

# TRENDS, PATTERNS, AND GAPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES IN SCHOOL LEARNING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW (2015–2025)

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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the persistent dominance of uniform instructional practices in schools that emphasize limited dimensions of intelligence and insufficiently accommodate students' diverse cognitive characteristics. To provide a structured synthesis of existing evidence, this study aims to examine trends, patterns, and research gaps in the implementation of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in school learning from 2015 to 2025. The research employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using a qualitative-descriptive approach with thematic synthesis, following the PRISMA 2020 framework. Data were retrieved from peer-reviewed journal articles indexed across multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar and ERIC, through systematic identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion procedures, resulting in 23 empirical studies for final analysis. The findings reveal a noticeable increase in MI-related research in recent years, with strong concentration at the elementary education level and within Islamic Religious Education and Mathematics subjects. Qualitative designs remain predominant, while longitudinal and large-scale investigations are limited. Additionally, certain intelligence domains particularly musical and naturalistic intelligences remain underrepresented. These results indicate that MI implementation tends to be pedagogically adaptive yet selectively integrative rather than systemically transformative. Strengthening methodological rigor and expanding cross-level curricular integration are therefore essential for advancing more comprehensive implementation of MI in school learning.

Keywords: Multiple Intelligences, Systematic Literature Review, Differentiated Instruction, Elementary Education, Research Trends

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic and foundational role in shaping learners' intellectual capacities, character formation, and adaptive competencies in response to rapid societal transformation driven by technological advancement and socio-cultural change. As institutions of holistic human development, schools are expected to nurture diverse cognitive, emotional, and social potentials within learners rather than merely transmitting knowledge. However, instructional practices in many school contexts continue to prioritize linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities as the primary indicators of academic success and measurable achievement. This tendency reflects the persistence of standardized educational paradigms that privilege measurable cognitive performance while marginalizing broader dimensions of human potential (Robinson & Aronica, 2016). Within the Indonesian educational context, similar orientations remain visible in classroom strategies that focus predominantly on academic mastery and insufficiently accommodate diverse intelligence domains (Muali, 2016; Masdudi, 2017).

Such a narrow conceptualization of intelligence often results in the marginalization of other cognitive potentials that students inherently possess, including creative, interpersonal, bodily, and ecological capacities. Classroom interactions therefore remain predominantly

teacher-centered, structured around standardized academic targets, and insufficiently optimized to accommodate diverse learner characteristics and varied learning profiles (Sunarti, 2021). This condition reflects a persistent discrepancy between the ideal objective of holistic education, which aspires to develop learners comprehensively, and the empirical reality of instructional practices that prioritize uniform academic standards and measurable cognitive outputs.

Within the Indonesian educational landscape, assessment systems that are heavily cognitive-oriented tend to reinforce standardized achievement metrics, frequently overlooking the multidimensional and contextual nature of intelligence (Indria, 2020). Educational success is often equated with performance in core academic subjects, thereby strengthening a reductionist understanding of student capability. In the era of Society 5.0, however, students are required to demonstrate not only academic proficiency but also creativity, collaboration, critical and problem-solving abilities, digital adaptability, and socio-emotional intelligence (Putri et al., 2021).

These multidimensional competencies are essential for navigating complex societal challenges and participating meaningfully in knowledge-based economies (Putri et al., 2021). Yet, such competencies cannot be cultivated effectively through monolithic instructional approaches that rely on singular modes of intelligence and standardized delivery methods. Consequently, the widening gap between contemporary educational demands and conventional learning paradigms underscores the urgency of adopting more inclusive, flexible, and differentiated pedagogical frameworks capable of recognizing diverse forms of intelligence and fostering comprehensive learner development (Syaikhu, 2020; Robinson & Aronica, 2016).

The theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), proposed by Gardner (1993), provides a conceptual alternative to traditional intelligence models that conceptualize intelligence as a single, quantifiable entity. By proposing that intelligence consists of multiple modalities linguistic, logical–mathematical, spatial, bodily–kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic MI theory challenges the dominance of single-score intelligence measurement and reframes intelligence as a plural and contextually situated construct. This theoretical perspective affirms that learners possess unique cognitive configurations shaped by cultural, experiential, and environmental influences. Students' diverse characteristics therefore necessitate differentiated instructional strategies capable of recognizing, accommodating, and nurturing varied intellectual potentials (Hermawan, 2014; Sufianti, 2022). In elementary education contexts in particular, such differentiation is especially relevant, as learners at this developmental stage benefit significantly from experiential, interactive, and play-based learning approaches that stimulate multiple domains of intelligence simultaneously (Nurul, 2016).

