



# Improving the Emotional Intelligence of Learners in Primary Schools: What is the Teacher's Attitude?

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## Abstract

This problem stems from students from Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools, who are expected to have better emotional states than students from other public elementary schools. However, researchers found students with negative emotional states, such as socializing with friends, talking to friends, being assertive toward teachers, and not paying attention to lessons, not accepting their own mistakes, being unwilling to accept others' opinions, and being overly sensitive. Therefore, researchers wanted to investigate the causes of these emotional states in students. This research using field research methods through a descriptive qualitative approach, with techniques snowball sampling. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews and documentation. This study resulted in teacher efforts in increasing students' self-awareness at Insan Kamil Integrated Islamic Elementary School by accustoming children to good behavior or morals, teaching children prayers and knowing Allah as the creator of the universe, giving advice in small forums, and getting used to being polite, appreciating and respecting others. Teachers' efforts in increasing student motivation by means of high motivation are by giving numbers, medium motivation by giving questions and assignments and low motivation by giving punishment. Teachers' efforts in increasing student empathy by giving advice about caring for fellow friends, giving children opportunities to be active and inviting children to contemplate nature.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a necessary process to achieve balance and perfection in the development of individuals and society (Nurkholis, 2013). In Indonesia, the system still assumes that students with above-average IQs will get the highest grades (Rahmita, et al., 2019). However, their attitudes towards activities, independence, emotions, and personality have not been thoroughly evaluated. Society assumes that students with A grades will get good degrees and get decent jobs with satisfactory salaries that guarantee success and success (Makki, 2019).

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Education functions to develop abilities and educate the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation aims to develop the potential of students to become people who believe in and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens. One of the things that distinguishes humans from other living creatures is intelligence. Intelligence is cultivated to enhance human vitality. Besides aiming to enhance intellectual intelligence, education also needs to foster student character, one of which is how students develop emotional intelligence (Indria, 2020). The fact is that the standard of learning success in modern education depends not only on learning outcomes recorded in textbooks that demonstrate skills and achievements, but also on changes in attitudes and behavior. There are five forms of emotional intelligence, namely recognizing one's own emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing the emotions of others and building relationships. Emotional intelligence is a person's ability to regulate their emotions with intelligence, maintain emotional health and how to express emotions and how to express emotions appropriately with awareness and skills, motivation, empathy, and social skills within themselves. Emotional intelligence is an educational concept that has not received much attention from educators in the world of education.

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in fostering students' morality, as individuals with emotional intelligence are highly sensitive to their surroundings and can resolve problems calmly. Students' emotional intelligence varies, so some may be able to manage it well, while others may not. This requires environmental guidance to help students manage their emotions for appropriate and beneficial purposes. If emotional intelligence is neglected, it is feared that it will lead to disabilities in both individual and social skills. This is because emotional intelligence is closely related to intellectual intelligence. By understanding emotional intelligence, students can develop a stable problem-solving ability and adapt to both school and community environments.

Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) is an educational institution that provides solutions and services to guide, educate, and improve the morals of children from elementary school age. One of the integrated Islamic schools in the Bukittinggi area is the Insan Kamil Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT). At the Insan Kamil Integrated Islamic Elementary School itself, students are given a lot of religious learning, namely studying the Quran and Hadith, and facilitating students in developing religious abilities such as congregational Dhuhur prayer, religious ceremonies every Friday, murojaah together every morning and having good morals, in order to form an Islamic personality in controlling students' emotional intelligence.

