



Strategies for Developing Holistic Learning Environments in Islamic Education: A Library Research Review

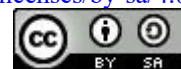
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Article Info:	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 28-02-2026 Approved: 19-05-2026 Published: 09-06-2026	Modern education faces growing challenges, including academic pressure, digital media exposure, and moral decline, which demand a strategic rethinking of learning environments. In Islamic education, the goal is to develop <i>insan kamil</i> individuals who are intellectually capable, spiritually grounded, and morally upright. However, existing practices often prioritize cognitive achievement while neglecting spiritual and psychological dimensions. This study aims to analyze strategies for developing holistic learning environments that integrate spiritual and psychological aspects within Islamic educational settings. A qualitative library research method was employed, utilizing content analysis to systematically examine books, journal articles, and academic sources from relevant databases. The findings reveal that effective holistic learning environments are established through six interconnected strategies: integrative curriculum design linking religious and general knowledge, structured classroom management fostering emotional safety, spiritually enriched physical settings, value-based school culture grounded in <i>akhlaq al-karimah</i> , cultivation of emotional intelligence aligned with Islamic principles of self-purification, and active collaboration among schools, families, and communities. These findings imply that a balanced integration of spiritual values and psychological well-being is essential for holistic student development. Educational institutions should adopt this integrated framework to produce students who are academically competent, emotionally stable, and spiritually grounded.
keywords: holistic learning environment; Islamic education; spiritual development; psychological well-being; emotional intelligence	

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INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge but also a means of shaping individuals holistically, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Aprilianti, 2024). In Islamic perspectives, education aims to produce *insan kamil*, individuals who are intellectually capable, spiritually grounded, and morally upright. However, current educational practices often emphasize academic achievement while neglecting students' psychological well-being and spiritual development (Arum Sari & Retnaningsih, 2023).

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing challenges faced by students in modern society, including academic pressure, digital media exposure, and declining moral values (Syarwani & Antasari, 2025). Previous studies have highlighted the importance of learning environments in influencing students' behavior and development, yet many have not fully integrated spiritual and psychological dimensions simultaneously. (Berutu et al., 2024)

This study identifies a gap between existing educational practices and the ideal holistic approach that integrates both dimensions. While some research focuses on psychological well-being and others on spiritual development, few combine both in a structured strategy. Therefore, this study aims to analyze strategies for developing learning environments that support both spiritual and psychological growth in a balanced manner.

At the global level, educational systems are increasingly confronted with crises that go beyond academic performance. According to UNESCO (2023), more than 250 million children and adolescents worldwide are out of school or failing to achieve basic literacy and numeracy, while a separate WHO report (2021) reveals that approximately one in seven young people aged 10–19 years experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 13% of the global burden of disease in this age group. These data underscore the urgency of rethinking educational environments to address not only intellectual formation but also emotional, moral, and spiritual development. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 framework similarly emphasizes the need for education to cultivate students' agency, well-being, and sense of purpose — dimensions that resonate deeply with the holistic vision of Islamic education.

In the Indonesian context, specifically within Islamic educational institutions (madrasah and pesantren), similar challenges are observed. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama, 2022) indicate a growing concern over students' declining moral conduct and spiritual engagement despite the formal integration of religious subjects in the curriculum. Studies conducted in Indonesian Islamic schools have documented cases of bullying, academic dishonesty, and disengagement from religious practice, suggesting that formal religious instruction alone is insufficient to cultivate holistic student development (Hanipah et al., 2022). This reality calls for a more systematic and integrated approach to designing learning environments that simultaneously address spiritual formation and psychological well-being.

Several previous studies have examined aspects of this issue from different angles. First, Ramli (2024) investigated the concept of effective learning environments from both Islamic and psychological perspectives, concluding that Islamic educational philosophy offers a coherent framework for integrating spiritual values into pedagogical practice; however, the study did not provide operational strategies for implementation. Second, Syarwani and Antasari (2025) analyzed

learning environment effectiveness through a literature review and identified key psychological principles, yet their work did not explicitly address spiritual dimensions as defined within Islamic education. Third, Habsy et al. (2023) explored the role of positive learning environments in supporting student performance, emphasizing emotional safety and teacher-student relationships, but similarly did not integrate the spiritual dimension within an Islamic framework. These studies collectively confirm the importance of the learning environment while revealing a persistent gap: no study has provided a comprehensive, integrated strategy that simultaneously addresses both spiritual and psychological dimensions within Islamic educational settings.

The novelty of the present study lies in its attempt to bridge this gap by offering an integrated analytical framework that synthesizes Islamic educational philosophy and psychological principles specifically Maslow's hierarchy of needs, emotional intelligence theory, and school culture research into a coherent set of strategies for developing holistic learning environments. Unlike previous studies that focus on either the spiritual or the psychological dimension in isolation, this research treats both as equally essential and mutually reinforcing components of effective Islamic education. This integrative approach constitutes the primary theoretical contribution of the present study.

