

## **Implementation of the Concept of Islamic Montessori Education at Awliya Holistic Elementary School, Majasem Cirebon**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

*One of the main challenges of Islamic education in Indonesia is to find a learning model that is able to balance intellectual growth with spiritual and moral development. The Montessori method, known for its focus on independence, sensory learning and Developmental Psychology, provides significant opportunities to develop autonomy and creativity. However, without a spiritual foundation, this approach risks neglecting the upbringing of children's religious and ethical values. The purpose of this study is to explore how Montessori approach can be integrated with Islamic values in the context of Primary School holistic Awliya (SDH) Majasem Cirebon. Particular attention is paid to the application of fitrah (innate human disposition), adab (ethics and manners), and tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul) in the practice of daily learning. This study uses descriptive qualitative methods using classroom observation, curriculum analysis, and in-depth interviews with teachers, parents, and students. The Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of integration between Montessori principles and Islamic values. These findings suggest that Montessori practices-such as prepared environments, freedom with responsibility, and experiential learning-are effectively aligned with the values of Islamic education. This integration fosters not only intellectual independence but also spiritual awareness, ethical discipline, and emotional balance in students. In conclusion, The Montessori-Islamic model implemented in the Awliya Holistic Primary School is a pioneering effort in the reform of Islamic education in Indonesia. It offers a contextual and holistic framework capable of producing intellectually capable, spiritually grounded, and morally responsible students.*

**Keywords:** Montessori, Islamic Education, Fitrah, Adab, Tazkiyat Al-Nafs, Holistic Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Basic education in Indonesia still faces great challenges in finding a balance between academic demands and the needs of character and spiritual formation of children.<sup>1</sup> The national curriculum has undergone several revisions, including an emphasis on character education, but in practice, many schools still focus on academic achievement alone. This can be seen from the way teachers teach which emphasizes cognitive aspects through lecture methods and rote assignments.<sup>2</sup> Children are encouraged to achieve test scores and master textbook material, but space for developing emotional sensitivity, creativity, and spirituality is often limited. As a result, basic education produces more children who are proficient in remembering material, but lack critical power, empathy, and awareness of the importance of moral and religious values. The dominance of rote-oriented learning model has caused a number of negative impacts on learners. Many students experience considerable learning pressure from having to meet rigorous curriculum targets, while not all children have the same cognitive abilities. This pressure can lead to a loss of intrinsic motivation in learning, so that the child learns not out of curiosity or the need to understand, but out of sheer obligation. This condition also reduces children's opportunities to explore, create, and develop their unique potential. In addition, the lack of attention to the emotional and spiritual dimensions results in the child growing up in a dry, mechanical and less meaningful learning atmosphere for everyday life.<sup>3</sup> The gap between academic needs and the emotional and spiritual development of children is what demands the birth of a new, more holistic educational model. In the context of primary education, there is a great need for learning practices that not only equip children with intellectual skills, but also foster emotional sensitivity as well as spiritual depth. Education should be a space where children can fully understand themselves, their environment, and their God. Therefore, the integration of intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects is an urgent need that must be answered by educational institutions. The model of education that is able to connect between academic achievement and the formation of religious character becomes very relevant to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has noble morals and awareness of life based on spiritual values.

One relevant alternative approach that can be considered is Montessori-based education integrated with Islamic values. The Montessori method is widely recognized as an educational model that emphasizes independence, hands-on experience, and respect for each child's unique potential. By allowing children to learn through exploration and discovery, this method nurtures critical thinking and creativity, while also fostering a sense of responsibility and confidence in their own abilities. Such an approach is particularly effective in providing children with

<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Safrotuloh and Diaz Alauddin, "The Role of Stakeholders in Guidance for Overcoming Juvenile Delinquency in Cirebon Regency," *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2025): 20–41, <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v7i1.285>.

<sup>2</sup> Fikriyah Fikriyah, Fidya Arie Pratama, and Barnawi Barnawi, "School Based Management in Improving the Quality of Elementary Schools," *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 6, no. 1 (September 17, 2024): 78–85, <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v6i1.272>.

