Fostering Learners’ Interpersonal Intelligence through Religious Extracurricular Activities: A Case Study in An Islamic School

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Abstract

Research on multiple intelligences has been growing for the last three decades, however, the ones on interpersonal intelligence still need more investigation. This case study explored the development of Islamic school learners’ interpersonal intelligence fostered by religious extracurricular activities. It also sought the factors inhibiting the development of intelligence. The participants of the study were a school principal, vice-principal, extracurricular coach, and three teachers and students at a secondary Islamic school. Data were collected through interviews and observation. The data were then analyzed through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The findings revealed that joining religious extracurricular helped learners grow the characters of discipline, self-confidence, empathy or caring, politeness, and togetherness. Meanwhile, factors that inhibit the development of students’ interpersonal intelligence were the influence of surrounding people and gadgets (technology).

Keywords:
Interpersonal Intelligence, Religious Extracurricular, Secondary Islamic School

Kata Kunci:
Kecerdasan Interpersonal, Ekstrakurikuler Keagamaan, Madrasah Aliyah

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INTRODUCTION

Education in a broad sense is an effort made by the older generation to the younger one to transfer knowledge, experience, skill, and intelligence. It is also often referred to as an effort to guide immature children to the level of maturity so that the child is able to be independent and responsible. The success of education that becomes the indicator of the success of national education is influenced by many factors including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. However, in the context of Indonesia, the national education system has so far been apparently oriented to the development of cognitive aspects only, leaving the other two aspects. In addition, in its implementation, the educational learning curriculum was still oriented towards obtaining test scores, so it was not surprising that the national examination was frequently used as a reference for success. To respond to these, the government introduced a new curriculum called 2013 curriculum which is believed to have a focus on all three aspects of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

The 2013 curriculum comprises four competencies: spiritual, social, knowledge, and skill which can be reached through intra-curricular, co-curricular, and or extracurricular learning activities (Permendikbud no 37, 2018). The curriculum also contains core competencies and basic competencies. Core competencies are the competencies that bind various basic competencies into the aspects of attitude, intelligence, and knowledge that must be learned and possessed by students. They must describe the balance quality of the achievement of hard skills and soft skills.

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Meanwhile, basic competencies refer to competencies for each subject and each grade. Both competencies go hand in hand for classroom implementation. As one of essential components in the core competencies, the ‘intelligence’ aspect is explored in this study.

Gardner introduced seven bits of intelligence including *linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal* which are known as multiple intelligence theory. Since then, another intelligence has been added as a *naturalist* in 1997. The theory challenged the old assumption saying that there is only one intelligence in humans which is associated with the cognitive aspect. Gardner viewed learners as equal regardless of their academic results, thus it is essential for educators to see intelligence as the way to solve problems and form products in context-rich and naturalistic settings. Among the intelligence, this study focuses on interpersonal intelligence.

Interpersonal intelligence is a person's ability to understand and cooperate with others. It is the ability to relate to other people, interact with others, and maintain the relationships they have established. It is also referred to as social intelligence, where humans are able to create relationships, maintain and add new relationships with other people. Likewise, Hoerr argues that interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people and build relationships that have been well established. According to Armstrong, interpersonal intelligence includes the “sensitivity to facial expressions, voice, and gestures; the capacity for discriminating among many different kinds of interpersonal cues; and the ability to respond effectively to those cues in some pragmatic way”.

Research on interpersonal intelligence has been growing over the last three decades. Boeree mentioned the factors that affect the interpersonal intelligence of

8 Thomas Armstrong, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* (ASCD, 2009).
students as follows: 1) family environment, where children need parental care and attention. 2) Nutrition, where the effects of nutritional deficiencies do not occur directly. Children who are malnourished are usually less responsive as adults, less motivated to learn, and less active in exploring than children who are adequately nourished. 3) Individual life experience. Children grow and develop in a family environment and social relations are first obtained by individuals through parents.

