



The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Developing Students' Spiritual and Existential Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The cultivation of spiritual and existential intelligence from elementary school age is a fundamental aspect in shaping a generation that is faithful, virtuous, and capable of understanding the meaning of life. Islamic Education teachers play a strategic role not only as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and counselors who guide students toward self-awareness, empathy, and moral resilience. This study aims to explore the role of Islamic Education teachers in fostering students' spiritual and existential intelligence at State Elementary School 01 Medan City.

Methodology: The research employed a qualitative case study approach with purposive site selection, as the school was considered active in guidance practices and open to character development. The main subjects were Islamic Education teachers and the principal. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, persistence, and member checking.

Main Findings: The results show that Islamic Education teachers play a significant role in instilling values of faith, empathy, and awareness of life's meaning amidst the individualistic challenges of urban environments. Strategies include varied instructional methods, collaboration with parents, and institutional support, all of which strengthen their role in character development.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study highlights how Islamic Education teachers contribute uniquely to integrating spiritual and existential dimensions into education, offering a contextual model for holistic character formation in modern urban schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of spiritual and existential intelligence has become an urgent challenge in contemporary education, where moral degradation and individualism continue to emerge among young learners [1]. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers play a central role in this process [2], particularly at the elementary level, where students face emotional and social issues while searching for meaning in life [3]. However, the role of IRE teachers is often reduced to disciplinary enforcement rather than guiding students toward self-awareness and moral growth [4]. This research addresses the problem of how IRE teachers contribute to the development of students' spiritual and existential intelligence at State Elementary School 01 Medan City. At the elementary stage, teachers

act not only as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and counselors who guide students in discovering their true selves [5], cultivating spiritual awareness, and understanding the meaning of life [6].

This role aligns with the objectives of Islamic Religious Education, which emphasizes planned learning to strengthen faith, tolerance, and moral values [7], ultimately producing a generation that is faithful, ethical, and upholds unity [8], yet variations in educational background and experience may affect teaching effectiveness [9], making professional development essential [10]. The teaching profession also demands openness to innovation and change [11], enabling schools to remain adaptive amid rapid educational transformation [12]. Nevertheless, teachers are not empowered to impose their personal ideals upon students [13] but are obligated to help them develop their potential, interests, and talents [14].

Hence, the quality of the teacher–student relationship becomes a key determinant of effective mentorship [2]. Preliminary observations at State Elementary School 01 Medan City reveal low self-awareness, limited empathy, and poor understanding of life’s meaning among students. These are reflected in individualistic attitudes, diminished respect for moral values, and weak mental resilience in facing everyday problems. Strengthening spiritual and existential intelligence is therefore essential as a foundation for character building, enabling students not only to think critically and logically [15] but also to discover life’s purpose, understand their identity, and connect deeply with life values [16]. In this context, IRE teachers hold a strategic position in nurturing the inner dimensions of students’ development.

However, practices in the field show that the role of IRE teachers is often confined to addressing behavioral issues or student conflicts [17]. Few elementary schools have optimized the systematic and sustainable function of IRE teachers in fostering students’ spiritual and existential intelligence. Most previous studies focus on learning guidance, career orientation, or socio-emotional support, whereas research highlighting the contribution of IRE teachers to spiritual and existential development remains limited. Theoretical studies on spiritual and existential intelligence are often found in philosophy or developmental psychology, but few integrate these concepts into practical educational frameworks at the elementary level. Empirically, little data exists on how IRE teachers strengthen these dimensions in urban schools such as Medan City, which face complex social challenges.

In addition, strategies that support the growth of students’ intelligence such as clarifying learning objectives [18], offering appreciation, creating healthy competition, and implementing proportional discipline [19], have not been fully utilized. Teachers also need to develop positive habits [20], assist with learning difficulties, employ diverse teaching methods, and use relevant learning media [21]. These strategies not only enhance academic achievement but also contribute to the cultivation of spiritual and existential intelligence [22].

In Islam, teachers occupy a noble position as conveyors of knowledge and instillers of moral values. The Qur’an Al-Mujadilah (58:11) states that “Allah will raise those who believe among you and those who have been given knowledge by several degrees.” This aligns with the goal of spiritual intelligence, which fosters creativity [23], flexibility, openness, and adaptability [24], strengthens appreciation of religious values [25], and builds harmonious relationships with God, others, and oneself [26]. Individuals with high spiritual intelligence tend to be emotionally mature [27], responsible, and ethical [28].

