

The Relevance of Character Education Values in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Imām al-Zarnūjī to the Moral Challenges of Modern Students

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ABSTRACT

Education plays a vital role in shaping human character, especially in facing the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the digital era. In Islam, education is not only a means of intellectual development but also a spiritual and moral process aimed at producing *insan kamil*—a complete human being. One of the classical Islamic literatures that emphasizes the importance of character education is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Imām al-Zarnūjī. This research aims to explore the relevance of the character values contained in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* in addressing the moral challenges faced by students in modern times. Using a qualitative library research method, this study analyzes classical texts and relevant contemporary literature. The findings show that the values of sincerity, discipline, respect for teachers, time management, and humility in seeking knowledge are still highly relevant in today's educational context. These values serve as a foundation for developing strong moral character among students, which is essential in responding to the complexities of modern life and preserving ethical behavior amidst technological advancement. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic character education and offers insights for reforming modern education by integrating classical values.

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan memegang peranan penting dalam membentuk karakter manusia, terutama dalam menghadapi tantangan Revolusi Industri 4.0 dan era digital. Dalam Islam, pendidikan tidak hanya sebagai sarana pengembangan intelektual, tetapi juga proses spiritual dan moral yang bertujuan untuk menghasilkan *insan kamil*—manusia seutuhnya. Salah satu literatur Islam klasik yang menekankan pentingnya pendidikan karakter adalah *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* karya Imām al-Zarnūjī. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi relevansi nilai-nilai karakter yang terkandung dalam kitab *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* dalam menjawab tantangan moral yang dihadapi oleh para pelajar di zaman modern. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis teks-teks klasik dan literatur kontemporer yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai keikhlasan, kedisiplinan, rasa hormat kepada guru, manajemen waktu, dan kerendahan hati dalam mencari ilmu masih sangat relevan dalam konteks pendidikan saat ini. Nilai-nilai ini berfungsi sebagai fondasi untuk mengembangkan karakter moral yang kuat di kalangan siswa, yang sangat penting dalam menanggapi kompleksitas kehidupan modern dan melestarikan perilaku etis di tengah kemajuan teknologi. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada wacana pendidikan karakter Islam dan menawarkan wawasan untuk mereformasi pendidikan modern dengan mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai klasik.

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A. INTRODUCTION

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), */pendidikan/* 'education' is derived from the root word */didik/* 'to educate', which means to nurture and provide training (teaching, guidance) concerning morals and intellectual intelligence.¹ Education is a human necessity to open the path of life through the knowledge gained from education. The purpose of education is to form a perfect human being who possesses values of spirituality, morality, sociability, emotion, and rationality.²

It is also stated in UUSPN No. 20 of 2003, Article 4, that national education aims to educate the life of the nation and to develop a whole human being, namely a person who believes and is devoted to God Almighty and has noble character, possesses knowledge and skills, physical and spiritual health, a steady and independent personality, as well as a sense of social and national responsibility.³ Education, with its previously mentioned meaning and purpose, becomes an essential matter for humans. Likewise in Islam, education is a means or medium to form *insan kamil*, that is, a good and pious human being, who worships Allah, has noble character and morals, and is beneficial to the nation, state, and religion.⁴ Education in Islam has a central meaning and is a comprehensive enlightenment process in order to achieve happiness in both the world and the hereafter.⁵

The era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 presents a serious challenge for education in Indonesia. The fourth industrial revolution (4.0) is transforming the economy, employment, and even society itself. The essence of Industry 4.0 is the fusion of physical and digital technologies through analytics, artificial intelligence, cognitive technologies, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to create interconnected digital enterprises capable of making more accurate decisions. The term "Industrial Revolution" was introduced by Friedrich Engels and Louis-Auguste Blanqui in the mid-19th century.⁶ In phase 1.0, the invention of machines emphasized the mechanization of production. Phase 2.0 focused on mass production integrated with quality control and standardization. Phase 3.0 marked mass uniformity based on computer integration. Phase 4.0 is digitization and automation—the blending of the internet with manufacturing.⁷ These changes demand strong character, especially religious character, as an effort to equip the next generation with good character, high literacy skills, and excellent 21st-century competencies, namely the ability to think critically and analytically, creatively, communicatively, and collaboratively.⁸

¹Hasibuan, M. A. (2023, October). Transdisciplinary Position in the Goals of Islamic Education. In *Proceeding International Seminar and Conference on Islamic Studies (ISCIS)* (Vol. 2, No. 1).

²Bosra, M. (2022). *Nalar Monoteistik Pendidikan: Kontemplasi Menuju Aksi*. Nuansa Cendekia.

³Jannah, F. (2013). Pendidikan Islam dalam sistem pendidikan nasional. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 13(2).

