

Character Value Internalization in the Educational Thought of Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali: A Comparative Analysis of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim and Ayyuha al-Walad

Haerudin¹⁾, Iyad Suryadi²⁾, Helmawati³⁾

¹⁾Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang, Indonesia

^{2), 3)}Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia

¹⁾Email: haerudin@ubpkarawang.ac.id

²⁾Email: iyadsuryadi@uninus.ac.id

³⁾Email: helmawati.dr@gmail.com

Abstract: Character education has become an increasingly urgent issue in response to the moral challenges faced by younger generations in the era of globalization and digitalization. The weakening of ethical values in contemporary education highlights the need to revisit classical Islamic educational thought as a source of guidance for holistic character formation. This study aims to compare the concepts of character education proposed by Imam Al-Zarnuji in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim and Imam Al-Ghazali in Ayyuha al-Walad and to examine their relevance to contemporary student development. The research employed a qualitative approach using a library research design. Primary data were obtained from the two classical texts, while secondary data were drawn from relevant books, journal articles, and other scholarly publications. Data were collected through document analysis and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings reveal that Al-Zarnuji emphasizes character formation through proper learning etiquette, sincere intention, respect for teachers, and love of knowledge, whereas Al-Ghazali highlights spiritual purification through self-reflection (muhasabah), sincerity, and the integration of knowledge with righteous action. Both scholars regard knowledge as a means of cultivating noble character and strengthening one's relationship with Allah. The integration of these complementary perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for developing character education that balances cognitive, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions, offering valuable implications for contemporary Islamic education.

Keywords: Al-Zarnuji; Al-Ghazali; Character Education

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15575/atthulab.v11i1.54931>

Received: 01, 2026. Accepted: 03, 2026. Published: 04, 2026.

Copyright: © (2026). The Authors.

Licensee: Atthulab: Islamic Religion Teaching & Learning Journal is licensed under The [Creative Commons Attribution Licence](#).

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become one of the central concerns of educational systems worldwide as societies confront increasingly complex moral, social, and technological challenges (Herak, 2025). The rapid development of globalization and digitalization has transformed not only the way people access information but also the values, attitudes, and behaviors of younger generations. While these developments have created new opportunities for learning, they have also contributed to moral dilemmas, declining social ethics, misuse of digital technology, and weakening spiritual awareness among students. Consequently, education is expected not only to foster intellectual competence but also to cultivate moral integrity, spiritual maturity, and responsible citizenship (Surbakti et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, the importance of character education is explicitly emphasized in Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that national education aims to develop students' potential, strengthen character, promote a dignified national civilization, and enrich the intellectual life of the nation (Mahanani et al., 2022). This objective is consistent with Tilaar (2004), who views education as a process of developing the whole person, and with Zubaedi (2011), who argues that education functions as a medium for internalizing moral and cultural values (Tohri et al., 2022; Arifin et al., 2026). Likewise, UNESCO's Learning: The Treasure Within (Carneiro, 2015) highlights four pillars of education – learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together – all of which emphasize holistic human development beyond academic achievement.

Despite these educational ideals, contemporary educational practice often prioritizes cognitive achievement and academic performance over character formation. The consequences are increasingly visible in various forms of moral degradation. Indonesia continues to experience serious ethical challenges, including corruption, violence in educational institutions, cyberbullying, intolerance, and the misuse of digital technology among adolescents. According to Data Reportal (2024), more than 75% of Indonesian adolescents actively use social media, increasing their exposure to harmful digital content, online addiction, and psychological vulnerability. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (JPPI) reported a substantial increase in cases of violence in schools between 2020 and 2025, indicating that moral education remains an urgent challenge. These conditions demonstrate that strengthening character education has become an educational necessity rather than merely a curricular objective (Kisbiyanto, 2025).

