

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory in the Paradigm Transformation of Islamic Educational Psychology

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Abstract

This study examines the paradigm transformation of intelligence from the concept of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) within the perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology. The purpose of this research is to analyze the shift in the concept of intelligence and to integrate it with Islamic educational values. A qualitative approach was employed, using library research and content analysis techniques. Data sources were drawn from primary and secondary literature relevant to intelligence theory and Islamic education. The findings reveal that the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) paradigm is limited and reductionist, as it emphasizes only cognitive aspects. In contrast, the Multiple Intelligences theory provides a broader and multidimensional understanding of human intelligence. From an Islamic perspective, intelligence encompasses not only intellectual aspects but also the dimensions of reason (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), and spirit (*ruh*), all oriented toward servitude to Allah SWT. The integration of Multiple Intelligences with Islamic education produces a holistic, humanistic, and transcendental paradigm of intelligence. In conclusion, the transformation of the intelligence paradigm demonstrates a shift from a single-dimensional approach to a multidimensional framework aligned with Islamic values in shaping the concept of *insan kamil*.

INTRODUCTION

The development of modern educational psychology studies demonstrates a fundamental paradigm shift in understanding the concept of human intelligence. In its early phase, intelligence was largely reduced to the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) approach, which emphasized logical-mathematical and verbal abilities as the primary indicators of individual success. The dominance of this paradigm not only influenced perspectives on students' abilities but also shaped the structure of educational systems, ranging from curriculum design to evaluation mechanisms that tended to be uniform and oriented toward measurable cognitive aspects (Dwijayanti & Syafril, 2024; Gottfredson, 1997; Hadi, 2024; Klein, 1997; Sternberg, 2012; Wahyudi & Alafiah, 2016).

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This condition subsequently generated various critiques within contemporary psychological studies. The reduction of intelligence solely to cognitive aspects was considered insufficient to represent the full complexity of human abilities. In real-life practice, individual success is not determined merely by academic achievement, but also by social competence, emotional regulation, creativity, and the capacity to adapt to the environment. Therefore, a reinterpretation of the concept of intelligence has become an unavoidable necessity in the development of educational psychology (Vensel, 2015; Waterhouse, 2022).

As a response to these limitations, Howard Gardner introduced the theory of Multiple Intelligences, which asserts that human intelligence is not singular but consists of several relatively independent domains. Gardner classified intelligence into several types, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. This concept made a significant contribution to education by encouraging more adaptive learning approaches to accommodate students' diverse potentials and by shifting educational orientation from homogenization to differentiated learning (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Vensel, 2015).

Nevertheless, the theory of Multiple Intelligences has not been free from academic debate. Several studies in cognitive psychology argue that empirical evidence supporting the independence of each intelligence remains limited, and there is no strong consensus regarding the validity of measuring each type of intelligence separately (Klein, 1997; Waterhouse, 2022). Other critiques highlight that the theory functions more as a pedagogical framework than as a psychometric theory with robust measurement foundations in mainstream psychology.

On the other hand, from the perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology, intelligence is not only understood as cognitive ability and social skills, but also encompasses spiritual dimensions oriented toward the relationship between humans and Allah SWT. Within this framework, intelligence is viewed as an integration of reason (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), and spirit (*ruh*), directed toward the formation of morally upright individuals grounded in divine values (Al-Attas, 1995; Langgulung, 2004).

Based on this, a conceptual effort is required to integrate the theory of Multiple Intelligences into the framework of Islamic Educational Psychology. Such integration is essential to ensure that the concept of intelligence does not stop at humanistic and functional dimensions alone, but also includes transcendental dimensions that serve as the foundational principles of Islamic education (Alwiyah & Syarif, 2025; Mahmud et al., 2024).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research design. This method was chosen based on the study's focus on conceptual exploration and theoretical review of various relevant literature sources, without involving empirical data collection in the field. In this context, all research data were obtained from scientific documents related to the transformation of the intelligence paradigm in educational psychology and Islamic education (Anidar et al., 2026; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2025; 2026; Snyder, 2019; Zed, 2008).

A qualitative approach was used because this research does not aim to test hypotheses or generate numerical data, but rather to deeply understand the construction of meaning, concepts, and theoretical relationships between Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Multiple Intelligences, and Islamic Educational Psychology. Therefore, this research orientation emphasizes conceptual meaning and interpretation (meaning-oriented research), as commonly used in qualitative literature studies (Creswell, 2014; Danandjaja, 2014; Pringgar & Sujatmiko, 2020).

Characteristically, this research falls into the descriptive-analytical category, namely research that not only describes the concepts studied but also systematically analyzes the relationships, differences, and potential integration among concepts to produce a more complete theoretical construction (Moleong, 2021).