⁴Harahap, M., & Siregar, LM (2017). Konsep Pendidikan Islam Dalam Membentuk Manusia Paripurna. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah*, 2 (2), 148-163.

⁵Atikah Salma Hidayati et al., "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kitab Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim Karya Al-Zarnuji Serta Implementasinya Dalam Konteks Pendidikan Islam," *Alfihris: Jurnal Inspirasi Pendidikan* 2, no. 3 (2024): 149–63.

⁶Susyanto, B. (2022). Manajemen lembaga pendidikan Islam dalam menghadapi era digital. *Al-Madrasah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 6(3), 692-705.

⁷Marsono, M. (2019, August). Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai Budaya di Era Milenial. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Dharma Acarya* (Vol. 1, No. 1).

⁸Rahmi, Y. S., & Saefudin, A. (2024). 21st Century Skills-Based Learning at Nahdlatul Ulama Higher Education (Case Study of Islamic Education Program (PAI) at UNISNU Jepara). *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 10(2).

Education and learning heavily loaded with knowledge content but neglecting aspects of attitude and skills, as is currently implemented, will result in students who are unable to compete with the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. The dominance of knowledge in education and learning needs to be reformulated so that the future generation of Indonesia can surpass machine intelligence while also being wise in using machines for the benefit of life.⁹ The Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, also known as the cyber era or the era without spatial and temporal boundaries, stimulates and fosters the advancement of science and technology, resulting in the creation of smart machines, autonomous robots, and even Artificial Intelligence (AI).¹⁰ This era provides many new opportunities in all fields while also creating complex and difficult challenges, thus requiring high-quality human resources who master science and are capable of solving problems in society.

The generation of the millennial era is the “internet generation,” which interacts more dynamically and has an unlimited scope of connectivity. They live and grow every day in a digital world, very familiar with modern technology such as tablets, gadgets, portable computers, and operating systems like Android and iOS, as an ocean of information that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) originating from mobile phones connected to the internet has changed learning patterns, culture, social life, future perspectives, and political involvement.¹¹ With the sociological-psychological shift in society’s attitudes, education must undergo a revolution to demand new methods in mastering knowledge in the learning process.¹²

One classical literature that explains the importance of *adāb* (manners/ethics) in the educational process is *Ta’līm al-Muta’allim* by Imām Al-Zarnūjī. This book provides practical guidance on ethics and manners in seeking knowledge, such as purifying intentions, respecting teachers, managing time, and avoiding arrogance. Imām Al-Zarnūjī emphasized that the blessings of knowledge can only be attained through good manners, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated that every deed is judged by its intention. Furthermore, Imām Al-Zarnūjī stressed that knowledge without manners will not bring blessings. This principle serves as a crucial reminder in the modern era, where education is often result-oriented. By integrating the values of *Ta’līm al-Muta’allim*, Islamic education has the potential to produce a generation that excels not only academically but also has a strong moral foundation. As an effort to enrich scientific treasures and simultaneously respond to the challenges of globalization, the study of the concept of *adāb* education in *Ta’līm al-Muta’allim* becomes highly relevant. This research not only aims to explore the values of *adāb* contained in classical literature but also to explore its relevance in contemporary educational systems. Thus, the results of this study

⁹Serdyukov, P. (2017). Innovation in education: what works, what doesn’t, and what to do about it?. *Journal of research in innovative teaching & learning*, 10(1), 4-33.

¹⁰Hossain, K. A. (2023). Analysis of present and future use of artificial intelligence (ai) in line off fourth industrial revolution (4ir). *Scientific Research Journal*, 11, 1-50.

¹¹Wijoyo, H., Junita, A., Sunarsi, D., Setyawati Kristianti, L., Santamoko, R., Leo Handoko, A., ... & Suherman, S. (2020). *Blended learning suatu panduan*.

¹²Izzuddin Musthafa and Fitri Meliani, “Penerapan Metode Pembelajaran Islam Klasik Al-Zarnuji Di Era Revolusi Industri 4.0,” *JlIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 4, no. 7 (2021): 664–67.

are expected to provide concrete contributions to the development of character education in the era of globalization.¹³

The research by Nabihah Husna Razali & Arifin Mamat emphasizes the relevance of Imām al-Zarnūjī's educational concept to the reform of the Islamic education system in Malaysia, particularly in the context of the national Islamic Education curriculum. The main focus lies on the integration of moral values and teaching methods in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* with Malaysia's national education policies. Using a literature analysis approach, the study emphasizes structural and systemic contexts within formal education.¹⁴

Meanwhile, Iwan Kusdian & Ahmad Amir Aziz focus more on exploring the Sufi values in *Adab al-Mu'allimīn* by Ibn Saḥnūn, emphasizing spirituality and ethics in educational practices. The approach is deeply rooted in Sufi philosophy, differing from the emphasis on modern student morals. Therefore, the text objects, value orientation, and spiritual approach in that study are fundamentally different from the focus of this article, which is more contextual and applicable to contemporary student life.¹⁵

The study by Meila Sari et al. highlights the role of pesantren leaders in shaping the character of santri based on the teachings of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. The main emphasis is on leadership and exemplary methods within the pesantren environment, not on the relevance of the book's contents to the broader moral challenges faced by modern students. This study is local, contextual, and based on field studies in traditional educational institutions.