Recent empirical studies further demonstrate the expanding application of MI across diverse instructional contexts and subject areas. At the elementary level, MI-based strategies have been utilized to optimize student potential and diversify classroom instruction by tailoring activities to varied intelligence profiles (Auralia & Lesmana, 2025; Kurniawati, 2023). In Islamic Religious Education settings, MI has been employed to support reflective, affective, and value-oriented learning processes that extend beyond cognitive mastery (Humaira & Pranoto, 2025). Other studies highlight the development of MI-based instructional methods designed to respond to specific classroom dynamics and learner needs (Khair, 2023). These investigations collectively illustrate that MI has been adopted as a pedagogical tool for differentiation and contextual adaptation. Nevertheless, despite these developments, most studies remain context-bound, focusing on specific subjects, schools, or short-term interventions without situating their findings within a broader analytical synthesis.

Moreover, methodological diversity across previous research ranging from qualitative descriptive approaches to quasi-experimental and experimental designs has not been systematically consolidated to assess dominant research tendencies, comparative effectiveness, or the robustness of empirical evidence (Maftuh et al., 2024). While individual studies provide valuable insights into classroom-level implementation, the absence of structured synthesis limits

the ability to identify overarching trends, recurring implementation patterns, and persistent research gaps. The uneven distribution of intelligence domains emphasized, the predominance of elementary-level research, and the scarcity of longitudinal or large-scale investigations further contribute to ambiguity regarding the systemic impact of MI-based instruction. In this regard, a systematic analytical consolidation is critically needed to map research trajectories, evaluate methodological orientations, and clarify domain representation across studies. By addressing these gaps, the present review contributes not only to organizing fragmented empirical findings into a coherent evidence base but also to strengthening the theoretical positioning and future research direction of Multiple Intelligences implementation in school learning.

Therefore, a systematic review covering the period 2015–2025 is necessary to identify trends, patterns, and gaps in the implementation of Multiple Intelligences in school learning. By consolidating fragmented empirical findings into an integrative analytical framework, this study contributes novelty beyond descriptive summarization, clarifies methodological orientations and domain emphases, and ultimately strengthens both theoretical development and evidence-based educational practice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual basis of this study derives from Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, which reconceptualizes intelligence as a plural construct rather than a singular measurable capacity (Gardner, 1993). According to this framework, intelligence refers to the ability to solve problems or create products valued within particular cultural settings, thereby positioning intelligence as culturally embedded and contextually meaningful rather than purely psychometric. Gardner's model expands traditional intelligence paradigms by acknowledging multiple domains that reflect distinct cognitive strengths and modes of expression. This perspective shifts the focus of education from standardized measurement toward recognition of individual intellectual diversity, encouraging educators to move beyond uniform instructional models toward more responsive pedagogical designs.

Further elaboration of MI theory emphasizes that intelligence is not a fixed or static attribute but a dynamic potential that can be developed through appropriate environmental stimulation, social interaction, and educational experiences (Armstrong, 2004). Intelligence domains may function independently, yet they interact dynamically depending on contextual demands and learning tasks. This theoretical stance aligns with the view that each child is inherently endowed with unique intellectual capacities that require pedagogical facilitation to reach optimal development (Arifin, 2017). Consequently, MI theory provides a conceptual foundation for differentiated instruction, positioning diversity not as a challenge to be minimized but as an asset to be cultivated within classroom environments.

The operationalization of MI theory in school learning typically involves identifying students' dominant intelligence profiles and aligning instructional strategies accordingly. Research indicates that MI-based approaches encourage active engagement, collaborative interaction, and meaningful participation by allowing students to access content through multiple cognitive pathways (Syaikhu, 2020). Teachers integrate varied instructional methods such as group discussions, kinesthetic activities, visual-spatial tasks, reflective journaling, and linguistic exercises to accommodate diverse learning preferences (Wijaya et al., 2023). The integration of MI principles into lesson planning and assessment instruments further strengthens instructional alignment with learners' cognitive profiles and promotes more inclusive classroom practices (Awwalina et al., 2023).