Existential intelligence, likewise, emphasizes understanding life’s meaning, purpose, and one’s position in the universe [29]. While spiritual intelligence deepens the vertical relationship with God, existential intelligence enriches horizontal awareness of social relations and moral responsibility [30]. Together, both dimensions balance intellectual intelligence to prevent decision-making from losing moral direction [31]. A hadith narrated by At-Tirmidhi emphasizes that “The most intelligent believer is the one who remembers death the most and prepares best for it,” reinforcing that true intelligence transcends logic, rooted instead in awareness of life’s ultimate purpose the essence of existential intelligence.

Therefore, this research, titled *The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Developing Students’ Spiritual and Existential Intelligence*, is crucial to conduct at State Elementary School 01 Medan City. It not only addresses theoretical, empirical, and practical gaps but also provides a contextual contribution by integrating spiritual and existential dimensions into Islamic education. The guiding research question is: How do Islamic Religious Education teachers develop students’ spiritual and existential intelligence in elementary education? The novelty of this study lies in its holistic framework that connects spiritual and existential theories with practical strategies of IRE instruction, offering a model for fostering character formation that unites faith, morality, and self-awareness in the modern educational context.

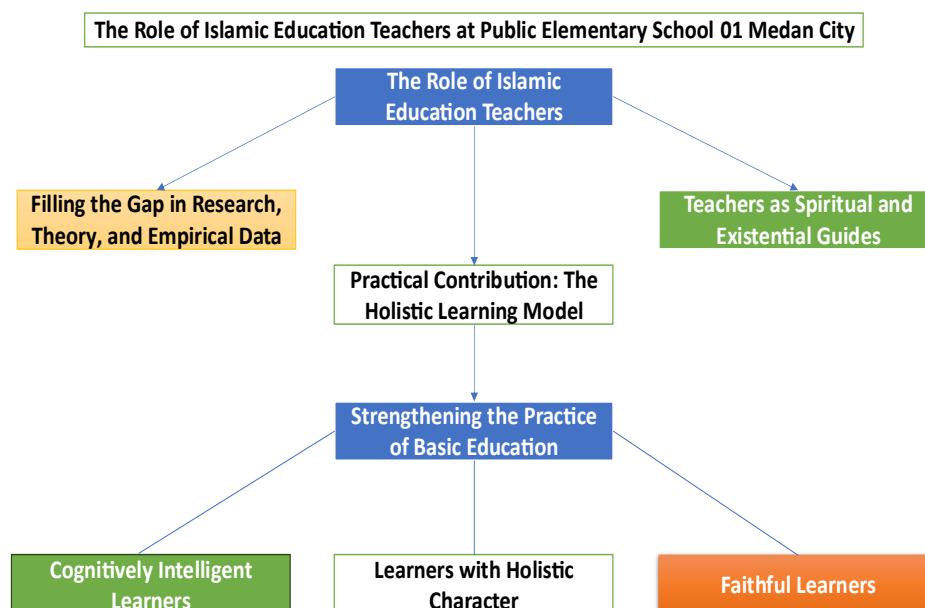


Figure 1. The Role of IRE Teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City
Image Source: Analysis Results from the Author

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in developing students' spiritual and existential intelligence at State Elementary School 01 Medan City. The research was conducted over a period of three months, from August to September 2025. The research site was selected purposively because this school is recognized for its active implementation of student guidance programs and openness to character-based education. The rationale for choosing State Elementary School 01 Medan City also lies in its diverse student population and institutional support for religious and moral development, making it an appropriate setting for studying the integration of spiritual and existential learning within Islamic education practices. The participants consisted of five categories of informants, including the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, students, and parents. In total, fifteen informants were involved, comprising one principal, two Islamic Religious Education teachers, three homeroom teachers, six students, and three parents. All informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance and potential to provide rich, detailed, and contextually meaningful information about the research focus. This diverse composition ensured a comprehensive perspective on the collaborative role of teachers, parents, and the school community in nurturing students' inner development. Data were collected using three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the informants' understanding of spiritual and existential guidance strategies. Participatory observation was used to observe classroom activities, teacher-student interactions, and character-building practices within the school environment. Documentation included school programs, activity reports, and records of religious and moral education initiatives. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings.