The article by Iskandar et al. discusses the da'i cadre system of Wahdah Islamiyah from the perspective of Islamic education. Although it also highlights character formation, the research uses an institutional approach and the formality of the da'i training program, not an evaluative approach to the moral challenges of the younger generation in general, let alone directly linked to *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the article by Putri Wahidah Luthfiyani et al. focuses more on the constructivist-based learning psychology approach and Islamic values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The difference is very evident because it is more focused on learning theory and educational psychology, without examining specific classical texts as the basis for student character formation.¹⁷

The novelty of this article lies in the direct relevance of the character education values in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Ibn al-Zarnūjī to the concrete moral challenges faced by modern students, such as integrity crises, individualism, lack of responsibility, and

¹³Abdurrahman Abdurrahman, Nurwahida Nurwahida, and Samsuddin Samsuddin, "Konsep Pendidikan Adab Dalam Kitab Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim Karya Imam Al-Zarnuji: Kajian Literatur: The Concept of Adab Education in the Book of Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim by Imam Al-Zarnuji: Literature Review," *Tarbiyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 1, no. 2 (2024): 182–201.

¹⁴Nabihah Husna Razali and Arifin Mamat, "Al-Zarnuji's Educational Concept and Its Relevance to the Teaching of Islamic Education in Malaysia," *IJUM Journal of Educational Studies* 12, no. 2 (2024): 135–44.

¹⁵Iwan Kusdian and Ahmad Amir Aziz, "Sufistic Education in Adab Al-Mu'allimin: Eksplorasi Pemikiran Muhammad Ibn Saḥnūn," *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 8, no. 2 (2023): 1350–58.

¹⁶Aditia M Yusup and Mariyanto Nur Shamsul, "Model Pendidikan Kaderisasi Da'i Di Wahdah Islamiyah Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam," *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 14, no. 2 (2025): 190–207.

¹⁷Putri Wahidah Luthfiyani, Khairunnas Rajab, and Masyhuri Masyhuri, "Pendekatan Konstruktifisme Dalam Psikologi Belajar Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Islam," *Hamalatul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu Ilmu Alqur'an* 6, no. 1 (2025): 20–36.

declining manners in learning. This article not only analyzes values normatively but also connects them with the actual needs of character education amid the challenges of digitalization, the wave of popular culture, and the moral disorientation of the younger generation. With a conceptual approach and critical analysis, this article presents a synthesis between classical scientific heritage and contemporary needs in a direct and contextual manner.

The main objective of this article is to examine the relevance of character education values taught in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Imācm al-Zarnūjī to the moral challenges faced by students in the modern era. This article aims to offer alternative thoughts in strengthening character education by integrating the classical Islamic intellectual tradition that is rich in ethics and spirituality so that it can be used as a foundation for the holistic moral development of students, both in formal and non-formal education contexts.

B. METHODS

The method employed in this study is a library research method. All analyzed data is derived from relevant literature sources, both classical and contemporary.¹⁸ This research is not conducted through direct fieldwork but rather through the examination of various written sources that provide in-depth insights into the values of character education found in classical Islamic works and their relevance to the moral condition of students in the modern era.

The research employs a qualitative approach, specifically a descriptive-analytical one. This approach is chosen as it is suitable for exploring and interpreting the meanings embedded within the text of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, as well as for assessing the applicability of these values in today's educational context. Through this approach, the researcher aims to interpret the content of the text contextually while linking it to the current social realities faced by students in the modern age.

