



## Revisiting social intelligence development in islamic secondary education: A sociological analysis of students in private madrasah aliyah in pekanbaru city

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### Abstract

Amid the growing complexity of social interaction in contemporary education, concerns have intensified regarding the inadequacy of cognitive-centered approaches in preparing students for real-world interpersonal demands. This study fundamentally redefines the development of social intelligence by examining how it is socially constructed within Islamic secondary education through the dynamic interaction of teacher roles and school environments. Employing a qualitative multiple-case study design across three private Madrasah Aliyah, the research integrates semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis to capture nuanced interactional processes and lived experiences. The findings reveal that social intelligence does not emerge as an individual attribute but as an emergent, relational competence produced through structured and sustained social engagement embedded within pedagogical and institutional systems. Teachers act as critical agents who not only facilitate interaction but actively shape its quality through modeling, scaffolding, and feedback, while the school environment functions as an enabling structure that amplifies or constrains participation. Crucially, the study demonstrates that optimal development occurs only when these elements operate in synergy, forming a coherent and iterative social learning ecosystem. By challenging dominant outcome-based models of Social Emotional Learning, this research advances a process-oriented and system-based conceptualization of social intelligence as context-dependent and dynamically constructed. The study contributes theoretically by integrating sociocultural and educational perspectives into a unified analytical framework, and practically by offering actionable insights for designing context-sensitive interventions in faith-based institutions. Ultimately, this research positions social intelligence as a central pillar of holistic education and provides a globally relevant framework for its sustainable development in increasingly complex social environments.

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## INTRODUCTION

The growing complexity of social interactions in the twenty-first century has intensified concerns about the declining quality of interpersonal competencies among students, particularly in formal educational settings. Rapid digitalization, increased reliance on mediated communication, and reduced face-to-face engagement have collectively contributed to what scholars describe as a “social skills gap” among adolescents (Zhao, 2025; Sucipto et al., 2024). This condition has shifted the focus of education from purely cognitive achievement toward a more balanced development that includes social and emotional competencies. Social intelligence, defined as the capacity to understand others, manage relationships, and respond appropriately in social contexts, is now considered a critical skill for navigating both academic and real-world environments (Singh & Patel, 2023). Contemporary educational frameworks increasingly emphasize the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to address these emerging challenges (Mahmmoud et al., 2026). However, despite its recognized

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importance, the systematic development of social intelligence within specific educational contexts remains uneven and underexplored. This raises fundamental questions about how educational institutions can effectively cultivate students' social competencies in ways that are both contextually relevant and pedagogically sustainable.

Empirical studies have consistently reported that students with limited social intelligence often struggle with collaboration, conflict resolution, and meaningful participation in classroom interactions. These challenges are not merely incidental but reflect deeper structural issues within educational environments that prioritize academic performance over social development (Clark & Taylor, 2023; Wright & Jordan, 2024). In many secondary schools, students exhibit difficulties in expressing ideas constructively, responding empathetically to peers, and managing interpersonal disagreements, which can ultimately hinder both learning outcomes and social cohesion. Moreover, the increasing dominance of individualistic learning patterns has reduced opportunities for authentic social engagement, further exacerbating these issues (Sucipto et al., 2024). Such conditions highlight a disconnect between the demands of modern society and the competencies developed within schools. As a result, there is an urgent need to reconceptualize educational practices to ensure that social intelligence is systematically embedded within learning processes. Without such efforts, schools risk producing graduates who are academically competent but socially unprepared for complex human interactions.

The urgency of this issue becomes more pronounced within faith-based educational institutions, particularly Islamic secondary schools such as Madrasah Aliyah. These institutions are uniquely positioned at the intersection of academic instruction, moral education, and social character formation. In principle, madrasahs emphasize values such as empathy, cooperation, respect, and social responsibility, which are inherently aligned with the concept of social intelligence (Soeharto & Rahmawati, 2024). However, the translation of these values into structured pedagogical practices that effectively enhance students' social competencies remains inconsistent. While religious teachings provide a normative foundation for social behavior, they do not automatically guarantee the development of practical social skills in real-life interactions. This discrepancy suggests that value-based education alone is insufficient without deliberate instructional strategies and supportive learning environments. Consequently, examining how social intelligence is developed within madrasahs is not only relevant but also necessary for bridging the gap between normative ideals and empirical realities. Such an investigation offers a context-sensitive understanding of social intelligence within an educational framework that integrates religious and social dimensions.

