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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE, ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS, AND SOCIAL SKILLS THROUGH A LIVE-IN PROGRAM: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Ease Arent[1*], Emelda Thesalonika[2]

[1*]Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia
[2]Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Pematangsiantasr, Indonesia
**ease.arent@unm.ac.id*

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Corresponding Author:
Ease Arent
ease.arent@unm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of the live-in program in developing students' spiritual intelligence, environmental awareness, and social skills at SMAK St. Albertus Malang. The live-in program is an out-of-classroom learning activity that allows students to reside with the local community, experience social life firsthand, and interact with the surrounding environment. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation to evaluate the program's impact holistically; participants included 30 Grade XI students who shared their four-day experiences in Malang Regency, 5 supervising teachers who provided perspectives on behavioral changes, and 10 local community members who commented on participant interactions and engagement. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo software to categorize, code, and interpret themes emerging from the collected data. The results identified three main themes: spiritual development, environmental awareness, and social skills. Spiritual development was reflected in the students' awareness of life values, capacity for self-reflection, and empathy. Environmental awareness was evident in the students' experiences and observed engagement with both the natural and social environments. Social skills were demonstrated through abilities in communication, cooperation, adaptation, and participation in community activities. These findings indicate that the live-in program contributes to holistic student development through experiential learning and meaningful interactions with the community and environment. The study's findings can serve as a basis for educational institutions to consider similar community-based learning programs as part of their efforts to foster student character development.

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development has become a global issue that emphasizes the importance of balancing economic, social, and environmental aspects. In this context, educational institutions play a strategic role in shaping a younger generation that is not only academically excellent but also environmentally conscious and socially skilled. Specifically, upper secondary education is a critical period for the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of adolescents, including the formation of spiritual values that can influence their behavior toward the environment and social interactions. A holistic approach that integrates aspects of spiritual intelligence into environmental and social education is an alternative that requires further exploration.

Spiritual intelligence (Spiritual Quotient) is a dimension of intelligence related to an individual's ability to understand the meaning of life and transcendental values. Spiritual intelligence is the ability to confront and solve issues of meaning and values, place behavior and life within a broader context of meaning, and assess that one's actions or life path hold greater significance than others (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Spiritual intelligence is conceptualized as a crucial foundation for equipping individuals to make wiser decisions by integrating values, meaning, and purpose in life (Emmons, 2000). This means that individuals with strong spiritual intelligence can face various life challenges, whether personal, social, or ecological, in a wiser and more meaningful way. In the context of education, spiritual attitude refers to the development of the student's spiritual dimension, encompassing a connection to transcendent values, the meaning of life, and profound self-awareness (Anjassari et al., 2025).

In the context of education, spiritual intelligence can serve as a crucial foundation for students' character development and awareness of social and environmental responsibilities. The study revealed that Spiritual Intelligence (X1), Emotional Intelligence (X2), and Intellectual Intelligence (X3) significantly influence English learning achievement (Y), jointly accounting for 60.3% of its variance, with the remaining 39.7% explained by other factors. Each type of intelligence also demonstrated a significant individual effect (Taupik, 2025). Spiritual intelligence and prosocial behavior among Hasyim Asy'ari High School students in Pekalongan City are positively correlated. This means that higher spiritual intelligence indicates stronger prosocial behavior, while students with low levels of spiritual intelligence tend to have low prosocial behavior as well (Rachmasari & Sakti, 2023).

Environmental awareness is a concept that encompasses an understanding of environmental degradation and the importance of efforts to protect the environment (Jusoh et al., 2018). More specifically, it refers to the knowledge, attitudes, and concrete actions aimed at preventing damage to the natural environment, as well as efforts to restore ecological damage that has already occurred (Ismail, 2021). This concept of environmental awareness is also closely linked to the concept of ecological intelligence (Sunarno & Supriatna, 2023). Developing social, emotional, spiritual, and moral intelligence from an early age is crucial, and education serves as a relevant medium for strengthening these aspects (Schuler, 2014).