The nature of this research is normative, as it seeks to explore the ideal values and moral teachings contained within classical texts and to assess their alignment with the moral needs of today's younger generation. This study does not investigate students' actual behavior directly; rather, it focuses on textual analysis and the normative frameworks within Islamic literature. The data sources in this study consist of both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Imām al-Zarnūjī, which serves as the main object of study. Additionally, the researcher refers to various secondary sources such as books on character education, scholarly journal articles, previous research findings, and other academic materials discussing the moral challenges faced by students in the digital era and the concept of character education in Islam.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation, which involves gathering, recording, and reviewing documents or literature relevant to the research focus. All collected data are systematically analyzed by identifying key themes related to character education values and the moral challenges of today's students. Subsequently,

¹⁸ Afrizal, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Sebuah Upaya Mendukung Penggunaan Penelitian Kualitatif dalam Berbagai Disiplin Ilmu* (Depok: Depok: Pt Rajagrafindo Persada, 2015), 124.

the data analysis technique employed is content analysis, which entails identifying, categorizing, and interpreting the character education values found in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and connecting them to contemporary issues of student morality. The results of this analysis are structured to build a scholarly argument regarding the importance of integrating classical values into contemporary education as a means of addressing the moral decline of today's youth. Through this method, the study is expected to contribute academically to the discourse on Islamic character education and provide insights for educational reform in an era of globalization marked by moral challenges and identity crises.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Biography of Imām Al-Zarnūjī

Sheikh Al-Zarnūjī was a prominent Islamic scholar well-known within the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) communities. His monumental work has served as a gateway to success for students in their pursuit of knowledge. His full name is Nu'man ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Khalīl Al-Zarnūjī Tajuddin. The title "Al-Zarnūjī" refers to his place of origin, the city of Zarnuj, which was also a clan name in the region. Some sources add the honorific "Burhanuddin" to his name, making his full name Sheikh Burhanuddin Al-Zarnūjī.

There are differing opinions regarding the year of his death. Some scholars suggest he died in 591 AH / 1195 CE, while others claim it was in 850 AH / 1243 CE. Information about his birth date and place is very limited. However, it is widely believed that he lived during the late 12th to early 13th century, a period regarded as the golden age of Islamic education. Khayat Nuriman explains that this period was marked by the peak of Islamic intellectual development.¹⁹

According to Djudi, Imām Al-Zarnūjī pursued his studies in the regions of Samarkand and Bukhara, two cities that were centers of Islamic scholarship at the time. Education was commonly held in mosques under the guidance of esteemed sheikhs such as Burhanuddin Al-Marghinani and Syamsuddin Abdil Wajdi Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Abdul Satar. In his work, Al-Zarnūjī mentions the names of his teachers, who remain widely known among Muslim intellectuals today, including in Indonesia. Among his teachers were Burhanuddin Ali bin Abu Bakar Al-Marghinani, a prominent Hanafi scholar and author of the monumental fiqh book *Al-Hidāyah*; Rukn Al-Islam Muhammad bin Abu Bakar (Imām Zadeh), a famous mufti in Bukhara; Hammad bin Ibrahim, an expert in fiqh and kalam; and Sheikh Fakhruddin, known for his work *Badāi'us Shanā'i*. Other notable teachers include Sheikh Fakhruddin Qadli Khan Al-Ouzjandi and Ruknuddin Al-Farghani, a literary scholar known as Al-Adib Al-Mukhtar.²⁰

Al-Zarnūjī, whose full name is Burhanuddin al-Islam al-Zarnūjī, was a medieval Islamic scholar who began contributing to Islamic civilization in the 13th century CE. According to Wilhelm Ahlwardt in the Berlin Library Catalogue No. 111, as quoted by

¹⁹Miftahul Husna Zain, Wedra Aprison, and Andy Riski Pratama, "Kriteria Guru Ideal Perspektif Imam Burhanuddin Az-Zarnuji Dalam Kitab Ta'lim Muta'allim Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pendidikan Islam Saat Ini," *Education Achievement: Journal of Science and Research*, 2024, 1379–90.

²⁰Nada Nabilah Syafiqoh, Muhammad Mustofa, and Nailin Najihah, "Nilai Pendidikan Karakter (Analisis Kitab Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim Karya Az-Zarnuji)," *Tahafus Jurnal Pengkajian Islam* 2, no. 2 (2022): 85–97.

Dzikri Nirwana, Al-Zarnūjī began his scholarly career around 620 AH / 1223 CE. This information is based on Mahmud Sulayman al-Kaffawi's *A'lam al-Akhyar min Fuqaha Madhhab an-Nu'man al-Mukhtar*, as cited by Plessner, who listed Al-Zarnūjī as a 12th-generation Hanafi scholar.

According to Dzikri Nirwana (2014:26), Al-Zarnūjī was a scholar who lived and developed in the Persian region. He was known as an expert in Hanafi jurisprudence, particularly in the northeastern Persian regions of Khurasan and Transoxiana. Therefore, in his seminal work *Ta'lim*, he frequently quotes sayings from Imām Hanafi.