Empirical implementations of MI have been documented across various subjects and educational contexts. In mathematics education, MI-based strategies have been used to enhance conceptual understanding and problem-solving abilities through problem-based and discovery-oriented models (Kamid et al., 2018; Maftuh et al., 2024). In language and literacy learning contexts, differentiated MI-based approaches have supported writing skills, comprehension

development, and student engagement by incorporating linguistic, interpersonal, and visual strategies (Sunayah et al., 2018; Tastin et al., 2017). These studies illustrate how MI can serve as a framework for diversifying literacy instruction and addressing heterogeneous learner needs within primary education settings.

Furthermore, MI integration within Islamic Religious Education and thematic elementary learning contexts has demonstrated potential for fostering holistic cognitive and socio-emotional development (Wijaya et al., 2023; Nurul, 2016). In inclusive education settings, MI has been applied as a supportive framework for accommodating students with special needs by recognizing diverse strengths rather than focusing solely on limitations (Uma et al., 2025). Such applications underscore MI's relevance not only for mainstream classrooms but also for inclusive environments where differentiation is pedagogically imperative.

Recent developments also indicate efforts to integrate MI with higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and multimodal learning frameworks. For instance, MI-based instructional models have been combined with approaches such as Visual, Auditory, Read-Write, and Kinesthetic (VARK) strategies and Directed Reading Listening Thinking Activities (DRLTA) to enhance critical thinking and cognitive flexibility (Suhartono et al., 2025). These integrations suggest that MI is increasingly positioned within broader competency-based paradigms that emphasize analytical reasoning and adaptive learning. Instructional innovation grounded in MI theory is therefore frequently associated with meaningful learning experiences, enhanced motivation, and improved academic performance (Muali, 2016).

The application of discovery learning and problem-based learning models integrated with MI principles has shown positive effects on learning outcomes across subject areas (Lestari, 2017). However, despite widespread application across disciplines, implementation strategies vary significantly in terms of instructional design, assessment mechanisms, intelligence domains emphasized, and duration of intervention. Some studies focus primarily on intelligence mapping and learner profiling, while others emphasize instructional experimentation or model development.

Although theoretical and empirical foundations of MI-based instruction are well established, inconsistencies remain regarding dominant implementation patterns, research orientations, and domain distribution. The diversity of methodological approaches ranging from qualitative descriptive inquiry to experimental validation reflects a dynamic yet fragmented research landscape. This diversity, while enriching, has not been systematically synthesized to identify cross-study trends, recurring implementation patterns, and persistent research gaps. Therefore, grounding this systematic review in established theoretical frameworks and recent empirical findings strengthens analytical validity and provides a comprehensive basis for examining trends, patterns, and gaps in MI implementation within school learning contexts from 2015 to 2025.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using a qualitative-descriptive approach grounded in thematic synthesis to examine trends, patterns, and research gaps in the implementation of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in school learning from 2015 to 2025. The SLR design was selected to ensure a systematic, transparent, and replicable procedure in identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing empirical evidence. Rather than collecting primary data, this study analyzed secondary data derived from peer-reviewed journal articles to construct an integrative overview of research developments within the specified period. The review procedure followed the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework to enhance methodological transparency and rigor in documenting the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

The data sources consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles retrieved through multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and other widely accessible educational

indexing platforms, in order to ensure broader coverage and reduce database bias. The literature search was conducted using combinations of keywords and Boolean operators, including “Multiple Intelligences,” “MI theory,” “Multiple Intelligences in education,” “school learning,” “elementary education,” and “MI-based instruction,” with the search limited to publications between 2015 and 2025 to ensure contemporary relevance. The initial search identified 312 records, from which 36 duplicate records were removed prior to screening. The remaining 276 record/s were subjected to title and abstract screening, resulting in the exclusion of 202 articles that did not align with the research focus. A total of 74 full-text articles were then assessed for eligibility, and 43 reports were excluded due to lack of relevant focus ( $n = 18$ ), methodological limitations ( $n = 15$ ), and incomplete data reporting ( $n = 10$ ). Following eligibility verification, 31 studies met the essential requirements, and after final validation of methodological clarity and direct relevance to classroom-based MI implementation, 23 empirical studies were included in the final qualitative synthesis, as illustrated in Figure 1.