In the 21st century, learning emphasizes not only mastery of basic literacy, critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and communication, but also the ability to position students as agents of change, capable of critically thinking about ecological issues and collaborating in finding solutions (Nurhayati et al., 2018). Environmental awareness is a crucial aspect of student character development in the current era of ecological crisis. Complex environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, and habitat degradation require a young generation with awareness and commitment to environmental conservation. Direct experience with nature is a key factor in shaping adolescents' environmental identity (Chawla, 2020).

In 21st-century learning, social skills are just as important as environmental awareness. Many students today prefer working individually rather than in group s(Bielinis, 2018). As a result, students often struggle to build teamwork, navigate group conflict, and develop mutual respect (Putri et al., 2019). This phenomenon is influenced by several factors, including the rise of individualism due to the use of digital technology and social media, a lack of collaborative learning experiences, and low levels of empathy and communication skills among students (Cecco, 2023). The rise of digital technology and the increasing use of social media have led to a paradoxical phenomenon: a decline in the quality of direct social interactions among adolescents, as highlighted in a longitudinal study (Twenge, 2020).

The cultivation of environmental awareness goes beyond mere educational and socialization efforts; it necessitates concrete implementation in everyday practices (Astagini & Wibianto, 2025). The Live-In Program is an experiential learning method that involves students living and interacting directly with a specific community for a certain period. This approach facilitates authentic learning through real-life experiences (experiential learning), stimulating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development simultaneously. Direct experience accompanied by critical reflection has the potential to produce a deep perspective transformation in students (Formenti & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2023). Student engagement in learning, games, as well as during breaks and shared meals, is known to be a key indicator of social acceptance (Ainin & Tabrin, 2024).

SMAK St. Albertus Malang, as an educational institution grounded in Catholic Christian values, has implemented the Live-In Program as an integral part of its character development curriculum. This program is designed to provide an immersive experience for eleventh-grade students, allowing them to live with rural communities for 4 days while engaging in organic farming, environmental conservation, and community empowerment activities (Arent & Thesalonika, 2023). Although the program has been running for several years, systematic evaluations of its impact on students' spiritual intelligence, environmental awareness, and social skills have not been conducted comprehensively.

In the national context, several studies have examined the effectiveness of the Live-In program in Indonesia's educational setting (Yuniatiningtyas et al., 2023). Live-in is an activity aligned with the school's vision of developing individuals grounded in prayer, brotherhood, and service. Through this activity, students are expected to balance their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development, appreciate their existence as God's

creatures, and experience God's presence as He manifests His love in their daily lives (Yuniatiningtyas et al., 2023). However, neither of these studies examined the relationship among spiritual intelligence, environmental awareness, and social skills in the context of the Live-In program.

Previous research on Live-In programs has highlighted their implementation as a means to strengthen students' character education. However, these studies have generally focused on how Live-In activities shape student character. In contrast, the program is designed to purify and clarify the heart and foster a balance in which individuals develop not only their IQ but also their EQ and SQ. The goal is to form a whole, mature, and balanced individual capable of giving to and encountering God, while experiencing His presence and love at every step of life. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study that addresses spiritual, environmental, and social dimensions. This study expands on previous research by adopting an integrated perspective that examines these three dimensions within a single, cohesive educational experience. Thus, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of how Live-In programs support students' spiritual, environmental, and social development, while also enriching existing literature by situating these interconnected dimensions within the context of high school education in Indonesia. The findings are expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of holistic education models that integrate spiritual, environmental, and social aspects in Indonesian high schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth the role of spiritual intelligence in shaping environmental awareness and social skills through a "Live-In" program for students at SMAK St. Albertus Malang (Bogdan & Biklen, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1984). The research subjects comprised 30 eleventh-grade students who participated in a 4-day live-in program within a rural community, five program mentor teachers, and ten community members from the program location. Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participant observation during the program, analysis of students' reflective documents, and mentor teachers' observation journals.