Al-Zarnūjī's only surviving work is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. This fact is cited in Hajji Khalifah's bibliographic work *Kashf al-Zhunun*, which lists approximately 15,000 literary titles. According to Hajji Khalifah, *Ta'lim* is Al-Zarnūjī's sole authored text. However, as Dzikri Nirwana (2014:29) points out, no publication details are given for the text. Hajji Khalifah only mentions that the book was annotated by Ibn Isma'il—possibly also known as an-Naw'i—and published in 996 AH / 1587 CE.

Affandi, in his thesis on the *Ta'lim* book, notes that the book was first published in Murshidabad in 1265 AH / 1848 CE. It was later published in Tunis in 1286 AH / 1869 CE and 1290 AH / 1873 CE; in Cairo in 1281 AH / 1864 CE, 1307 AH / 1889 CE, and 1318 AH / 1900 CE; in Istanbul in 1292 AH / 1875 CE; and in Kashan in 1316 AH / 1896 CE.

Furthermore, Affandi cites Brockelmann, who states that *Ta'lim* received commentaries (*sharḥ*) in seven editions: (1) An-Naw'i (year unknown), (2) Ibrahim ibn Isma'il in 996 AH / 1588 CE, (3) As-Sya'rani in 710–711 AH / 1215–1216 CE, (4) Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ar-Rumi Qili in 720 AH / 1225 CE, titled *Mir'atu ath-Thalibin*, (5) Qadhi Zakariya al-Anshari Asy-Syafi'i (year unknown), (5) Othmanpazari in 1407 AH / 1986 CE, titled *Tafhim al-Mutafahhim*, and (6) An anonymous author (name and date unknown).

According to Affandi *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* has been translated into several languages, including Arabic, English, French, Turkish, Urdu, and Indonesian. The Arabic edition, titled *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq al-Ta'allum*, was published by Musthafa al-Babi al-Halabiwa Awladuh in Egypt in 1367 AH / 1948 CE, totaling 63 pages. The French version was translated by Ibrahim Salamah in 1983 and republished in 1991 under the title *Instruction de l'Étudiant; la Méthode d'Apprendre (Ta'lim al-Muta'allim)*. The Turkish version was translated by Abd al-Majid ibn Nushuh ibn Israil as *Irshad at-Ta'lim fi Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. The Urdu translation was done in 1930 by Imtiyaz Ali 'Arsyi and Mohd. Moinuddin in two editions.

The Indonesian version, translated by Aly As'ad, is titled *Bimbingan bagi Penuntut Ilmu Pengetahuan* and was published by Menara Kudus in 1978. Generally, the book consists of thirteen chapters covering educational guidance, namely:²¹ (1) Chapter on the essence and virtue of knowledge and jurisprudence, (2) Chapter on intention in learning, (3) Chapter on choosing knowledge, teachers, and peers, (4) Chapter on respecting knowledge and its scholars, (5) Chapter on consistency, perseverance, and ambition, (6) Chapter on the beginning, extent, and order of study, (7) Chapter on trust in God (*tawakkul*), (8) Chapter on effective learning time, (9) Chapter on compassion and advice, (10) Chapter on seeking benefit (*faidah*), (11) Chapter on piety during study, (12) Chapter

²¹Raudhatinur Raudhatinur, "Kandungan Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Pendidik Dalam Kitab *Ta'limul Muta'allim* Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Al Mabhats: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Agama* 4, no. 2 (2019): 221–44.

on causes of memory and forgetfulness in learning, Chapter on causes of sustenance and its obstacles, as well as causes of longevity and short life.

2. Analysis of Character Education Values from Imām Al-Zarnūjī's Perspective

In *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, Al-Zarnūjī does not explicitly discuss character education in the form of specific subchapters, yet the values are implicitly conveyed throughout the text and closely related to the educational challenges faced by students. These values can be classified as follows:

First, Student's Morality towards Allah. Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes the importance of sincere intention in seeking knowledge for the sake of Allah's pleasure, trust in Him (*tawakkul*), and practicing piety (*wara'*). He stated: *"The student should intend to seek knowledge for the sake of Allah's pleasure, for the hereafter, and to revive the religion."* *"Whoever places his trust in Allah, Allah will suffice him."* These statements show that a student's morality towards Allah includes sincerity, trust in Allah, and maintaining righteousness. However, in practice, financial constraints often hinder students from fully placing their trust in Allah, which highlights the need for a deep understanding of these principles.²²

Second, student's Morality towards Themselves. Al-Zarnūjī highlights the importance of self-discipline and dedication in the learning process. He advises students to avoid distractions and harmful habits. He wrote: *"Indeed, one will not attain knowledge except through diligence, effort, and persistence."* He also advises students to manage their diet and sleep schedule, and to avoid unbeneficial interactions—an expression of *wara'* and self-control.²³

