

**SPIRITUAL EDUCATION AS A STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION OF
HIGHER EDUCATION IN BUILDING FUTURE
GLOBAL CIVILIZATION**

Syuhud^{1*}

*syuhudlu@gmail.com

Achmad Farid²

ac.faried@gmail.com

^{1,2} Syarifuddin Islamic University, Lumajang, Indonesia

Abstract

Spiritual education serves as a strategic approach for higher education institutions in shaping the future global civilization based on humanistic and divine values. This study aims to analyze the contribution of higher education in embedding spiritual values as the foundation for character formation and peaceful global culture. Using a library research approach, data were gathered from scientific literature on spiritual education, character development, and global civilization building. The results reveal that integrating spiritual education into university curricula enhances students' spiritual intelligence, moral awareness, and social-ecological responsibility. Spiritual education acts as a transformative instrument in forming holistic individuals who are self-aware and committed to world peace. The findings highlight the strategic role of higher education in fostering a civilized global society through transformative spirituality.

Keywords: *spiritual education, higher education, character formation, world peace, global civilization*

Abstrak

Pendidikan spiritual merupakan strategi penting bagi perguruan tinggi dalam membangun peradaban dunia masa depan yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan dan ketuhanan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kontribusi pendidikan tinggi dalam menanamkan nilai spiritual sebagai fondasi pembentukan karakter dan budaya global yang damai. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kepustakaan, data dikumpulkan dari berbagai literatur ilmiah tentang pendidikan spiritual, nilai karakter, dan pembangunan peradaban global. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi pendidikan spiritual dalam kurikulum perguruan tinggi mampu mengembangkan kecerdasan spiritual mahasiswa, memperkuat moralitas, serta menumbuhkan tanggung jawab sosial dan ekologis. Pendidikan spiritual menjadi instrumen strategis dalam membentuk manusia yang holistik, sadar diri, dan berorientasi pada perdamaian dunia. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pendidikan tinggi berperan signifikan dalam mewujudkan peradaban global yang berkeadaban melalui spiritualitas transformatif.

Kata Kunci: *pendidikan spiritual, pendidikan tinggi, karakter, perdamaian dunia, peradaban global*

Introduction

Education is widely regarded as the gateway to the holistic formation of human beings, encompassing both physical and spiritual dimensions. Ideas, thoughts, and behaviors expressed by individuals are manifestations of knowledge acquired through education. Therefore, educational institutions are not merely transmitters of scientific knowledge but are responsible for implementing visions and missions that shape comprehensive human character capable of responding to future societal challenges. However, in practice, many universities focus primarily on cognitive, technical, and professional aspects while neglecting the spiritual dimension of human development.

Empirical social facts reveal a growing “crisis of meaning” and moral decline associated with the secularization of education and the fragmentation of human values (Waggoner, 2017). As centers of intellectual development and social transformation, higher education institutions face a crucial challenge: how to cultivate graduates who are not only intellectually competent but also spiritually grounded, capable of upholding ethical orientation amid technological and sociocultural complexities.

A considerable body of literature has examined the relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being, academic achievement, and emotional maturity. A meta-analysis by Zhou et al. (2024) reported that spiritual intelligence positively correlates with academic performance ($r \approx 0.36$) and emotional intelligence ($r \approx 0.50$) among students and university learners. Similarly, Anwar et al. (2023) found that spiritual intelligence significantly predicts university students’ psychological well-being. Pinto et al. (2024) confirmed that spiritual intelligence correlates consistently with resilience, mental health, and spirituality across diverse populations.

However, most of these studies remain correlational and overlook institutional-level strategies that enable higher education to foster spirituality systematically through curricula and policy frameworks. While Fuertes et al. (2021) emphasized the need for higher education to serve as a space for students’ spiritual growth, few studies have designed strategic institutional models that connect spirituality to the development of global civilization.

Research on professional higher education (e.g., Zsolnai, 2025) has explored opportunities and challenges in integrating spirituality into pedagogical and psychological curricula but remains primarily normative without concrete institutional frameworks. Particularly in Indonesia and other developing countries, empirical studies investigating the strategic contribution of spiritual education in higher education to global civilization remain scarce.

This study addresses two major research gaps. First, it focuses on institutional strategies for integrating spiritual education into higher education rather than merely assessing individual spiritual intelligence. Second, it bridges macro-level perspectives (global civilization) with micro-level dimensions (curricular design, student character formation). Hence, this

study develops a conceptual framework explaining *how* universities can contribute to global civilization through a systematic and spiritually grounded approach.