The research instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guides and observation protocols, developed based on the following theoretical dimensions. Regarding spiritual intelligence, guiding indicators included the capacity for finding meaning, self-reflection, transcendence (a sense of connection to something greater than oneself), and the internalization of moral and life values (Emmons, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). For environmental awareness, indicators included awareness of environmental issues, attitudes toward nature, and the application of sustainable practices in daily life. Regarding social skills, indicators included communication abilities, empathy, collaboration and teamwork, conflict resolution, and adaptability to social and cultural differences. These indicators formed the basis for formulating interview questions and observation checklists for each participant group; for instance, students

were asked to reflect on their personal experiences regarding meaning-making and behavioral changes, while community members and mentor teachers were asked to describe observable changes in the students' environmental and social behaviors. This alignment ensured that the empirical data collected corresponded directly to the conceptual framework underpinning the study. Data analysis followed a sequential qualitative procedure adapted from (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This procedure was carried out in four stages. First, open coding was used to break down interview transcripts, FGD notes, observation records, and reflective documents into distinct initial concepts, while remaining close to the participants' own language. Second, axial coding was applied to group these initial concepts into broader categories and subcategories by examining their relationships (e.g., linking specific reflective practices to specific indicators of spiritual intelligence). Third, selective coding was used to integrate these categories around three core constructs: spiritual intelligence, environmental awareness, and social skills, to build a coherent conceptual model of how they interrelate within the Live-In program. Fourth, thematic analysis was conducted across the coded data to identify recurring patterns and overarching themes that spanned individual categories. Throughout this process, the constant comparative method was applied: newly coded data were continuously compared with previously coded data and emerging categories, allowing researchers to iteratively refine categories and develop an increasingly deep understanding of the phenomenon under study. This sequential approach, moving from fragmented codes to structured categories, then to an integrated model, and finally to cross-cutting themes, ensured that the resulting themes were both empirically grounded and theoretically coherent.

NVivo software was used to support this analytical process, specifically to organize raw data, facilitate systematic coding, generate matrix coding queries, and produce cluster analyses that visualized co-occurrence patterns between nodes (Hafidhah & Yandari, 2021). NVivo serves as an organizational and analytical aid rather than an interpretive tool in itself; the software does not independently generate meaning. All coding decisions, category definitions, and thematic interpretations are made through researcher judgment, based on careful, repeated readings of the data and discussions within the research team. Matrix coding and cluster analysis results are used as heuristic starting points to identify potential relationships among the constructs of spiritual intelligence, environmental awareness, and social skills (e.g., co-occurrence patterns between codes related to spiritual reflection and those related to pro-environmental behavior); however, the substantive interpretation of these patterns including whether the apparent relationships are meaningful or coincidental is determined through the researchers' analytical assessment and cross-checked against raw interview and observation data, rather than being derived directly from software output.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual intelligence is a crucial factor influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviors across various aspects of life, including environmental awareness. In the

educational context, spiritual intelligence can shape students' awareness of their moral and ethical responsibilities toward nature. Acting responsibly toward the environment means minimizing adverse impacts (Bria et al., 2025).

The analysis results indicate that students' experiences during the Live-In Program are associated with the emergence of spiritual reflection, awareness of life values, empathy, and a sense of connectedness between humans and nature. These dimensions are reflected in the students' narratives and observed behaviors regarding their environmental awareness.

The Live-In program provides students with direct experience interacting with the natural environment and rural communities that apply sustainability principles (Grimalda et al., 2021). Through interviews and observations analyzed using NVivo software, this study found that the program contributes to building students' ecological awareness and strengthening their connection with nature. The data indicate that during the program, students not only learn about the community's harmonious lifestyle with nature but also begin adopting more eco-friendly habits in their daily lives. Further analysis reveals three key indicators that develop in the students: increased awareness of environmental issues, Implementation of sustainable practices, and strengthening of spiritual values related to the human-nature relationship (Golovina & Kharkiv, 2016)

Furthermore, this study reveals that students with deeper spiritual reflection tend to have higher environmental awareness and can recognize the connection between ecosystem balance and human survival. They begin adopting positive behaviors, such as reducing single-use plastics, supporting organic farming, and sharing knowledge about the importance of environmental conservation with those around them. Mentor teachers involved in the program also observed a notable shift in students' attitudes, showing greater environmental concern after completing the Live-In experience. This program not only provides hands-on experience in sustainable living but also helps shape students' character, making them more responsible stewards of nature.