The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model [32], which consists of three cyclical stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and simplified raw data according to the research focus. In the data display stage, the information was organized and presented descriptively to facilitate interpretation. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and verifying them through continuous comparison and validation. Furthermore, a thematic analysis was applied to categorize data into key themes, which included the teachers' strategies, the students' responses, and the school's institutional support. Thematic analysis was conducted through five interconnected steps: familiarization with data, coding, theme identification, theme review, and interpretation aligned with the study's objectives. This analytical process provided a coherent structure for deriving conclusions that reflect both empirical and theoretical relevance.

The data collection techniques used in this study consisted of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The interview instrument was a semi-structured guide designed to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and strategies in fostering spiritual and existential intelligence. The

interview outline covered several aspects: (1) teachers' understanding of spiritual and existential intelligence concepts, (2) the implementation of guidance practices in classroom activities, (3) the role of collaboration between teachers, parents, and the school environment, and (4) challenges and opportunities faced in implementing holistic education.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the researcher used source and method triangulation, prolonged observation, and member checking with informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations [33]. In the data reduction stage, all collected information was coded and grouped based on emerging patterns relevant to the research focus. The data display stage involved describing categorized findings in narrative and thematic forms to facilitate interpretation. The conclusion and verification stage included the synthesis of core themes and cross-validation through member checking with informants. To complement this model, thematic analysis was also applied through the steps of familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, review, and final interpretation. This process allowed the integration of empirical data and theoretical constructs to draw valid and meaningful conclusions.

Detailed field notes and reflective memos were maintained to ensure the consistency and transparency of the analysis process. Ethical clearance for this research was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi, under approval number 024/UNPAB/PAI/2025. Formal permission was also obtained from the principal of State Elementary School 01 Medan City. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily, with assurances of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time. With this approach, it is hoped that the research results will provide a comprehensive picture of the guidance practices of IRE teachers in fostering the spiritual and existential intelligence of students in elementary schools. Through this methodological approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive and credible understanding of how Islamic Religious Education teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City guide and nurture students' spiritual and existential intelligence in the context of elementary education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. IRE Teachers as Spiritual and Existential Mentors at State Elementary School 01 Medan City

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City play a central role in guiding students through emotional and social challenges while helping them develop moral awareness and find meaning in life. Field observations conducted between August and October 2025 revealed that many students struggled with empathy, emotional sensitivity, and the ability to understand their purpose. This finding underscores the essential role of IRE teachers as spiritual and existential mentors who guide students beyond cognitive learning toward reflective and value-based understanding.

During interviews, IRE teachers repeatedly emphasized that religious education must go beyond memorizing verses and rituals. One teacher explained, *"Many children here are still insensitive to their friends' feelings. Some are indifferent when their peers are in trouble, while others get angry easily when they disagree. Therefore, in every IRE lesson, I try to incorporate values such as empathy, mutual help, and patience. I prefer to use examples from stories of the Prophet so that children can understand the meaning of life more easily"* (Interview, August 2025). This perspective highlights an effort to translate abstract moral values into practical experiences [34], consistent with Zohar and Marshall's theory of spiritual intelligence, which emphasizes the application of transcendental values in everyday life [26].

Another IRE teacher supported this approach, stating, *"If it's just memorizing prayers or verses, they forget quickly. But if I relate it to everyday experiences, like helping parents, sharing with friends, or keeping things clean, they respond better. I try to make IRE a real guide for life, not just theory"* (Interview, August 2025). This approach reflects Gardner's concept of existential intelligence, which involves the capacity to reflect on deeper life questions and connect daily experiences with broader moral significance [35]. Both statements illustrate that IRE teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City have developed a reflective pedagogy that integrates faith, emotion, and life practice as mutually reinforcing dimensions.

The school principal shared similar views during an interview in September 2025, acknowledging the importance of the teachers' mentorship. He said, *"The role of IRE teachers is vital, especially since the students at this school come from diverse social backgrounds. They must set an example, not only for students but also for other teachers, in cultivating spiritual and existential values."* The principal also highlighted the moral challenges of urban life, noting, *"The environment in Medan City is quite complex. Children are influenced by individualistic culture. We hope IRE teachers can be mentors who help them find their identity, understand their life purpose, and maintain good relationships with others."* His reflections reinforce the argument that moral education in urban schools must intentionally counter the individualistic tendencies of city environments through guidance that integrates emotional, spiritual, and existential awareness.