From an Islamic perspective, character education (*tarbiyah al-akhlāq*) has constituted the primary mission of Islamic education since the prophetic era. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ declared that he was sent to perfect noble character, emphasizing that moral excellence represents the essence of Islamic teachings. Likewise, the Qur'an consistently encourages believers not merely to understand religious teachings intellectually but to internalize them so that faith, sincerity, piety, and righteousness become enduring personal characteristics. Accordingly, Islamic education views knowledge not simply as intellectual acquisition but as a means of cultivating virtuous character and drawing individuals closer to Allah.

Among the classical Muslim scholars who made significant contributions to character education are Imam Al-Ghazali and Sheikh Al-Zarnuji. In *Ayyuha al-Walad*, Al-Ghazali presents character education through a spiritual approach that emphasizes sincerity (*ikhlas*), self-reflection (*muḥāsabah*), purification of the soul, and the integration of knowledge with righteous action (Ma'awiyah, 2025). His educational philosophy stresses that knowledge is meaningful only when translated into ethical

conduct and spiritual transformation. Conversely, Sheikh Al-Zarnuji, in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, emphasizes the cultivation of adab in learning, including respect for teachers, sincere intentions, love of knowledge, discipline, humility, and proper learning etiquette (Dinana & Nurhidin, 2025). For Al-Zarnuji, educational success depends not only on intellectual competence but also on the moral qualities developed throughout the learning process.

Although both scholars place character formation at the center of Islamic education, they approach it from different yet complementary perspectives. Al-Ghazali primarily focuses on the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of character formation, whereas Al-Zarnuji emphasizes practical educational ethics and learning behavior. Together, their perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of how cognitive, moral, and spiritual development can be integrated within Islamic education.

Previous studies have examined the educational thought of Al-Ghazali and Al-Zarnuji independently. Existing research has primarily explored moral education in *Ayyuha al-Walad* or learning ethics in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* (Hanani, 2016; Ridwan & Abdurrohman, 2022). However, comparative studies that systematically analyze both works remain limited. More importantly, little attention has been given to examining how the complementary concepts proposed by these two scholars may contribute to addressing contemporary educational challenges, particularly the moral and spiritual development of students in the digital era. Consequently, a significant gap remains in developing a holistic framework of character education grounded in classical Islamic educational thought while remaining relevant to present-day educational contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to compare the concepts of character education proposed by Imam Al-Zarnuji in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ayyuha al-Walad*, as well as to examine the relevance of these concepts to contemporary student development. Through this comparative analysis, the study seeks to identify complementary character education values that may serve as a conceptual foundation for strengthening holistic character education within contemporary Islamic education, integrating cognitive, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design to explore and compare the concepts of character education presented in two classical Islamic educational texts (Azhari et al., 2026). Library research was considered appropriate because the study focused on interpreting and analyzing written sources rather than collecting empirical data from participants (Chu, 2015).

The primary data sources consisted of Imam Al-Ghazali's *Ayyuha al-Walad* and Sheikh Al-Zarnuji's *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. These two works were purposively selected because they are among the most influential classical texts in Islamic education and have significantly shaped the philosophy and practice of character education in Muslim societies. Secondary data were obtained from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and other scholarly publications discussing Islamic educational thought, character education, and the educational philosophies of Al-Ghazali and Al-Zarnuji.

Data were collected through document analysis, involving systematic reading, note-taking, coding, and classification of textual materials relevant to the concepts of character education (Sakti et al., 2024). The unit of analysis comprised statements, themes, and educational principles related to moral values, learning ethics, spiritual development, and character formation contained in the two primary texts.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis following three stages. First, data reduction was conducted by identifying and selecting passages related to

character education from both texts. Second, data categorization was performed by grouping similar concepts into thematic categories, including educational objectives, moral values, teacher-student relationships, learning ethics, and spiritual development. Third, a comparative analysis was carried out to identify similarities, differences, and complementary perspectives between Al-Ghazali's and Al-Zarnuji's concepts of character education, followed by interpreting their relevance to contemporary Islamic education.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation by comparing interpretations derived from the primary texts with contemporary scholarly literature. In addition, an audit trail was maintained throughout the analytical process to ensure transparency and consistency in coding, categorization, and interpretation. These procedures strengthened the credibility and dependability of the study's findings.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

This study examines two classical Islamic educational texts that have profoundly influenced the development of character education in the Muslim world: *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Sheikh Al-Zarnuji and *Ayyuha al-Walad* by Imam Al-Ghazali. These works were purposively selected because they represent two complementary traditions within Islamic educational thought. While *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* emphasizes educational ethics (*adab*) and learner discipline, *Ayyuha al-Walad* highlights spiritual purification and moral transformation as the ultimate objectives of education.