<sup>3</sup> Lela Siti Nurlaela, Herdianto Wahyu Pratomo, and Nuruddin Araniri, "Pengaruh Pola Asuh Orang Tua Terhadap Pembentukan Karakter Anak Pada Siswa Kelas III Mandrasah Ibtidaiyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Asasul Huda Ranjikulon Kecamatan Kasokandel Kabupaten Majalengka," *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (September 21, 2020): 226–41, <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v2i2.35>.

opportunities to learn in a way that feels natural and engaging. However, the application of Montessori without a strong spiritual foundation may result in gaps in shaping children's religious character. This is where the integration of Montessori principles with Qur'anic values and Islamic teachings becomes highly significant. Through this integration, education not only focuses on cognitive and practical aspects, but also emphasizes the moral and spiritual development of students. In the context of basic education in Indonesia, such an approach can serve as a holistic solution to form a generation that is both intellectually capable and noble in character, in line with the nation's vision of producing future leaders who are intelligent, ethical, and spiritually grounded.

The main focus of this research is on the implementation of Islamic Montessori concept in Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH), Majasem Cirebon. This school seeks to present an alternative educational model that is not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also emphasizes the balance between freedom of learning and the formation of children's spirituality. The Montessori concept adopted provides a wide space for children to learn independently, explore their environment, and develop unique potentials according to their stage of development. However, different from Montessori schools in general, Awliya Holistic Elementary School provides an additional dimension by integrating Qur'anic values and Islamic teachings in every aspect of the educational process, so that learning becomes not only academic, but also transformative in shaping the morals and personality of children. The uniqueness of this school lies in its courage to combine two major approaches that are rarely deeply integrated, namely the Montessori approach with holistic Islamic education. Montessori emphasizes the freedom of children in choosing learning activities and the importance of a structured learning environment, while Islamic education emphasizes the habituation of worship, internalization of moral values, and the connection of children with God. At Awliya Holistic Elementary School, these two principles are carried out simultaneously. Children are not only given the freedom to explore in learning activities, but also directed to understand the spiritual meaning behind each activity. For example, daily activities are associated with Qur'anic values, so that children learn not only to know, but also to live.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in the perspective of holistic education, which views children as whole individuals encompassing cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social dimensions. Montessori's philosophy emphasizes the importance of a "prepared environment" and "self-directed learning," where children are given the freedom to explore, learn, and develop at their own pace. This model supports the natural growth of a child's intellectual and emotional capacities while nurturing independence and creativity as key elements in the learning process. In parallel, Islam provides comprehensive life guidance through the Qur'an and Sunnah, directing not only intellectual growth but also moral and spiritual development. When integrated, the Montessori approach and Islamic education create a complementary model that strengthens both dimensions of child development. This combined framework does not merely aim at fostering academic competence, but also instills ethical values, spiritual awareness, and responsibility. Thus, the theoretical approach employed in this study is a synthesis of Montessori theory and holistic Islamic education, ensuring balance between intellectual independence and moral character formation.

The initial argument of this study is that the application of Islamic Montessori concept in Awliya Holistic Elementary School is able to answer the challenges of basic education in Indonesia which tends to be cognitive-centric. The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the implementation of the model, especially in the aspects of curriculum, learning methods, learning environment, and the formation of children's character. In addition, the study seeks to formulate theoretical reflections and practical recommendations so that similar models can be adapted in other schools.

Several previous studies have shown the relevance of Montessori integration with spiritual values. For example, research by Ahmad & Khalid (2022) found that the application of Montessori in the context of Islamic education in Malaysia increases children's independence and religious awareness. Meanwhile, a study by Nurdin (2023) in Indonesia highlights that the Montessori method integrated with Islamic values is able to strengthen the emotional and spiritual intelligence of elementary school students. Another study by Hassan et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of Montessori adaptation to fit local culture and religious values. In addition, a study by Rahmawati (2023) revealed that Islamic Montessori not only shapes academic skills, but also supports children's daily worship habits. Research by Yusuf & Karim (2024) adds that a Montessori learning environment based on Islamic values can improve children's concentration, discipline, and sense of responsibility. These findings reinforce the assumption that Montessori integration with spiritual values makes a significant contribution to character education and holistic development of children. However, most research is still limited to conceptual studies or case studies in a limited number of Islamic educational institutions.

Different from previous studies, this study specifically examines the practice of implementing Islamic Montessori in Awliya Holistic Elementary School, Majasem Cirebon, which is known as a holistic approach-based school. The urgency of this research lies in its theoretical contribution in enriching the discourse on the integration of Montessori education with Islamic values, as well as its practical contribution to other schools that wish to adopt a similar model. By examining the implementation in depth, this study is expected to provide real inspiration for the development of basic education that is more balanced between academic, spiritual, and emotional.

## METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, which was chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of integrating Islamic values into the Montessori approach at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) Majasem, Cirebon. The case study approach provides an explorative space to examine the natural context of education in the school, including the practices, dynamics, and meanings constructed by educational actors. Data collection was carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations focused on classroom activities, teacher-student interactions, the use of Montessori tools, and the embedding of Islamic values in daily routines. Meanwhile, interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and support staff provided insight into the vision, strategies, and challenges in integrating Montessori and Islamic curricula. Documentation studies

further complemented the data through reviews of curricula, syllabi, learning modules, teacher journals, and student activity records.

The data obtained were analyzed using a thematic approach by identifying recurring patterns and categorizing them into themes such as “Islamic values in Montessori activities,” “the role of teachers as *murabbi*,” and “integration challenges.” The analysis process involved reading the data comprehensively, identifying patterns, grouping them into categories, and drawing relevant conclusions. To strengthen the credibility of findings, triangulation was applied by cross-checking data from observations, interviews, and documents, as well as conducting member-checking with some informants to minimize interpretative bias. The main focus of the study is on how Islamic values such as *tawheed*, *adab*, *amanah*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* are realized within a Montessori-based learning environment that emphasizes freedom, independence, and experiential learning. By situating these practices within the broader social and institutional context such as school vision, teacher preparation, parental involvement, and organizational culture this study seeks to present a holistic and contextualized picture of the Islamic Montessori approach.

### **Synergy of Montessori Concept and Islamic Education in Shaping the Nature of Children**

The Montessori approach is based on the concept of the child's absorbent mind or "absorbing mind", that is, the idea that children at an early age have an extraordinary ability to absorb information and experience from their environment naturally and without conscious effort.<sup>4</sup> This concept is reinforced by the understanding of sensitive periods, which are certain phases in the child's development in which he is very sensitive to certain stimuli, such as language, regularity, movement or social aspects. In this period, learning takes place in a deeper and faster way if the child is provided with a suitable environment and supports his natural potential. In practice, Montessori provides a prepared environment, that is, a carefully and aesthetically organized environment, allowing the child to choose activities that suit his interests and needs. Learning occurs through direct experience, the use of concrete tools, and free but purposeful exploration. Children are given space to be independent, develop a sense of responsibility, and recognize cause-and-effect relationships through concrete actions. This process promotes the formation of character from within, not due to external coercion.

Meanwhile, Islamic education is rooted in a deep spiritual orientation, namely *tazkiyat al-nafs* (تَزْكِيَّةُ النَّفْسِ, purification of the soul) and *taqwiyat al-‘aql* (تَقْوِيَّةُ الْعُقْلِ, strengthening of the intellect). The main goal is to form a Kamil human being who is a complete person who knows, loves, and serves God in all aspects of his life. Education in Islam is not solely aimed at forming individuals who are intellectually intelligent, but also who are straight in their beliefs, good morals, and strong in their spirituality.

In this point, the Montessori approach and Islamic education find a very important meeting point in the concept of *fitrah*. Nature is understood as the innate human potential to know the truth, love beauty, and incline to moral and spiritual values. In Islam, children are born in a state of *fitrah*,

<sup>4</sup> and Muanjing Julia Wang, Laski, Elida V., “‘A Critical Consideration of Montessori Education in Its Relation to Cognitive Science and Concrete-to-Abstract Thinking.’ The Bloomsbury Handbook of,” 2023, 241–49.

as the word of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and it is the responsibility of their parents and educators to maintain, guide, and grow them through an educational process that is in accordance with the values of tauhidan. Montessori and Islamic schools both view children as unique individuals who need to be respected and facilitated, not controlled or rigidly shaped. Montessori referred to the child as a "future host" who has the right to determine his own path in learning, while Islam views the child as a mandate from God that must be grown gradually and lovingly according to the stage of development (at-tadarruj). Both of them also agreed that education should touch all aspects of the child's humanity: jasadiyah (physical), 'aqliyah (intellectual), and ruhaniyah (spiritual). Montessori involves children in physical activities such as tidying up tools, pouring water, or gardening as part of learning that blends motor and cognitive skills. On the other hand, Islamic education strongly emphasizes the integration of knowledge, charity, and manners in everyday life, so that the learning process is not disconnected from the dimension of servitude to Allah. In Montessori, the beauty, order and tranquility of the environment are important principles for forming a pleasant learning atmosphere. This principle is in line with Islamic values that encourage ihsan in all things to do things with the best and full awareness of the presence of Allah. Thus, presenting aesthetics in the learning space and sowing peace of mind is a form of awareness that children not only learn outwardly, but also absorb inner values.