The field interviews revealed several consistent patterns. Teachers consciously positioned themselves not merely as instructors but as facilitators who created reflective spaces where students could express feelings and

discuss moral experiences. For example, after class, they often conducted short reflection sessions asking students how they applied Islamic values at home or during play. This practice helped students articulate self-awareness and empathy. Teachers also acted as motivators, offering praise to students who showed good moral behavior. Such positive reinforcement encouraged repetition of prosocial actions, an approach consistent with Goleman's in 1995 emotional intelligence framework emphasizing motivation and empathy as foundations for ethical development.

In addition, teachers functioned as counselors who mediated interpersonal conflicts and guided students toward forgiveness and compassion. One teacher recounted a case in which two students quarreled over a group task. Instead of imposing punishment, the teacher facilitated dialogue and related the discussion to the Prophet's example of forgiveness, prompting both students to reconcile. This mentoring role exemplifies al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), emphasizing moral transformation through reflection and repentance [36].

Spiritual intelligence at State Elementary School 01 Medan City was cultivated through daily rituals that were intentionally transformed into learning moments. Praying together before class, for instance, was not treated as routine but as an opportunity to strengthen gratitude and awareness of divine presence. Teachers framed these moments as forms of experiential learning, reminding students that studying is an act of worship. Similarly, existential intelligence was developed through contextualized discussions of Qur'anic verses and hadiths. Teachers often referred to QS. Al-Mujadilah (58:11), which emphasizes the virtue of knowledge, and explained that diligence in study is a path to divine honor. They also drew upon the hadith stating that "the most intelligent believer is the one who remembers death the most," relating it to time management and discipline. Such integration illustrates the connection between faith, morality, and purpose as expressed in both Islamic and psychological perspectives.

The multicultural environment of State Elementary School 01 Medan City further strengthened the relevance of this approach. Students from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds required exposure to the value of tolerance as a spiritual and civic virtue. Teachers integrated interfaith respect and cooperation into moral lessons, helping students appreciate differences as a form of divine diversity. This finding supports the notion that spiritual and existential intelligence must include social consciousness, emphasis on ethical transcendence [37].

Interviews with parents reinforced the view that IRE teachers bridge the moral gap between school and home. One parent explained that many families in Medan struggle to devote time to moral education because of work responsibilities, making the teacher's role vital in maintaining continuity of faith-based guidance. Parents appreciated that teachers communicated regularly about children's behavior, reinforcing values of kindness, respect, and humility. This collaboration contributes to the coherence between familial and institutional moral education, ensuring that values taught in school are practiced at home.

In analyzing these findings, several causal linkages emerge. The presence of individualistic urban culture contributes to reduced empathy, while teacher-led reflection sessions enhance students' awareness of others. Emotional reinforcement stimulates motivation, and faith-based counseling strengthens resilience and moral discipline. This sequence of cause and effect demonstrates that spiritual and existential intelligence grows most effectively when emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions are harmonized through pedagogical reflection.

When compared with previous studies conducted in rural or madrasa contexts, the experience of State Elementary School 01 Medan City highlights that urban schools demand a more deliberate pedagogical framework. While rural students often internalize values through community-based traditions, urban students require structured reflection and guided dialogue to internalize moral meaning. This confirms that existential development, in particular, must be intentionally cultivated through teaching strategies that encourage self-inquiry and purposeful living.

The integration of theoretical perspectives from Zohar and Marshall, Gardner, Goleman, and al-Ghazali provides an interdisciplinary foundation connecting psychology, Islamic spirituality, and education [38]. The IRE teachers' methods at State Elementary School 01 Medan City show that faith-based moral education can simultaneously address intellectual reasoning (*'aql*), emotional regulation (*nafs*), and spiritual consciousness (*qalb*). The synergy of these dimensions forms a holistic educational model in which teachers act as mentors of meaning, shaping students' faith, character, and emotional intelligence in harmony.

Theoretically, the study demonstrates that spiritual and existential intelligence can be operationalized through integrative Islamic pedagogy. Practically, it presents a model in which religious instruction, emotional engagement, and family collaboration together nurture empathy, self-discipline, and a sense of divine purpose. The mentorship of IRE teachers thus transforms religious education from a cognitive subject into a dynamic moral experience. Through this integrative approach, students at State Elementary School 01 Medan City grow into individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually aware, emotionally balanced, and existentially mature—embodying the ideal of Islamic education that unites knowledge (*ilm*), faith (*iman*), and righteous action (*amal*).