Sheikh Al-Zarnuji was a prominent Hanafi scholar who lived during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in Transoxiana, an important center of Islamic scholarship encompassing present-day Uzbekistan. Historical sources indicate that he studied under several distinguished scholars of Hanafi jurisprudence, including Burhanuddin al-Marghinani, whose intellectual influence is reflected in Al-Zarnuji's educational philosophy. His principal work, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, remains one of the most influential classical references for Islamic education, particularly in traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) throughout Southeast Asia. Rather than focusing solely on instructional techniques, the book presents a comprehensive framework of educational ethics, emphasizing sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), respect for teachers, discipline, perseverance, humility, and proper etiquette in seeking knowledge (Hidayati et al., 2024).

In contrast, Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE) is recognized as one of the foremost scholars in the history of Islamic intellectual thought. His educational philosophy integrates jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, and Sufism into a holistic understanding of human development. Among his numerous works, *Ayyuha al-Walad* occupies a unique position as a concise collection of ethical and spiritual advice addressed to one of his students. Unlike his more systematic philosophical writings, this text presents practical guidance for cultivating sincerity, self-reflection (*muhāsabah*), spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), humility, and the integration of knowledge with righteous action. Al-Ghazali argues that knowledge acquires its true value only when it transforms moral conduct and strengthens one's relationship with Allah (Nasrun, 2025).

Although both scholars emerged from different intellectual contexts, they share a common educational vision that positions knowledge as a means of moral and spiritual formation rather than merely intellectual achievement. Nevertheless, their approaches differ in emphasis. Al-Zarnuji focuses primarily on cultivating ethical behavior throughout the learning process, whereas Al-Ghazali places greater emphasis on the

purification of the heart and the internalization of spiritual values. These complementary perspectives constitute the analytical foundation for the comparative findings presented in the following sections.

Character Education in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim

The qualitative content analysis of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim identified six major themes representing Al-Zarnuji's conception of character education. These themes illustrate that character formation is embedded throughout the educational process and is closely associated with ethical conduct in seeking knowledge. Rather than viewing education as merely the acquisition of intellectual competence, Al-Zarnuji conceptualizes learning as a process of cultivating moral discipline and spiritual responsibility.

Table 1 .Character Education Themes in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim

Theme	Description	Educational Significance
Sincere intention (<i>ikhlaṣ</i>)	Learning should be pursued solely for the pleasure of Allah rather than worldly recognition.	Establishes spiritual motivation as the foundation of learning.
Respect for teachers (<i>ta'ẓīm al-ustādh</i>)	Students are required to honor teachers through obedience, humility, and proper manners.	Strengthens ethical teacher-student relationships.
Love of knowledge	Knowledge is regarded as a lifelong obligation and an act of worship.	Encourages continuous intellectual and spiritual development.
Discipline and perseverance	Learning requires patience, consistency, and diligence.	Develops self-control and resilience.
Humility (<i>tawāḍu'</i>)	Learners should avoid arrogance despite possessing knowledge.	Cultivates ethical leadership and moral awareness.
Beneficial knowledge	Knowledge should produce righteous conduct and social benefit.	Integrates cognitive achievement with moral practice.

The dominant finding emerging from the analysis is the central role of adab as the core of Al-Zarnuji's educational philosophy (Basith et al., 2026). Unlike contemporary educational approaches that often prioritize cognitive outcomes, Al-Zarnuji argues that the success of learning depends primarily on the learner's moral disposition. Every stage of the learning process, from intention to the application of knowledge, is governed by ethical principles.

