

# Spiritual intelligence in children within Islamic Educational Psychology: development, potential, and guidance

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## Abstract

*Spiritual intelligence plays a significant role in Islamic education by bridging the understanding of religious teachings, moral development, and self-awareness regarding the existence of God and humanity. This intelligence involves not only religious knowledge but also values such as empathy, compassion, and a sense of purpose that guide individuals in making ethical decisions and living with integrity. The study emphasizes the importance of spiritual intelligence in fostering well-rounded individuals by integrating intellectual, emotional, and spiritual components. It also highlights the interconnectedness of these aspects, which collectively shape a child's overall development. The primary objective of this research is to examine the development and potential of spiritual intelligence in children from the perspective of Islamic educational psychology. The study employs a literature review with a qualitative approach, incorporating observations and scientific reasoning to explore this topic. The findings suggest that children's spiritual intelligence can be assessed through their abilities and potential, providing valuable insights into their unique characteristics and developmental needs, which can inform effective educational and parenting strategies.*

**Keywords:** Children; Psychology of Islamic Education; Spiritual Intelligence.

## Abstrak

Kecerdasan spiritual memainkan peran penting dalam pendidikan Islam dengan menghubungkan pemahaman ajaran agama, perkembangan moral, dan kesadaran diri terkait eksistensi Tuhan dan umat manusia. Kecerdasan ini melibatkan tidak hanya pengetahuan agama, tetapi juga nilai-nilai seperti empati, kasih sayang, dan rasa tujuan hidup yang membimbing individu dalam mengambil keputusan etis dan hidup dengan integritas. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya kecerdasan spiritual dalam membentuk individu yang seimbang dengan mengintegrasikan komponen intelektual, emosional, dan spiritual. Hal ini juga menyoroti keterkaitan antara ketiga aspek tersebut, yang secara kolektif membentuk perkembangan anak secara keseluruhan. Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memeriksa perkembangan dan potensi kecerdasan spiritual pada anak-anak dari perspektif psikologi pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan tinjauan pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif, yang mencakup

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pengamatan dan penalaran ilmiah untuk menggali topik ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kecerdasan spiritual anak dapat diukur melalui kemampuan dan potensi mereka, yang memberikan wawasan berharga mengenai karakteristik unik dan kebutuhan perkembangan mereka, yang dapat menjadi dasar bagi strategi pendidikan dan pengasuhan yang efektif.

**Kata kunci:** Anak; Psikologi Pendidikan Islam; Kecerdasan Spiritual.

## **Introduction**

Islamic education represents an integrative approach to child development, designed to influence emotional growth by embedding Islamic spiritual values and moral consciousness into their lives, actions, and approach to knowledge (Sahin, 2018). However, education encompasses more than the formal instruction of children in schools. A child who receives a well-rounded education is likely to grow into an individual capable of making meaningful contributions to society, the nation, and religion in the future (Nurislamiah et al., 2022). Such individuals demonstrate physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and spiritual health.

Surbakti et al. (2024) emphasized that spiritually intelligent individuals view their actions within a broader, more meaningful context, which is essential in Islamic teachings, where faith and ethics are deeply intertwined. Similarly, Kotyk (2024) noted that spirituality is an inherent trait in children, but its development requires proper guidance, particularly from parents and educators who play a vital role as role models. Nurislamiah et al., (2022) highlighted the significant role of teachers in fostering spiritual intelligence by embodying virtues such as patience, empathy, and sincerity in their actions. This research emphasizes that spiritual intelligence is not only about acquiring religious knowledge but also involves the cultivation of moral virtues and social justice. Moreover, Efendi (2024) emphasized that each child possesses unique spiritual potential, and nurturing this potential leads to well-rounded individuals with a strong moral and spiritual foundation.

All children born with normal physical and mental conditions possess the inherent potential for intelligence. This is rooted in the fact that Allah SWT has endowed humans with innate intelligence at birth, enabling them to fulfill their roles as servants and representatives of Allah on Earth. According to Anantri et al. (2022), the perfection of intellectual development, such as the ability to think critically, aligns with the definition of intelligence as described in the Indonesian Language Dictionary (KBBI). However, a key component of Islamic education is spiritual intelligence, which is characterized by the awareness to live purposefully, the ability to draw upon spiritual strength in problem-solving, and the development of noble character. Furthermore, it includes the capacity to

foster harmonious interactions with others, with oneself, and with Allah (Roji & El Husarri, 2021).