3.2. Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening the Role of IRE Teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education at State Elementary School 01 Medan City, particularly in fostering students' spiritual and existential intelligence, is accompanied by various contextual challenges. These challenges stem from internal student factors, the complexity of the urban social environment, and limited institutional support. Consequently, IRE teachers must employ creative and adaptive strategies to sustain their mentoring role effectively.

During interviews conducted in August 2025, IRE teachers explained that one of the main difficulties lies in the students' tendency toward individualism and lack of empathy. One teacher reflected, *"Many students here are still very individualistic. They pay little attention to friends who are facing difficulties and often try to solve problems alone. To instill empathy and togetherness, we need to take a more personal and intensive approach."* The observation highlights the weakening of collective awareness among urban children, a symptom consistent with what Zohar and Marshall describe as a lack of spiritual grounding—when individuals are detached from transcendent moral frameworks [26]. Without cultivating compassion and social belonging, spiritual intelligence cannot develop holistically.

Another challenge concerns the ineffectiveness of traditional lecturing methods. The second IRE teacher noted, *"Lectures are no longer effective for elementary students. They get bored quickly, so I use storytelling, role-playing, and short discussions. In that way, students can understand and experience the values directly."* This testimony demonstrates the need for experiential learning, aligning with Gardner's theory that existential intelligence thrives when learners confront moral dilemmas and personal meaning through lived experiences [24]. The teachers' shift from rote memorization to participatory learning mirrors the pedagogical transition from cognitive to affective–existential engagement.

Observations also revealed that many students exhibited low self-awareness and social sensitivity, often struggling to collaborate or express compassion. These conditions represent a primary obstacle for IRE teachers who must instill empathy and social responsibility within an urban context heavily influenced by digital media and popular culture. The exposure of children to secular entertainment, consumerist trends, and fragmented online interactions often diminishes their spiritual focus and weakens moral discipline. The principal confirmed this, explaining in an interview, *"As a school located in the city center, our students live in a diverse and digital environment. They are constantly exposed to popular culture, which can erode their moral values. Therefore, IRE teachers have to act as value filters to strengthen the students' moral foundation."*

In addition to environmental influences, there remains a narrow public perception of the IRE teacher's function. Many still regard IRE instruction as limited to teaching ritual practices or maintaining discipline. This perception often constrains teachers' roles as spiritual counselors and existential mentors. Interviews also revealed professional and resource-related constraints, including insufficient access to updated digital learning materials that could support value-based education. At State Elementary School 01 Medan City, multimedia resources that link Islamic teachings with real-life contexts remain minimal, making it challenging for teachers to adapt their instruction to contemporary learning preferences.

IRE teachers also reported interpersonal challenges in forming close relationships with students who are reserved or reluctant to share personal concerns. Some children find it difficult to express emotions, yet the development of both spiritual and existential intelligence depends on openness and reflective dialogue. Teachers thus adopt a personalized approach that involves informal conversations outside the classroom, providing emotional safety and guidance. These micro-interactions enable students to build trust and self-awareness, reflecting Goleman's in 1995 principle that emotional empathy precedes moral growth [39].

To overcome these obstacles, IRE teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City have devised multidimensional strategies. They employ storytelling, using narratives about the Prophet and historical Islamic figures to contextualize moral values within the students' lived realities. This approach enables students to interpret faith as a dynamic and applicable moral compass rather than abstract knowledge. Teachers also use role-playing and simulation activities, such as enacting acts of kindness, apologizing, or practicing deliberation, allowing students to internalize moral lessons experientially. These strategies demonstrate how abstract concepts like sincerity, cooperation, and compassion can be transformed into practical life skills.

The principal affirmed that institutional support has become a strategic necessity. He explained, *"We try to give IRE teachers wider space beyond classroom instruction. They are involved in religious activities, character-building programs, and the cultivation of school culture. Through this integration, we hope the IRE teachers' role will be more visible in shaping students' spiritual and existential intelligence."* Such institutional collaboration enhances the teachers' moral authority and legitimizes their role as holistic mentors rather than solely as classroom instructors.

