

## The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Instilling Spiritual Intelligence in Students of SDN 006 Bontang Utara

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### Abstract

Spiritual intelligence is essential to be cultivated in students from an early age, as external influences may weaken the inner dimensions of children. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers carry professional and moral responsibilities in forming students' spiritual intelligence. This study aims to describe the role of PAI teachers in instilling spiritual intelligence, analyze the strategies employed, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors at SDN 006 Bontang Utara. The study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis followed the steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validity verified through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that PAI teachers play a strategic role as role models, prayer mentors, spiritual motivators, organizers of religious activities, and communicators with parents. Strategies implemented include religious practice routines, storytelling, self-reflection, moral reinforcement, and collaboration among teachers and parents. Key supporting factors are teacher role modeling, school religious culture, and consistent religious habituation, while inhibiting factors include digital environment influence, limited PAI time, and insufficient spiritual guidance at home. These findings emphasize that developing spiritual intelligence requires continuous, structured, and comprehensive synergy among teachers, students, families, and the social environment.

### Keywords

PAI Teacher, Spiritual Intelligence, Learning Strategy, Character Education, Elementary School



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## INTRODUCTION

Spiritual intelligence is an important dimension in the development of students because it serves as a foundation in shaping the way of thinking, behaving, and behaving based on divine values. In the context of basic education, spiritual intelligence is not only related to the ability to carry out worship, but also reflects the ability of students to internalize moral values, control themselves, and build harmonious relationships with others. According to Zohar and Marshall (2000), spiritual

intelligence is the ability of individuals to find the meaning of life, understand higher values, and make these values the basis for making decisions. From the perspective of Islamic education, spiritual intelligence is part of human nature that needs to be developed through a continuous educational process so that students are able to become individuals who have faith, piety, and noble character.

This role makes Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers the main actors in the process of cultivating spiritual intelligence in elementary schools. PAI teachers are not only in charge of delivering religious materials, but also function as *murabbi*, *mu'allim*, as well as *uswah hasanah* who provide examples to students. Al-Ghazali emphasized that the success of Islamic education is highly determined by the moral quality and exemplary of teachers in guiding the spiritual development of students. In line with that, Muhaimin (2012) explained that PAI teachers have the responsibility to develop learning that is able to integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects so that Islamic values do not stop at the level of knowledge, but become real behavior in daily life. The urgency of developing spiritual intelligence is increasing in the digital era which is marked by the rapid development of information and communication technology. Elementary school students now have easier access to various information through digital media that are not entirely in line with moral and religious values. This condition has the potential to affect character development if it is not balanced with adequate spiritual guidance in the school and family environment. Therefore, PAI teachers are required to be able to implement learning strategies that not only emphasize mastery of the material, but also build religious habits, examples, and a learning environment that supports the internalization of spiritual values.

Normatively, the importance of the formation of spiritual intelligence is in line with the goals of national education as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which emphasizes that education aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who have faith, fear God Almighty, and have noble character. In addition, the Independent Curriculum places the dimensions of faith, fear of God Almighty, and noble character as one of the main characters in the Pancasila Student Profile. In the perspective of Islam, this goal is in line with the words of Allah Swt. in QS. Adz-Dzariyat verse 56 which affirms that humans were created to worship Him, as well as the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) which states that every child is born in a state of fitrah and the educational environment plays a role in shaping his personality development.

Various previous studies have shown that PAI teachers have an important contribution to the development of students' spiritual intelligence. Putra and Wulandari (2021) found that religious habituation and teacher examples have a positive influence on the formation of students' spiritual intelligence. Research by Al Jihadul Haq (2025) also shows that the strategy of PAI teachers through the integration of Islamic values in learning, habituation of worship, and moral development is able to form the religious character and empathic attitude of students. However, most of the research was conducted at the secondary education level, such as junior high school, high school, and vocational school. The study of PAI teachers' strategies in instilling spiritual intelligence in elementary school students, especially in public elementary schools, is still relatively limited so it requires further research.