Participation in spiritually oriented activities, including communal prayer, reflective contemplation, and moral discussions regarding the environment, created opportunities for students to engage in spiritual reflection during the Live-In Program. NVivo-assisted analysis identified recurring themes related to spiritual reflection, moral awareness, the human connection to nature, and environmental responsibility. Student narratives indicate that these experiences prompted them to reflect on the relationship between human life and nature and to consider their responsibilities toward the environment. These findings suggest that spiritual experiences within the Live-In context can provide a meaningful space for students to connect personal values with environmental awareness and conscientious practices.

Furthermore, interview results with local communities indicate that students with higher levels of spiritual intelligence tend to be more responsive to the sustainability practices implemented by village residents. They not only observe environmentally friendly practices in the village but also actively participate in activities that support sustainability, such as organic waste management, reforestation programs, and efficient

use of water resources. Participation in these activities not only helps them understand the importance of sustainable practices but also encourages them to adopt similar actions in their daily lives.

Spiritual intelligence not only shapes individual awareness of environmental issues but also encourages concrete actions that positively impact nature. The Live-In program provides students with a direct opportunity to experience how spirituality can influence their perspectives and behavior toward the environment. With increased awareness and participation in sustainable practices, it is hoped that the younger generation can become agents of change in maintaining ecosystem balance and fostering a more sustainable lifestyle (Widianingsih et al., 2023).

The NVivo-assisted analysis revealed changes in students' attitudes following their participation in the Live-In Program. Before participating in the program, many students had little understanding of environmental issues and tended to view nature merely as a resource to be exploited, without considering the consequences. However, after experiencing life closer to nature firsthand during the program, their perspectives shifted positively. Their ecological awareness increased, accompanied by a more responsible attitude toward environmental preservation and a greater consideration of the impact of their actions on nature.

Overall, the findings reveal a link between students' spiritual experiences and their environmental awareness within the Live-In Program. Through spiritual reflection and interaction with rural communities, students can understand the values of sustainability and apply them in their daily lives (Tsuroyah & Rasyad, 2019). Therefore, experiential and spirituality-based educational programs can be an effective strategy in fostering environmental awareness and concern among the younger generation.

Therefore, future environmental conservation efforts will be more effective if they focus on fostering individual environmental awareness and love. Fostering environmental awareness and love requires a long-term process involving various complex stages. Environmental awareness can be fostered through a gradual and iterative process of change (Puspitasari et al., 2022).

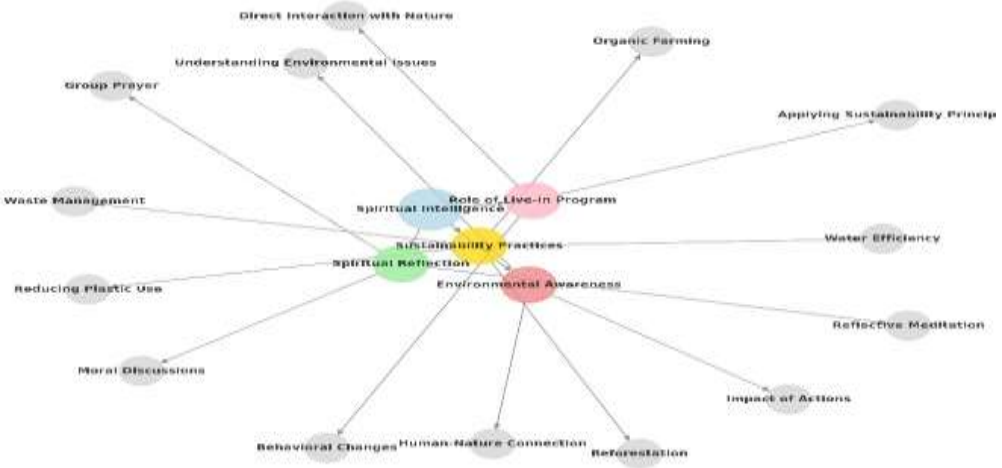

Figure 2. The Influence of Spiritual Intelligence on Environmental Awareness Results Using NVivo