Theoretically and practically, the development of social intelligence is strongly influenced by two interrelated factors: the role of teachers and the nature of the school environment. Teachers serve as primary agents of socialization within classrooms, shaping not only students' cognitive development but also their interpersonal behaviors through instructional practices and role modeling (Brown & Smith, 2023). At the same time, the school environment—including classroom climate, peer interactions, institutional culture, and extracurricular activities—provides the broader context in which social learning occurs (Anderson & Gray, 2025). Research has shown that supportive teacher-student relationships and inclusive learning environments significantly enhance students' social and emotional competencies (Castro et al., 2025; McCallister & Thompson, 2022). However, existing studies often treat these factors independently, overlooking the dynamic interaction between pedagogical practices and environmental conditions. This fragmentation limits the ability to fully understand how social intelligence is cultivated in real educational settings. Therefore, a more integrated approach is needed to examine how these elements interact in shaping students' social development.

Recent literature on social intelligence and SEL has produced substantial evidence regarding the effectiveness of structured interventions in improving students' interpersonal competencies. Studies indicate that collaborative learning activities, peer interaction, and reflective practices significantly contribute to the development of empathy, communication skills, and social awareness (Singh & Patel, 2023; Wright & Jordan, 2024). Furthermore, research on teacher influence highlights that supportive instructional strategies, such as dialogic teaching and feedback-oriented learning, play a crucial role in fostering students' social engagement (Brown & Smith, 2023). The importance of school climate has also been widely documented, with findings suggesting that inclusive and respectful environments promote positive social behaviors and reduce interpersonal conflict (Castro

et al., 2025; Anderson & Gray, 2025). In addition, extracurricular and community-based activities have been shown to extend social learning beyond the classroom, providing students with opportunities to apply their social skills in diverse contexts (Clark & Taylor, 2023). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that social intelligence is shaped by a complex interplay of instructional, relational, and environmental factors. Nevertheless, the majority of this research has been conducted in general or secular educational settings, limiting its applicability to faith-based institutions.

Despite the growing body of knowledge, several critical gaps remain in the literature. First, there is a noticeable lack of in-depth studies that examine social intelligence within Islamic educational contexts, particularly at the level of Madrasah Aliyah (Widyastuti, 2021). Second, prior research tends to adopt fragmented analytical frameworks that isolate teacher roles from school environmental factors, thereby failing to capture the holistic nature of social learning processes. Third, many studies rely heavily on quantitative approaches, which, while useful for measuring outcomes, often overlook the nuanced social interactions and lived experiences that shape students' social intelligence. Furthermore, there is limited attention to how sociocultural and religious values interact with pedagogical practices in influencing students' social competencies. These limitations suggest that existing frameworks are insufficient for explaining the complexity of social intelligence development in context-specific educational settings. In response to these gaps, this study adopts a qualitative sociological perspective to provide a more comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of the phenomenon.

This study aims to analyze how teacher roles and school environment interact to strengthen students' social intelligence in Private Madrasah Aliyah in Pekanbaru City. By employing a qualitative approach, this research seeks to uncover the social processes, interactions, and contextual factors that shape students' interpersonal competencies within this unique educational setting. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by reconceptualizing social intelligence development through an integrated sociological lens that combines instructional and environmental dimensions. Practically, the findings offer insights for educators and policymakers in designing context-sensitive strategies to enhance students' social competencies in faith-based education. In doing so, this study moves beyond descriptive accounts and provides a more critical and holistic understanding of how social intelligence can be effectively cultivated. Ultimately, it positions social intelligence not merely as an individual trait but as a socially constructed competence shaped by educational practices and institutional contexts.

## METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative multiple-case study design within a sociological framework to investigate how teacher roles and school environments interact in shaping students' social intelligence in Islamic secondary education. A qualitative approach was selected because the research seeks to capture complex social processes, lived experiences, and context-specific interactions that cannot be adequately represented through quantitative measures. The use of a multiple-case study design allows for comparative analysis across different institutional contexts, enabling the identification of both shared patterns and contextual variations in the development of social intelligence (Karakuş et al., 2025; Yasin & Nabi, 2026). This design is particularly appropriate for examining real-life phenomena within bounded systems, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. By integrating sociological perspectives with educational inquiry, the study provides a holistic understanding of how social intelligence is constructed through interactional and institutional processes.

The research was conducted in three Private Madrasah Aliyah located in Pekanbaru City, Indonesia, namely MAS MASMUR, MAS MUNAWWARAH, and MAS AL-FAJAT. These sites were purposively selected to represent variation in institutional culture, pedagogical practices, and extracurricular programming, which are assumed to influence students' social development. The study was carried out over an extended period to ensure prolonged engagement, allowing the researcher to observe recurring patterns of interaction and minimize superficial interpretations. Pekanbaru City, as an urban educational setting with diverse socio-cultural characteristics, provides a meaningful context for examining social intelligence within faith-based schooling. The multi-site

setting enhances the robustness of the study by enabling cross-case comparison and increasing the transferability of findings.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly employed in qualitative research to identify information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The participants included students, teachers, and school administrators who were actively involved in instructional and social interaction processes within the selected madrasahs. Inclusion criteria were defined to ensure relevance, including active participation in classroom and extracurricular activities, willingness to engage in interviews, and direct experience with social learning practices in the school environment. The final number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where no new themes or insights emerged from additional data collection (Naeem et al., 2024; Squire et al., 2024). This approach ensures that the data collected are both sufficient and meaningful for in-depth qualitative analysis.

Data were collected using three complementary instruments: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. The interview protocol was developed based on key dimensions of social intelligence, including empathy, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution, grounded in Social Emotional Learning frameworks (Chongcharoen et al., 2025). Interviews allowed participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives in their own words, providing rich narrative data. Observations were conducted in classroom and extracurricular settings to capture naturally occurring interactions among students and between students and teachers, using structured observation guides to ensure consistency. Document analysis included school policies, activity reports, and program descriptions related to student development. The use of multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and depth of the findings (Kawar et al., 2024; Ogunkan & Akinpelu, 2026).

To ensure the rigor of the research instruments and data, this study applied trustworthiness criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024; Kakar et al., 2023). Credibility was established through prolonged engagement, triangulation of data sources, and member checking, where participants were given the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing detailed contextual descriptions of the research setting, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Dependability was ensured through the use of a consistent data collection protocol and audit trails documenting the research process. Confirmability was achieved by maintaining reflexivity and minimizing researcher bias through systematic documentation and peer debriefing. Additionally, inter-coder agreement was employed during data analysis to enhance consistency in coding and theme development.