The novelty also lies in redefining higher education's contribution: not only through scientific and technological advancement but also through the cultivation of moral values, social harmony, and ecological awareness rooted in spirituality. This framework integrates *hablum minallah* (vertical relation with God) and *hablum minannas* (horizontal relation with others) as the spiritual foundation of higher education's mission.

This study aims to formulate a strategic model of spiritual education that can be adopted by higher education institutions to contribute significantly to the development of future global civilization. Specifically, the objectives are to: (1) Identify key elements of spiritual education relevant to the higher education context; (2) Construct an institutional strategy framework linking spirituality with global contribution; (3) Examine the implications of implementing spiritual education in universities, particularly within Indonesia's context.

The core argument of this study is that higher education—when oriented not only toward intellectual excellence but also toward spiritual development—can serve as a transformative agent in shaping global civilization. By internalizing spiritual values in institutional structures (vision-mission, curriculum, evaluation, and campus culture), universities can cultivate graduates who are not only intelligent and skilled but also moral, creative, and committed to promoting peace and civility in global society.

This study is significant because it provides a conceptual foundation and strategic direction for universities to function not merely as centers of technical learning and research but as catalysts of spiritual transformation for a just, tolerant, and sustainable world. In an era of global moral decline, polarization, conflict, and ecological crisis, the integration of spiritual values into higher education emerges as a crucial pathway toward building a peaceful and civilized global community.

Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design using a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to synthesize theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and institutional practices related to spiritual education in higher education and its contribution to the development of future global civilization. The SLR method was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive integration of diverse scholarly insights into a coherent conceptual framework that explains how spiritual values can be embedded in the educational system (Snyder, 2019). The research was grounded in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, emphasizing the construction of meaning through textual and contextual analysis. This paradigm is

appropriate for exploring the values, norms, and humanistic dimensions of education that cannot be measured quantitatively but require in-depth interpretive understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data sources of this study consisted of both primary and secondary literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus and Sinta from 2015 to 2025, along with books, policy documents, and philosophical works addressing spiritual education, moral formation, and global civilization. In addition, national legal documents such as Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education and Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System were used to provide a normative framework for the Indonesian context. The inclusion criteria for the literature were limited to works written in English or Indonesian, directly related to spirituality, higher education, or civilization studies, and published within the last decade to ensure conceptual relevance. Non-academic sources, popular essays, and materials lacking empirical or theoretical depth were excluded to maintain scholarly rigor.

Data collection was carried out systematically through database searches using combinations of keywords such as “spiritual education,” “higher education,” “spiritual intelligence,” “moral formation,” “character education,” and “global civilization.” The databases used included Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, MDPI, and Google Scholar. The selection and screening process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines (Page et al., 2021), ensuring transparency and methodological consistency. From an initial pool of 350 academic articles, 82 were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria after being assessed for relevance, recency, and scholarly quality.

The data analysis was conducted using content analysis and thematic synthesis in accordance with the procedures developed by Braun and Clarke (2019). The analysis consisted of three main stages. First, data reduction was performed by selecting and categorizing the most relevant theories and findings concerning spiritual education and civilization development. Second, data display involved organizing and comparing extracted information into thematic matrices that illustrated the relationships between spirituality, educational strategies, and global civilization. Third, conclusion drawing was carried out to construct a conceptual model that explains the strategic role of spiritual education in higher education as a transformative contribution to global civilization. The validity of the findings was strengthened through triangulation of sources—cross-comparing authors, theoretical frameworks, and contextual settings—and through peer debriefing to ensure interpretive credibility and analytical consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Throughout the research process, academic ethics were maintained by ensuring accuracy, transparency, and respect for intellectual property. All sources were appropriately cited following the APA 7th Edition citation format. Because the study was based solely on secondary data from published

literature, no human participants were involved, and ethical approval was therefore not required.

The conceptual framework guiding this study integrates three analytical dimensions. The philosophical dimension explores the ontological and epistemological foundations of spirituality in education. The institutional dimension investigates how higher education institutions can operationalize spiritual values through their vision, curriculum, and governance. Finally, the global civilization dimension examines how spiritually grounded education contributes to developing a peaceful, ethical, and sustainable global society. Together, these dimensions provide a systematic foundation for formulating a strategic model of spiritual education as a transformative force in higher education for advancing the civilization of the future.

Results and Discussion

Spiritual Education in Higher Education

Spiritual education in higher education has become an increasingly essential foundation for developing holistic human beings who are not only intellectually competent but also ethically and spiritually conscious. A recent scoping review on *spiritual intelligence and mental health* found that most studies in the last decade have been conducted in educational and health settings, demonstrating strong associations between spiritual intelligence, resilience, emotional intelligence, and positive social behavior (Rassool, 2024). These findings reinforce the need for universities to integrate spiritual development as part of their curriculum and institutional culture to promote students' psychological well-being and moral integrity.