With an approach that values the child's natural development and integrates spiritual values, the synergy between Montessori and Islam forms a strong foundation for a more holistic education. Education is no longer just a transfer of knowledge, but a process of forming a whole human being, who thinks freely, feels with empathy, and acts with faith. Combining the Montessori approach with Islamic values is therefore not only possible, but also urgent in the current context of Muslim education reform. This opens up opportunities for the birth of a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also spiritually mature, strong in character, and able to become agents of change in society based on divine values.<sup>5</sup>

### The Historical Context of Montessori in Islamic Education

In Muslim countries such as Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Montessori approach has begun to be adopted more widely by Islamic schools. This application is not done in raw, but through a process of adaptation and integration with contextual Islamic values. The schools combine Montessori philosophy with an Islamic curriculum that includes learning the Qur'an, Islamic manners, Arabic, and moral education. With this approach, they seek to create an education system that is modern but still rooted in Islamic spirituality. The Integrative Model not only adopts the tools and methods of Montessori, but also reinterprets key concepts such as freedom, discipline, and learning environment to align with the values of monotheism and the example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In some schools, children start the day with dhikr or recitations, integrating spiritual practices into the daily routine naturally and not compulsively.

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<sup>5</sup> Abdullah Hanif, Wawan Wahyudin, and Sholahuddin Sholahuddin, "Implementation of Transdisciplinary Approaches in Islamic Education to Face Contemporary Global Challenges," *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 6, no. 2 (February 19, 2025): 151–71, <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v6i2.283>.

This shows that the Western method can coexist harmoniously with the framework of Islam as long as through a wise adaptation process.

In Indonesia, the adoption of the Montessori approach in Islamic education does not start from large institutions, but rather grows from the grassroots, namely from a community of teachers, parents, and education activists who have a concern for educational methods that are more child-friendly and aligned with Islamic values.<sup>6</sup> These communities began to study the Montessori philosophy, attend trainings, translate materials and design curricula appropriate to local culture and values. With this community-based approach, various Islamic educational institutions were born that apply Montessori principles contextually. In various cities and regions, Islamic Montessori-based schools and kindergartens emerged, which developed a combination curriculum: between Montessori-typical sensorial tools, freedom in learning, and habituation to Islamic values in everyday life. The success of this approach depends a lot on the active role of parents and teachers in building a conducive learning environment and spiritual nuances. One concrete example of this integration can be seen at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) Majasem Cirebon, which became a pioneer in combining the Indonesian national curriculum with Montessori principles and Islamic values locally and contextually. This school is a mirror of Islamic education reform efforts that do not reject the existing system, but reconstruct it to be more humanist, spiritual, and in accordance with the Times.

Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) does not just add religious lessons to the Montessori system, but organizes the entire child's learning experience so that it pivots on Islamic values. For example, the Montessori concept of grace and courtesy—which instills good manners and social awareness—is geared towards reinforcing Islamic adab in everyday interactions. Children are taught not only to stand in line and speak politely, but also to say greetings, pray before studying, and keep the mandate in their duties. At the curriculum level, this school combines learning materials from the Indonesian Ministry of Education with typical Montessori activities and local Islamic content. Children learn to read, write and count with a concrete and thematic approach, but they also memorize short surahs, learn the story of the Prophet, as well as understand monotheism through down-to-earth conversations and activities. His teachers double as facilitators and murabbi, who not only guide academically, but also shape character and morals.