This research employs three main, complementary approaches in the conceptual analysis process. First, a philosophical approach is used to examine the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of the concept of human intelligence from the perspective of modern psychology and Islamic education. This approach helps uncover the basic assumptions behind the theory of Multiple Intelligences and the concept of intelligence within Islamic thought (Al-Attas, 1995; Langgulung, 2004).

Second, a psychological approach is used to understand the development of the concept of intelligence in contemporary psychology, from the dominance of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to the expansion of the concept through the theory of Multiple Intelligences. This approach draws on the development of modern intelligence theory developed by (Vensel, 2015a) and cognitive psychology's critique of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) model (Sternberg, 2012).

Third, the Islamic education approach is used to study the concept of intelligence, drawing on Islamic normative sources such as the Quran, Hadith, and the works of scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun. In this approach, intelligence is understood as the integration between the mind (*'aql*), the heart (*qalb*), and the spirit, which is directed towards the formation of a perfect human being (Ihya', 2021; Nasr, 1987).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data, which are used in a complementary manner. The primary data in this study are the main works of Howard Gardner, in particular. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, which serves as the main conceptual foundation for understanding the structure of multiple intelligences (Vensel, 2015). Secondary data were obtained from various relevant scientific literature, including books on educational psychology, Islamic educational philosophy, national and international journal articles, scientific proceedings, and previous research results such as theses and dissertations. All sources were selected based on their relevance to the research topic, particularly those discussing intelligence, learning theory, and the integration of Islamic education (Mahmud et al., 2024; Putra, 2022; Wahyudi & Alafiah, 2016).

Data collection techniques in this study were conducted through two main methods: literature review and documentation. Literature review was conducted through systematic reading, critical analysis, and understanding of various literature related to the concept of intelligence, Multiple Intelligences theory, and Islamic educational psychology. This method aligns with the library research approach, which emphasizes the analysis of scientific documents (Snyder, 2019; Zed, 2008). Meanwhile, documentation techniques were used to collect various scientific documents such as books, journal articles, and relevant previous research results. These documents were then classified based on main themes to facilitate further analysis (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis in this study uses content analysis (content analysis) with a systematic, interpretive, and comparative qualitative approach. This technique is used to identify, categorize, and interpret the meaning contained in various scientific texts related to intelligence from the perspective of modern psychology and Islamic education.

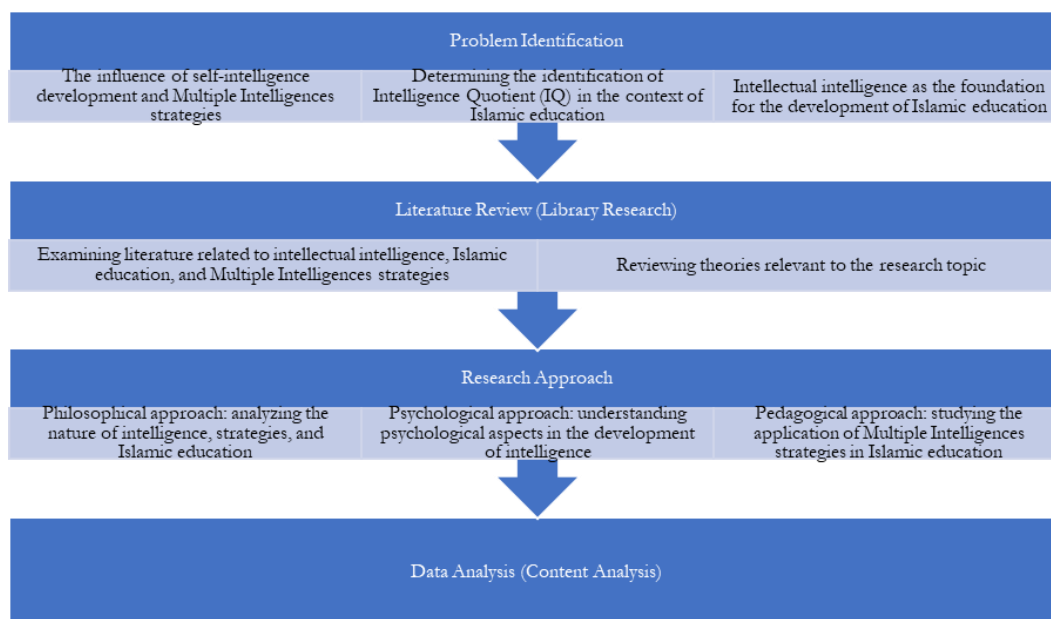


Fig 1. Research Flow on the Transformation of Intelligence Paradigms

Figure 1 shows the research flow used in this study. The research began with identifying the problem regarding the transformation of the intelligence paradigm in educational psychology. This was followed by a literature review covering the concepts of Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Multiple Intelligences, and Islamic Educational Psychology.