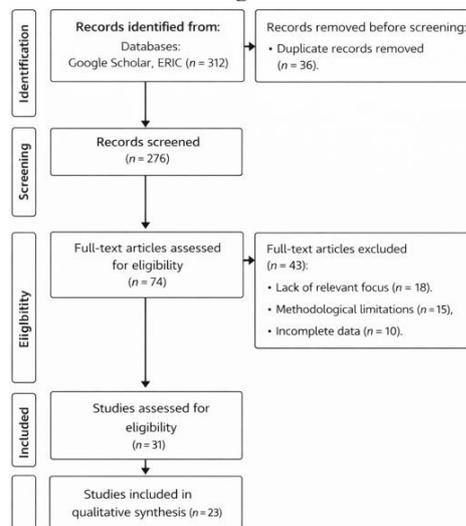


Figure 1. **PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process**

The inclusion criteria required studies to be empirical in nature qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods and explicitly focused on the implementation of MI in school learning environments, while conceptual articles, non-systematic reviews, opinion papers, duplicate publications, and studies not directly related to classroom-based MI implementation were excluded. Data extraction was conducted through structured document analysis by recording publication year, research design, educational level, subject area, intelligence domains emphasized, instructional strategies employed, and reported outcomes. Thematic synthesis was then applied through iterative coding, pattern categorization, and interpretative analysis to identify methodological tendencies, dominant implementation patterns, and research gaps across studies. To strengthen analytical rigor, a descriptive quality assessment was conducted across the included studies by examining clarity of research objectives, methodological alignment, contextual adequacy, analytical rigor, and reporting transparency; although most studies demonstrated appropriate alignment between objectives and research design, limitations were frequently observed in sample scope and long-term evaluation, indicating the predominance of short-term and context-specific investigations within the existing literature.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings derived from the systematic review of 23 selected studies examining the implementation of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in school learning between 2015 and 2025. The synthesis is grounded in structured document analysis and thematic coding, focusing on publication trends, methodological characteristics, educational levels, subject

distribution, and intelligence domains emphasized. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the included empirical studies and serves as the basis for subsequent cross-study comparison and interpretative analysis.

**Table 1. Summary of Included Studies on the Implementation of Multiple Intelligences (n = 23)**

No	Author (Year)	Method	Level	Subject	Key MI Implementation Focus
1	Andriyani (2017)	Qualitative Case Study	Elementary (Inclusive)	English	MI adaptation for inclusive classroom
2	Auralia & Lesmana (2025)	Qualitative	Elementary	General	Optimizing student potential through MI differentiation
3	Awwalina et al. (2023)	Experimental	Elementary	PAI	Interactive MI-based learning media
4	Fikriyah & Aziz (2018)	Qualitative	Elementary	PAI	MI integration in lesson planning
5	Fitrotun Nisa (2015)	Qualitative	Elementary	General	MI conceptual implementation
6	Humaira & Pranoto (2025)	Qualitative	Elementary	PAI	MI-based instructional adaptation
7	Kamid et al. (2018)	Quasi-Experimental	Elementary	Mathematics	PBL examined via MI profiles
8	Karwadi (2023)	Qualitative	Elementary	General	Classroom MI strategy integration
9	Khair (2023)	Qualitative	Elementary	General	MI-based instructional method
10	Kurniawati (2023)	Qualitative	Elementary	General	Strategic MI differentiation
11	Lestari (2017)	Experimental	Elementary	Mathematics	Guided discovery linked to MI
12	Maftuh et al. (2024)	Experimental	Elementary	Mathematics	Discovery learning based on MI
13	Purnomo et al. (2024)	Development Research	General	General	MIR model for learning quality
14	Putri et al. (2021)	Mixed Methods	Elementary	General	MI model in Society 5.0 context
15	Rofiah (2016)	Qualitative	Elementary	General	MI classroom implementation
16	Rohman (2022)	Qualitative	Elementary	PAI	MI in Islamic education
17	Suniyah et al. (2018)	Qualitative	Elementary	Indonesian	Writing instruction via MI
18	Suhartono et al. (2025)	Experimental	Elementary	Thematic Learning	MI-HOTS integration through VARK and DRLTA
19	Syaikhu (2020)	Qualitative	Elementary	General	MI-based strategy framework
20	Tastin et al. (2017)	Qualitative	Elementary	Indonesian	MI principles in language learning
21	Uma et al. (2025)	Experimental	Inclusive	PAI	MI for special needs students
22	Wijaya et al. (2023)	Qualitative	Elementary	PAI	Operationalizing MI theory
23	Wahyudi & Alafiah (2016)	Qualitative	Elementary	PAI	MI-based strategy in PAI