This research emphasizes the critical importance of cultivating children's spiritual intelligence and their related abilities. A heightened sense of spirituality enables individuals to discover happiness and meaning in their lives. In the Islamic context, spiritual intelligence involves both the inner self and the soul, as well as the capacity to impart profound meaning to acts of worship. Islamic education emphasizes the role of educators in guiding students to develop spiritual intelligence in alignment with Islamic teachings. Through an integrative educational approach, teachers and parents assume pivotal roles in fostering the spiritual intelligence of children.

A child's spiritual intelligence primarily depends on the family environment, which serves as the first and most influential learning platform. It is challenging to nurture spiritual intelligence in children if their families fail to prioritize spiritual development. The level of a child's spirituality varies depending on the care and guidance they receive. Several strategies can enhance spiritual intelligence in children, including the practices of prayer and worship grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith.

Moreover, spiritual intelligence helps individuals develop a Tawhid-based mindset in addressing life's realities. By engaging in prayer and worship and adhering to the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, various effective methods can be employed to nurture a child's spiritual intelligence. Therefore, this study aims to explore the development and potential of spiritual intelligence within the framework of educational psychology. Such an exploration is crucial for observing and measuring the spiritual maturity of children and supporting them in achieving an ideal readiness to navigate life and personal growth.

## **Research Methodology**

This study employs a library research approach, which involves systematically gathering data by thoroughly reviewing and analyzing a diverse range of references that are relevant to the research topic. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, specifically a literature review, which aims to explore and synthesize information from various sources such as books, scholarly articles, and scientific journals. These sources provide critical insights into the concept of spiritual intelligence in children, particularly within the context of Islamic educational psychology. Through examining existing literature, this approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how spiritual intelligence is developed, nurtured, and integrated into the educational framework, helping

to illuminate its significance in shaping children's growth and character in an Islamic educational setting.

## Results and Discussion

### A. Results

#### 1. *Definition of spiritual intelligence*

The term "intelligence" refers to the ability to think deeply and critically (Limeri et al., 2020). Meanwhile, "spiritual" relates to psychological attributes (Knobel, 2020). The term "spirit" derives from *spiritus*, meaning breath or air, symbolizing life and animating a person. Spirit imparts meaning to all things, acting as the essence of one's entire life experience (Badri, 2018). Thus, spirituality pertains to the divine, representing living and wise essence, as well as a form of consciousness embodying humanitarian values previously known as principles of humanity. An individual's spiritual intelligence is determined by their level of faith and corresponding behavior.

Spiritual intelligence functions to address questions of meaning by situating behaviors and life within a broader context and assessing actions or life paths based on their significance. It forms the foundation necessary for effectively utilizing both IQ (intellectual intelligence) and EQ (emotional intelligence). Spiritually intelligent individuals possess a far-reaching and comprehensive perspective, firmly believing that everything holds meaning and value. This perspective serves as a guide in making decisions and determining appropriate courses of action (Pruzan & Mikkelsen, 2017).

In the context of Islamic education, spiritual intelligence involves a profound understanding of religious teachings, moral and ethical values, and the strengthening of one's relationship with Allah SWT. It emphasizes the spiritual dimension of individuals by integrating religious knowledge, practices, and the understanding of Islamic values into daily life (Surbakti et al., 2024). While religious aspects are a critical component of spiritual intelligence, they are not the sole focus. Spiritual intelligence also encompasses sensitivity to humanitarian values, empathy, and social justice. It encourages patience in facing life's challenges, fosters harmonious relationships, and supports living with a clear purpose.

Parents bear the responsibility of providing guidance, direction, and quality education to their children to shape their personality and foster intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. Psychologists emphasize that a child's growth and development involve a transformative period encompassing

physical, intellectual, emotional, and interactional abilities, which significantly influence their overall maturation and education.

Characteristics of children with high spiritual intelligence include the following:

- a. Profound self-awareness, intuition, and a strong sense of self or innate authority.
- b. A broad worldview, recognizing interconnections between themselves and others, intuitively perceiving the world as vibrant and illuminated with a subjective light.
- c. A clear understanding of their life's purpose and a deep sense of their life's path.