Third, student's Morality towards the Teacher. Al-Zarnūjī explicitly addresses the ethics of dealing with teachers in the third and fourth chapters of his book. He emphasized: *"The student must honor his teacher more than he honors his own father."* He also advises students not to walk in front of the teacher, not to sit in the teacher's place, not to speak without permission, to be punctual in attending lessons, and to avoid actions that may anger the teacher. These guidelines reflect profound respect for the teacher as a conduit of knowledge.²⁴

Fourth, student's Morality towards Fellow Students. Al-Zarnūjī stresses the significance of choosing righteous and intelligent companions, as friends greatly influence a student's behavior and academic success. He stated, *"A student should befriend those who are pious, wise, and possess good character."*²⁵

²²Noer, M. A., & Sarumpaet, A. (2017). Konsep adab peserta didik dalam pembelajaran menurut az-zarnuji dan implikasinya terhadap pendidikan karakter di Indonesia. *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, 14(2), 181-208.

²³Sakila, S., & Masyithoh, S. (2024). Urgensi Adab dalam Belajar dan Pembelajaran di Dunia Pendidikan. *Journal Education and Government Wiyata*, 2(3), 210-225.

²⁴Ramadhan, S., Himmawan, D., & Rusydi, I. (2023). Konsep Etika Belajar Menurut Syekh Az-Zarnuji (Studi Analisis Kitab *Ta'lim Muta'allim*). *Journal Islamic Pedagogia*, 3(2), 107-114.

²⁵Az-Zarnuji, Burhanuddin. 2009. *Ta'lim Muta'allim: Terjemah Kitab Pedoman Penuntut Ilmu*. Terj. Ph. Abdullah. Jakarta: Mutiara Ilmu.

3. Character Values in *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim*

a. Respecting Knowledge and Its Experts

The author reminds students that in order to achieve success and benefit from knowledge, it is obligatory to respect knowledge and those who possess it. A student's failure usually stems from neglecting respect. Honoring knowledge also means respecting those who teach it. Imām Al-Zarnūjī stated, "*Honoring something is more important than merely obeying it.*"²⁶ Students must take good care of their books, always be in a state of purity while studying, and write neatly to avoid future regret. A person who teaches even a single letter of religion is considered a teacher in religious life. Honoring teachers includes actions such as not walking in front of the teacher, not sitting in the teacher's place, not speaking without permission, not asking questions when the teacher is weary, and patiently waiting when knocking on the teacher's door. Students must seek the teacher's approval, avoid angering them, and obey their instructions unless they involve sin. Respecting the teacher's descendants and associates is also part of honoring the teacher.

b. Diligence, Consistency, and Noble Aspirations

Imām Al-Zarnūjī consistently emphasized the importance of diligence in every endeavor, as written in the book *Ta'līm Muta'allim*:

من طلب شيئا وجد وجد ومن قرع الباب ولج ولج

Whoever desires something and puts in effort will obtain it. Whoever continues to knock, will eventually enter

Diligence is the foundation for attaining knowledge. Without it, a student will gain very little. Students must consistently review their lessons during blessed times, such as the last third of the night, after dawn (*subh*), and between maghrib and isha. Attention should also be given to sleep and eating etiquette, both of which should be in moderation; excess leads to laziness in learning. Students should be persistent and have high aspirations to succeed and avoid characteristics that hinder progress.

c. Trust in God (*Tawakkal*)

Students must have trust in God when seeking knowledge, undeterred by economic or other worldly concerns. They must believe that those who seek Allah's pleasure will have their needs fulfilled. Imām Al-Zarnūjī quoted:

روى أبو حنيفة رحمه الله عليه عن عبد الله بن الحسن الزبيدي صاحب رسول الله ص.م من تفقه في دين الله كفاه الله همه ورزقه من حيث لا يحتسب

Narrated by Imām Abu Hanifah from Abdullah bin Hasan Az-Zubaidiy, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): Whoever studies the religion of Allah, Allah will suffice his needs and provide sustenance from unexpected sources.

²⁶Hidayati, D. P. N., Khairi, M., & Ummah, K. (2025). Tafsir Ayat Ayat Tentang Pendidikan Yang Dijadikan Landasan Dalam Membangun Jiwa Pendidik. At-Tarbiyah: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pendidikan Agama Islam, 2(2), 217-228.

