness.

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