

## ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SKILLS AND MEANING OF LIFE: STUDY ON MADRASAH ALIYAH STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to understand how adolescents' social skills relate to their understanding of the meaning of life. This research used a qualitative descriptive type of research aimed to analyze the social skills and meaning of life of Madrasah Aliyah X students in Medan, Indonesia. The research method used was descriptive qualitative by collecting data through interviews with 5 students at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan, Indonesia. The research results showed that there was a correlation between social skills with the understanding of the meaning of life in adolescents. The results can provide insight to educators and parents about the importance of developing social skills in helping teenagers live their teenage years better. In addition, this research also provides further understanding of how adolescents respond to social challenges and how this can influence their understanding of indestructible life goals. Therefore, the recommendation of this research is the need for a holistic approach in adolescent education which includes the development of social skills and understanding the meaning of life. Furthermore, there needs to be support and guidance from parents and educators in helping teenagers live their teenage years better.

**Keywords:** Social Skills, Meaning of Life, Teenagers, Madrasah

Submissions	Review Process	Revised	Accepted	Published
18-09-2023	18-09-2023 - 10-10-2023	12-10-2023	12-10-2023	31-10-2023

### INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the efforts to advance the nation (Krishnamurthi, 2021). It cannot be denied that the progress of a nation or country will only be achieved if education is progressive. Education in general is often interpreted as a conscious, systematically designed effort carried out by educators in order to develop the potential of students, so that students are expected to be able to become individuals who are faithful and holistically healthy (Ferdiansyah & Wulandari, 2021).

Madrasah Aliyah as an Islamic educational institution has an essential role in stimulating character development and capacity of Muslim students (Luneto, 2023). This institution is not just a place for the

transmission of knowledge, more than that, madrasah seeks to form capable individuals with multidimensional skills that are always connected to Islamic values and teachings (Tambrin et al., 2021). Other than functioning as an educational institution that integrates the general curriculum and religious teachings, madrasah is also active in exploring students' potential through various extracurricular activities. This approach aims to create students who not only have knowledge in various subjects, but also broad social skills and have a deep understanding of the meaning of life (Pahrudin et al., 2021).

According to Akelaitis (2015), social skills are personal capability to interact effectively with other individuals, both

through verbal and nonverbal communication, in conformity with the context and situation at a particular moment. In fact, these social skills are aspects of behavior that can be learned and developed over time (Syafriyanto & Rangkuti, 2020). In an educational context, students who are able to manifest strong social skills will have the ability to express their feelings, both positive and negative, in the context of interpersonal relationships without causing a detrimental impact on other individuals (Marcheta et al., 2021).

Social skills are also defined as an individual's ability to interact effectively with other people, which has deep significance within the framework of Islamic teachings (Usiono et al., 2023). In Islamic teachings, wholesome, positive, and filled with kindness social interactions are considered a necessity. Understanding and developing social skills is seen as an integral part of forming character in line with Islamic principles (Maharani et al., 2018).

Caldarella and Merrell (in Machmudah et al., 2023) put forward the 5 (five) most common dimensions contained in social skills, as described in the table below:

**Table 1.**

<b>General Dimensions of Social Skills</b>	
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Skill Indicator</b>
<b>Peer relational skills (Peer relationship skills)</b>	Having social interaction, praising friends, or advising friends and playing together
<b>Self-Management</b>	Controlling one-self well, following existing rules and boundaries
<b>Academic (Academic Ability)</b>	Completing assignments individually and taking responsibility for academics

<b>Compliance (Obedience)</b>	Having good social cooperation and being able to follow existing regulations
<b>Assertion (Assertive Behaviour)</b>	Having assertive skills

Islam also views that developing social skills is a lifelong journey (Su'ud, 2017). This indicates that individuals are encouraged to continue to improve and develop their social skills throughout life. The concept of self-improvement taught in Islam becomes relevant in this context, emphasizing the importance of continuous self-development (Judge, 2020).