If a student's heart is tied to material sustenance, the drive to attain noble character will diminish. Seeking knowledge involves hardship; therefore, students must be ready to endure difficulties for the sake of learning. Letting go of worldly desires and focusing on the hereafter brings great benefit. Many scholars of the past chose to travel far and wide in search of knowledge.

d. Compassion and Advice

Compassion is the foundation of the teacher-student relationship according to Imām Al-Zarnūjī. Compassion involves the student's deep respect for the teacher and the teacher's concern for the student's progress. Teachers must teach with love, offer advice, and treat students like their own children so that knowledge is more easily absorbed and remembered. Students must honor and love their teachers by sincerely following their teachings and advice and never belittling them. Compassion and advice aim to shape good character and strengthen the teacher-student bond, ultimately fostering responsibility and awareness in students to become individuals with noble character.

e. *Wara'* (Cautiousness in Religious Practice)

Wara' means protecting oneself from things that may lead to wrongdoing according to Islamic law. Imām Al-Zarnūjī explained that *wara'* for students includes avoiding overeating, oversleeping, and engaging in excessive or unbeneficial talk. Avoiding market foods is also considered part of *wara'* because they may not be pure or clean, which can distance one from remembering Allah and lead to negligence.

In *Ta'lim Muta'allim*, a hadith is mentioned: "*Whoever does not practice wara' in his learning, Allah will test him with one of three things: He will die young, live among ignorant people, or become a servant of the authorities.*" Students must practice *wara'* so their knowledge will bring great benefit. Avoiding sinful people is also part of *wara'*. During study, manners such as facing the qibla, observing sunnah, and not neglecting obligations must be upheld to achieve success in this world and the hereafter.²⁷

4. Instilling Character Education Values in the Book *Ta'lim Muta'allim* by Sheikh Al-Zarnūjī

The book *Ta'lim Muta'allim* by Sheikh Al-Zarnūjī is a classical work in Islamic educational literature that emphasizes moral character and ethics in the process of seeking knowledge. This book does not only address the theoretical mastery of knowledge but also stresses the formation of good character in students and how behavioral changes toward positive direction can occur through education. Thus, this book teaches that education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but also a process of personality and moral development.

In the context of Islamic education, character building is extremely important, as strong character and noble morals are the main foundations for a person's success in both worldly and hereafter affairs. Sheikh Al-Zarnūjī in *Ta'lim Muta'allim* provides guidance

²⁷Fathan Miftah Shururi, Ani Siti Anisah, And Iis Komariah, "Relevansi Nilai Karakter Dalam Kitab Ta'lim Muta'alim Dengan Profil Pelajar Rahmatil Lil 'Alamin Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Muallimuna: Jurnal Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 10, No. 2 (2025): 33-47.

and character education values that every student must possess and apply in order to grow into a person of noble character and responsibility.

Below is a detailed explanation and elaboration of the character values taught in *Ta'lim Muta'allim* and their implications and relevance to character education in Indonesia:²⁸

a. Intention to Learn

Sheikh Al-Zarnūjī strongly emphasized the importance of intention in all learning activities. Intention is the starting point of every action and determines whether an action is considered an act of worship or not. In Islamic teachings, deeds are judged by their intentions; with the right intention, the act of learning can become a righteous deed that earns divine reward. Intention is not merely a verbal expression but a sincerity rooted in the heart. A student must instill the intention to seek knowledge solely for the sake of gaining Allah's pleasure and for the benefit of oneself and others—not for pride or worldly purposes. With a sincere intention, the learning process becomes more meaningful and yields optimal results. In practice, this intention must be instilled from the very beginning of the educational process by providing students with an understanding of the true purpose of seeking knowledge, so that they are not easily swayed when facing challenges.

b. Choosing Knowledge, Teachers, and Friends

Al-Zarnūjī emphasized that students must be prudent in selecting the knowledge they wish to pursue, the teachers they learn from, and the friends they associate with. The knowledge chosen should be beneficial and aligned with religious needs and the student's future. Choosing the right teacher is also essential, as teachers serve as intermediaries in delivering both knowledge and morals. A teacher who possesses sound knowledge, noble character, and a strong commitment to education will positively influence the student's development. Likewise, choosing good companions significantly shapes a supportive and virtuous learning environment. This is especially relevant in today's context, where information is easily accessible, making it crucial to be selective in choosing sources of knowledge and social environments to avoid harmful influences.²⁹

c. Honoring Knowledge and Scholars

One of the core values taught by Al-Zarnūjī is the reverence for knowledge and scholars, including teachers. This attitude is key to success in the pursuit of knowledge. A student who honors knowledge and their teachers demonstrates respect and earnestness in learning. Honoring knowledge means preserving and dignifying it, such as taking care of textbooks, studying earnestly, and not belittling the knowledge acquired. Respecting teachers is reflected through politeness, obedience to advice, and avoiding defiance. This

²⁸Tyas Hidayatulloh, Abdul Hadi, and Muhammad Hambal Shafwan, "Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Kitab Ta'lim Muta'allim Karya Syekh Az-Zarnuji," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial (JMPIS)* 5, no. 3 (2024).