Another prominent finding concerns the relationship between knowledge and character. The analysis indicates that Al-Zarnuji consistently portrays knowledge as a means of cultivating virtuous conduct rather than achieving social prestige. Students are encouraged to develop sincerity, patience, humility, and gratitude because these virtues determine whether knowledge becomes beneficial (*'ilm nāfi*).

Furthermore, the findings reveal that teacher-student relationships constitute an essential component of character education. Respect for teachers is not presented merely as cultural etiquette but as a pedagogical principle that facilitates intellectual growth and

spiritual blessing (barakah). This indicates that character education in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim extends beyond moral instruction to encompass the creation of an ethical learning environment.

The content analysis demonstrates that Al-Zarnuji's educational philosophy is predominantly pedagogical and normative, emphasizing observable moral behavior throughout the learning process. Character education is therefore conceptualized as the continuous habituation of ethical values that shape students into knowledgeable and morally responsible individuals.

Character Education in *Ayyuha al-Walad*

The content analysis of *Ayyuha al-Walad* identified five major themes that characterize Al-Ghazali's conception of character education. In contrast to Al-Zarnuji's emphasis on educational ethics, Al-Ghazali focuses primarily on the inner transformation of learners through spiritual purification and moral self-development.

Table 2. Character Education in *Ayyuha al-Walad*

Theme	Description	Educational Significance
Sincerity (<i>ikhhlāṣ</i>)	Every action should be directed solely toward Allah.	Builds intrinsic motivation and integrity.
Self-reflection (<i>muḥāṣabah</i>)	Learners are encouraged to evaluate their intentions and behavior continuously.	Promotes lifelong moral development.
Purification of the soul (<i>tazkiyat al-naḥs</i>)	Education should cultivate inner spiritual refinement.	Strengthens emotional and spiritual intelligence.
Knowledge accompanied by action	Knowledge without righteous practice has no educational value.	Integrates theory with practice.
Asceticism and humility (<i>zuhd</i> and <i>tawāḍu'</i>)	Students should avoid excessive attachment to worldly interests.	Encourages ethical responsibility and self-restraint.

The analysis demonstrates that the dominant concept in *Ayyuha al-Walad* is the inseparable relationship between knowledge, spirituality, and righteous action. Al-Ghazali repeatedly emphasizes that intellectual achievement alone cannot produce a virtuous individual unless it is accompanied by sincere worship, moral discipline, and continuous self-improvement (Jalaldeen & Al-Hidabi, 2025).

Another important finding concerns the role of self-reflection (*muḥāṣabah*) in character formation. Unlike Al-Zarnuji, who emphasizes external educational behavior, Al-Ghazali argues that moral transformation begins with internal awareness. Students are encouraged to evaluate their intentions, recognize their moral weaknesses, and continuously strive for spiritual excellence. Consequently, character education becomes an ongoing process of self-renewal rather than merely compliance with ethical norms.

The analysis also indicates that Al-Ghazali rejects the separation between knowledge and practice. Throughout the text, he consistently argues that knowledge gains value only when translated into righteous action (*'amal ṣāliḥ*). Therefore, education should cultivate individuals who are intellectually competent, spiritually mature, and socially responsible.

Another distinctive feature identified in the analysis is the emphasis on spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Al-Ghazali considers the purification of the heart to be the ultimate objective of education because moral behavior originates from inner character rather than external regulation. This perspective broadens the scope of character education by integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions into a unified educational process.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy is predominantly spiritual and transformative, emphasizing the internalization of moral values through sincere worship, self-reflection, and righteous action. Character education is therefore understood as a lifelong journey toward moral excellence and closeness to Allah.

Comparative Analysis of Character Education

The comparative analysis demonstrates that both scholars share a common understanding that the ultimate objective of education is the formation of noble character (*akhlak al-karimah*). However, they differ in their pedagogical emphasis.