The next stage is data collection through literature review and documentation. The data obtained is then analyzed through data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. This analysis process yields conclusions regarding the transformation of the intelligence paradigm and its integration within the perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology. This technique is used to identify, categorize, and interpret the meaning contained in various scientific texts related to intelligence from the perspective of modern psychology and Islamic education (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorff, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Intelligence Paradigm from Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to Multiple Intelligences

The results of the literature review indicate that the concept of intelligence in educational psychology has undergone a significant paradigm shift from a single approach to a multidimensional approach. In the early stages of the development of modern psychology, intelligence was understood predominantly through the concept of Intelligence Quotient (IQ), which focuses on cognitive abilities, particularly the logical-mathematical and verbal-linguistic aspects. Measurement within this paradigm is generally conducted through standardized quantitative tests, so intelligence tends to be reduced solely to academic achievement.

However, various studies in contemporary educational psychology show that this approach has limitations in fully explaining the complexity of human abilities. Several studies confirm that individual success in life is not always linearly correlated with Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores, as non-cognitive factors such as social skills, emotional regulation, motivation, and creativity also play a significant role in achieving success (Byrne, 2012; Chollet, 2019).

This situation then opened up space for criticism of the dominant reductionist Intelligence Quotient (IQ) paradigm. It was in this context that Howard Gardner proposed his theory. Multiple Intelligences, which emphasizes that human intelligence is not a single entity, but rather consists of various relatively independent and

complementary domains. This shift marks a significant shift from a linear paradigm to a more pluralistic and humanistic paradigm of intelligence in education (Cerruti, 2013; Vensel, 2015).

Howard Gardner's Concept of Multiple Intelligences

The results of the analysis show that the theory of Multiple Intelligences made an important contribution in broadening the perspective on human potential. Gardner defines intelligence as the ability to solve problems or create products that have value within a particular cultural context (Vensel, 2015). Within this framework, intelligence is no longer understood as a single entity, but rather comprises various types of intelligence, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Each type of intelligence has distinct functions and characteristics, yet simultaneously forms a unique individual ability profile.

These findings demonstrate that each student possesses a unique combination of intelligences, rendering a uniform educational approach irrelevant. Numerous educational studies have shown that implementing this theory encourages more inclusive and differentiated learning practices, providing space for the development of potential according to individual characteristics (Ansori, 2019; Yuliani & Rachmawati, 2021). However, several critical studies in cognitive psychology also indicate that the empirical validity of the independence between intelligence types remains debatable, as most factorial research does not fully support a strict separation between intelligence domains (Waterhouse, 2022). Nevertheless, pedagogically, this theory still makes a significant contribution to the development of more adaptive learning strategies.

Multiple Intelligences in the Perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology

From the perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology, the research results show that there is a conceptual meeting point between the theories of Multiple Intelligences and the concept of humans in Islam. Islam views humans as multidimensional beings consisting not only of cognitive aspects but also of spiritual and moral dimensions. In Islamic educational literature, humans have three main dimensions, namely reason (mind) as the center of thinking, the heart as the center of emotions and spiritual awareness, and the spirit as a transcendental dimension that connects humans with Allah SWT. In addition, the concept emphasizes that every human being has unique basic potential and can be developed through the educational process (Irawan, 2015; Journal, 2025).

The results of the analysis show that the theory Multiple Intelligences. This theory of Multiple Intelligences aligns with efforts to understand the diversity of human potential from a modern psychological perspective. However, this theory does not explicitly incorporate the spiritual dimension as the primary orientation of intelligence. Unlike the Islamic perspective, intelligence is not solely directed toward worldly functional success, but also toward the development of divine awareness and noble morals as the ultimate goal of education.

Integration of Multiple Intelligences Theory with Islamic Educational Values

The results of the study also show that the theory of Multiple Intelligences has the potential to be integrated with the values of Islamic Education through a monotheistic approach. In this perspective, all forms of intelligence are not only understood as individual abilities, but also as a trust and means of worship to Allah SWT. Linguistic intelligence, for example, can be directed toward conveying the values of truth and preaching. Logical-mathematical intelligence can be developed to produce knowledge that benefits the community. Interpersonal intelligence plays a role in strengthening social relationships and Islamic brotherhood, while intrapersonal intelligence can be used for self-reflection in strengthening spirituality. Meanwhile, naturalistic intelligence can be interpreted as human responsibility as caliphs in maintaining environmental balance.

This integration demonstrates that Islamic education has the capacity to accommodate developments in modern psychological theory without losing its foundation in divine values. Thus, a more comprehensive paradigm of intelligence emerges, one that encompasses not only intellectual and social intelligence but also spiritual and moral intelligence.

The Transformation of the Intelligence Paradigm from Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to Multiple Intelligences

The results of the literature review indicate that there has been a fairly fundamental paradigm shift in the study of modern educational psychology, namely from the concept of a single intelligence (Intelligence Quotient/IQ) to the concept of multiple intelligences (Multiple Intelligences/MI). In the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) paradigm, intelligence is understood as a general cognitive ability and is measured through standard psychometric instruments, with a dominance of verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical aspects (Neisser et al., 1996; Spearman, 1904).