Based on the results of initial observations at SDN 006 Bontang Utara, the school has carried out various religious programs, such as the habit of prayer before and after learning, reciting the Qur'an, and commemorating Islamic holidays. Nevertheless, the level of spiritual intelligence of students still shows variation. Some students are not fully able to internalize spiritual values in their daily lives so

they still need more intensive assistance. PAI teachers also identified several obstacles, including limited learning time, the influence of the social environment outside the school, and the lack of optimal religious habituation in the family environment. Based on these conditions, this study aims to describe the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling the spiritual intelligence of students at SDN 006 Bontang Utara, analyze the strategies applied in the learning process and religious habituation, and identify factors that support and hinder its implementation. The results of the research are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic Religious Education learning strategies that are more effective in shaping the religious character of elementary school students

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand in depth the dynamics of learning, pedagogical relationships, and the socio-cultural context of schools holistically. The case study focuses the research on a limited system, namely the professional practice of PAI teachers at SDN 006 Bontang Utara, so that the phenomenon can be intensively observed in a natural setting (Yin, 2018; Merriam, 2009). The research was carried out at SDN 006 North Bontang, North Bontang District, East Kalimantan, in the period of December 2025 to May 2026. This school is located at Jl. R.A. Kartini RT. 23 No. 50, Bontang Baru Village, with accreditation status A. The research informants consist of PAI teachers as the main informants, school principals, class teachers, and class VI students as supporting informants. The selection of informants used purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques.

The data collection technique includes three ways. First, participatory observation is carried out to capture students' real behavior and learning practices that are oriented towards the development of spiritual intelligence. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with PAI teachers, principals, classroom teachers, and students to explore perceptions, experiences, and psychological dynamics that affect the process of internalizing spiritual intelligence. Third, document studies are carried out through analysis of learning tools, activity journals, teacher records, and school program archives related to strengthening spiritual character. The data analysis follows the model of Miles and Huberman (1994) which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the data was tested through source triangulation (comparing data from teachers, students, and parents), technical triangulation (interviews, observations, and documents), and theoretical triangulation using the perspective of spiritual development psychology and teacher role theory. The research paradigm is multidisciplinary, covering theological, pedagogical, and psychological dimensions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Overview of Research Objects**

SDN 006 Bontang Utara is a public elementary school with A accreditation status with NPSN: 30401839. This school has 363 students who are all Muslims, with a distribution of 172 male students and 191 female students. The educators and education staff are 23 people with a composition of civil servants, PPPK, and honorary (Honda). The school's vision is "Realizing Quality, Virtuous, Skilled and Environmentally Friendly Education", with the main mission of faith and fear of God Almighty and developing children's talents and potentials in various fields. The school has developed various religious programs such as prayer before and after study, recitation of short surahs, congregational

prayers, recitation of Asmaul Husna, commemoration of Islamic holidays, and the habit of greeting. PAI teachers, namely Mrs. Janawati (PPPK), are the main drivers of these activities. These programs are the foundation of the school's religious culture that supports the formation of students' spiritual intelligence holistically.

### **The Role of PAI Teachers in Instilling Spiritual Intelligence**

The results of the study show that PAI teachers at SDN 006 Bontang Utara have diverse and complementary roles in the process of cultivating spiritual intelligence. The principal emphasized in the interview that spiritual intelligence is developed through routine school programs such as prayer before and after study, recitation of short surahs, habituation of greetings, religious activities, and strengthening discipline and responsibility. The PAI teacher explained that worship coaching is not just about teaching the technique of prayer movements, but also explaining the meaning behind each worship as a form of gratitude, submission, and how to ask for help from Allah SWT. First, the role of a spiritual example. PAI teachers display consistent behavior between speech and deed. Discipline in worship, politeness in speaking, patience in teaching, and honesty in attitude are models that students observe directly. This finding is in line with Albert Bandura's social learning theory which emphasizes that children learn through the process of observation, imitation, and behavioral modeling. The observed behavior of important figures such as teachers can be imitated by children, especially if the behavior is positively reinforced. Muhaimin emphasized that PAI teachers as *role models* play a role in guiding students towards understanding and appreciating Islamic teachings as a whole.