Another important strategy involves fostering partnerships with parents to sustain spiritual learning at home. IRE teachers maintain open communication with families, encouraging them to cultivate habits such as praying together, reciting short surahs before sleep, and discussing moral stories. This family–school synergy

reinforces the continuity of spiritual and existential education, bridging formal and informal learning environments.

IRE teachers are also beginning to incorporate digital media to make religious education more engaging. Some have used short video clips, Islamic quizzes, and illustrated visual aids to explain abstract ethical concepts. While resources remain limited, these efforts demonstrate adaptive pedagogy and signal an emerging digital literacy that supports students' moral imagination.

In guidance and discipline, IRE teachers employ both positive reinforcement and proportional sanctions. Students who demonstrate empathy or responsibility receive verbal praise or simple rewards, while those who misbehave are encouraged to reflect on their actions through journaling or short prayers. These educational sanctions aim not to punish but to nurture moral accountability, in line with al-Ghazali's perspective that moral awareness must be awakened through contemplation rather than fear [40].

The principal's support in providing professional development, training, and facilities remains critical for sustaining these efforts. Without strong institutional backing, the teachers' capacity to innovate and expand their mentoring function would be limited. Therefore, the school's policy framework must explicitly recognize the broader spiritual and existential dimensions of IRE.

Overall, the challenges faced by IRE teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City reveal a dynamic interplay between environmental pressures, pedagogical transformation, and institutional adaptation. Their strategies rooted in narrative learning, reflection, and emotional engagement reflect an integrative model of Islamic education that bridges cognition, emotion, and faith. Through these approaches, IRE teachers evolve from mere transmitters of doctrine into facilitators of meaning and moral growth. As a result, students begin to internalize Islamic values not as external rules but as lived principles that guide their understanding of life, faith, and humanity.

4. CONCLUSION

IRE teachers at State Elementary School 01 Medan City hold a strategic and multidimensional role that extends beyond delivering religious knowledge. They serve as facilitators, motivators, counselors, and role models in cultivating students' spiritual and existential intelligence. Their work integrates the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith with everyday experiences, nurturing students' faith, empathy, moral awareness, and understanding of life's purpose. Through this integration, IRE teachers contribute to forming individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also spiritually grounded and emotionally mature.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of spiritual and existential intelligence research by contextualizing the frameworks of Zohar and Marshall and Gardner within Islamic education. The findings demonstrate that both forms of intelligence are interconnected within an Islamic pedagogical framework that harmonizes cognition, emotion, and spirituality. This synthesis bridges modern psychological theories, such as Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence, with classical Islamic thought, particularly al-Ghazali's concept of moral purification or *tazkiyat al-nafs*. By linking these perspectives, this research formulates a theoretical model of integrative Islamic moral pedagogy that positions spiritual and existential growth as complementary outcomes of holistic education.

Practically, the results highlight important implications for teachers, schools, and policymakers. For teachers, the study emphasizes the need for reflective and contextual teaching methods such as storytelling, role-playing, and value-based dialogue that translate religious lessons into meaningful daily experiences. For schools, institutional support in the form of professional development, digital learning resources, and opportunities for reflective activities is crucial. School leaders must also acknowledge the broader mentoring role of IRE teachers, whose influence extends beyond the classroom into the school's moral culture. For parents, collaboration with teachers is essential to reinforce spiritual habits at home and ensure harmony between school-based and family-based moral education. Collectively, these actions strengthen the moral and spiritual ecosystem within elementary education in urban settings.

The challenges identified in this study, including low empathy, exposure to individualistic culture, and limited pedagogical resources, illustrate the need for continuous innovation in Islamic education. Further research is recommended to develop digital-based IRE learning media that support the growth of spiritual and existential intelligence. Future studies should also compare the implementation of Islamic moral education between urban and rural schools or between public and Islamic institutions to examine how social context influences educational effectiveness. Longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of spiritual and existential education on students' character development would also provide valuable insights for curriculum design and educational policy.

In conclusion, optimizing the role of IRE teachers in fostering students' spiritual and existential intelligence requires synergy among teacher competence, institutional support, and parental collaboration. When these elements are well integrated, Islamic education can produce students who are intellectually capable, morally

upright, spiritually aware, and existentially reflective, prepared to face the ethical and social challenges of contemporary life.

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