Table 3. Comparative Dimensions of Character Education

Character Dimension	Al-Zarnuji (<i>Ta'lim al-Muta'allim</i>)	Al-Ghazali (<i>Ayyuha al-Walad</i>)
Educational orientation	Learning ethics (<i>adab</i>)	Spiritual purification
Primary objective	Ethical learner behavior	Inner moral transformation
Central values	Respect, discipline, humility	Sincerity, self-reflection, piety
Teacher-student relationship	Strong emphasis	Moderate emphasis
Knowledge	Means to cultivate ethical conduct	Means to attain closeness to Allah
Learning process	Discipline and perseverance	Reflection and righteous action

The comparison indicates that Al-Zarnuji presents a normative and pedagogical framework emphasizing external educational ethics, whereas Al-Ghazali develops a more spiritual and philosophical approach that focuses on internal moral transformation. Rather than contradicting one another, these perspectives complement each other by integrating external discipline with internal spirituality.

The findings demonstrate that the educational philosophies of Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali remain highly relevant to addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic education. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and moral uncertainty, Al-Zarnuji's emphasis on learning discipline, respect for teachers, and educational ethics provides a strong foundation for strengthening students' character within formal educational settings. At the same time, Al-Ghazali's focus on sincerity, self-reflection, and spiritual purification offers important guidance for fostering students' moral resilience and spiritual well-being amid the pressures of globalization and digitalization.

The integration of these complementary perspectives contributes to a holistic framework of character education that balances cognitive, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions. This framework supports the development of Islamic education that not only promotes academic excellence but also cultivates ethical responsibility, spiritual

awareness, and lifelong character formation. Consequently, the combined educational philosophies of Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali provide a valuable conceptual foundation for strengthening contemporary character education in both formal and non-formal Islamic educational institutions.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that both Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali regard character education as the primary objective of Islamic education rather than merely a complementary aspect of knowledge acquisition. The comparative analysis revealed that both scholars consistently position knowledge as a means of cultivating moral excellence and strengthening one's relationship with Allah. This finding reinforces the Islamic educational philosophy that education is fundamentally directed toward the holistic development of human beings, integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

However, the two scholars conceptualize character formation through different educational perspectives. The content analysis indicates that Al-Zarnuji develops a pedagogical framework centered on adab, discipline, and ethical conduct throughout the learning process, whereas Al-Ghazali emphasizes the transformation of the inner self through sincerity (*ikhlas*), self-reflection (*muhasabah*), and purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). These findings suggest that character education in classical Islamic thought encompasses both external behavioral regulation and internal spiritual transformation. Rather than representing contradictory perspectives, the two approaches complement one another by addressing different dimensions of human development.

This finding supports the view of Al-Attas (1991), who argues that the ultimate aim of Islamic education is the cultivation of adab, understood as the proper recognition of one's responsibilities toward Allah, oneself, society, and knowledge. Likewise, Nasr (1989) emphasizes that Islamic education should integrate intellectual excellence with spiritual consciousness, thereby preventing the separation between knowledge and morality.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that both Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali reject the dichotomy between knowledge and action. The analysis of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* demonstrates that beneficial knowledge (*'ilm nafi'*) can only be attained when learners cultivate sincerity, discipline, humility, and respect for teachers. Similarly, Ayyuha al-Walad emphasizes that knowledge without righteous action is spiritually meaningless and incapable of producing genuine character transformation.

This finding is consistent with previous studies that describe Islamic education as an integrative process in which cognition, affection, and behavior are inseparable (Sodikin et al., 2022; Nurrahma et al., 2026). Contemporary educational research also suggests that character education becomes effective only when moral values are continuously practiced rather than merely taught conceptually (Trisnantari et al., 2026; Walker et al., 2015). Therefore, the present study extends previous literature by demonstrating that classical Islamic educational thought had already conceptualized experiential character education centuries before it became widely discussed in modern educational theory (Munawarsyah, 2023).

Unlike many contemporary educational systems that primarily evaluate academic achievement, both Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali argue that the success of education should ultimately be measured by the learner's moral conduct and spiritual maturity. This perspective contributes an important alternative framework for evaluating educational outcomes within Islamic education.