The learning environment at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) also reflects these integrative values. Classes are designed with neatness and soothing aesthetics, learning tools are laid out to be easily accessible to children, and there are special spaces for spiritual activities such as reading the Qur'an, duha prayers, or morning dhikr. With this approach, the school creates a comfortable and spiritual learning atmosphere, where the child feels valued as an individual and at the same time led as a servant of God. The Model developed by Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) proves that the integration of the national curriculum, Montessori, and Islamic values is not only possible, but also effective in forming intelligent, independent, and moral children. This approach is an inspiration for other Islamic schools that want to reform education

<sup>6</sup> Endah Windiastuti, "Islamic Religion through Islamic Montessori Learning: A Curriculum Development for Early Childhood," *HIKMATUNA: Journal for Integrative Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (August 3, 2022): 55–63, <https://doi.org/10.28918/hikmatuna.v8i1.4643>.

in a contextual way, while maintaining the roots of tradition and opening up to relevant modern pedagogical methods.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The curriculum implemented at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) combines five main areas in the Montessori approach of Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, and Cultural Studies with core values in Islam such as adab, right intention (ikhlas), and understanding of Tawheed as a foundation for thinking and acting. This integration is done contextually, so that Islamic values do not stand apart, but become an integral part of daily learning activities. Children not only learn to read and count, but also learn to be honest, disciplined, and know God through concrete and reflective activities. Teachers at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) not only act as teachers, but also as murabbi, namely spiritual guides who are in charge of instilling values, shaping character, and being an example in words and deeds. Every day, teachers guide children through Islamic routines such as morning dhikr, Prayer Before study, and the habit of praying in congregation. Values such as patience, responsibility, and trustworthiness are taught not only orally, but through real practice and example in school life.

Through an approach that touches on cognitive, affective and spiritual aspects, children show harmonious development. These developments are systematically documented in the form of individual portfolios, learning journals, as well as observation reports from teachers and parents. The portfolio contains student work, notes on Skill Development, as well as spiritual reflections that the child writes or describes according to his age stage. This gives a complete picture of the child's growth as a full and independent Muslim person. To explore the practice of implementing the Islamic Montessori approach at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH), observation instruments are used that are designed to capture various key aspects of the learning process, social interaction, and values that are formed in everyday life. This instrument is used by researchers to observe directly the activities in the classroom, the school environment, as well as patterns of interaction between students and teachers. Using a structured format, observations are carried out systematically and repeatedly to ensure the reliability of the data.

**Table 1.**  
**The Following is a Table of Observation Instruments Used in This Study**

<b>No</b>	<b>aspects observed</b>	<b>indicators / description</b>	<b>observation notes</b>
1	Classroom atmosphere	Calm, organized, focused children learn independently	
2	Islamic Activities	Children read prayers, prayers in congregation, dhikr, memorization	
3	The role of teachers	Teachers guide with a personal approach, soft, not commanding	
4	Montessori Tools	The presence of tools such as beads, sandpaper letters, etc. the modified Islamic	
5	Student interaction	Interaction between students mutual respect, courtesy, cooperation	
6	Daily routine	Structured activity schedule, no scheduled worship time	
7	Islamic values	Cultivation of noble character, manners to teachers, parents, friends	
8	Physical environment of the classroom	Clean, tidy environment, Montessori support facilities (low shelves, independent tools)	
9	Child independence	Children can choose their own activities and complete tasks without prompting	
10	Individual approach	Teachers adapt the material to the development of each child	

This instrument is used triangulatively with data from interviews and school documents to provide a comprehensive picture of how Islamic Montessori is applied in real life in the field. From the results of initial observations, the learning atmosphere at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) reflects a balance between freedom and values, as well as between exploration and spiritual guidance. Through a continuous process of observation, a deep understanding is gained of how Montessori principles emphasizing independence, responsibility, and character development—are harmoniously integrated with Islamic values. These observations not only enrich the empirical data of the study but also demonstrate the significant potential of this approach as an effective and contextual model of contemporary Islamic education. At the end of this findings chapter, it is important to position the research findings within the broader research discourse. Previous studies on Montessori often highlight independence and self-directed learning but pay little attention to the role of spirituality in shaping children's character. On the other hand, Islamic

education research tends to emphasize moral and religious formation but sometimes lacks structured pedagogical models that foster autonomy and critical thinking. This study contributes to bridging these gaps by showing how Montessori principles and Islamic values can be integrated into a coherent and holistic framework. In doing so, it strengthens the discourse on Islamic education reform while offering a unique contribution to global conversations on alternative pedagogical models that are both value-based and child-centered.<sup>7</sup>