The data collection procedure was conducted in several sequential stages to ensure systematic and comprehensive data gathering. The initial phase involved obtaining formal permission from school authorities and securing informed consent from participants. This was followed by the data collection phase, during which semi-structured interviews were conducted and observations were carried out in natural classroom and school settings. Field notes were recorded to capture contextual details, including non-verbal communication and interaction dynamics. In the final phase, relevant documents were collected and analyzed to complement and validate the data obtained from interviews and observations. This multi-stage process ensured data triangulation and strengthened the overall validity of the study.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following a systematic and iterative process as outlined by (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022; Byrne, 2022). The analysis began with data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes. This was followed by initial coding, where meaningful segments of data were identified and labeled. The codes were then organized into categories based on conceptual similarity, and subsequently developed into broader themes that represent the core patterns of social intelligence development. Cross-case analysis was conducted to compare findings across the three madrasahs, identifying both commonalities and contextual differences. The analysis process involved constant comparison to ensure analytical depth and consistency (Kowalski et al., 2024; Kumar & Pant, 2023). NVivo software was used to support data organization, coding, and theme visualization, enhancing transparency and methodological rigor.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation and were informed of their rights, including voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing participant identities and using pseudonyms in all data records and reports. Data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher to prevent unauthorized use. The study also adhered to principles of non-maleficence and respect for participants' dignity and perspectives. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority prior to data collection, ensuring that the research complied with established academic and ethical standards (Khavenson et al., 2026).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The findings demonstrate that the development of students' social intelligence across the three madrasahs is shaped by varying degrees of engagement in structured social interaction, resulting in distinct yet interconnected patterns. Students who actively participate in collaborative learning consistently display stronger empathy, more effective communication, and higher adaptability in group settings. Observational evidence shows that these students respond more attentively to peer contributions and are able to adjust their behavior according to group dynamics. One teacher noted that "students who are used to working in groups tend to listen more and interrupt less," indicating the emergence of social awareness through repeated interaction. In contrast, students with limited involvement in collaborative activities often hesitate to express opinions and show reduced sensitivity to others' perspectives. This difference becomes particularly visible during classroom discussions, where active participants demonstrate confidence while others remain passive. The data also reveal that social intelligence does not develop spontaneously but is gradually constructed through consistent exposure to interactional experiences. These findings confirm that engagement in structured social activities serves as a foundational mechanism for the development of interpersonal competencies.

A more nuanced pattern emerges when examining students' approaches to managing interpersonal conflict within the school environment. Students who frequently engage in collaborative tasks tend to resolve disagreements through dialogue, demonstrating an ability to negotiate and consider alternative viewpoints. During one observed interaction, a student expressed disagreement by stating, "I understand your idea, but maybe we can try another way," reflecting both empathy and constructive communication. In contrast, students with lower levels of social engagement often respond to conflict either by withdrawing or by reacting defensively. Teachers reported that guided interaction plays a crucial role in shaping students' ability to handle conflict constructively. This is supported by classroom observations where teacher intervention helps students shift from emotional reactions to rational discussion. The data further indicate that repeated exposure to social problem-solving situations enhances students' confidence in managing disagreements. Students gradually internalize norms of respectful communication through these experiences. As a result, conflict management emerges as a key dimension of social intelligence that reflects both cognitive understanding and behavioral practice.

The role of non-academic programs in strengthening students' social intelligence is also evident across all three madrasahs, although the nature and intensity of their impact vary. School documentation shows that activities such as religious gatherings, group discussions, and community service projects provide structured opportunities for social engagement beyond classroom instruction. Students reported that these activities allow them to "learn how to work with different people" and "understand others' feelings better," highlighting the experiential nature of social learning. Observations confirm that students become more confident and expressive after participating in these programs. In MAS MUNAWWARAH, for instance, religious discussion sessions encourage students to articulate opinions while respecting differing views. Meanwhile, MAS MASMUR emphasizes collaborative extracurricular activities that strengthen teamwork and shared responsibility. MAS AL-FAJAT integrates social values into project-based learning, particularly in activities involving conflict resolution. These variations indicate that while all schools promote social interaction, they do so through different institutional strategies. Consequently, non-academic

programs function as an extension of formal learning that reinforces students' social competencies in diverse contexts.

The findings also reveal that teacher roles are central in shaping the quality and depth of students' social intelligence development. Teachers who actively facilitate discussion, encourage participation, and model positive behavior create more inclusive and interactive learning environments. In one classroom observation, a teacher prompted quieter students to contribute by saying, "Your opinion matters here, let's hear your perspective," which resulted in increased participation. Students reported that such encouragement makes them feel valued and more willing to engage socially. Teachers who provide constructive feedback further support students in refining their communication and cooperation skills. The modeling of behaviors such as patience, respect, and openness serves as a reference point for students in their interactions with peers. However, variations in teacher practices across the three schools influence the extent of this impact. MAS MASMUR demonstrates strong facilitation of collaborative learning, while MAS MUNAWWARAH emphasizes moral guidance in social interaction. MAS AL-FAJAT focuses on structured conflict resolution as part of instructional practice. These differences illustrate that teacher roles are not uniform but context-dependent, shaping distinct pathways of social intelligence development.