²⁹Rohmah, N. N. S., Narimo, S., & Widyasari, C. (2023). Strategi penguatan profil pelajar Pancasila dimensi berkebhinekaan global di sekolah dasar. *Jurnal ElementariaEdukasia*, 6(3), 1254-1269.

attitude benefits the student personally and also sustains the tradition of knowledge and upholds the dignity of education as a whole.

d. Diligence, Perseverance, and Noble Aspirations

Al-Zarnūjī reminded that diligence and perseverance in seeking knowledge are absolutely essential. A student must remain consistent and steadfast—without giving up—in their learning journey in order to achieve noble goals. Diligence in learning is not just about having good intentions but must be accompanied by maximum effort, time discipline, and repetition of lessons so that knowledge is firmly retained in memory. Al-Zarnūjī recommended optimal times for reviewing lessons, such as during the last third of the night and after the dawn prayer, as these are times when the mind is clearer and more receptive to knowledge. Noble aspirations serve as a strong motivation that drives students to continue learning and not give up despite various difficulties.

e. Trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*)

In addition to earnest effort, students are also taught to have *tawakkul*—placing their trust in Allah regarding the outcome of their efforts. *Tawakkul* teaches students not to overly worry about livelihood or worldly obstacles that may disrupt their motivation to learn. This attitude brings inner peace and strengthens faith, allowing students to remain focused and optimistic throughout the learning process without excessive anxiety. Believing that Allah will ease all matters becomes an important source of spiritual strength.³⁰

f. *Wara'* (Avoiding Harmful and Dubious Matters)

Al-Zarnūjī also emphasized the value of *wara'*—abstaining from sins, immoral acts, and doubtful matters that may hinder the acquisition of knowledge and damage the student's moral integrity. *Wara'* is closely related to maintaining a disciplined lifestyle, including consuming lawful and wholesome food, and regulating sleep and eating habits to avoid excess. A student who practices *wara'* will guard themselves from useless or harmful actions, thereby optimizing the learning process and maintaining a pure heart.³¹

g. Learning Methods

Lastly, Al-Zarnūjī gave considerable attention to effective learning methods. He advocated memorization as a good way to retain knowledge, and also recommended *muzakarah* 'mutual review' and *mutharahah* 'discussion' as means to deepen understanding and develop critical thinking. Proper learning methods greatly influence the success of the educational process, as only through appropriate strategies can knowledge be truly absorbed and understood deeply.

The moral phenomenon among students in the contemporary era indicates a significant shift in values and norms, affecting the way students think, behave, and act in their daily lives. Technological advancement, the massive flow of information, and

³⁰Chanan, A., Hifza, H., & Irawan, D. (2024). Konsep Kompetensi Kepribadian Guru Dalam Kitab Adabul'alim Wal Muta'allim Karya Khm Hasyim Asy'ari. ILJ: Islamic Learning Journal, 2(2), 243-277.

³¹Abdillah, R. (2019). Siapakah yang Pantas Disebut Ulama?: 44 Kisah Ulama Panutan Sepanjang Sejarah. Darul Falah.

increasingly complex social environments are dominant factors shaping students' morality today. In this context, students are not only experiencing moral dilemmas but also value confusion, where the boundaries between right and wrong become increasingly blurred. The moral challenges they face include issues such as intolerance, bullying, behavioral deviance, and a crisis of empathy in social relationships.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, authored by Al-Zarnūjī, is a monumental work in the realm of Islamic education that offers practical guidance for students of knowledge. In this book, Al-Zarnūjī discusses various essential aspects of the learning process, ranging from having the correct intention, selecting the right knowledge and teacher, to observing proper ethics and behavior as a learner. The book emphasizes the importance of sincerity, perseverance, and continuity in learning, as well as the student's responsibility in maintaining respectful relationships with knowledge, teachers, and fellow learners. Al-Zarnūjī also underscores the significance of a spiritual approach to learning by incorporating concepts such as *tawakkul* (trust in God), *wara'* (piety), and by highlighting supportive factors in the learning process such as compassion, counsel, and harmony in daily life. Furthermore, this book does not only focus on intellectual aspects but also provides comprehensive guidance on moral and social dimensions in the context of education.

Theoretically, these findings contribute to the development of moral psychology and character education by highlighting the importance of integrating cognitive and affective approaches in shaping student morality. The findings enrich the literature by demonstrating that student morality cannot be fully understood through rational dimensions alone (e.g., as in Kohlberg's theory), but must also consider emotional factors, social experiences, and digital interactions that students encounter. This study provides a foundation for developing moral development models that are relevant to current socio-cultural and technological contexts.

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