Students need to have interpersonal intelligence as it is essential and useful for the provision of social life. The interpersonal intelligence that is expected to be possessed by students is the ability to empathize and show respect, politeness, and unity to others, be disciplined towards school rules, communicate well with anyone and be able to work well together and be able to take responsibility for their own duties and accept criticism and advice from others\textsuperscript{15}. In addition, students need to be able to manage attitudes well. To develop these characters, incorporating religious-related activities at school, Islam in this case could be supportive.

Through the moral dimension in Islamic religious education, students are expected not only to understand what they have learned but also to apply it in their daily lives in the form of action\textsuperscript{16}. Religious extracurricular activity is an alternative that can be used in the formation and development of students' interpersonal intelligence including the ability to empathize, communicate, have a polite attitude and good cooperation, and develop attitudes and moral values\textsuperscript{17}. It can provide direct and indirect learning and experience to students. Religious extracurricular activities can also support intra-curricular activities by developing knowledge and intelligence, both intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence of students through their hobbies, talents, and interests\textsuperscript{18}.


\textsuperscript{17}Arita- Marini, Desy-Desy Safitri, and Iskandar- Muda, ‘Managing School Based on Character Building in The Context of Religious School Culture (Case in Indonesia)’, \textit{Journal of Social Studies Education Research} 9, no. 4 (1 October 2018): 274–94.

\textsuperscript{18}Zarkasyi Zarkasyi, Asnil Aidah Ritonga, and Wahyudin Nur Nasution, ‘Internalization of Islamic Religious Education Values in Scouting Extracurricular Activities in Forming Student Character in Public
The role of extracurricular programs is very important in instilling character values and noble cultural values\textsuperscript{19}. The involvement of students in the extracurricular activities that they choose and experience directly and in real terms will foster awareness of themselves, others, and their God. In that way, extracurricular activities can develop interpersonal intelligence well\textsuperscript{20}.

Although there are ample studies on inter-and intrapersonal intelligence, the ones are still limited when combined with religious extracurricular activities. This study investigated how religious extracurricular activities could foster learners’ inter- and intrapersonal intelligence in the context of Indonesian Islamic secondary school. To reach the objective, two questions were proposed (1) how is the development of learners’ interpersonal intelligence after joining religious extracurricular activities? and (2) what factors inhibit the development of learners’ intelligence?

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative case study aimed to explore the development of learners’ inter-and intrapersonal intelligence fostered by religious extracurricular activities in a bounded system, that is an Islamic school in Indonesia. It was conducted at an Islamic senior high school in a certain town in East Java, Indonesia. The participants of the study were the school principal, vice-principal of the studentship department, three teachers, and three students. The teacher participants were teachers of fiqh, aqidah akhlak, and counseling, while the students were the ones who sat in Grade 11. In a case study, data collection involves multiple sources of information\textsuperscript{21}, thus the data in this study were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The data were then analyzed through the steps of reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions.\textsuperscript{22}


\textsuperscript{21}John W. Creswell, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches (SAGE Publications, 2012).

\textsuperscript{22}Sugiyono, Metode penelitian pendidikan: (pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R & D) (Alfabeta, 2008).
There were five religious extracurricular activities in the participating school, they were *Banjari, Qiroah, Baca Tulis Qur’an, Qosidah,* and *Khitobah.* Banjari is the art of music in the form of reciting prayers accompanied by a tambourine musical instrument, which is packaged to increase people’s love for developing Islamic art.23 *Qiroah* or *qiraat* is the art of reciting the Holy Qur’an by using certain tones. *Baca tulisqur’an* is the learning activity of reading and writing the Holy Qur’an. *Qasidah* is the art of reciting Salawat which is normally accompanied by certain music. While *khitobah* is an activity to learn how to deliver a speech about Islam. The extracurricular programs were carried out twice on Thursday and Friday. The activities were held both inside and outside the school by doing regular weekly training and participating in Islamic festivals and religious competitions.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the data collected, some findings are described based on the research questions as follows:

*RQ1: How is the development of learners’ interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence after joining religious extracurricular activities influenced?*

The religious extracurricular activities have helped the students to be disciplined in terms of time as explained by the religious extracurricular coach:

According to what I observed after the children took part in religious extracurricular activities, it was clear that their interpersonal intelligence had developed. For example, during training, the children were disciplined on time according to the schedule, even though there were still some who were late, but only a few children, because I saw the children were very enthusiastic about participating in this extra.24

In line with this, the school’s principal added that the students also became disciplined when they were on the road. He said, “... in terms of discipline, children begin to be disciplined in traffic, if they are disciplined in traffic, then other disciplines will follow by themselves, the proof is that children who are often late are rarely seen again”. It shows that joining the religious extracurricular programs not only helped the students to be disciplined in time management but also other life manners. This

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24 interview with the religious extracurricular builder of MAN 1 Mojokerto, on February 15 2019, at 15.00 WIB
finding corroborates the study by Jamaluddin et.al.,\textsuperscript{25} who found that (religious) extracurricular activities made the students to be disciplined.

Besides the discipline character, the data revealed the students’ sense of social or caring for others. The school’s principal exemplified by saying “…when there was a disaster in Mojosari, and especially when an elementary Islamic school in Jetis was collapsed, the students responsively helped out without being instructed.” The vice-principal further gave an example of how the students cared for each other. He said, “I once knew there was a student who had no money to buy a snack or cake, then another student gave his snack to him”. Finally, the fiqh teacher said, “The students have a very high sense of charity. When there is a sick student, the students and teachers visit him or her, so the social sense is quite high here”. These are supported by the observation data where the students lent some pens, type-x, and books to those who needed them. What the participants said about the students’ sense of social and caring and the observation data showed that the learners’ interpersonal intelligence has developed.

Another character that emerged was self-confidence. One of the students said, "After I took part in religious extracurriculars, my self-confidence began to grow”. He added “In the past, I was afraid of being laughed at when I wanted to express my opinion in front of people, but now I want to be laughed at or not, that's their business. I don't feel anything, I'm getting more confident”. In the same vein, the coach of extracurricular programs said that the students have gained more confidence to express their opinion.

Finally, the religious extracurricular programs have influenced the attitude of the students. The vice-principal said, “In general, the students have a good attitude. They greeted others every time they are about to enter the classroom. They did it too when they meet teachers”. Similarly, the extracurricular coach said that the students used to speak rudely, but after following the extracurricular activities they became better and more polite.

\textit{RQ2: What factors inhibit the development of the learners’ interpersonal intelligence?}

There were some factors that hinder the development of inter-and intrapersonal intelligence including surrounding people such as families, friends, and teachers. This is evidenced by the results of interviews with student representatives who revealed the inhibiting factors of the bits of intelligence:

Factors that hinder students' interpersonal intelligence include family, friends and the surrounding environment, for example in a family where there are parents of students who have prohibited their children from participating in various activities, let their children talk and be rude to others, forbid their children to share with others, never asking their children to work together with siblings to complete homework together, never letting their children not be on time in all activities, and there are parents of students who have told their children not to visit other people who are sick. Then the next is the environmental factor of the community where there are teachers who have forbidden students from participating in various activities, there are friends who have influenced them not to help friends who need help, there are friends who have forbidden them when they want to share something with others, and friends who have invited to skip school, there are friends who have asked to talk outside the lesson theme during the lesson, and there are also friends who have asked not to obey school rules.  