The Contribution of Spiritual Intelligence to the Development of Social Skills

Spiritual intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping students' social skills, particularly in the context of the Live-In program, which involves direct interaction with the community. Based on qualitative research analyzed using NVivo software, students with high spiritual intelligence demonstrated better communication skills, deeper empathy, and greater adaptability to diverse social environments. Spiritual intelligence encourages students to understand the meaning of life, strengthen moral values, and enhance their social awareness. In the Live-In program, they are exposed to the reality of rural community life, which is simple yet full of togetherness, significantly fostering the development of social skills (Mutalib & Dylan, 2021).

Data analysis using NVivo indicates that students with a high level of spiritual intelligence tend to establish harmonious social relationships more easily. They are more sensitive to others' feelings and can demonstrate tolerance and appreciation for cultural differences and local community customs. Interviews with community members also revealed that students with a strong spiritual understanding adapt more quickly to the community's social values. This enables them to interact more positively and build more meaningful relationships during the Live-In program.

In addition to aiding social interactions, spiritual intelligence also plays a role in developing teamwork and leadership skills within groups. Research findings indicate that students who internalize spiritual values in their daily lives are more active in discussions, more adept at resolving conflicts wisely, and more cooperative in various community activities. These abilities make them more effective in carrying out group tasks and contribute to a more harmonious social dynamic, both within the Live-In program environment and in their daily lives after the program ends (Latief & Asniwati, 2023).

Furthermore, interviews with mentor teachers revealed that students with higher spiritual intelligence show greater development in empathy and patience. They are better able to regulate their emotions when facing social challenges during the Live-In program, such as collaborating with community members from diverse backgrounds and adapting to customs that differ from those in their school environment. This indicates that spiritual intelligence not only helps students understand life values but also shapes them into wiser individuals in social interactions.

In terms of communication skills, students with high spiritual intelligence are better able to express their ideas respectfully and persuasively. They listen more attentively, understand different perspectives, and avoid behaviors that could lead to conflict. Nvivo analysis of group discussion transcripts shows that students with higher spiritual intelligence tend to use more positive and constructive language when communicating with others, whether with fellow participants or members of the local community (Stella et al., 2023).

The active participation of students in various social activities during the Live-In program reflects how spiritual intelligence shapes their social skills. Social skills encompass the ability to communicate, collaborate, manage emotions, and resolve conflicts effectively (Ratnawati et al., 2025). Through direct experiences such as assisting

residents with their work, engaging in discussions with community leaders, and participating in local religious activities, they learn to understand and apply the community's social values. Data analysis shows that students with higher levels of spiritual intelligence tend to be more empathetic, collaborate more effectively, and demonstrate a deeper social awareness compared to those who have not developed their spiritual aspect as much. This attitude helps them adapt to new environments and build stronger connections with the local community.

Additionally, spiritual intelligence helps expand students' social networks during the program. They are more readily accepted by the community and gain the trust of those around them due to their caring attitude, sense of responsibility, and stronger communication skills. Interviews with community members revealed that students with higher spiritual awareness tend to show greater respect for local values, making them more appreciated and regarded as part of the community. Spiritual intelligence not only influences their interpersonal relationships during the program but also helps shape a social character that will continue to develop throughout their lives (Eliza & Amalia, 2022).

Overall, spiritual intelligence significantly contributes to students' social skill development, particularly within the Live-In program. Through a deeper understanding of spiritual values, students can build stronger interpersonal relationships, enhance communication skills, and develop empathy and cooperation in broader social contexts. Therefore, integrating spiritual intelligence into formal education and extracurricular activities is essential to fostering a younger generation that is not only academically intelligent but also excels in social skills.