## **2. *Developing spiritual intelligence in children***

Every child is born with an innate religious nature (*fitrah*), which, with proper guidance and training, begins to manifest its values as they reach maturity. Similar to other instincts, the inclination toward religion is inherent but not immediately apparent, as the psychological functions necessary for its full expression have not yet matured. Therefore, a child's developmental progress significantly influences their understanding of religious concepts (Reksiana & Adlia, 2022).

Understanding a child's concept of religion involves recognizing the characteristics of their religious development. In their growth, children tend to follow patterns or ideas related to authority, meaning their religious understanding is shaped by external influences. They imitate the actions of adults and parents, whether in daily activities or religious practices (Tan & Yasin, 2020). Consequently, a child's comprehension of religious traditions stems from observing the behaviors of their parents and teachers, which they then learn and adopt.

The educational process is shaped by various environmental components, one of which is family education, a foundational and essential aspect for cultivating a child's spiritual intelligence and religious consciousness. The family serves as the primary environment because it is where a child first receives guidance and instruction. Children spend most of their time at home with their parents and family (Nurislamiah et al., 2024). Developing spiritual intelligence requires both IQ (intellectual intelligence) and EQ (emotional intelligence), as these are interdependent, and spiritual intelligence (SQ) cannot function effectively in isolation. IQ, EQ, and SQ are interconnected and collectively contribute to holistic development.

Thus, fostering spiritual intelligence involves educators nurturing the abilities linked to a child's soul, enabling them to resolve challenges aligned with religious values and instilling the principle of *lillahi ta'ala* (for the sake of Allah) in their actions. Failure to develop spiritual intelligence can result in poor character formation in children, as spirituality is inherently tied to their overall growth. Adults who lack character and morality often reflect the inability of their parents to nurture spiritual intelligence during early childhood (Ajawani, 2016).

Parents must recognize that children possess an inherent spiritual nature that can be nurtured to prevent developmental shortcomings. Through understanding these spiritual traits, parents can more effectively guide their children toward developing strong spiritual intelligence. In the context of Islamic educational psychology, several approaches can be employed to nurture and develop a child's spiritual intelligence effectively (binti Norman et al., 2024). These methods aim to instill strong faith-based values while fostering their spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth:

a. Developing Children's Spiritual Intelligence Through Religious Education

Islamic education plays a crucial role in fostering children's spiritual intelligence by reinforcing religious values. This development arises from the application of Islamic principles, enabling children to comprehend, internalize, and practice teachings comprehensively. Supported by divine guidance, this holistic approach allows children to master their spiritual dimensions. Spiritual intelligence and Islamic education are inherently interrelated, as one supports the other in cultivating a child's understanding of faith and spirituality (Bensaid, 2021).

Islamic education provides individuals with in-depth knowledge of religious teachings, forming a strong foundation for spirituality. By offering insight into spiritual theories such as the purpose of life, the relationship with Allah, and the meaning of existence, Islamic education helps children build a meaningful and purposeful life centered on faith.

Religious education serves as the starting point for a child's learning journey. Al-Ghazali describes education as the process of instilling values that bring children closer to Allah SWT. It teaches children that knowledge and achievements are only meaningful when directed toward recognizing and worshiping Allah (*ma'rifatullah*). Consequently, religious education must form the cornerstone of early education. In this context, material knowledge acts as a tool to deepen a child's understanding of Allah's creation (Aldemir, 2018).



b. Religious Values to Instill

Several core values are essential for developing spiritual intelligence in children. First, instilling *taqwa* (God-consciousness) can be achieved by encouraging children to engage in acts of worship, such as prayer, fasting, and Qur'anic recitation, fostering a deep connection with Allah. Teaching *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and prayer before daily actions builds mindfulness and gratitude. Additionally, fostering patience and *istiqamah* (steadfastness) helps children develop resilience and persistence when facing challenges. Cultivating *amal sholeh* (charitable actions) encourages acts of kindness and generosity, reinforcing moral and ethical behavior as an integral part of their character (Meguid, 2024).

c. Methods to Foster Spiritual Intelligence in Children

To effectively nurture a child's spiritual intelligence, parents and educators must employ comprehensive strategies. Teaching Qur'anic recitation is fundamental, as it allows children to internalize the messages of the Qur'an and reflect on its guidance. Training in religious practices such as prayer, fasting, and Hajj rituals lays a solid foundation for spiritual growth (Meguid, 2024). Implementing the prophetic method of *dawah* offers a practical approach, emphasizing role modeling through exemplary behavior, utilizing quality time for guidance and education, and treating children fairly to instill justice and trust. Praying for children's well-being is equally important, as consistent supplications seek Allah's blessings for their success (Quadri, 2021). Encouraging critical thinking and curiosity further supports the intellectual and spiritual maturity of children, while fostering mental development helps build psychological resilience and well-being.