The school environment emerges as another critical factor that interacts with teacher practices in influencing students' social intelligence. Schools characterized by a supportive and inclusive climate provide greater opportunities for students to engage in meaningful social interaction. Observations indicate that students in such environments are more confident in expressing ideas and more willing to participate in group activities. One student stated, "I feel comfortable speaking because my friends listen and don't judge," reflecting the importance of psychological safety. In contrast, less supportive environments tend to limit students' engagement and reduce the quality of interaction. The presence of clear behavioral expectations and consistent teacher support contributes to a more structured social environment. Additionally, peer relationships play a significant role in reinforcing or inhibiting social learning. Students who experience positive peer interaction are more likely to develop cooperative and empathetic behaviors. The interaction between environmental conditions and student participation highlights the contextual nature of social intelligence. Therefore, the school environment functions not only as a setting but also as an active agent in shaping social development.

The triangulation of data across observations, interviews, and documentation reveals a dynamic interaction between teacher roles and school environment in shaping students' social intelligence. Teachers who implement interactive strategies create opportunities for engagement, while supportive environments sustain and reinforce these interactions. Students benefit most when both factors operate simultaneously, creating a consistent and coherent social learning experience. In cases where one factor is weaker, the development of social intelligence becomes less optimal. For example, strong teacher facilitation without environmental support results in temporary engagement that is not sustained outside the classroom. Conversely, a supportive environment without active teacher involvement leads to unstructured interaction with limited developmental impact. The findings suggest that social intelligence is not the result of a single factor but emerges from the interaction of multiple elements within the educational system. This interaction creates a feedback loop where engagement, experience, and reflection reinforce each other. As a result, the development of social intelligence can be understood as a socially constructed process embedded within institutional practices.

A cross-case analysis further highlights the distinctive strengths and limitations of each madrasah in fostering social intelligence. MAS MASMUR demonstrates strong collaborative practices but relies heavily on structured activities, which may limit spontaneous interaction. MAS MUNAWWARAH excels in integrating moral and religious values but shows less emphasis on interactive pedagogical strategies. MAS AL-FAJAT provides a balanced approach through conflict-based learning but faces challenges in maintaining consistency across different classroom contexts. These variations indicate that each school adopts a unique approach to social intelligence development, influenced by its institutional priorities and teaching practices. Students in each setting develop different aspects of social intelligence depending on the dominant approach used. This diversity highlights the importance of context in shaping educational outcomes. It also suggests that no single model is universally effective, and adaptive strategies are required. Overall, the cross-case

comparison enhances the depth of analysis and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how social intelligence is developed across different educational contexts.

**Table 1.** Research Results from Three School Locations

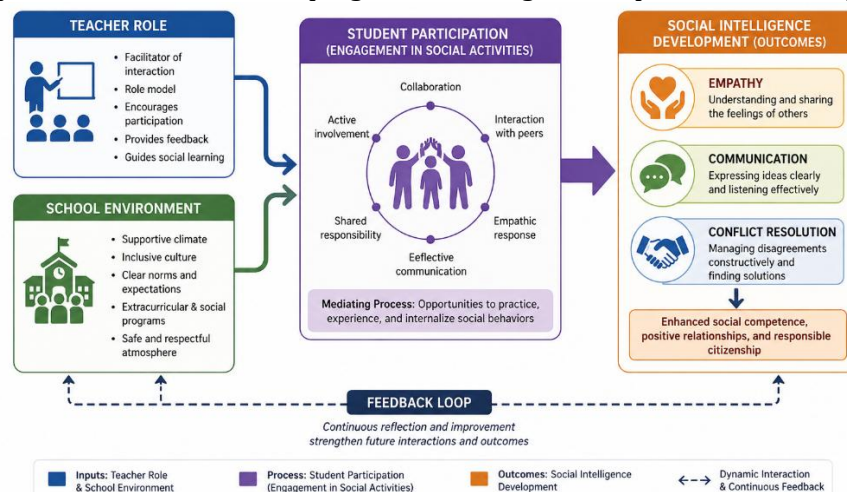
Category	MAS MASMUR	MAS MUNAWWARAH	MAS AL-FAJAT
Teacher's Role	Group discussion & collaboration	Discussion of social-religious values	Teamwork & conflict-based learning
School Environment	Extracurricular & value programs	Religious-based interaction	Culture of mutual respect
Teacher Impact	Builds relationships	Role modeling	Feedback-based development
Teaching Strategy	Collaborative learning	Discussion-based learning	Conflict resolution approach
Student Participation	Active social engagement	Increased involvement	Strengthened social bonds
Social Skill Development	Teamwork improvement	Communication improvement	Conflict resolution improvement

