

Innovating islamic education through multiple intelligences-based learning at raudhatul huffaz center

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe in depth the implementation of innovative learning based on Multiple Intelligences (MI) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects at Rumah Belajar Raudhatul Huffaz. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method using data collection techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and literature analysis. The results show that the application of Multiple Intelligences-based learning strategies accommodates the diversity of students' potentials, interests, and learning styles. Teachers actively design and implement various learning activities, including group discussions, worship practices, creative arts, educational games, and project-based problem solving. Each activity is structured to develop students' intelligence aspects. This innovative approach has been proven to enhance students' learning motivation, active participation, and understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials. Furthermore, the implementation fosters an inclusive and collaborative learning environment, enabling students to gain self-confidence and express their potentials optimally. Thus, the implementation of Multiple Intelligences-based learning at Rumah Belajar Raudhatul Huffaz is effective in improving the quality of both the learning process and outcomes in Islamic Religious Education, while also supporting the holistic development of students' character.

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Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an essential component of Indonesia's national education system, aimed at shaping individuals who have faith in and devotion to God Almighty, and who possess noble character, as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Habe & Ahiruddin, 2017). Religious education is not solely directed toward achieving cognitive competence in understanding religious teachings but also toward the internalization of spiritual and moral values in students' daily lives. This

makes PAI instruction strategic in fostering national character and developing the whole person.

However, in practice, PAI instruction at various levels of education still faces significant challenges. One major challenge is the mismatch between the learning approaches used and the diverse characteristics of students. Many learning processes remain conventional, monotonous, and teacher-centered, making them unable to accommodate differences in students' learning styles, intelligences, and unique potentials (Rosyad & Maarif, 2020). As a result, students often become passive, are less engaged emotionally and socially, and struggle to connect lesson content with real-life contexts.

Modern educational theory emphasizes the importance of holistic learning approaches that are responsive to individual learners' needs. One relevant and proven approach is Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), developed by the Harvard University psychologist and professor (Gardner, 1983). In his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Gardner posits that human intelligence is not a single entity but rather consists of various distinct yet interacting types of intelligences. The eight primary intelligences he identifies are: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (Gardner, 1983).

This paradigm rejects the old concept that only logical and verbal abilities should be used as benchmarks for learning success. In the context of PAI instruction, the MI theory offers teachers vast opportunities to design varied and creative strategies suited to students' intelligence profiles. For example, children with musical intelligence can be encouraged to memorize prayers through songs; those with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence can directly practice ablution and prayer movements; while those strong in interpersonal intelligence can engage in group discussions and Islamic values case studies.

Furthermore, the MI approach aligns with the principles of contextual teaching and learning, which hold that learning should be relevant to students' real lives and should allow them to construct meaning through active and reflective engagement (Johnson, 2002). In this regard, MI implementation not only facilitates cognitive goals but also supports the balanced development of students' affective and psychomotor domains.

Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center, a non-formal educational institution focusing on strengthening Islamic Religious Education, has adopted the Multiple Intelligences approach in its learning process. The institution recognizes that each learner is unique and has different strengths in processing and absorbing information. Therefore, learning activities are designed to be flexible and diverse, ranging from practical worship activities, creative projects, and educational games to spiritual reflections – each tailored to the child's intelligence profile.

This context closely relates to the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum launched by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, which encourages differentiated, student-centered learning and recognizes the importance of teacher autonomy in designing learning processes suited to local needs and conditions. MI-based learning is highly relevant in meeting this challenge, as it provides both a theoretical framework and practical approach for creating inclusive and adaptive education.

The implementation of MI at Raudhatul Huffaz aims not only to improve students' academic achievement in understanding religious material but also to integrate Islamic values into their character and daily behavior. This aligns with the concept of holistic education in Islam, which views humans as complete beings with intellectual (*'aql*), spiritual (*ruh*), emotional (*nafs*), and physical (*jasad*) dimensions that must be developed in balance (Islam, 2024). Consequently, religious education should not rely solely on memorization and conceptual understanding but must also encompass experience, practice, and habituation of noble values in real life.