By integrating these practices and principles, parents and educators can develop a robust spiritual foundation, equipping children with the tools necessary to navigate life with purpose, faith, and moral integrity.

**3. How teachers can develop spiritual intelligence in children**

Teachers play a significant role in nurturing children's spiritual intelligence by helping them find meaning in life, think positively, discover wisdom in every event, and teaching them how to worship and appreciate its beauty. By guiding students to reflect on life and encouraging them to engage in spiritual practices, teachers can facilitate the development of their spiritual intelligence. A teacher must strive to create a learning environment that allows students to explore and grow their spiritual intelligence through learning, reflection, and practical life experiences (Nurislamiah et al., 2022).

Spiritual intelligence is an essential aspect of character development. Teachers are also expected to serve as role models, embodying spiritual values in their daily interactions with students. This process is critical because teachers, as influential figures, impact students' spiritual and moral growth (Solihah et al., 2024). In Islamic education, spiritual intelligence involves understanding the vertical relationship between humans and Allah, applying religious teachings in everyday life, and cultivating a deep awareness of this connection (Khadijah & Umam, 2023). To foster spiritual intelligence, teachers can implement the following strategies:

- a. Teachers should embody spiritual values in their personal lives, acting as role models in displaying qualities such as patience, perseverance, sincerity, and empathy toward others. By demonstrating these traits in their interactions with students, teachers can encourage students to develop similar values (Nurislamiah et al., 2022).
- b. Teachers are responsible for guiding students in religious practices. They should provide practical guidance on how to perform religious duties, such as prayer, fasting, and other acts of worship. This ensures that students not only learn about religious practices but also understand the significance of these rituals in their spiritual lives (Solihah et al., 2024).
- c. Involving students in social activities helps them develop a sense of community and empathy. Teachers can teach students about values such as cooperation and concern for others by encouraging them to engage in social activities. These activities, such as community clean-up events, collaborative projects, or assisting those in need, allow students to practice kindness and build good character, which are key components of spiritual intelligence (Munawati et al., 2021).

Integrating these approaches, teachers can play a vital role in developing their students' spiritual intelligence, helping them grow into individuals who are not only academically competent but also morally and spiritually grounded.

#### ***4. Potentials in the development of children's spiritual intelligence***

Spiritual potential refers to the inner source that drives individuals to act in a virtuous manner. Recognizing a child's spiritual intelligence is essential in understanding their potential for moral and ethical growth. Kaas et al. (2024) highlights that every child inherently possesses the capacity for components of spiritual intelligence. The term "intelligence" implies that each child has unique potential, which may vary from one individual to another. Some children excel in processing information, others in managing emotions, and some in understanding the deeper meaning and values of life. These different forms of



intelligence are often categorized as intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence (Moradi et al., 2022).

An example of spiritual potential can be seen in a three-year-old child who already understands what is right and wrong. At four years old, children may also show compassion, such as offering help to a beggar. In many cases, such acts are overlooked, yet they represent the spiritual foundation that should be nurtured, as these behaviors form the basis of character that will carry into adulthood. Thus, a child's ability to absorb knowledge and the spiritual essence inherent within their hearts are gifts from Allah and an essential aspect of human nature.