Another important finding concerns the central role of teachers in character formation. Although both scholars emphasize the importance of teachers, their perspectives reveal different educational emphases. Al-Zarnuji considers respect for teachers as a prerequisite for acquiring blessed and beneficial knowledge, while Al-Ghazali highlights the teacher's role as a spiritual mentor who guides students toward moral excellence through personal example (Memon & Alhashmi, 2018; Yahya et al., 2025)

These findings support the concept of relational pedagogy, which argues that meaningful education depends upon authentic relationships between teachers and students rather than solely on instructional methods (Noddings, 2013). Within Islamic educational philosophy, this relationship extends beyond academic interaction to include moral guidance, spiritual mentoring, and character modeling.

The findings therefore suggest that teacher professionalism in Islamic education should not only be evaluated in terms of pedagogical competence but also in relation to moral integrity, exemplary conduct, and spiritual leadership. Such a perspective remains highly relevant for strengthening character education within contemporary Islamic schools.

The findings have important implications for contemporary Islamic education, particularly in responding to moral challenges arising from globalization, digitalization, and rapid technological development. Current educational practices often prioritize cognitive achievement while providing limited opportunities for students to develop moral reasoning, spiritual awareness, and ethical responsibility. The complementary educational philosophies of Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali offer an alternative framework capable of addressing these limitations.

Al-Zarnuji's emphasis on discipline, learning ethics, and respect for teachers remains highly relevant for improving students' learning culture in schools and Islamic boarding schools. At the same time, Al-Ghazali's emphasis on sincerity, self-reflection, and purification of the heart contributes to strengthening students' emotional resilience and spiritual intelligence, both of which are increasingly important in the digital era.

Rather than selecting one approach over the other, the present findings indicate that integrating these two educational philosophies provides a more comprehensive model of character education. Such integration enables Islamic education to balance cognitive development with moral discipline and spiritual formation, thereby producing learners who are intellectually competent, ethically responsible, and spiritually grounded.

This study contributes to the literature on Islamic education in two important ways. First, it demonstrates that Al-Zarnuji and Al-Ghazali should not be viewed as representing competing educational philosophies but rather as offering complementary perspectives on character education. While Al-Zarnuji provides a pedagogical framework emphasizing ethical learning behavior, Al-Ghazali contributes a spiritual framework centered on inner moral transformation. Integrating these perspectives enriches the conceptual understanding of character education within the Islamic educational tradition.

Second, the study proposes a holistic framework for contemporary Islamic education that combines educational ethics, spiritual development, and moral practice. This framework aligns with current efforts to strengthen character education within Islamic schools by emphasizing that educational success should not be assessed solely through academic performance but also through students' moral behavior, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility.

Accordingly, curriculum developers, teacher education institutions, and Islamic schools may consider incorporating both pedagogical ethics and spiritual cultivation into curriculum design, classroom practices, and character education programs. Such an approach is expected to produce graduates who possess not only academic competence but also noble character (akhlaq al-karimah) and the capacity to contribute positively to society.

CONCLUSION

This study compared the concepts of character education proposed by Imam Al-Zarnuji in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ayyuha al-Walad* and examined their relevance to contemporary student development. The findings reveal that both scholars share a common educational vision in which the ultimate purpose of education is the cultivation of noble character (akhlaq al-karimah) through the integration of knowledge, morality, and spirituality. Nevertheless, each scholar offers a distinct educational emphasis. Al-Zarnuji conceptualizes character education through educational ethics (adab), discipline, respect for teachers, sincerity in learning, and the cultivation of beneficial knowledge, whereas Al-Ghazali emphasizes inner spiritual transformation through sincerity (ikhlas), self-reflection (muhasabah), purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs), and the integration of knowledge with righteous action.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that these two perspectives are complementary rather than contradictory. Al-Zarnuji provides a pedagogical framework that strengthens students' ethical behavior throughout the learning process, while Al-Ghazali offers a spiritual framework that nurtures moral consciousness and personal transformation. Together, they present a holistic model of character education that integrates cognitive, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions.