### Comparative Analysis with Other Educational Models

Compared to the conventional Islamic school approach that is still dominant in various educational institutions, Islamic Montessori appears as a promising progressive alternative. Conventional Islamic schools tend to focus on the memorization of religious material such as verses of the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as the mastery of cognitive aspects in general lessons. The learning process is mostly done through lecture methods, written assignments, and repetition of one-way material. As a result, students are often positioned as learning objects, not active subjects capable of constructing understanding through exploration and reflection. Islamic Montessori comes with a more thorough approach, covering not only the intellectual but also the spiritual and emotional aspects of the child. This Model places the child as the center of learning (child-centered learning) that has freedom within directed limits. With this approach, children are not only invited to memorize and understand cognitively, but also to experience the learning process actively, concretely and independently. The learning process is designed in such a way that children have the space to ask, try, explore, and find their own meaning from each material learned.

Philosophically, Islamic Montessori is not merely an adaptation of secular Montessori with an Islamic label, but a synthesis of humanistic Western pedagogical thought with transcendental Islamic principles. Montessori in its original version, as developed by Maria Montessori, emphasized the importance of freedom, an organized learning environment, as well as the role of the teacher as a facilitator. These concepts are retained in the Islamic version of Montessori, but supplemented by spiritual foundations such as Tawhid (oneness of God), adab (Islamic ethics), and awareness of the existence and role of God in life. The addition of this spiritual dimension is very important because it makes learning not only as an intellectual process, but also as worship. In Islamic Montessori, every learning activity contains the value of obedience. Children not only learn to read or count, but also understand that knowledge is a mandate from God, and that the search for knowledge is part of devotion to him. For example, in the activity of observing nature, children are invited to reflect on the beauty of God's creation; when learning to count, children are trained to realize the order and balance in his creation. One of the uniqueness of Islamic Montessori is the development of children's natural potential. In Islam, fitrah is the basic innate human being who is pure and inclined to the truth. Montessori views that children from birth have the potential and natural drive to grow and develop fully. In Montessori Islamic practice, this fitrah

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Usef Saefullah, Amin Haedari, and Labisal Qolbi, "MODEL MANAJEMEN SARANA DAN PRASARANA DALAM PELAYANAN PENDIDIKAN," *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 1, no. 2 (September 22, 2019): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v1i2.19>.

is maintained and directed through a conducive learning environment, developmental age-appropriate activities, and the compassionate interaction of teachers who act as murabbi (spiritual and intellectual educators).

The learning environment in Islamic Montessori is designed to form children who are independent, confident, and have self-control. The shelves are arranged low so that the child can pick up the tools himself, the table and chair are adjusted to the child's height, and the room is arranged so that it is quiet and not crowded. Classes are not divided by subject, but by developmental areas such as practical life (daily life), sensorial (senses), language (language), math (mathematics), and culture (culture and nature). In Islamic Montessori, each of these areas can be inserted with Islamic content, such as hand washing activities that begin with prayer, or counting activities by counting the number of cycles in prayer. The integration of Islamic values in each activity makes learning relevant to the child's spiritual life. For example, children are accustomed to reading prayers before starting activities, greeting when entering class, and performing duha prayers in congregation. Not only that, values such as patience, honesty, responsibility, and helpfulness are instilled through teacher's example and daily activities. Teachers not only teach, but Guide meekly, lovingly, and understand each child's character individually.

Compared to systems that emphasize uniformity of learning outcomes, Islamic Montessori values individual differences. Children are given space to develop at their own pace. In one class there may be children who are fluent in reading, while others are still in the stage of recognizing letters and both are accepted, guided, and given activities that are appropriate for their level. This makes Islamic Montessori very inclusive, and in accordance with Islamic principles that respect potential differences and do not impose burdens beyond the ability of children. Thus, the Islamic Montessori approach offers not only a new methodology, but also a new paradigm in Islamic education. This paradigm is based on the belief that every child is a mandate, has a nature that must be maintained, and the potential that must be developed with wisdom. Education is not only about the transfer of knowledge, but the process of humanizing a whole person: physically, mentally, and spiritually. Islamic Montessori, in its ideal form, creates a learning environment that blends science, faith, and charity and this is what makes it relevant, contextual, and promising for the future of Islamic education.

At Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) Majasem Cirebon, this approach is not only a theoretical concept, but is systematically implemented in the curriculum and daily practice. Through an interview with Regha, one of the teachers at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH), it was revealed that Islamic Montessori is understood as an approach that combines the Montessori method with Islamic values. "We are implementing Cosmic Education for children aged 6-12 years, where children learn independently, explore the environment, and undergo activities that are centered on themselves," said Regha. The integration of Islamic values is clearly seen in the learning routine at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH). Children are not only given the freedom to choose activities and use Montessori AIDS, but also familiarized with prayers, dhikr, recitation of the Qur'an, and prayer in congregation. "The learning environment we have prepared carefully, not only aesthetic and child-friendly, but also Islamic. Children read prayers

when starting and ending activities, even praying with their teachers and friends," added Regha. This shows that the values of worship become a unified part, not a separate addition to the learning process.

Each child uses the Montessori apparatus to understand the concept of learning. Tools such as beads, sandpaper letters, and other activity boards are modified with Islamic content." That's our hallmark, "explains Regha, " with Montessori tools, children are more understanding and actively involved, and we adjust to religious values. For example, there are counting tools that we design with pictures of mosques or Arabic letters." This activity helps to instill meaning and knowledge at the same time in a fun and contextual form. Despite this, challenges remain. Regha mentions that one of the main obstacles is the teacher's lack of understanding of Montessori concepts. "Many teachers are not familiar with this approach as a whole, so they need special training," he said. Therefore, Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) requires its new teachers to attend intensive Montessori training for two to three days, then self-study from internal learning videos twice a week. This demonstrates the school's commitment to maintaining the quality of implementation of this approach on an ongoing basis.

The results of this approach are quite encouraging. According to Regha, children show high enthusiasm for learning because they are given the opportunity to choose and discover knowledge independently. "They are more active, courageous, and independent," he explained. In the Montessori system, assessment is not limited to written tests but also includes observation of children's learning processes, such as engagement, activeness, and critical thinking. However, to remain aligned with national curriculum standards, the school still conducts formative and summative exams as complementary measures. The role of parents also contributes significantly to the success of the Islamic Montessori approach. "Parents are very cooperative," said Regha. "When children receive project-based tasks, they assist and accompany them with enthusiasm." Regular communication between teachers and parents is established through portfolio reports and evaluation meetings, while the school also provides guidance to ensure that Montessori practices can be continued at home. This creates a seamless continuity between school and family environments, reinforcing the holistic development of the child.

From the student perspective, interviews with Cuda reveal a positive and meaningful learning experience. He expressed joy in being able to choose his own activities, describing "studying with Miss" as his favorite moment. He also shared his pride in learning *Qiraati* with a special teacher, memorizing short surahs, and enjoying congregational worship. "Before praying together, we read short surahs while waiting for friends," he explained. These experiences highlight how the integration of Montessori and Islamic principles fosters not only intellectual growth but also spiritual awareness and moral grounding in daily practices. Montessori Islam, as implemented at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH), has thus proven effective in creating a pleasant, deep, and spiritually rich learning atmosphere. This model represents more than a pedagogical innovation; it is also a form of *tajdid* (renewal) in Islamic education that is grounded in fitrah and revelation while embracing modern scientific and pedagogical methods. The hope, as Regha emphasized, is that this approach can "produce extraordinary children who understand the relationship between science, nature, and God, and who possess deep self-awareness." At the

end of this findings chapter, it is essential to confirm the position of these research results within the existing discourse. Earlier studies on Montessori largely emphasize autonomy, creativity, and experiential learning, while Islamic education research has focused more on spirituality, morality, and religious identity. This study contributes to bridging these two domains by presenting a contextual model of Islamic Montessori that harmonizes freedom with guidance and exploration with spirituality. In doing so, the findings provide a unique perspective within contemporary educational discourse, enriching both the global Montessori conversation and the ongoing reform of Islamic education in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of Montessori Islam at Awliya Holistic Elementary School (SDH) demonstrates that integrative education can harmonize child-centered learning with Islamic values such as *'ibādah*, *adab*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs*. This approach not only facilitates intellectual and emotional growth, but also builds strong spiritual foundations, proving that modern educational methods need not contradict religious principles.

To sustain this model, systematic support is essential, including teacher training that integrates Montessori philosophy with Islamic teachings, policy recognition from the government, and the development of standardized teaching materials. Awliya SDH has shown that Islamic Montessori is a realistic and effective alternative for shaping a generation that is spiritually resilient, intellectually capable, and socially responsible, making it a model worthy of replication across Indonesia.

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