Analysis of methodological distribution indicates that qualitative approaches dominate the research landscape. Of the 23 included studies, fourteen employed qualitative designs, four utilized experimental methods, one applied a quasi-experimental design, one adopted mixed methods, one implemented development research, and one focused on literature-based instructional development. This distribution reflects a prevailing emphasis on classroom-level descriptive exploration rather than large-scale experimental validation. In terms of educational level, twenty studies were conducted at the elementary school level, two addressed inclusive educational contexts, and only one extended beyond elementary settings. The concentration at

the elementary level suggests that MI implementation is primarily perceived as pedagogically relevant for foundational education, with limited evidence of scalability to secondary or broader educational systems.

Subject distribution further reveals that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Mathematics constitute the most frequently examined instructional domains. Eight studies focused on PAI contexts, while three explicitly addressed Mathematics instruction. Language-oriented subjects, including English and Indonesian, accounted for three studies, whereas the remaining publications examined general thematic or interdisciplinary learning. This pattern suggests that MI theory is often operationalized within curricular domains that are either value-oriented or cognitively structured, reinforcing established instructional priorities rather than diversifying subject integration.

**Table 2. Intelligence Domains Emphasized Across Included Studies**

Intelligence Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Linguistic	9	39.1%
Logical–Mathematical	8	34.8%
Interpersonal	9	39.1%
Intrapersonal	6	26.1%
Spatial	3	13.0%
Bodily–Kinesthetic	2	8.7%
Musical	0	0%
Naturalistic	0	0%

The distribution of intelligence domains across the reviewed studies reveals a patterned selectivity rather than comprehensive multidimensional enactment. Linguistic, interpersonal, and logical–mathematical intelligences dominate the implementation landscape, indicating that MI is frequently aligned with competencies already embedded within formal schooling structures. Although MI theory was originally conceptualized by Gardner (1993) as a paradigm shift toward pluralistic epistemology, classroom applications appear to gravitate toward domains that are already legitimized by assessment systems and curricular benchmarks. This suggests that MI is operationalized in ways that remain compatible with prevailing academic hierarchies rather than challenging them. The concentration of certain domains therefore reflects structural adaptation rather than epistemological transformation.

The complete absence of musical and naturalistic intelligences from explicit implementation focus further reinforces this selective orientation. While it is possible that elements of these intelligences were implicitly integrated into broader activities, none of the reviewed studies positioned them as primary instructional drivers. This omission is theoretically significant because musical and naturalistic domains represent aesthetic and ecological dimensions central to Gardner’s multidimensional construct (Gardner, 1993). Their marginalization suggests that MI in practice is filtered through institutional priorities that privilege measurable academic outcomes. Consequently, the operational scope of MI narrows when confronted with standardized curricular expectations.

Spatial and bodily–kinesthetic intelligences, although present, appear only peripherally within the corpus. This limited representation indicates that multimodal and experiential learning, which are particularly developmentally appropriate at the elementary level, remain underemphasized despite theoretical justification (Masdudi, 2017). The discrepancy between developmental theory and empirical practice reveals a tension between pedagogical ideals and institutional realities. While MI discourse advocates embodied and visual learning experiences, implementation often defaults to text-based and discussion-centered modalities. Such tendencies highlight the persistence of conventional classroom norms within MI-oriented instruction.