Considering the profound aspects, social skills are seen as aspects of good morals in Islam. Islam teaches the importance of being fair, generous and loving towards others. Thus, good social skills include behaviors such as giving, helping those in need, and providing support to others in difficult situations.

In the context of education at Madrasah Aliyah, the development of social skills is an integral part in forming students' character in accordance with Islamic values. Students are taught to interact with each other with respect, honesty, and compassion. Thus, social skills are not just an ability, but also implementation of Islamic principles in daily actions.

Research found in Character et al., (2022) stated that the use of inquiry and investigation group learning models with environmental settings in the learning process had a positive impact in student's ethical behavior and social skills. This is in line with research conducted by Ulum (2018) which concluded that, social skills produce a positive atmosphere. This result creates a respectful and positive class community where every student has opportunities both socially and academically, creates student activity in the learning process, and is able to be more involved in the learning process.

The next research conducted by Virdawati et al., (2021) found that the majority of students had a high level of social skills. A total of 34 students, or around 34% of the total students participating in the research, were in this category. When the social skills dimension was analyzed further, it was found that the assertive behavior dimension showed the highest score with a score of 84.39, while the self-management dimension had a lower score amounted to 64.85.

In addition to factors that can influence student involvement, the meaning of life is also one of it. Meaning of life serves as a major role in maintaining positive mental health (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2022). Existential theory asserts that individuals are driven more than just an elemental and defense mechanisms (Womick et al., 2021). Then obey (Arizona et al., 2022) the meaning of life in the form of a sense of responsibility and a positive vision of one's life and future, existential goals, integrating acceptance of failure, life satisfaction and self-fulfillment.

According to Cumbraugh, in Utami & Setiawati (2019), there are three main aspects that form an understanding of the meaning of a person's life. First, have a purpose in life (Purposefulness). This is related to individual's perception of their primary life goals. Someone who has a high level of purpose in life tends to feel that their life has a distinct path and robust aim. They may have a well-defined vision of what they want to achieve in life.

Life Desire (concerns about the present time), includes a person's feelings and concern for the current moments in their life. People with a high level of passion for life tend to enjoy and appreciate their current life experiences. They may feel happy and satisfied with what they are experiencing at that time. Finally, there are plans for the future (planning for the future). This aims to find out the extent to which a person has intentions and dreams

for the future. People with high levels of future planning tend to have a strong vision of what they want in life and have a structured plan for achieving it. They have positive hopes regarding their future. So, according to Cumbraugh, this dimension of meaning in life helps individuals understand how someone feels and interprets meaning in their life through the level of goals, presence in the moment, and plans for the future.

The term meaning of life in Islam does not simply refer to the search for existential goals, but also to the deeper concept of devotion to Allah, making beneficial contributions to humanity, and living a life in harmony with religious principles. (Hasanuddin et al., 2023; Sadri, 2023). Understanding the meaning of life within the framework of Islamic teachings becomes a solid moral foundation in developing the skills of Madrasah Aliyah students. Based on this description, researchers conducted research with the aim of analyzing the social skills and meaning of life of Madrasah Aliyah X students in Medan City.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research used a qualitative descriptive type of research which aims to analyze the social skills and meaning of life of Madrasah Aliyah X students in Medan City. The research method used was descriptive qualitative by collecting data through interviews with 5 students at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan City. Interview techniques were used as the main method for collecting data in this research (Alamri, 2019). In-depth interviews were used to obtain an in-depth perspective from each respondent (Jong & Jung, 2015). Below is the description of the Informant:

**Table 2. Informant's Characteristics**

No.	Informant Initials	Informant Status
1	JSH	11 <sup>th</sup> grader
2	FNI	11 <sup>th</sup> grader
3	RS	11 <sup>th</sup> grader
4	TSI	11 <sup>th</sup> grader
5	ESR	11 <sup>th</sup> grader