Second, the role as an educator and worship guide. The teacher not only explains the procedure of worship, but accompanies the students in practice—patiently correcting mistakes, explaining the meaning behind each movement, and connecting worship to real life. Al-Ghazali emphasized that worship education must be carried out through example, habituation, and continuous supervision until worship becomes the innate character of students. Third, the role as a spiritual motivator. PAI teachers awaken the inner drive of students to get closer to Allah through heartfelt advice, exemplary, and positive reinforcement. Jalaluddin stated that spiritual motivation is an inner drive to achieve closeness to God through understanding the meaning of life and worship. Teachers also help students see each test as an opportunity to be patient and pray, not as an obstacle.

Fourth, the role as a manager of school religious activities. PAI teachers design, coordinate, and supervise all religious programs in the school environment, including congregational prayers, Qur'anic tadarus, commemoration of Islamic holidays, and noble moral habituation programs. Muhaimin emphasized that the cultivation of Islamic values in schools will be effective if teachers function as the main drivers of structured religious activities. Fifth, the role of communicator with parents and the environment. PAI teachers bridge information between schools and families through parent meetings, online message groups, and direct communication. Epstein emphasized that community involvement is one of the important pillars in educational collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Intensive communication ensures that the spiritual values instilled in school are reinforced at home.

The findings of the study also show that classroom teachers play a role as strategic partners of PAI teachers. The classroom teacher stated in an interview that the development of spiritual intelligence is inseparable from general learning. In any lesson, teachers can insert spiritual values such as associating environmental materials with the responsibility of caring for God's creation, or building mutual respect in group work. These findings broaden the understanding that the success of

PAI teachers is largely determined by collaboration with all school residents.

### **PAI Teachers' Strategies in Instilling Spiritual Intelligence**

The results of the study identified a number of strategies that PAI teachers applied in a sustainable and interrelated manner. These strategies do not run in isolation, but are a comprehensive pedagogical approach. The first strategy is the example of the teacher. Example is the strongest foundation because it is easier for students to understand spiritual value through the teacher's real actions than verbal advice. The principal emphasized that teachers who arrive on time, speak politely, lead prayers solemnly, and patiently reprimand students are concrete examples for children. Thomas Lickona emphasized that character formation will not succeed without *moral modeling* from educators. The second strategy is the habit of worship. Habituation is carried out through prayer before and after study, reading short surahs, reading Asmaul Husna or Juz Amma, ablution practice, prayer practice, and school religious activities. PAI teachers stated that elementary school students need repetition so that spiritual values are not only understood, but become habits. Hafidz et al. (2022) show that habituation of religious values can hone children's spiritual intelligence from an early age through direct experience.

However, this study also found that habituation does not always result in complete inner intelligence. Some students still participate in worship activities because of the teacher's direction or because they follow friends, not because of inner awareness. These findings are important because they show a gap between formal obedience and spiritual intelligence. Habituation must always be accompanied by meaning; Without meaning, habituation risks becoming a mechanical routine. The third strategy is the use of exemplary stories and simple reflection. The teacher conveys the story of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, a friend, or a simple story about a child who is honest, devoted to his parents, helps friends, and is patient in facing problems. After telling the story, the teacher invites students to take lessons through simple questions. Nabihasnah et al. (2025) emphasized that *the storytelling* method can form noble morals because religious values are conveyed in a lively manner and close to children's experiences. Exemplary stories serve as a bridge between religious teachings and daily life.

The fourth strategy is to strengthen morals in daily life. Teachers consistently reprimand and correct deviant behavior, as well as give appreciation for positive behavior. Indicators of spiritual intelligence are assessed not only through formal worship, but also through honest, polite, caring, patient, responsible, able to apologize, and maintain cleanliness. This finding is in line with Widodo who said that exemplary methods, worship habits, advice, and reflection on values are relevant in building spiritual intelligence. The fifth strategy is a personal and cooperative approach. PAI teachers provide individualized guidance to students who face confusion, worship difficulties, or family problems that affect their spiritual dimension. Cooperation with classroom teachers and parents is carried out to ensure the continuity of coaching at school and at home. PAI teachers convey the development of children's worship through online message groups, parent meetings, or direct communication.

### **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors**

The cultivation of spiritual intelligence at SDN 006 North Bontang is influenced by various factors that can be categorized as supporting and inhibiting factors. Key supporting factors include: (1) the school's religious culture embodied through scheduled and consistent religious programs; (2)

the example of teachers as a spiritual model that can be observed and imitated by students; (3) habitual routine worship that gradually forms religious awareness; (4) cooperation between PAI teachers and classroom teachers that extend spiritual guidance to various learning contexts; (5) support for school principals who maintain and strengthen religious culture through school policies; (6) students' enthusiasm in religious activities; and (7) parental involvement in fostering children's spiritual behavior at home.