The benefits of this research are threefold. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on Islamic educational philosophy by providing a structured synthesis of relevant literature. Practically, it offers educators, school leaders, and curriculum designers with evidence-based strategies that can be directly applied in Islamic schools and madrasahs. From a policy perspective, the findings provide a foundation for educational institutions and governmental bodies to reconsider how holistic development is conceptualized and operationalized in school quality standards and teacher competency frameworks. The implications of this research are particularly relevant for educational institutions seeking to navigate the challenges of modernity while maintaining their Islamic identity and mission.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach through library research. Data were collected from books, journal articles, and relevant academic sources related to learning environments, Islamic education, and educational psychology (Fauzy, 2022). The data collection techniques include literature review and online database searches (Syafriada Hafni Sahir, 2022).

The analysis method used is content analysis, which involves categorizing and interpreting written materials systematically to identify key themes and patterns. The research focuses on identifying strategies that integrate spiritual and psychological development within learning environments (Hikmawati, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning Environment in Islamic and Psychological Perspectives

A learning environment refers to all conditions surrounding the educational process, including physical, social, and academic aspects. An effective learning environment should provide comfort, safety, and motivation for students to learn actively. (Anton & Usman, 2020) Furthermore, the Islamic learning environment integrates faith-based practices into daily educational activities. For instance, routine worship, recitation of the Qur'an, and moral habituation contribute to shaping students' character. This finding suggests that spirituality is not an additional component but a core element embedded within the learning process. The presence of spiritually enriched activities fosters inner peace, self-control, and a sense of purpose among students.

From an Islamic perspective, education emphasizes not only intellectual growth but also spiritual purification and moral development. An effective learning environment should encourage faith development, promote noble character through role modeling, and integrate knowledge with real-life practice (Ramli, 2024). From a psychological perspective, the learning environment plays a crucial role in supporting students' cognitive, emotional, and social development. The findings show that students perform better academically when they feel emotionally secure and psychologically supported. An effective learning environment must provide emotional safety, reduce anxiety, and promote positive relationships between teachers and students.

From a psychological perspective, an effective learning environment supports cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. It should ensure emotional safety, encourage participation, respect individual differences, and provide positive reinforcement. Additionally, psychological theories highlight the importance of student-centered learning, where individual differences are recognized and accommodated. Respecting students' backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities enhances their self-confidence and motivation. Positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and opportunities for self-expression further contribute to a healthy psychological climate.

Strategies for Developing Supportive Learning Environments

Developing a learning environment that supports spiritual and psychological growth requires comprehensive strategies (Nadilah et al., 2025).

First, an integrative curriculum approach is essential. Academic subjects should be connected with spiritual values, such as relating science to the greatness of God or history to moral lessons (Hanifa Nur Laili, 2025). This approach also prevents the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge, promoting a more unified educational framework.

Second, classroom management plays a crucial role. A well-organized, structured, and engaging classroom environment enhances students' comfort and participation.

Third, physical learning spaces should be designed to support both focus and spirituality. Proper lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, and access to worship facilities contribute positively to students' well-being (Habsy et al., 2023).

Fourth, collaboration with families and communities is necessary. Learning does not only occur in schools; therefore, consistent positive habits must be reinforced at home and in society (Hanipah et al., 2022). The study reveals that students achieve better outcomes when there is alignment between school values and home environments. Parents play a significant role in reinforcing moral values and supporting students' emotional needs. Community involvement also provides real-life contexts for learning and character development.

Fifth, psychological needs must be fulfilled based on Maslow's hierarchy. Students need physiological comfort, safety, a sense of belonging, appreciation, and opportunities for self-actualization to develop optimally (Juaini, 2022).

Lastly, teachers play a central role as role models and facilitators. Effective teachers not only deliver content but also guide students' emotional and spiritual growth (Setyosari, 2014).

The findings of this study highlight that developing a holistic learning environment requires a balanced integration of spiritual and psychological dimensions. One of the key insights is that current educational practices often prioritize cognitive achievement while overlooking emotional and spiritual aspects. This imbalance can lead to stress, lack of motivation, and moral challenges among students.

By integrating Islamic values with psychological principles, education can address these challenges more effectively. Spiritual practices provide inner stability and moral guidance, while psychological support ensures emotional well-being and personal growth. Together, they create a comprehensive framework for student development.

Moreover, the study emphasizes that the success of such environments depends on consistency and collaboration among all stakeholders. Schools cannot work in isolation; they must involve families and communities to create a supportive ecosystem. This aligns with the concept of lifelong and life-wide education, where learning occurs in multiple contexts (Berutu et al., 2024).

Another important implication is the need for teacher training and professional development. Teachers must be equipped with both pedagogical skills and spiritual awareness to effectively implement holistic learning strategies. Without proper training, the integration of these dimensions may remain theoretical rather than practical.

Finally, this study suggests that future educational policies should emphasize the importance of holistic development. Curriculum design, assessment systems, and school management should incorporate both spiritual and psychological indicators of success, not solely academic achievement.