Despite its many theoretical advantages, MI implementation in real contexts still faces challenges, such as limited teacher time and resources for conducting intelligence assessments, a lack of learning media to support varied learning styles, and the need for teacher training in designing differentiated lesson plans. Institutional support and collaboration among teachers, parents, and educational institutions are therefore essential to ensure optimal MI implementation.

This study aims to explore in depth the implementation of Multiple Intelligences-based learning innovations in PAI at Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center. The main focus includes: (1) how teachers assess students' intelligences, (2) the types of learning activities developed for each intelligence, and (3) the impact of MI implementation on students' motivation, participation, and understanding of religious material. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to developing a more contextual and student-potential-based PAI learning model.

Beyond offering empirical insights, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators and policymakers in designing more effective, engaging, and student-oriented religious education. By integrating Multiple Intelligences principles into the PAI curriculum, it is hoped that future generations of Muslims will emerge who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually, socially, and emotionally strong.

Method

This research is descriptive-analytical in nature, seeking to depict actual conditions in the field based on data obtained from multiple sources, which are then systematically analyzed to draw conclusions. Descriptive research does not merely report facts but also explains the relationships between phenomena. This aligns with Ramdhan's (2021) view that the primary goal of descriptive research is to produce a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the phenomenon under study. The research site, Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center, is a non-formal educational institution focusing on character building and Islamic values through a personalized, child-potential-oriented approach. The research subjects include teachers acting as learning facilitators, students from various age groups enrolled in the PAI program, and parents or guardians who collaborate in supporting learning at home.

Subjects were selected using purposive sampling, meaning that informants were chosen intentionally based on criteria relevant to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2008). The main criteria were direct involvement in MI strategy implementation and willingness to provide in-depth information. Data collection was carried out using three primary methods: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Through participatory observation, the researcher directly engaged in learning activities to observe strategies, activities, and interactions in the classroom. This aimed to capture the learning reality within its actual context and to understand the dynamics of teacher-student interaction and differentiated instruction practices.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers (ustadz/ustadzah), students, and parents. This method allowed flexibility in probing for information while following a prepared guide. The interviews sought to explore participants' understanding of the MI concept, the planning and execution of lessons, and reflections on the outcomes. Document analysis was conducted by collecting various materials such as lesson plans (RPP), teachers' daily journals, students' work, activity photos, and learning evaluation records. These documents served as supplementary data that supported the findings from observations and interviews.

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher (Makbul, 2021). However, to ensure consistency and focus, supporting instruments such as observation guides, interview protocols, and document analysis formats were also employed. These tools were developed based on MI theory indicators and differentiated learning principles. Data were analyzed inductively and interactively through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2018). During data reduction, the researcher filtered, simplified, and focused on data relevant to the research objectives, with interview transcripts categorized according to relevant intelligence types. The data display stage involved presenting the findings in narrative, table, or matrix form to facilitate analysis. Conclusions were drawn continuously and verified through source and method triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings.

Data validity was tested through triangulation, cross-checking data from observations, interviews, and documentation (Makbul, 2021). The study also adhered to established trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and triangulation. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed contextual descriptions so the findings could be applied in similar contexts. Dependability was maintained by ensuring consistency in data collection and analysis, while confirmability was upheld by grounding all findings in field data rather than researcher bias.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research, including obtaining informed consent from participants, protecting their identities, and ensuring that interviews were voluntary and free from coercion. With this comprehensive methodological approach, the study seeks to authentically and deeply portray the implementation of Multiple Intelligences-based learning strategies at Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center and assess the extent to which this approach contributes to the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education

Result and Discussion

Mapping Children's Intelligence: The First Step in Differentiated Learning.

The implementation of Multiple Intelligences (MI)-based learning strategies at Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center begins with mapping students' intelligence profiles (Imayanti et al., 2023). This process is carried out through informal observation, interviews with parents, and monitoring children's behavior during various learning activities. Although no formal psychometric tools are used, teachers are able—through intuitive assessment—to identify dominant intelligence patterns. For instance, a child who quickly memorizes through songs tends to have strong musical intelligence, whereas a child who frequently asks questions and tells stories exhibits dominant linguistic intelligence.