This study contributes to the literature on Islamic education by proposing an integrated conceptual framework of character education derived from two major classical Islamic scholars. The findings extend previous studies that have generally examined these scholars separately by demonstrating how their educational philosophies complement one another in addressing contemporary educational challenges. The integrated framework provides a theoretical foundation for strengthening character education within contemporary Islamic education, particularly in responding to moral degradation, technological disruption, and the growing need for value-based education.

REFERENCES

- Arifin, Z., Rifa'i, M., & Fadhli, M. (2026). Character Development Management of Coastal Madrasah Students in MA Al-Washliyah, Nagur Village, Tanjung Beringin District, Serdang Bedagai Regency. *Sosioedukasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Sosial*, 15(1), 1599-1611. <https://doi.org/10.36526/sosioedukasi.v15i1.7656>
- Azhari, A. A., Saepudin, D., Husaini, A., & Handrianto, B. (2026). The Concept of moral education according to ibn qayyim al-jawziyyah and its relevance to the national education objectives. *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 15(2), 205-222. <https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v15i2.22861>
- Basith, F., Ruhendi, A., Musthafa, I., & Saufana, E. (2026). Al-Zarnuji's Concept of 'Ilm and Fiqh: Its Relevance in the Era of Learning 5.0. *Sustainable*, 9(1), 71-79. <https://doi.org/10.32923/adbdmx91>

- Carneiro, R. (2015). Learning: The treasure within—Prospects for education in the 21st century. *European Journal of Education*, 50(1), 101-112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12110>
- Chu, H. (2015). Research methods in library and information science: A content analysis. *Library & information science research*, 37(1), 36-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2014.09.003>
- Dinana, M. F., & Nurhidin, E. (2025). The Concepts Of Al-Zarnuji's Ethics In Islamic Education And Its Relevance For The Contemporary Era. *Fikroh: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 18(1), 22-33. <https://doi.org/10.37812/fikroh.v18i1.1654>
- Hanani, D. (2016). Pendidikan karakter anak menurut imam al-gazali. *Jurnal Ilmiah AL-Jauhari: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Interdisipliner*, 1(1), 46-53. Retrieved from <https://journal.iaingorontalo.ac.id/index.php/aj/article/view/663>
- Herak, R. (2025). Character Education in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities Amidst Technological Developments. *MSJ : Majority Science Journal*, 3(2), 245-252. <https://doi.org/10.61942/msj.v3i2.367>
- Hidayati, A. S., Perdana, F. H., Hasanah, I., Ibrahim, M. A., Faqihuddin, A., & Syahidin, S. (2024). Konsep Pendidikan Islam dalam Kitab Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Karya Al-Zarnuji serta Implementasinya dalam Konteks Pendidikan Islam. *ALFIHRIS: Jurnal Inspirasi Pendidikan*, 2(3), 149-163. Retrieved from <https://journal.insyaka.ac.id/index.php/ALFIHRIS/article/view/888>
- Jalaldeen, J., & Al-Hidabi, D. (2025). Al-Ghazali's framework of teachings professional values: Analyzing the pedagogical principles in Islamic Education. *Al-Burhān: Journal of Qur'ān and Sunnah Studies*, 9(1), 27-46. <https://doi.org/10.31436/alburhn.v9i1.363>
- Kisbiyanto, K. (2025). Enforcement Gaps in Child Protection Law: Managing Strategy of Violence on Students in Islamic Boarding Schools and the Limits of Legal Compliance in Indonesia. *Khazanah Hukum*, 7(3), 392-416. <https://doi.org/10.15575/kh.v7i3.43929>
- Ma'awiyah, A. (2025). an Analytical Study of Imam Al-Ghazali's Ayyuhal Walad Book: Implications for Contemporary Moral Education in Adolescents. *JURNAL HURRIAH: Jurnal Evaluasi Pendidikan dan Penelitian*, 6(2), 903-915. <https://doi.org/10.56806/jh.v6i2.262>
- Mahanani, P., Akbar, S., Kamaruddin, A. Y. B., & Hussin, Z. B. (2022). Educational Analysis to Develop Character in Malaysia and Indonesia. *International Journal of Instruction*, 15(3), 377-392. Retrieved from <https://e-iji.net/ats/index.php/pub/article/view/326>
- Memon, N. A., & Alhashmi, M. (2018). Islamic pedagogy: Potential and perspective. In *Islamic schooling in the West: Pathways to renewal* (pp. 169-194). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73612-9_9
- Munawarsyah, M. (2023). Islamic education in the modern era: Analysis of student character and their role in facing the challenges of Industry