The Role of School Culture in Strengthening Spiritual and Psychological Development

In addition to curriculum, classroom management, and physical environment, the findings of this study highlight that school culture plays a significant role in shaping students' spiritual and psychological development. School culture refers to the system of values, norms, traditions, and daily practices that are consistently implemented within the educational institution. It functions as an invisible force that influences students' attitudes, behaviors, and ways of thinking. (Alti et al., 2022)

The results indicate that a positive school culture fosters a sense of belonging, emotional security, and moral awareness among students. When schools consistently promote values such as honesty, discipline, respect, and responsibility, students are more likely to internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives. In Islamic educational settings, school culture is often reflected through routine religious activities, ethical interactions, and the embodiment of *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character) (Suwarni, S., 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of spiritual values into school culture strengthens students' identity and sense of purpose. Practices such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and moral reminders create a spiritually rich atmosphere that supports students' inner development. These activities not only enhance religious understanding but also contribute to emotional stability by providing a sense of peace and direction (Saputra & Sugiarto, 2025).

From a psychological standpoint, school culture significantly influences students' motivation and well-being. A supportive and inclusive culture encourages positive relationships among students, teachers, and staff. The findings show that students who feel accepted and valued within the school community tend to exhibit higher self-esteem, better social skills, and stronger academic motivation. Conversely, a negative school culture can lead to anxiety, disengagement, and behavioral problems.

In addition, consistency in school culture is crucial. Values that are taught in the classroom must be reflected in the behavior of teachers and school leaders. This alignment between theory and practice strengthens students' trust and reinforces the credibility of the educational process. Teachers and staff serve as role models whose actions significantly influence students' character formation (Habsy et al., 2023).

The study also reveals that participatory school culture enhances students' sense of responsibility and ownership. When students are involved in decision-

making processes, organizational activities, and community service, they develop leadership skills and a deeper understanding of social responsibility. This aligns with both Islamic teachings on social contribution and psychological theories on self-actualization.

Overall, school culture acts as a foundational element that integrates spiritual values and psychological well-being into everyday educational experiences. Therefore, developing a strong, value-based school culture is essential for creating a holistic learning environment that supports students' comprehensive development.

The Integration of Emotional Intelligence in Learning Environments

Another important finding of this study is the role of emotional intelligence in supporting the effectiveness of learning environments, particularly in fostering students' psychological and spiritual growth. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions appropriately, both in oneself and in interactions with others. In educational settings, emotional intelligence becomes a key factor in shaping students' behavior, relationships, and learning readiness (Aprilianti, 2024).

The results show that learning environments that actively develop emotional intelligence tend to produce students who are more adaptive, empathetic, and resilient. These students are better able to manage academic pressure, resolve conflicts, and maintain positive social interactions. This indicates that emotional intelligence is closely linked to psychological well-being and plays a significant role in supporting academic success.

From an Islamic perspective, emotional intelligence aligns with the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* (self-purification) and the cultivation of noble character (*akhlak*). Islam teaches the importance of controlling anger, showing patience (*sabr*), practicing gratitude (*shukr*), and maintaining sincerity (*ikhlas*). These values are essential components of emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into learning environments is not only psychologically beneficial but also spiritually meaningful.

In practice, the development of emotional intelligence can be implemented through various strategies. Teachers can create opportunities for students to express their feelings through reflective discussions, journaling, or group activities. Conflict resolution exercises and collaborative learning also help students develop empathy and communication skills. Furthermore, teachers who model emotional awareness and positive behavior contribute significantly to students' emotional development (Ummah, 2019).

The study also finds that emotionally supportive environments reduce stress and anxiety among students. When students feel understood and supported, they are more confident in expressing ideas and participating in learning activities. This

emotional safety enhances creativity, critical thinking, and overall engagement in the learning process (Iskandar et al., 2025).

Additionally, the integration of emotional intelligence supports spiritual growth by encouraging self-awareness and reflection. Students who are aware of their emotions are more likely to engage in self-evaluation and moral consideration. This leads to the development of a balanced personality that harmonizes intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence serves as a bridge between psychological well-being and spiritual development. Its integration into learning environments strengthens students' ability to navigate both academic challenges and personal growth. Therefore, educational institutions should prioritize the development of emotional intelligence as part of holistic learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that developing holistic learning environments in Islamic education requires a coherent and integrated system of strategies. The findings demonstrate that effective environments are not built through isolated efforts but through the simultaneous implementation of six mutually reinforcing components: integrative curriculum design that bridges religious and general knowledge, structured classroom management that fosters emotional safety, supportive physical settings that reflect Islamic values, a value-based school culture grounded in akhlaq al-karimah, the cultivation of emotional intelligence as a bridge between spiritual and psychological well-being, and active collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Together, these strategies create a comprehensive framework for student development that addresses cognitive, affective, spiritual, and psychomotor dimensions simultaneously. This study acknowledges that its conclusions are based on library research rather than empirical field data, and the sources reviewed are predominantly Indonesian, which may limit broader generalizability. Future research should prioritize empirical studies testing these strategies in actual Islamic educational settings such as madrasahs and pesantren, including longitudinal studies assessing long-term impact on students' spiritual development and psychological well-being. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to adopt this integrated framework as a foundation for developing more responsive, human-centered, and spiritually grounded educational systems.

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