However, of the several factors inhibiting the interpersonal intelligence of the students above, there is a more dominant influence on the development of interpersonal intelligence, namely technological developments. With the current technological advances, it greatly affects students to focus more on the gadgets they have. Wherever and under any conditions, they tend to focus on a gadget, so they no longer have empathy and are more apathetic to other people and the environment. This is reinforced by the result of the interview with the counseling teacher as follows:

The most influential factor that inhibits students' interpersonal intelligence is family because children stay longer at home or in the family environment, so it is the role of parents who can shape children's social attitudes. Another factor is friends both at school and outside of school who have a big influence on parents or family. There are also a teacher and economic factors. Likewise, the influence of gadgets and technology is extraordinary. Its effect is so real for children, and in the end, the children are less concerned about their environment.

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26 Interview with the religious extracurricular builder of MAN 1 Mojokerto, on February 15 2019, at 15.00 WIB
27 Interview with the Counseling Guidance teacher at MAN 1 Mojokerto on 19 February 2019 at 09.00 WIB
DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the religious extracurricular programs have fostered the students’ interpersonal intelligence in the form of building the character of discipline, caring, self-confidence, and politeness. The discipline character has been shown by attending school on time and riding carefully on the road. This finding corroborates the study by Jamaluddin et.al., (2021) and Ritonga et.al., (2021) who found that (religious) extracurricular activities made the students to be disciplined.

According to Fateme, one of the characteristics of children who have high interpersonal intelligence can empathize with others or understand others completely. This means that students can feel what other people feel, they are able to understand the feelings of others when other people feel happy or sad\(^\text{28}\). Anderson states that interpersonal intelligence has three main dimensions, namely social sensitivity, social insight, and social communication. These three dimensions are complement to each other\(^\text{29}\). These characters have been denoted by the students in that they have a high sense of empathy or caring as evidenced when they visited sick friends, helped victims of natural disasters, helped friends who were in trouble, and gave friends something that they didn’t have\(^\text{30}\).

The students also have a polite attitude such as saying hello when entering the room, greeting someone when they meet, bowing when passing in front of older people, and speaking politely\(^\text{31}\). This is in accordance with the characteristics of interpersonal intelligence where communication skills include effective listening, effective speaking, and effective writing\(^\text{32}\). In addition, interpersonal intelligence involves the ability to relate to other people, interact with others, and maintain the relationships they have established\(^\text{33}\). This means that students can understand the prevailing social norms so that students are able to interact and behave politely with their environment, both in the family, school, and community environment.

\(^{28}\) Behjat, ‘Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Intelligences’.

\(^{29}\) Armstrong, *7 Kinds of Smart*, 56.


\(^{32}\) Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences*.

\(^{33}\) Behjat, ‘Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Intelligences’, 353.
Meanwhile, the factors that hinder students' interpersonal intelligence were gadgets or technology, family, friends, and environment. The rapid spread of technology enables students to access everything they want. This brings both good and bad effects on them. One of the bad effects of gadget is the disruption of sleep time. It is hard for students to have a good focus when they lack sleeping time. But the factor of friends both at school and outside of school has a big influence after parents or family. Likewise, the influence of gadgets and technology is also extraordinary, the effect is very large for children, and in the end, the children become less concerned about their environment.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that (1) The development of students' interpersonal intelligence is influenced by religious extracurricular activities, which in these activities, students always interact with other people, by interacting with other people in the community. Festivals and competitions can develop students to easily get to know new friends, have a polite attitude, and students can accept criticism if they make mistakes. Then at regular meetings, students can develop the ability to be good listeners, actively discuss in meetings. By practicing the religious activities regularly every week, they can encourage students to be willing to help friends who are in trouble, able to feel the feelings of friends who are telling stories, dare to reprimand, and give advice to friends who make mistakes, share food with their friends. During the al-banjari and qosidah exercises, they can also develop good cooperation, and when participating in festivals and competitions, students have a sense of courage and confidence to show up in public. (2) Factors that can affect interpersonal intelligence are the family environment, the surrounding environment, the economy, the development of the times, and the latest technology.

34 Boeree, Personality Theories, 7.
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