Based on the observations conducted by researchers in the fourth grade of Insan Kamil Bukittinggi Integrated Islamic Elementary School, there are still many students who have bad emotions, such as appearing less aware of the actions taken, students are not disciplined during learning, do not obey the rules that have been made, do not accept their own mistakes, do not pay attention when the teacher delivers the material, do not want to accept other people's opinions, and feelings that are too sensitive. As a result of such emotions, students are not liked by their friends, this has an impact on other developments such as intellectual, social, character development, and others. Based on the problems above, researchers are interested in exploring the form of students' emotional intelligence, by seeing how teachers' attitudes in dealing with students' emotions.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach because it aims to understand the phenomenon in depth based on the perspectives of the research subjects, not to measure or test hypotheses. The researcher attempted to comprehensively describe the implementation process and factors influencing Islamic Religious Education learning at Insan Kamil Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Bukittinggi City. The snowball sampling technique was used to determine informants in stages, where the initial informant recommended subsequent informants who were deemed relevant to the research focus. This facilitated the researcher in obtaining rich and in-depth data from sources who truly understood the context in the field. Data collection techniques were carried out through direct observation of the learning process, in-depth interviews with the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and fourth-grade teachers, as well as documentation of supporting documents such as syllabi, lesson plans, and learning journals. Data validity was obtained through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain the validity of the information. The data obtained were then analyzed through four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, in order to produce a complete and systematic picture of the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning at the school that was the object of the study.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers' Efforts to Increase Students' Self-Awareness

Providing good examples such as behaving well and speaking properly is a crucial strategy used by teachers, as students tend to imitate the behavior of adults around them. When teachers consistently demonstrate noble character, it sets a standard for students to follow, encouraging the development of good morals and self-awareness. The efforts are as follows: 1) Getting children used to behaving or having good morals; Teachers habituate students to practice good morals through the 5S approach: greeting, smiling, being polite, respectful, and courteous. Teachers must also be role models in consistently applying these values so that students can internalize them through daily interactions. 2) Teaching children prayers and introducing Allah as the Creator; Teachers enhance students' self-awareness by embedding religious values, such as prayer (both obligatory and sunnah), Quran recitation, and practicing ablution. These activities instill spiritual discipline and awareness of divine presence, shaping students' behavior from within. Religious principles are also integrated into subject content, reinforcing the understanding that all knowledge is connected to Allah's creation.

3) Giving advice in small forums; Teachers provide direct guidance in informal settings, allowing a personal and reflective atmosphere where students are more open to correction. When verbal advice is not effective, teachers may use educational consequences such as memorizing Quranic verses to reinforce discipline in a meaningful way. Getting students accustomed to politeness and respect; Teachers discourage negative behaviors like shouting or using offensive language and consistently remind students to honor others' speech and presence through calm tone and respectful communication. These strategies show that increasing students' self-awareness is not just about discipline, but about cultivating an internal compass guided by values, religion, and empathy. Teachers are facilitators who create opportunities for students to reflect on their own behavior and understand the consequences of their actions. By linking everyday practices to moral and spiritual teachings, students become more conscious of their responsibilities, both as learners and as individuals within a community.

In addition, the success of these efforts depends on continuity and consistency. Self-awareness does not form instantly; it requires reinforcement through daily routines and genuine teacher involvement. When students experience repeated moral reinforcement—through example, advice, and structured activities—they gradually develop the ability to self-regulate, show empathy, and act with integrity even outside of school supervision. Thus, teachers not only educate the mind but also nurture the heart, shaping students to grow into individuals with strong self-awareness and character.

### **Teachers' Efforts to Increase Student Motivation**

At Insan Kamil Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Bukittinggi City, student motivation originates both intrinsically and extrinsically. Teachers apply various strategies to enhance this motivation, categorized into three levels. First, high motivation is fostered through giving marks and organizing competitions. Teachers ignite students' enthusiasm by rewarding correct answers or achievements, which encourages a spirit of healthy competition and boosts self-confidence. Second, moderate motivation includes giving assignments, conducting tests, and providing grades. These tasks are designed to push students to perform at their best. Completing assignments successfully becomes a source of pride, as it reflects the students' persistence and effort. Third, low motivation involves more subtle approaches such as giving small rewards, nurturing interest, and clarifying long-term goals. In some cases, teachers also use light punishment or redirection to refocus students who are distracted, with the aim of helping them understand the value of attention and engagement in the learning process. These efforts are not meant to intimidate but to guide students toward realizing the benefits of their own academic progress.