The results of this study are in line with Gardner's theory (2011), which emphasizes that intelligence is not singular, but rather consists of various domains of ability that are relatively independent and work differently in each individual. Furthermore, the results of this study also support criticism of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) paradigm, which states that the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) approach is reductionistic because it fails to fully explain the complexity of human behavior (Klein, 1997; Waterhouse, 2022). This study emphasized that individual success is determined not only by cognitive ability but also by social and emotional intelligence, creativity, and adaptability.

In line with this, modern educational studies also show that Multiple Intelligences theory emerged as a response to the limitations of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) measurements, which were too narrow and did not reflect the full range of human potential variations (Morris, 2023; Vensel, 2015). Thus, it can be emphasized that the transformation from Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to Multiple Intelligences is an epistemological change from a unidimensional paradigm to a multidimensional paradigm in understanding human intelligence.

Reconstruction of the Concept of Intelligence in the Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The analysis results show that the theory of Multiple Intelligences makes a significant contribution to reconstructing the concept of intelligence in modern educational psychology. Gardner defines intelligence as the ability to solve problems or create valuable products within a particular cultural context (Vensel, 2015). The results of this study align with Gardner's (2011) theory, which emphasizes that human intelligence cannot be reduced to academic aspects alone, but encompasses various domains such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic.

This finding is also supported by research in education, which shows that the application of MI in learning contributes to increased learning differentiation and the development of students' potential more holistically (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). However, several cognitive psychology studies confirm that the empirical validity of the independence between intelligences is still debated and has not been fully accepted in mainstream psychology (Visser et al., 2006; Waterhouse, 2006).

Multiple Intelligences in the Perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology

The results of the study indicate a conceptual alignment between the theory of Multiple Intelligences and the multidimensional concept of humans in Islam. Islam views humans as beings consisting of the dimensions of reason (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), and spirit as spiritual elements that connect humans with Allah SWT (Al-Attas, 1995; Al-Ghazali, 2005). The results of this study are in line with the concept of *fitrah* in Islamic education, which emphasizes that every human being has different basic potentials and

can be developed through education (Khalidun, 2004; Langgulang, 2004).

However, Multiple Intelligences theory has not explicitly included the spiritual-transcendental dimension as the main orientation of intelligence, whereas in Islam intelligence is not only functional, but also worship and servitude to Allah SWT (Al-Attas, 1995). Thus, there is a conceptual meeting point between Multiple Intelligences and Islamic education, but also a fundamental epistemological difference, namely that Multiple Intelligences is humanistic-psychological, while Islamic education is theocentric and transcendental.

Integration of Multiple Intelligences Theory with Islamic Education

The results of this study indicate that the theory of Multiple Intelligences can be integrated with the values of Islamic education through a monotheistic approach. This integration aligns with the notion that Islamic education is holistic and accommodates the development of human potential as a whole (Al-Attas, 1995; Langgulang, 1995). These findings align with contemporary Islamic education research, which shows that the implementation of Multiple Intelligences in Islamic Religious Education can increase learning effectiveness, creativity, and student engagement in the learning process (Alwiyah & Syarif, 2025; Mahmud, Musfirah, et al., 2024).

In an integrative perspective, each type of intelligence is not only seen as an individual ability, but also as a means of worship to Allah SWT as in the concept of monotheism-based education (Ramayulis, 2018): linguistic, namely preaching and communicating Islamic values, logical-mathematical, namely the development of knowledge, interpersonal, namely strengthening Islamic brotherhood, intrapersonal, namely self-reflection and self-awareness, and naturalistic, namely responsibility as caliph on earth. Thus, this integration results in a transformation of the concept of intelligence from merely humanistic to transcendental based on monotheism (Al-Attas, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that there has been a transformation of the intelligence paradigm in educational psychology from the concept of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI). The Intelligence Quotient (IQ) paradigm, which is single, cognitive, and reductionistic, has been criticized for being unable to fully explain the complexity of human potential. In contrast, the theory of Multiple Intelligences offers a more inclusive and multidimensional view by recognizing the diversity of human intelligence, such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, and naturalist. Furthermore, from the perspective of Islamic Educational Psychology, the concept of Multiple Intelligences can be integrated with the values of monotheism through the development of the dimensions of reason (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), and spirit. This integration produces a more holistic intelligence paradigm because it is not only oriented towards worldly success, but also towards the formation of noble morals and devotion to Allah SWT. Thus, the transformation of the intelligence paradigm in this study not only shows a conceptual shift, but also an epistemological reconstruction towards a transcendental intelligence model oriented towards the formation of a perfect human being.

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