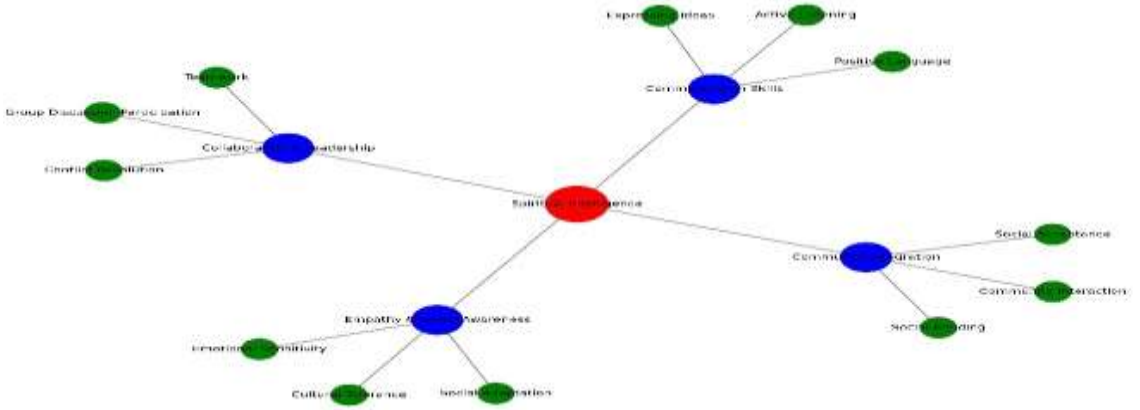

Figure 3. Contribution of Spiritual Intelligence to the Development of Social Skills Results Using NVivo

Developmental Processes through the Live-In Program

The Live-In Program is an educational approach that immerses students directly in rural communities, allowing them to experience residents' daily lives. In the context of this study, the Live-In Program provides an experiential learning setting that enables students to engage in spiritual reflection, environmental experiences, and social interactions, which are reflected in their spiritual, environmental, and social development.

Using qualitative research methods and data analysis in NVivo software, the findings indicate that firsthand experiences within the community have a significant impact on students' attitudes and behavioral changes (Tohri et al., 2022).

Based on interviews analyzed using Nvivo, it was found that students' spiritual intelligence increased through daily reflection and participation in community activities that emphasize values of togetherness and appreciation for life. Students expressed that their interactions with rural communities, particularly in religious activities and local traditions, helped them gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of life and strengthened their connection to higher spiritual values.

Students' environmental awareness also improved after participating in the Live-In Program. Through thematic coding analysis in Nvivo, it was discovered that their involvement in agricultural practices, waste management, and environmental conservation in the host village enhanced their awareness of the importance of preserving nature. They learned firsthand how rural communities depend on the environment and how small actions, such as sorting waste and conserving water, can have a significant positive impact.

Additionally, students' social skills developed significantly throughout the program. Through observations and analysis of social interactions recorded in NVivo, it was found that students who were initially less confident and more individualistic began to demonstrate a more proactive attitude in communicating and collaborating with the local community. The adaptation process in a new environment taught them how to understand cultural differences and build better interpersonal relationships (Annisha, 2024; Umar Seno et al., 2022).

The Live-In Program also provides students with the opportunity to experience real-life challenges that require them to step out of their comfort zones. Through data mapping in NVivo, it was found that this experience encouraged them to think critically, solve problems creatively, and develop greater empathy for the social conditions of rural communities. For example, some students reported that they began to understand the meaning of hard work and the value of cooperation after working in the fields alongside local farmers.

The role of mentor teachers is equally important in this transformation process (San-Martín et al., 2021). Based on interviews with five mentor teachers, it was found that they act as facilitators, helping students reflect on their experiences and connect them with life values. Teachers provide guidance through structured group discussions, which, as analyzed in Nvivo, are identified as a key supporting factor in the internalization of the spiritual and social values gained during the program.

On the other hand, the village community, as the study's subject, also benefits from the students' presence. Based on NVivo analysis of interviews with 10 community members, interactions with the students provided them with positive energy. Many villagers felt appreciated and more motivated to protect the environment and pass on local culture to the younger generation.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Live-In Program provides an experiential

learning context for the development and expression of SMAK St. Albertus Malang students' spiritual intelligence, environmental awareness, and social skills. The findings of this study indicate that experiential learning conducted directly within a community can serve as a holistic and sustainable educational model. Therefore, this program can be recommended as a broader learning strategy to shape students' character in the future.