In addition to the above strategies, teachers also build motivation by creating a positive and supportive learning environment. They use storytelling, real-life examples, and interactive methods to make lessons more relatable and enjoyable. This approach helps students feel more connected to the material and more willing to participate actively in the classroom. Furthermore, building strong teacher-student relationships based on mutual respect and empathy also plays a vital role in motivating students intrinsically. Ultimately, the success of motivational efforts depends not only on the techniques used but also on the consistency and sincerity of the teachers. When students see that their teachers genuinely care about their growth, both academically and personally they are more likely to develop a deep-seated motivation to learn. This long-term motivation becomes the foundation for academic resilience and lifelong learning attitudes.

### **Teachers' Efforts to Increase Students' Empathy**

At Insan Kamil Integrated Islamic Elementary School, Bukittinggi City, developing students' empathy is a key component of character education. Empathy is not only the ability to understand others' feelings, but also a willingness to act kindly and helpfully toward others. The school implements various strategies to instill empathy in students from an early age through everyday learning experiences and teacher-student interactions. First, giving advice about caring for fellow friends is one of the foundational efforts. Teachers routinely remind students about the importance of helping others in small but meaningful ways, such as sharing food during breaks, lending stationery to friends in need, and informing the teacher when a friend is sick or upset. These actions may seem simple, but they help children transition from self-centered behavior to becoming more aware of the needs and feelings of others. When such advice is given consistently and positively reinforced, students begin to internalize these behaviors and display genuine care for their peers. The school environment also supports this effort by encouraging collective classroom responsibilities, where students work together to keep their classroom clean and organized—fostering a sense of ownership and teamwork.

Second, providing opportunities for students to be active plays a critical role in building empathy through participation. Teachers give students chances to speak up, share opinions, and lead small group activities, even when they make mistakes. This not only builds confidence but teaches students to listen, respond respectfully, and understand differing viewpoints. Encouraging student voices allows them to feel heard and validated, which in turn helps them do the same for their peers. Furthermore, through group projects or collaborative games, students are naturally guided to develop cooperation, patience, and compassion important traits that underlie empathetic behavior. Third, teachers make a concerted effort to invite children to contemplation of nature and their surroundings. By directing students to care for the environment such as maintaining classroom cleanliness, watering plants, or picking up trash teachers are instilling a broader form of empathy that extends beyond people to include all of creation. These activities teach students that empathy is not limited to humans but includes living things and the environment. Reflecting on nature also helps children recognize interdependence, the concept that all living beings affect one

another, and that caring for nature is part of their moral and spiritual responsibility as Muslims. Teachers often link these actions with Islamic values, reinforcing the belief that caring for others and the earth is part of their faith.

Overall, these approaches combine verbal guidance, active experience, and environmental awareness to nurture empathy as a living value in the students' daily lives. The consistent modeling of empathy by teachers through their words, actions, and attitudes reinforces what they teach, creating an emotionally supportive school culture. When students regularly experience kindness, respect, and shared responsibility in their interactions with teachers and peers, they are more likely to demonstrate these same values in their behavior. In this way, empathy becomes not just a concept but a habit of the heart, developed early and sustained through daily practice.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that teachers' efforts to increase students' self-awareness are carried out by cultivating positive behaviors such as implementing 5S (greeting, saying hello, smiling, being polite, and being courteous), introducing daily prayers, and linking general learning to religious values such as congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, and ablution. Teachers also provide personal advice based on students' problems and instill the importance of being polite, not using harsh words, and respecting others. In increasing learning motivation, teachers apply an approach tailored to students' motivation levels: giving grades as a form of appreciation for students with high motivation, giving assignments and questions to students with moderate motivation, and providing educational reprimands and encouragement to students with low motivation. Meanwhile, in increasing student empathy, teachers provide an understanding of the importance of caring for others, directing students to actively participate in class activities, and providing appreciation for their participation. In addition, students are encouraged to engage in nature contemplation to foster a love for the environment, by instilling habits of maintaining cleanliness, caring for plants, and appreciating the objects around them.

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