The principal emphasized that the school's commitment to building a religious atmosphere must be realized in an academic culture that is supported by all school residents—not just written documents. The PAI teacher added that worship habituation activities help students get to know worship directly and feel it as a need of the heart. Identified inhibiting factors include: (1) differences in family backgrounds that result in variations in students' spiritual readiness; (2) lack of consistency of students, especially in carrying out worship when not supervised; (3) the influence of the social environment and peers that do not always support spiritual values; (4) uncontrolled use of gadgets that have the potential to shift religious habits; (5) the limited PAI learning time is insufficient for comprehensive spiritual guidance; and (6) incomplete student spiritual development monitoring documents.

Efendi (in Zaer & Misra, 2025) emphasized that the development of digital technology has an impact on character formation, especially the moral and spiritual aspects of students. Barriers to the use of gadgets in this study are contemporary challenges that need to be overcome through strategies that involve families as the main partners. Rinaldi and Syahrin (2026) in their research also found that the habituation of worship and the example of teachers contribute significantly to the emotional and spiritual development of students.

### **Spiritual Intelligence Formation Pattern**

Based on the findings of the research, the pattern of spiritual intelligence formation of students of SDN 006 Bontang Utara was identified which can be summarized as follows: First, PAI teachers build a spiritual foundation through example. Second, teachers strengthen their values through consistent worship habits. Third, the teacher explains the meaning of worship and morals through stories, advice, and concrete examples. Fourth, classroom teachers and principals expand spiritual strengthening through school culture. Fifth, parents are the determining factor for the sustainability of habituation outside school.

This pattern shows that students' spiritual intelligence develops through the synergistic relationship between models, routines, meanings, reinforcement, and the environment. These findings expand the understanding of the research of Parhati et al. (2022) which affirm the importance of the role of PAI teachers in developing the spiritual and emotional intelligence of elementary school students. Wulandari et al. also emphasized that spiritual intelligence is an important element of character formation that has an impact on the morale of students. The novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, this study confirms that spiritual intelligence in elementary school students is operational and can be observed through daily behavior—not just the ability to carry out formal worship. Second, this study shows that spiritual intelligence is the result of an educational ecosystem involving PAI teachers, classroom teachers, principals, students, and parents. Third, this study identifies the gap between formal habituation and the inner intelligence of students, so habituation needs to always be accompanied by meaning, simple reflection, and a personal approach.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, three main things can be concluded. First, PAI teachers at SDN 006 Bontang Utara have a central role in instilling spiritual intelligence through five main functions: as spiritual role models, worship guides, spiritual motivators, managers of religious activities, and communicators between schools and families. The implementation of these five roles is carried out in a sustainable and integrated manner in teaching and learning activities and daily life of schools. Second, the PAI teacher's strategy in instilling spiritual intelligence is carried out through a complementary approach, namely example, habituation of meaningful daily worship, the use of exemplary stories, consistent moral strengthening, a personal approach, and cooperation with classroom teachers and parents. Exemplary strategies are core because learners are more likely to internalize values through what they see and feel rather than just what they hear. The habit of worship accompanied by meaning has been proven to be more effective in building inherent inner intelligence than mechanical habituation without appreciation.

Third, the cultivation of spiritual intelligence is influenced by supporting factors in the form of school religious culture, teacher examples, consistent worship habits, cooperation between teachers, and parental involvement. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include differences in family backgrounds, the influence of the digital environment, limited PAI time, and weak spiritual guidance at home. Successful cultivation of spiritual intelligence requires a structured and comprehensive sustainable synergy between schools, families, and social environments. The implications of this research include the importance of developing a religious culture in primary schools that is not only centered on PAI subjects, but integrated into the entire educational process. PAI teachers need to get full support from the principal and class teachers, as well as establish effective communication with parents. Further research can develop valid and reliable instruments for measuring the spiritual intelligence of elementary school students, as well as examine the effectiveness of digital-based intervention programs for spiritual development.

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