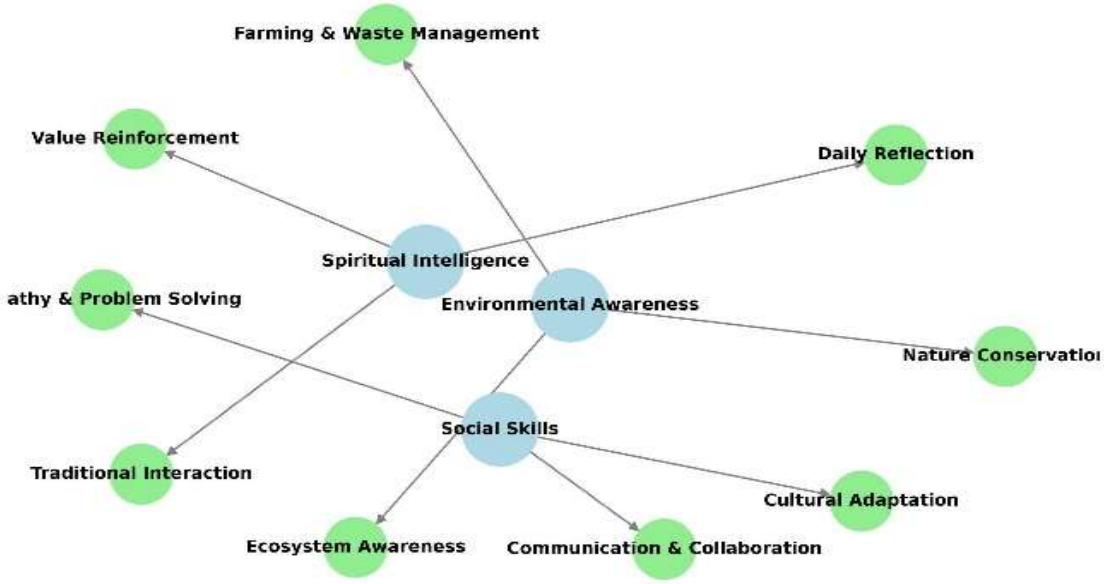

Figure 4. Developmental Processes through the Live-In Program Results Using NVivo

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, students' spiritual intelligence is reflected in their environmental awareness and engagement in practices during the Live-In Program. NVivo-assisted analysis identified recurring themes: spiritual reflection, social interaction, the human connection to nature, and involvement in ecological activities. Through this program, students demonstrated that direct engagement with the community and the surrounding environment provided opportunities to reflect on their responsibility toward nature and to connect spiritual values with environmental practices. These findings do not establish a causal relationship but indicate that community-based experiential learning can provide a meaningful context for expressing spiritual intelligence through environmental awareness and practices.

The findings also indicate that students' spiritual intelligence is manifested through interpersonal interactions, empathy, cooperation, respect for others, and participation in community activities. The Live-In Program offered students opportunities to encounter various social situations and interact directly with the local community, allowing them to experience and reflect on social values in daily life. These findings suggest that community-based experiential learning can serve as a meaningful context for linking spiritual reflection with social development. However, these findings must be understood within the institutional and religious context of SMAK St. Albertus Malang as a Catholic

Christian secondary school. The school's educational orientation, as well as the cultural characteristics and geographical location of the Live-In, may influence how students perceive and express spirituality, environmental responsibility, and social relationships. Therefore, the transferability of these findings to schools with different religious, cultural, institutional, or geographical contexts requires careful consideration.

Future research could employ comparative studies involving schools with diverse institutional, cultural, religious, and geographical backgrounds to examine whether the patterns identified in this study are context-specific or applicable across various educational settings. Longitudinal research is also recommended to examine students' experiences after completing the Live-In Program and to determine whether the environmental awareness, intentional practices, and social competencies reported or observed during the program persist over time. Such research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term role of experiential learning in student development. Contextually, this study contributes to understanding community-based experiential learning as a space that enables spiritual reflection to be linked to environmental and social development.

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