This table shows that the three schools have different approaches to developing social intelligence, but all center on social interaction as the core of learning. MAS MASMUR excels in collaboration, MAS MUNAWWARAH in socio-religious values, and MAS AL-FAJAT in conflict resolution. These differences demonstrate that the development of social intelligence is contextual. Nevertheless, the final results still show improvements in students' social skills across all three locations. This confirms that different strategies can produce similar outcomes if they focus on interaction. The role of the teacher emerges as a consistent factor across all contexts. Student participation is a key link in the process. Overall, this table reinforces that no single approach is dominant.

**Table 2.** Synthesis of Social Intelligence Development Patterns

Aspect	Empirical Findings	Analytical Interpretation
Social Interaction	Built through repeated engagement	Requires structured experience
Teacher Role	Facilitator & role model	Drives interaction quality
School Environment	Supportive climate	Enables participation
Student Participation	Active involvement	Mediates development
Social Outcomes	Empathy, communication, conflict resolution	Reflect integrated learning

This table synthesizes empirical findings into a more conceptual analytical pattern. It appears that social intelligence develops through structured, repeated interactions. The teacher's role is the primary driver of the quality of these interactions. The school environment serves as a space that enables optimal interactions. Student participation mediates the connection between input and output. The final outcome, social skills, reflects an integrated process. Each component interacts with each other and cannot stand alone. This demonstrates that social intelligence is the result of a complex learning system. Therefore, developing social intelligence requires a holistic approach.



**Figure 1.** Integrated Model of Social Intelligence Development

This model illustrates the relationship between the role of the teacher, the school environment, and student participation, which interact dynamically to produce social intelligence. The role of the teacher and the school environment act as primary inputs that influence the quality of student interactions. This interaction is then mediated by the level of student participation in social activities. The output of this process is social intelligence, which encompasses empathy, communication, and conflict resolution skills. This model demonstrates that the relationship between these variables is simultaneous and mutually reinforcing. This process is not linear, but rather cyclical and evolving. Thus, social intelligence is understood as a result of social construction within the educational context.

## Discussion

The findings demonstrate that structured social interaction constitutes the primary mechanism through which students' social intelligence is formed, rather than a supplementary pedagogical component. This indicates that social intelligence should be understood as a socially constructed competence emerging from sustained interactional processes, not as an individual trait that develops independently. Conceptually, this challenges the prevailing assumption within dominant Social Emotional Learning frameworks that treat social skills as measurable outcomes detached from their formative contexts. Instead, the evidence aligns more closely with sociocultural theory, where learning is inherently mediated through interaction and participation in social practices. While prior studies have acknowledged the importance of peer engagement (Singh & Patel, 2023; Zhao, 2025), they often position it as a supportive element rather than the central driver of development. In contrast, this study demonstrates that interaction itself functions as both the medium and the engine of social intelligence formation. This reframing suggests a theoretical shift from outcome-based to process-oriented models of social competence. Consequently, the study contributes to global discourse by redefining social intelligence as an emergent property of structured social engagement within educational systems.