- 4.0. *HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education*, 3(2), 141-154.
<https://doi.org/10.14421/hjie.2023.32-01>
- Nasrun, M. (2025). The Concept of Islamic Education According to Imam Al-Ghazali and Its Relevance to Contemporary Education: A Literature Analysis Study. *Samarinda International Journal of Islamic Studies (SIJIS)*, 2(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.64093/sijis.v2i1.816>
- Nurrahma, N., Gappar, L., & Supriandi, S. (2026). Components of Educational Psychology in Islamic Perspective and Its Implications for Learning: A Literature Review. *Edusoshum: Journal of Islamic Education and Social Humanities*, 6(1), 155-167.
- Ridwan, I., & Abdurrohman, A. (2022). Pengaruh Pembelajaran Kitab Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim Terhadap Pembentukan Etika Belajar Santri Pondok Pesantren Ath-Thohariyah Desa Sindanghayu Kecamatan Saketi Kabupaten Pandeglang. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter JAWARA (Jujur, Adil, Wibawa, Amanah, Religius, Akuntabel)*, 8(1). Retrieved from <https://jurnal.untirta.ac.id/index.php/JAWARA/article/view/15495>
- Sakti, S. A., Endraswara, S., & Rohman, A. (2024). Revitalizing local wisdom within character education through ethnopedagogy approach: A case study on a preschool in Yogyakarta. *Heliyon*, 10(10). Retrieved from [https://www.cell.com/heliyon/fulltext/S2405-8440\(24\)07401-2](https://www.cell.com/heliyon/fulltext/S2405-8440(24)07401-2)
- Sodikin, S., Imaduddin, I., Abidin, Z., & Sirojuddin, A. (2022). Islamic Religious Education Model with Knowing-Doing-Meaning-Sensing-Being Approach to Realize Knowledge Integration. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(4), 6039-6050.
<https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i4.2549>
- Surbakti, S. S. B., Harahap, R., & Hasanah, U. (2024). Future perspectives on the islamic personality model: Integrating spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, personal, and behavioral dimensions for holistic development. *Journal on Islamic Studies*, 1(1), 17-35. <https://doi.org/10.35335/7adqms8>
- Tohri, A., Rasyad, A., Sururuddin, M., & Istiqlal, L. M. (2022). The Urgency of Sasak Local Wisdom-Based Character Education for Elementary School in East Lombok, Indonesia. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 11(1), 333-344. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1341295>
- Trisnantari, H. E., Mutohar, P. M., Jabbar, M. R. A. A., & Ismail, R. A. (2026). Internalizing Religious Values through Habituation: Strengthening Students' Character in the Digital Era. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 10(2), 305-322. <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v10i2.284>
- Walker, D. I., Roberts, M. P., & Kristjánsson, K. (2015). Towards a new era of character education in theory and in practice. *Educational review*, 67(1), 79-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.827631>
- Yahya, M., Putri, S. R., Putri, R. M., & Ariady, S. (2025). The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Thought to Modern Education: A Literature Review on Ethics, Morals, and Character Development. *Khalafa: Journal of Education and Learning*, 3(2), 182-197. Retrieved from

<https://jurnal.staiyastispadang.ac.id/index.php/Khalaqa/article/view/281>