Through interviews, informants were invited to provide in-depth information to determine the level of social skills and meaning of life in each informant. The questions asked to the five informants were 1) How do you communicate with your friends in different situations at school and do you feel that social relationships support you in achieving meaning in your life? 2) Have you ever experienced a difficult situation or conflict with a friend or classmate at school? And how do you measure the impact of your perspective regarding the meaning of life? 3) How do you deal with stress or pressure in social situations or group assignments at school? And has this experience given you insight into what the genuine meaning of life is? Thus, through interview techniques, researchers can dig up more in-depth information.

In this research, the data analysis approach refers to the Miles and Huberman interactive model as explained by Abdul (2020). The process of analyzing data is carried out in three stages, namely reducing data, presenting data, and producing conclusions or carrying out verification. In order to ensure the validity of the data, this study also applied triangulation approach. The triangulation approach used involves a combination of methods and data sources by examining notes obtained from interviews, field observations, surveys, and documentation

from various data sources (Chanda, 2022). The technique for testing data validity is a triangulation approach which is used to check the consistency of data from various sources through various methods and at different times.

This research was conducted on 5 students at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan City. The students were asked about the dimensions of social skills and the meaning of life. Based on the first question asked by researchers about how students communicate with friends in various situations and whether they feel there is a correlation between social skills and achieving meaning in life, JSH and RS said they enjoyed talking with friends at their school, both in class and outside of the class. They often discuss religious lessons together, so this creates a bond between the two informants and their friends that aids to the meaning of their lives because the informants can learn together and support each other.

On the other hand, FNI and ESR have high social skills because they easily talk to their friends both at school and outside of school. However, they often feel confused about what the genuine meaning of life is. The social relations for the two informants are in the good category, but they do not yet understand the meaning of their lives. In line with the answers of the two informants, Dianda (2019) describes adolescence as a phase full of challenges and changes in one's life. In adolescence, individuals often experience confusion and uncertainty about many aspects of their lives, including the meaning of life (Di et al., 2022). This is the time when they begin to wonder about the purpose and meaning of what they do.

TSI responded to the questions given by researchers, TSI admitted that as a student in class, proficient in verbal communication in public can be related to the meaning of life by doing good to other people, especially peers both in class and outside of the class. With this, TSI feels satisfied with his life due to his

usefulness to others even though he cannot be said to be proficient and confident yet in communicating. In this context, according to Tridinanti (2018), speaking barriers can be caused by various factors, such as social anxiety, lack of experience, or lack of self-confidence which is often related to feelings of awkwardness or fear of being judged by others. However, according to Muslimin (2013), this should not be considered lasting impairment, as communication abilities and social skills can develop with time and broader social experience.

Regarding to the second question posed by the researcher about the experience that the informants had faced in difficult situations or conflicts with classmates and how this affected their understanding of the meaning of life, the informants (JSH, RS, and TSI) responded enthusiastically that they rarely experienced serious conflicts with friends in class, when small problems surfaced, the informants usually carried out genuine interaction so that it did not make any ambiguities. According to JSH, RS and TSI, the meaning of life can be felt if you have positive social relationships.

Based on the responses from informants regarding questions asked by researchers, Yani et al., (2019) said that social skills are to create interactive networks with other individuals, to be able to solve problems so that they achieve harmonious change in the social environment. These skills include how individuals communicate, share, and collaborate with other individuals.

Researchers asked the same questions to FNI and ESR. FNI and ESR felt they had good social skills, this was strengthened by the way FNI dealt with stress by encouraging communication and collaboration with various groups. The informant realized that having positive relationships and establishing good cooperation was the key to reducing stress. Thus, this experience provides insight into the

urgency of having good relationships and working as a team in his life.

FNI and ESR belong to the category of individuals who have high social skills. According to Salavera C & Usán P (2021), it is stated that individuals who have high social skills can be easily recognized by the social environment because these individuals are effectively recognized by peers, can build relationships and can follow relationships with their current situation.