This mapping process is crucial, as every child inherently possesses a unique combination of intelligences. According to Gardner (2017), MI rejects the singular view of intelligence that focuses solely on logical-mathematical abilities, instead emphasizing the diversity of human potential. By identifying dominant intelligences early, teachers can design learning strategies better aligned with each child's learning style, making the learning process more engaging, relevant, and meaningful. Parental involvement is another key factor in the mapping process. Information from parents about a child's interests, habits, and strengths at home provides teachers with a more complete understanding of each student's intelligence profile. The connection between home and school environments strengthens the effectiveness of MI implementation, allowing children to develop their potential consistently in both contexts (Wahyuni & Fitriani, 2022).

While intuitive observation-based mapping is helpful, research indicates that using more systematic MI assessment tools can improve the validity of results. Instruments such as standardized observation sheets, MI questionnaires, and emerging digital assessment applications can enhance accuracy in mapping children's intelligences (Sukmawati et al., 2021). For this reason, non-formal educational institutions like Raudhatul Huffaz are encouraged to develop more professional and measurable assessment mechanisms. Overall, intelligence mapping forms the foundation of differentiated learning implementation. Without accurate mapping, learning tends to be homogeneous and overlooks individual potential. This strategy aligns with Islamic educational principles, which emphasize recognizing a child's natural disposition (*fitrah*) and fostering it optimally (Nuryana, 2020). With a strong starting point, MI implementation can provide a more personalized, enjoyable learning experience that nurtures students' character and competence holistically.

Figure 1. Distribution of Students' Dominant Intelligence

Dominant Intelligence	Number of Students (out of 30)	Percentage (%)
Linguistic	8	26.7%
Logical-Mathematical	4	13.3%
Musical	5	16.7%
Bodily-Kinesthetic	6	20.0%
Interpersonal	4	13.3%
Intrapersonal	2	6.7%
Naturalist	1	3.3%

The distribution shows that most students display linguistic, musical, and bodily-kinesthetic tendencies, which serve as the basis for teachers to design appropriately tailored learning approaches.

Learning Strategies: Integrating Multiple Intelligences in Islamic Religious Education.

Teachers at Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center actively develop learning strategies based on the results of students' intelligence mapping. Learning activities are designed using a thematic-integrative approach, in which a single religious theme is explored through various methods tailored to different intelligences (Hartanti & Ramlah, 2021). For instance, the theme of gratitude (*syukur*) may be taught through writing prayers (linguistic intelligence), singing Islamic songs (musical intelligence), and performing acts of kindness toward peers (interpersonal intelligence). This approach ensures that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not only understood cognitively but also internalized in students' attitudes and daily behaviors.

Teachers also combine MI principles with active learning methods. For example, kinesthetic intelligence is nurtured through role-play activities depicting prophetic stories, while visual-spatial intelligence is supported through the use of images, concept maps, and Islamic videos. Such strategies enable students to grasp religious values in ways that align with their preferred learning styles. Recent studies show that implementing MI strategies increases students' active engagement and strengthens their comprehension of religious concepts (Safitri & Ramadhan, 2022).

This approach aligns closely with the principles of differentiated instruction, which emphasize that each child learns in a unique way. PAI teachers at Raudhatul Huffaz avoid one-way teaching patterns, replacing them with varied learning activities. For example,

children with naturalistic intelligence may participate in caring for plants while learning about *tauhid* and Allah's creation, whereas those with logical-mathematical intelligence may engage in simple simulations to calculate *zakat*. This method allows every type of intelligence to develop in balance within the framework of Islamic values (Irmayanti et al., 2023).