A second key finding concerning students' approaches to conflict management reveals that exposure to guided interaction transforms social behavior from reactive to reflective modes. This transformation indicates that conflict situations serve as critical developmental spaces where higher-order social competencies are negotiated and internalized. Theoretically, this extends emotional regulation frameworks by demonstrating that adaptive responses are not merely intrapersonal but are co-constructed through dialogic engagement. Existing research emphasizes the role of emotional intelligence in managing conflict (Wright & Jordan, 2024), yet often overlooks the social conditions under which such competencies are cultivated. The present findings challenge this individualistic bias by showing that constructive conflict resolution emerges from repeated participation in structured social problem-solving. Studies by Clark and Taylor (2023) similarly identify conflict as a learning opportunity, but do not sufficiently account for the role of pedagogical mediation. This study advances the field by positioning conflict as an interactional learning process rather than a behavioral outcome. As a result, social intelligence is reconceptualized as a relational competence shaped by collective engagement, offering a more nuanced understanding within the broader SEL paradigm.

The contribution of non-academic programs further reinforces the argument that social intelligence development transcends formal instructional boundaries and is deeply embedded in experiential learning contexts. These programs function as institutionalized spaces where students engage in authentic social practices, thereby operationalizing theoretical constructs from experiential learning theory. While prior studies have highlighted the benefits of extracurricular engagement (Castro et al., 2025; Anderson & Gray, 2025), they often treat such activities as peripheral to core educational processes. This study challenges that assumption by demonstrating that non-academic programs are integral to the architecture of social learning, particularly when aligned with institutional goals. Moreover, the variation across schools indicates that the effectiveness of these programs is contingent upon their structural integration and intentional design. This finding extends existing literature by emphasizing the role of institutional strategy in shaping experiential learning outcomes. It also introduces a critical perspective on the assumption that exposure alone is sufficient for skill development. Therefore, the study contributes conceptually

by positioning non-academic engagement as a structured extension of pedagogical practice rather than an auxiliary component.

The centrality of teacher roles in facilitating social intelligence underscores the need to reconceptualize pedagogy as a socially generative practice rather than merely a cognitive transmission process. Teachers who actively model, scaffold, and regulate interaction create conditions that enable the emergence of complex social competencies. This finding supports social learning theory, particularly the role of observational learning and reinforcement (Li et al., 2023), yet also extends it by highlighting the dynamic and context-dependent nature of teacher influence. Previous studies have established the importance of teacher-student relationships (McCallister & Thompson, 2022), but often fail to differentiate between types of pedagogical engagement. The present study addresses this gap by demonstrating that distinct instructional approaches—collaborative facilitation, moral guidance, and conflict-based learning—produce different developmental trajectories. This suggests that teacher roles are not static but adaptive, shaped by institutional priorities and classroom dynamics. Furthermore, the findings challenge the assumption that effective teaching is universally transferable across contexts. By foregrounding the variability of pedagogical impact, the study contributes to a more differentiated and context-sensitive understanding of teacher agency in social intelligence development.

The influence of the school environment further complicates the understanding of social intelligence by revealing that learning is contingent upon the quality of the relational and institutional context. A supportive environment fosters psychological safety, which in turn enables students to engage in meaningful interaction without fear of negative judgment. This aligns with ecological systems theory, where development is shaped by layered environmental influences, yet the findings extend this perspective by emphasizing the interaction between environment and pedagogical practice. While previous research highlights the importance of school climate (Castro et al., 2025; Anderson & Gray, 2025), it often treats it as an independent variable. This study challenges that separation by demonstrating that environmental conditions amplify or constrain the effectiveness of teacher-led interventions. In contexts where environmental support is weak, pedagogical efforts fail to produce sustained engagement, indicating that social intelligence cannot be developed in isolation from its context. Additionally, peer dynamics emerge as critical mediators, reinforcing or disrupting learning processes. This integrated perspective suggests that social intelligence is co-constructed through a network of relational influences, thereby expanding existing theoretical models.