Slightly different from FNI, TSI often feel awkward in social situations, but remains firm in the belief that the true meaning of life lies in doing good to others. According to Ngafifi (2014), for someone who has difficulty communicating with the public, they tend to focus on doing constructive engagements, one of which is helping other people. According to Nurhayati T (2016) which examines adolescent developmental psychology, the phenomenon in which a teenager may experience speaking barriers while they are actively engaged in purposeful activities, is a situation or condition of individual's development and is deemed suitable. This can be seen as part of the typical developmental journey in adolescence, where individuals are undergoing a stage of identity search and facing various emotional and social challenges.

According to Mayasari (2014), it is stated that social skills must be possessed by every individual, because as social creatures, individuals will always communicate with their social environment and will always help other people. Individuals who have novice level of social skills can cause anti-social attitudes characterized by a tendency to separate themselves, be individualistic, not appreciate differences of opinion, have bad prejudices, and can reduce self-confidence.

The researcher continued with the final question, including how the informants dealt with stress caused by the social environment

and group assignments given at school so that it could influence the meaning of life they lived. Each informant had a different answer. Informants who have skilled level of social skills tend to overcome stress by communicating and discussing with friends to prevent conflicts from arising. This experience creates meaning in life which can be felt if individuals provide support to each other. The researcher summarized this statement derived from the responses of JSH, RS and FNI.

Previous research from Khasanah & Rachmadyanti (2019) stated that social skills in high school (SMA) are demonstrated by the behavior of students who can communicate effectively both with peers and with teachers. Similarly, Anggraini et al., (2017) explained that the social skills of students at school which are in the high category are shown by students who have cohesiveness in class, have a high sense of solidarity, are friendly towards other people and easily communicate with peers.

Furthermore, statements from TSI who did not have strong social skills and felt awkward in dealing with social situations or group assignments illustrated the fact that the informant does not fully understand the meaning of the life he is living. This can be caused by TSI not feeling comfortable in social relationships.

Research conducted by Huriati & Hidayah (2016) revealed that some teenagers still feel confused or do not yet have a completely clear perspective about what the genuine meaning of life is. Adolescence is a period of searching for identity and values that often involves deep reflection about the meaning of life. Therefore, some teenagers are still in the exploration stage.

In contrast to the statement from TSI, ESR felt that he enjoyed social activities, talking in public and often holding group discussions. ESR interprets life by enthusiastically engaging in social relationships. According to Renaninggalih et

al., (2014), the way teenagers interpret their lives varies greatly, depending on each individual's experiences, values and personal views.

In light of a series of efforts carried out on five students at Madrasah Aliyah X Medan, researchers found various patterns in the way they viewed and interpreted their lives. The results of this research revealed that there was a correlation between social skills and understanding of the meaning of life in adolescents.

Overall, this research illustrates that social skills can influence the way adolescents make sense of their lives. However, understanding the meaning of life is also a complex personal journey and is influenced by many factors. Adolescents often experience uncertainty and a deep search for their purpose in life, and this is a natural part of their development. Therefore, support from the social and educational environment is very important in helping them go through this journey well.

## CONCLUSION

This research involved 5 students from Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan and explored their understanding of social skills and the meaning of life. The research results showed that there was a correlation between social skills and understanding the meaning of life in adolescents. The aim of this research was to understand how adolescents' social skills relate to their understanding of the meaning of life. The results can provide insight to educators and parents about the importance of developing social skills in helping teenagers live their teenage years better. In addition, this research also provides further understanding of how adolescents respond to social challenges and how this can influence their understanding of life goals. Therefore, the recommendation from this research is the need for a holistic approach in adolescent education which

includes the development of social skills and understanding the meaning of life. Apart from that, there needs to be support and guidance from parents and educators in helping teenagers live their teenage years better.

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