Building upon these findings, a conceptual model of MI implementation can be derived from the reviewed studies. The first stage consistently involves identification and mapping of students' dominant intelligence profiles through observation, questionnaires, or structured tools such as Multiple Intelligences Research (Purnomo et al., 2024). This diagnostic phase functions as the epistemic entry point for differentiated instruction, allowing teachers to recognize individual cognitive strengths. However, the rigor and standardization of these mapping processes vary across studies, raising questions regarding reliability and construct validity. Thus, while identification is central to MI practice, its methodological robustness remains uneven.

The second stage of the proposed model concerns pedagogical alignment, in which teachers design instructional strategies responsive to identified profiles. Strategies commonly include collaborative learning, guided discovery, and problem-based learning approaches (Maftuh et al., 2024; Syaikhu, 2020). In mathematics contexts, logical–mathematical intelligence is often foregrounded to enhance conceptual understanding (Kamid et al., 2018; Lestari, 2017), whereas in Islamic Religious Education settings, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are emphasized to cultivate reflective and value-oriented learning (Wijaya et al., 2023; Rohman, 2022). This alignment demonstrates pedagogical flexibility but also reveals subject-bound constraints that limit cross-domain integration.

The third stage involves instructional adaptation and contextual reinforcement, particularly within inclusive settings. Studies indicate that MI-based strategies contribute to increased engagement, participation, and academic achievement (Awwalina et al., 2023; Kamid et al., 2018). In inclusive classrooms, MI serves as a framework for recognizing diverse strengths and fostering supportive learning environments (Andriyani, 2017). These findings underscore MI's practical relevance as a differentiated instructional approach. Nevertheless, most interventions remain short-term and classroom-specific, limiting claims of sustained transformation.

A fourth dimension emerging from the synthesis relates to evaluation and outcome measurement. While several experimental and quasi-experimental studies attempt to quantify learning gains, qualitative designs dominate the research landscape (Rofiah, 2016; Syaikhu, 2020; Karwadi, 2023). The predominance of descriptive inquiry reflects an emphasis on contextual exploration rather than longitudinal validation. As a result, evidence of long-term cognitive, socio-emotional, or institutional impact remains limited. This methodological orientation reinforces the characterization of MI as pedagogically adaptive but structurally localized.

Temporal trends further illuminate the developmental trajectory of MI research. Earlier studies, such as those conducted in 2015 and 2016, primarily emphasized conceptual adaptation and classroom experimentation. In contrast, more recent investigations demonstrate greater methodological sophistication through experimental validation and instructional model development (Maftuh et al., 2024; Awwalina et al., 2023). Although this progression suggests increasing research maturity, growth appears episodic rather than cumulative, with limited integration across studies. The absence of longitudinal continuity constrains theoretical consolidation.

Taken together, the synthesized findings support a three-layer conceptualization of MI implementation: diagnostic recognition, pedagogical alignment, and contextual adaptation. While these layers collectively demonstrate functional applicability, they remain predominantly situated at the classroom level. Broader curricular reform, cross-level integration, and systemic policy incorporation are largely absent from the reviewed corpus. Consequently, MI implementation between 2015 and 2025 can be characterized as selectively integrative, operating within existing institutional frameworks rather than restructuring them.

Within the broader educational discourse, particularly in the context of Society 5.0, the potential of MI to foster multidimensional competencies remains significant (Putri et al., 2021). However, realizing this potential requires moving beyond domain-selective adaptation toward comprehensive epistemological diversification. Expanding underrepresented intelligences,

integrating digital and ecological dimensions, and conducting longitudinal multi-level studies would strengthen both theoretical coherence and practical impact. Without such expansion, MI risks remaining a pedagogical innovation confined to micro-contextual experimentation rather than evolving into a transformative curricular paradigm.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review demonstrates that the implementation of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in school learning remains predominantly pedagogical and context-bound rather than systemically transformative. Although MI-based approaches show consistent instructional relevance and adaptability, their application tends to align with existing curricular structures rather than fully operationalizing Gardner's multidimensional framework. The limited diversification of intelligence domains, the concentration at elementary levels, and the absence of sustained longitudinal inquiry indicate that MI has not yet achieved comprehensive epistemological integration within educational systems. Advancing MI toward more meaningful impact therefore requires broader methodological rigor, cross-level curricular integration, and alignment with contemporary interdisciplinary and digital learning developments.

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