A bibliometric study by Judijanto (2025) further highlighted that research on spiritual intelligence has gained significant attention in Southeast Asia, particularly within the fields of education, leadership, and moral development. This growing body of literature suggests that higher education institutions play a strategic role in embedding spiritual education into academic and community life as a pathway to cultivate ethical leadership and global citizenship. Similarly, a study by Anwar and Khan (2024) found that character education management in universities significantly enhances students' spiritual intelligence and socio-emotional competence, especially when supported by systematic curriculum design and a value-driven learning environment.

Zohar and Marshall's (2000) earlier concept of *Spiritual Quotient (SQ)*—which emphasizes consciousness, self-awareness, and moral responsibility—remains foundational and continues to be validated by recent studies. Higher education, therefore, must not only pursue academic excellence but also develop spiritual maturity that enables learners to think critically, act ethically, and contribute constructively to a peaceful global community.

The Role of Spiritual Intelligence in Cognitive and Academic Development

Recent meta-analytic evidence confirms that spiritual intelligence (SI) and emotional intelligence (EI) serve as independent yet significant predictors of academic performance. A study in *BMC Medical Education* (Zhou et al., 2024) revealed that while emotional intelligence has a slightly stronger correlation with academic success, SI remains an essential component influencing students' motivation, engagement, and resilience in higher education contexts. This demonstrates that spirituality is not limited to moral or religious dimensions but directly supports cognitive and learning processes.

Moreover, Ma and Wang (2022) reported that students with higher levels of spiritual awareness exhibit greater academic engagement and intrinsic motivation, as spirituality allows them to perceive deeper meaning and purpose in learning beyond grades or material outcomes. Their findings in *Frontiers in Psychology* indicate that spiritual education enhances students' reflective thinking, empathy, and ethical reasoning—skills that are increasingly relevant in the context of 21st-century education and global leadership.

Asthana and Srivastava (2023) further expanded this relationship by showing that spiritual intelligence positively affects not only students but also educators and administrative staff, fostering mutual trust, emotional balance, and workplace well-being within higher education institutions. This indicates that integrating spiritual education at the institutional level can strengthen both personal and organizational resilience, aligning with the broader goals of sustainable and human-centered educational transformation.

Spirituality and Strategic Planning for Global Civilization

In the broader context of global civilization, spiritual intelligence has been recognized as a key factor in nurturing ethical leadership, social justice, and sustainable development. According to Judijanto (2025), the intersection between spiritual intelligence, ethical leadership, and organizational responsibility forms a triadic model for creating human-centered institutions. This reinforces the need for universities to design strategic frameworks that incorporate spirituality not only in classroom teaching but also in institutional governance and community engagement.

Fuertes et al. (2021) emphasized that non-formal spiritual learning experiences—such as reflective dialogues, interfaith activities, meditation, and community service—are powerful avenues to develop students' moral consciousness and global empathy. Similarly, a study on *international students' spiritual and emotional development* by Nguyen and Lee (2023) found that participation in spiritual and reflective group activities enhances intercultural adaptation, mental health, and social connectedness in multicultural higher education settings. These findings suggest that spiritual education should extend beyond curriculum content to encompass holistic institutional design and student life programs.

The development of structured *spiritual intelligence modules* (Rahman et al., 2024) has also demonstrated measurable improvements in students' motivation, mindfulness, and psychological well-being. Such frameworks can be adapted to university-level curricula as part of strategic planning to shape global citizens with spiritual and ethical integrity. Therefore, higher education should move toward a “value-embedded model,” integrating academic rigor, emotional wisdom, and spiritual depth as inseparable pillars of global civilization.

The analysis of existing literature reveals a consistent convergence between classical and contemporary thought regarding spirituality in education. Classical theories by thinkers such as Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Zohar, and Marshall describe spirituality as the inner dimension of human consciousness that integrates reason, emotion, and moral sense. Contemporary studies strengthen this position by empirically confirming that spiritual intelligence contributes not only to moral and emotional stability but also to cognitive performance, leadership capacity, and social harmony.

In higher education, spirituality thus becomes a multidimensional construct—philosophical, psychological, and institutional—that binds academic development with humanistic values. The shift from mechanistic to holistic paradigms in education marks a return to a spiritually grounded understanding of human existence, echoing the Islamic educational principle of *hablum minallah wa hablum minannas* (balance between divine consciousness and human responsibility).