The success of this strategy relies heavily on teachers' creativity in designing learning media. Varied resources—such as picture cards, Islamic digital applications, and simple teaching aids—serve as vital tools for bridging abstract religious concepts and making them more tangible. Syamsuddin (2020) emphasizes that MI-based media usage enhances learning appeal and facilitates value internalization, which is essential given that religious education can often feel abstract if not connected to real-life experiences. Overall, integrating MI into PAI reflects a more humanistic and holistic Islamic educational approach. This strategy develops students' intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social aspects simultaneously. By providing space for each intelligence to flourish, PAI learning at Raudhatul Huffaz becomes a model of innovative and relevant non-formal education. This is in line with the vision of Islamic education to nurture *insan kamil*—individuals who are knowledgeable, faithful, and possess noble character (Nuryana, 2020).

Example of MI-Based Learning Theme: Prayer (*Shalat*) as the Pillar of Religion

Intelligence Type	Learning Strategy Applied	Objective
Linguistic	Reading and narrating stories about prayer from prophetic traditions	Understanding the concept of <i>shalat</i> narratively
Musical	Memorizing prayer recitations through songs and rhythmic patterns	Enhancing memory retention through melody
Kinesthetic	Practicing prayer movements directly in an open space	Understanding movements through bodily experience
Interpersonal	Small group discussions on the wisdom of prayer in daily life	Fostering empathy and social cooperation
Intrapersonal	Writing a personal reflection: "What do I feel when I pray"	Developing personal religious awareness
Logical-Mathematical	Calculating prayer times using a clock and determining the <i>qibla</i>	Strengthening analytical and logical thinking skills

This model encourages high interactivity, as students become not only objects of instruction but also active subjects in the learning process. Activities are designed to be flexible and filled with educational play, creating a joyful learning atmosphere consistent with constructivist principles (Vygotsky, 1978)

Impact of MI Implementation on Motivation and Learning Outcomes.

The implementation of MI-based strategies has had a clear impact on increasing students' learning motivation, active participation, and deeper understanding of subject matter. Teachers reported significant growth in participation, particularly among students who were previously passive in lecture-based instruction. For example, students with musical intelligence became more enthusiastic when learning through Islamic songs and melody-based memorization, while kinesthetic learners were more engaged in lessons involving games or religious dramas. This indicates that aligning teaching methods with students' innate potentials fosters an enjoyable and inclusive learning environment (Irmayanti et al., 2023). Beyond motivation, MI implementation positively influences

cognitive learning outcomes. Students who initially struggled to grasp abstract concepts in Islamic Religious Education – such as *tauhid* and *akhlak* – began showing improvements in answering questions, memorizing prayers, and understanding prophetic stories. Safitri & Ramadhan (2022) found that MI strategies not only enhance memory retention but also facilitate the transfer of concepts into real-life behavior. This was evident in children's emerging habits of expressing gratitude, sharing, and practicing discipline in their daily lives.

Another positive outcome appears in the affective domain. MI-based strategies provide children with opportunities to express emotions and feelings in healthy ways – through art, movement, or social interaction. Interpersonal learners became more adept at building relationships with peers, while intrapersonal learners displayed greater self-reflection regarding good deeds and mistakes. This aligns with the fundamental goal of religious education: to develop moral character and virtuous conduct (Hartanti & Ramlah, 2021). Socially, MI-based learning fosters cooperation and tolerance among students. Group activities designed around varied intelligences encourage mutual respect, as each child contributes according to their strengths. A student with logical intelligence might calculate *zakat*, while one with linguistic intelligence recites prayers, and a musically gifted student leads an Islamic song. This approach not only enhances individual achievement but also builds solidarity and a sense of community within the learning group (Syamsuddin, 2020).

Overall, the implementation of MI at Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center significantly contributes to creating a more productive learning ecosystem focused on developing children's potential holistically. This demonstrates that MI in PAI is not merely a pedagogical technique but an educational innovation capable of addressing learner diversity. By boosting motivation, improving learning outcomes, and enhancing social interaction quality, this strategy can serve as a reference for other Islamic educational institutions seeking a more humanistic, creative, and adaptive model (Nuryana, 2020).