According to Suwito et al. (2021), the deepest part of the heart, known as *bashirah* (the inner eye), is the conscience. It is through the conscience that humans recognize fundamental values such as truth, honesty, humanity, and divinity. Using these spiritual values, the soul is able to overcome the negative forces that may hinder a person from connecting with Allah, the Creator of the universe. A Muslim must possess some core components of the Shari'ah in order to enhance their spiritual intelligence:

- a. Wisdom in faith: The most important aspect of improving one's spiritual intelligence is to maintain and strengthen one's faith in Allah SWT. This foundational belief serves as the cornerstone of spiritual development (Lahmar, 2020).
- b. The ability to work with a strong ethical mindset while seeking Allah's pleasure: One must believe that every action, when done with sincerity, becomes an act of worship with intrinsic value in the sight of Allah SWT. Patience and perseverance in the face of trials are key, as they should maintain optimism, trusting that Allah will always guide them (Meguid, 2024).
- c. Acceptance of Allah's will: Spiritual intelligence also involves a profound acceptance of Allah's decisions. Believing that every outcome, whether positive or challenging, is a part of Allah's divine plan, which is always for the good of the individual, even if it surpasses human understanding (Alavi & Azizi, 2021).

To cultivate a balanced personality in a Muslim, the integration of spiritual and religious dimensions must go hand in hand. Religious education should assist both parents and educators in fostering children's spiritual intelligence, as every child has innate spiritual potential. Therefore, spiritual intelligence should be nurtured to help children fulfill their potential for goodness in accordance with the purpose of life, serving Allah SWT. A person with spiritual intelligence must also embody moral integrity, faith, good behavior, noble character, a

peaceful soul, and a conscious awareness of worship, prayer, and sincere charitable acts.

## **B. Discussion**

The development of spiritual intelligence in children, particularly within the framework of Islamic education, plays a crucial role in fostering holistic growth. Spiritual intelligence transcends the intellectual and emotional dimensions, helping children understand the deeper meanings of life and establish a connection with Allah SWT. This aligns with the findings of Surbakti et al. (2024), who argue that spiritually intelligent individuals view their actions in a broader, more meaningful context. This perspective is fundamental in Islamic teachings, where spiritual intelligence is closely connected to faith, ethical values, and the quest for purpose in life.

The research also underscores the inherent spiritual nature of children, a notion supported by Kotyk (2024). However, this potential for spiritual development requires proper guidance and nurturing. In this regard, the roles of parents and educators are pivotal. As role models, parents and teachers guide children through religious practices, instilling ethical values such as empathy, patience, and social justice. This aligns with Surbakti et al. (2024), who emphasize that spiritual intelligence in Islam is not merely about religious knowledge but also about the cultivation of virtues that guide children's behavior and interactions with others.

The study's findings regarding the role of teachers in promoting spiritual intelligence corroborate the views expressed by Nurislamiah et al. (2022). Teachers, through their own embodiment of virtues like patience and empathy, can significantly influence students' spiritual development. Through guiding students in religious practices and involving them in social activities that promote cooperation and kindness, teachers help children form a solid moral foundation. This approach not only nurtures religious awareness but also strengthens the child's emotional and social intelligence, allowing for a more integrated development of spiritual intelligence.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the unique spiritual potential each child possesses, a viewpoint consistent with Efendi (2024), who discusses the development of *bashirah*, or inner awareness, which allows children to discern spiritual truths and meaningfully engage with others. The importance of nurturing this potential is vital, as it leads to the formation of individuals who possess strong moral and spiritual values.

Overall, the research findings align with previous studies, particularly regarding the significance of religious education, moral values, and social involvement in developing children's spiritual intelligence. However, the research adds a nuanced perspective by explicitly emphasizing the importance of combining these elements in Islamic educational psychology to nurture spiritually intelligent children. Children grow into responsible, faith-driven individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to society. Thus, the study supports the view that spiritual intelligence, when properly developed, provides a solid foundation for both academic success and moral integrity, in accordance with the principles of Islamic teachings.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that children's spiritual intelligence in Islamic educational psychology can be assessed through their development and abilities. Spiritual intelligence is superior to both intellectual and emotional intelligence. Recently, the concept of spiritual intelligence has emerged as the pinnacle of human intelligence because it not only relies on reasoning or emotions but also emphasizes the spiritual aspect in guiding individuals towards success in life.

The development of children's spiritual intelligence occurs through religious education, and teachers play an important role in teaching spiritual values. Both the education system and the teacher's approach focus on helping children recognize their surroundings and practice Islamic teachings. Teachers are also responsible for teaching religious practices, such as performing prayers (salat) and fasting (sawm), as well as promoting social behaviors like kindness and mutual assistance. Meanwhile, the potential for developing spiritual intelligence in children lies in encouraging them to do good deeds and fostering their sense of care and empathy towards others.

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