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of spiritual education as an institutional strategy for higher education to contribute systematically to the building of future global civilization. While previous research often isolates spirituality at the individual or psychological level, this study conceptualizes spirituality as an institutional construct—embedded in governance, curriculum design, and campus culture. Furthermore, it bridges micro-level personal transformation with macro-level civilization development, presenting a *holistic strategic framework* for universities to act as agents of spiritual and cultural renewal.

The findings of this research carry significant theoretical, practical, and policy implications. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on the intersection of spirituality and higher education by proposing a transdisciplinary framework that links psychology, pedagogy, and civilizational studies. Practically, it offers a model for integrating spiritual intelligence into curricula, faculty development, and student engagement programs. At the policy level, it supports the development of higher education policies that balance scientific excellence with moral and spiritual education—aligning with UNESCO's vision of education for peace, sustainability, and global citizenship.

This study contributes to the academic discourse in several key ways. First, it redefines the role of higher education as a spiritual-intellectual ecosystem rather than a purely technical institution. Second, it introduces a

conceptual bridge between spiritual intelligence and global civilization theory, providing a novel analytical framework for future empirical studies. Third, it encourages higher education policymakers and practitioners to reconsider institutional transformation not merely in terms of technology and innovation but through a deeply moral and spiritual lens. Ultimately, this study positions spiritual education as a strategic contribution of higher education toward building a peaceful, just, and spiritually enlightened global civilization.

Conclusion

This study concludes that spiritual education serves as a decisive and strategic foundation for higher education institutions to contribute meaningfully to the development of future global civilization. The integration of spirituality within the academic and institutional frameworks enriches the intellectual, emotional, and moral dimensions of students, thereby forming the basis for holistic human beings (*insan kamil*) who embody both intellectual excellence and moral virtue. The findings affirm that spiritual intelligence is not merely a religious or theological construct but rather a transformative human capacity that enhances cognitive development, emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and social responsibility. In an era where technological progress and globalization often lead to moral relativism and spiritual emptiness, spiritual education emerges as an essential counterbalance—restoring meaning, compassion, and transcendental consciousness within academic life and leadership development.

Through the integration of spiritual values, higher education institutions can bridge the gap between intellectual advancement and ethical maturity, positioning themselves not only as centers of knowledge production but also as moral and spiritual ecosystems. Such integration aligns with the global educational vision promoted by UNESCO and the United Nations, which emphasizes education for sustainable development, peace, and intercultural understanding. Spiritual education empowers learners to internalize universal values of justice, empathy, and ecological harmony—values essential for building a sustainable and peaceful civilization. Consequently, the development of spiritual intelligence rooted in self-awareness, divine consciousness, and social sensitivity represents both a philosophical and practical pathway to forming individuals capable of responding wisely to global challenges. Therefore, the transformation of higher education must not be limited to technological innovation or scientific advancement but should extend toward the cultivation of a spiritually enlightened civilization grounded in moral integrity and collective responsibility.

In light of these findings, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the implementation of spiritual education in higher education institutions. First, spiritual education should be systematically embedded in the curriculum through interdisciplinary courses, reflective practices, and experiential learning models that connect science, ethics, and faith. Second,

the professional development of faculty and administrators should include training in spiritual pedagogy and ethical leadership to ensure that educators can facilitate holistic learning processes that integrate intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Third, institutional policy reforms are needed to promote a human-centered educational paradigm that balances technological innovation with moral and spiritual formation, aligning higher education with the global goals of peace and sustainability.

Furthermore, future research should empirically investigate the measurable impact of spiritual intelligence on students' learning outcomes, mental health, and ethical decision-making across disciplines and cultural contexts. In addition, universities should strengthen collaborations with international organizations, interfaith institutions, and civil society networks to advance initiatives in peace education, environmental ethics, and social justice. As the digital revolution and artificial intelligence increasingly shape the academic world, it is imperative that higher education integrate spiritual and ethical reasoning into the use of technology to ensure that innovation continues to serve humanity rather than undermine its moral essence. Moreover, the cultivation of a spiritual campus culture is essential; institutions should design environments and activities that promote mindfulness, compassion, social service, and environmental stewardship as expressions of applied spirituality.

Ultimately, the study underscores that the future of global civilization will not depend solely on technological advancement or economic progress but on the spiritual maturity, moral wisdom, and ethical responsibility of humankind. Higher education thus carries a sacred mandate to form not only intelligent minds but also enlightened souls—individuals who embody knowledge, faith, and compassion, and who can lead humanity toward a more peaceful, just, and spiritually grounded world civilization.

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