A significant contribution of this study lies in its identification of the dynamic interaction between teacher roles and school environment as a systemic mechanism underpinning social intelligence development. Unlike prior studies that examine these factors in isolation (Widyastuti, 2021), the present findings demonstrate that their effectiveness is contingent upon mutual alignment. This supports systems theory, which posits that outcomes emerge from the interaction of interdependent components rather than from isolated variables (Kumar & Pant, 2023). Importantly, the study reveals that the absence of synergy between these elements results in fragmented and unsustainable learning outcomes. This challenges linear models of skill acquisition that assume direct causality between intervention and outcome. Instead, the findings suggest that social intelligence develops through iterative feedback loops involving engagement, reflection, and reinforcement. This perspective introduces a more dynamic and process-oriented model of learning, which has been largely absent in existing literature. Consequently, the study offers a conceptual advancement by integrating pedagogical and environmental dimensions into a unified analytical framework.

Finally, the cross-case variations among the three madrasahs highlight the critical role of contextual specificity in shaping educational outcomes, thereby challenging the pursuit of universal models of social intelligence development. Each institution demonstrates distinct strengths, reflecting differences in cultural orientation, pedagogical emphasis, and institutional priorities. This finding aligns with contextualist perspectives that emphasize the situated nature of learning (Naeem et al., 2024), yet goes further by illustrating how these contextual factors actively shape developmental pathways. While global literature often seeks generalizable frameworks, this study argues for adaptive models that respond to local conditions. The differences observed across cases suggest that social intelligence is not a fixed construct but a flexible outcome influenced by

institutional ecology. This has significant implications for policy and practice, particularly in faith-based educational settings where cultural and religious values intersect with pedagogical processes. By situating the analysis within Islamic secondary education, the study fills a critical gap in the literature and introduces a new perspective to the global discourse. Ultimately, it positions social intelligence as a context-dependent and systemically constructed competence, thereby advancing both theoretical and empirical understanding in the field.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of social intelligence in Islamic secondary education is not a spontaneous or purely individual process, but a systematically constructed outcome shaped by the dynamic interaction between pedagogical practices and institutional environments. The findings demonstrate that structured social interaction serves as the core mechanism through which students internalize empathy, communication, and conflict resolution skills, thereby repositioning social intelligence as an emergent property of sustained engagement rather than a static personal attribute. Furthermore, the study reveals that teacher roles function as critical catalysts in this process, not only by facilitating interaction but also by modeling and reinforcing socially appropriate behaviors in context-sensitive ways. At the same time, the school environment operates as an enabling structure that either amplifies or constrains the effectiveness of these pedagogical efforts, highlighting the necessity of alignment between instructional strategies and institutional climate.

Importantly, this research advances existing theoretical frameworks by challenging the dominant tendency to treat social intelligence as an outcome variable detached from its formative processes. Instead, it proposes a reconceptualization of social intelligence as a relational and context-dependent competence that evolves through iterative cycles of participation, reflection, and reinforcement within educational systems. This integrative perspective provides a more comprehensive explanation of how social competencies are developed, moving beyond fragmented models that isolate teacher influence from environmental factors. In doing so, the study fills a significant gap in the literature, particularly within the context of Islamic education, which has been underrepresented in global discussions on Social Emotional Learning.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of designing educational interventions that intentionally integrate collaborative learning, guided interaction, and supportive environmental conditions. Educational institutions, especially faith-based schools, are encouraged to move beyond value transmission toward the deliberate cultivation of social competencies through structured and experiential learning approaches. Finally, while the study offers robust insights, it also acknowledges that social intelligence development is inherently context-bound, suggesting that future research should explore diverse educational settings and incorporate longitudinal designs to further refine and validate the proposed model. Overall, this study positions social intelligence as a central dimension of holistic education and provides a theoretically grounded and empirically supported framework for its development in contemporary schooling.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Marianti Kahar conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, conducted data collection and analysis, and led the writing of the manuscript. Ilyas Husti contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, supported data interpretation, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript for intellectual content. Zamsiswaya assisted in data collection, managed documentation and fieldwork processes, and contributed to editing and finalizing the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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