Comparison of Student Engagement Based on Teacher Observation Over 3 Months

Aspect	Before MI (Conventional Model)	After MI (Varied Model)
Participation in discussions	Low (limited to 5–6 students)	High (average of 25–28 students)
Motivation to complete tasks	Low (many left incomplete)	Good (over 85% completion rate)
Idea expression in forums	Minimal	Highly active and creative
Understanding of religious concepts	Memorization-based	Contextual and reflective

These findings show that MI-based approaches contribute to transforming the learning process from teacher-centered to student-centered, strengthening the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in a balanced way.

Implementation Challenges: A Critical Reflection.

Although the implementation of Multiple Intelligences (MI) strategies at Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center has shown positive results, the process still faces several challenges. One of the main obstacles is the limited time available for teachers to design varied learning methods. MI-based learning demands a high level of creativity in developing activities that cater to the diverse intelligences of students. Teachers often need to prepare more than one approach for each lesson, which requires additional energy and commitment (Irmayanti et al., 2023).

In addition to time constraints, resource limitations pose a significant challenge. Facilities such as teaching aids, audiovisual media, and flexible classroom spaces remain insufficient. In fact, MI implementation greatly benefits from varied facilities that allow students to learn through hands-on experiences aligned with their dominant intelligence. This finding aligns with Ananda's (2021) research, which emphasizes that the success of MI is highly influenced by the availability of supportive educational resources.

Another challenge relates to teachers' capacity to fully understand the MI concept. Not all teachers possess the background knowledge or sufficient training in multiple intelligences theory. As a result, some implement MI intuitively without a strong theoretical foundation, leading to inconsistency in its application. Continuous professional development and intensive mentoring are therefore essential to enable teachers to design truly MI-based learning (Hartanti & Ramlah, 2021). Furthermore, assessment remains a complex issue. At present, there are no truly adaptive and specific evaluation instruments to measure student development based on multiple intelligences. Assessments tend to be general and focus mainly on cognitive aspects, while affective and psychomotor domains are not yet optimally addressed. In fact, one of MI's primary goals is to recognize the diversity of children's potential beyond academic achievement. This calls for innovation in developing more holistic and contextual evaluation systems (Safitri & Ramadhan, 2022).

To address these challenges, a systemic and collaborative approach is required. Teachers need regular training on MI, while institutions should strengthen internal policies that support child-potential-based learning innovations. Additionally, collaboration with parents plays an important role in providing both moral and material support. Through synergy between teachers, institutions, and parents, MI implementation challenges can be minimized, ensuring the strategy operates more effectively and delivers maximum benefits for student development (Nuryana, 2020)

Conclusion

This study concludes that the application of Multiple Intelligences (MI)-based learning innovations in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Raudhatul Huffaz Learning Center in Cirebon effectively addresses the challenges of student heterogeneity. The process of intelligence mapping serves as a crucial foundation for designing differentiated learning, ensuring that each child's potential is accommodated through appropriate learning methods. Strategies employed by teachers—such as group discussions, worship practice, educational games, creative arts, and the use of digital media—have proven effective in enhancing student motivation, active engagement, and deep understanding of religious values. Beyond cognitive aspects, MI implementation also strengthens the affective, psychomotor, and character development of students in a holistic manner.

The application of MI has yielded positive outcomes, including increased learning participation, greater confidence in expressing ideas, and the creation of an inclusive, collaborative, and enjoyable learning climate. Students not only memorize religious concepts but also internalize Islamic values in their daily lives—such as discipline, gratitude, cooperation, and empathy. This demonstrates that MI-based PAI learning successfully integrates knowledge, skills, and Islamic values into a unified educational process.

Despite its positive impact, this study also identifies several challenges, including limited teacher time, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, insufficient teacher mastery of the MI concept, and an assessment system still focused mainly on cognitive aspects. Therefore, institutional support, teacher training, innovative evaluation methods, and collaboration with parents are needed to optimize MI implementation. In this way, the Multiple Intelligences approach can serve as an innovative model in PAI learning—not only

enhancing the quality of teaching and learning outcomes but also fostering the development of intelligent, well-rounded Muslim generations who can fully develop their potential in accordance with their natural dispositions

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