Reconstructing the Teleological Foundations of Islamic Education: A Thematic Educational Interpretation Addressing the Fragmentation of Spiritual and Educational Aims

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Abstract: Contemporary Islamic education faces a fragmentation of objectives between spiritual and pedagogical-instrumental orientations. Education tends to emphasize technical competence and market needs, while transcendental and Qur'anic values are marginalized. This article aims to reconstruct the teleology of Islamic educational objectives based on thematic interpretations of the Qur'an. The study uses a qualitative approach with library research. Primary data consists of Qur'anic verses on educational objectives, while secondary data include tafsir books, Ta'lim al-Muta'allim by az-Zarnuji, and contemporary Islamic educational literature. Analysis was conducted using the maudhu'i tafsir method of al-Farmawi and content analysis. The results show that the objectives of Islamic education are integrative, encompassing spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, and ubudiyah dimensions, making them relevant to addressing the challenges of contemporary education.
Keywords: Islamic Education; Educational Teleology; Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an; Challenges of Contemporary Education

INTRODUCTION

Education, as a planned activity, ideally has clear and integrated objectives. These objectives serve as the primary foundation that determines the direction, content, and process of education. However, in modern educational practices, including Islamic education, educational objectives often experience a fragmentation between spiritual and pedagogical-instrumental orientations. Education is increasingly directed toward achieving cognitive competencies, technical skills, and job market needs, while the spiritual dimension and transcendental values are often placed separately and subordinated.

This condition indicates a teleological crisis in Islamic education, namely the weakening of the integration of educational goals as a process of developing a complete human being. Modern education tends to reproduce the dichotomy between religious values and instrumental rationality due to the strong influence of secular epistemology in the contemporary education system (Rahman, 2025).

In the perspective of the Quran, the purpose of education is not partial, but rather includes comprehensive human development. These goals include ubudiyah (devotion to Allah), khalifah fi al-Ardh (humans as leaders on earth), the development and comprehensive development of human nature, rahmatan lil'alamin (being a mercy to the universe), and obtaining well-being in this world and the hereafter (Sundari et al., 2023). These goals emphasize that education from a Qur'anic perspective is directed at forming humans who are able to carry out their functions as servants and caliphs of Allah in a balanced manner in the spiritual, intellectual, moral and social dimensions (Muliati & Rezi, 2017). A similar assertion was also put forward in the study of the development of an Islamic education curriculum based on the Qur'an, which places the aim of education as an integration between the formation of morals, strengthening spirituality, and the intellectual development of students (Hendawi et al., 2024).

However, in contemporary educational practice, these goals are often not fully integrated into policies, curricula, and learning processes. The urgency of this issue is growing as the dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia show rapid developments, such as innovations in skills-based curricula, the integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) with religious education, and the use of digital technology through e-learning and distance learning. Meanwhile, Islamic schools and educational institutions are increasingly emphasizing the strengthening of character, spirituality, and 21st-century competencies (Abas et al., 2024; Maria et al., 2025). However, a number of studies show that these innovations are often technical-pedagogical in nature and have not been accompanied by a fundamental reconstruction of the goals of Islamic education (Kamridah et al., 2025).

Although these innovations reflect responses to the demands of the times, in many cases spiritual and educational goals operate in parallel without an integrative teleological framework, thus deepening the fragmentation of Islamic educational goals. This situation reinforces the criticism that modern Islamic education risks a reduction in meaning when transcendental goals are not the primary foundation of educational design (Husin et al., 2025).

Numerous studies on Islamic education have extensively discussed curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, and strengthening educational institutions. However, attention to the fundamental issue of the ultimate goal of Islamic education remains relatively limited. Many studies describe the goals of Islamic education in a normative-conceptual manner or based on the thoughts of educational figures, without a comprehensive and systematic reading of the Quranic verses through a thematic interpretation approach (Maria et al., 2025; Muliati & Rezi, 2017). As a result, understanding of the goals of Islamic education is often fragmented and does not yet reflect the integration of the theological, moral, social, and intellectual dimensions as outlined in the Qur'an. The limitations of this approach are also highlighted in studies of Islamic educational reform, which emphasize the need for a more methodological and systematic Qur'anic basis (Rahman, 2025).

Rapid changes in the world of modern education—such as the digitalization of learning, the globalization of values, the weakening character of the younger generation, and the increasing demands for 21st-century competencies—demand a more fundamental reorientation of the goals of Islamic education. Unfortunately, many Islamic educational institutions have not yet fully embraced the goals of Qur'anic education as the primary foundation in formulating their curricula, learning methods, and evaluation systems, resulting in a gap between the ideal goals of Islamic education and the reality of educational practice in the field (Abrar, 2025). Kondisi ini semakin menegaskan urgensi rekonstruksi fondasi teleologis pendidikan Islam.

Dalam konteks inilah, pendekatan tafsir tematik memiliki urgensi yang tinggi. Melalui metode ini, ayat-ayat yang terkait dengan pendidikan dapat dihimpun, disusun, dan dianalisis secara komprehensif, sehingga menghasilkan rumusan tujuan pendidikan Islam yang integratif, holistik, dan relevan dengan kebutuhan masa kini (Harahap et al., 2025). This approach allows for the emergence of understanding that is not only textual, but also contextual, so that it can answer contemporary educational challenges such as technology integration, strengthening morals, reconstruction of learning systems, and modernization of the curriculum based on the values of the Qur'an (Nasir & Sunardi, 2025).

Based on these issues, this article aims to reconstruct the teleological foundations of Islamic education through a thematic educational interpretation approach. This approach is carried out by compiling and analyzing Qur'anic verses related to the purpose of human creation, the meaning of knowledge, moral responsibility, and the role of the caliphate in a comprehensive and systematic manner. This approach aligns with the recommendations of a number of contemporary studies that emphasize the importance of integrating Qur'anic interpretation, educational philosophy, and pedagogical practice in responding to the fragmentation of Islamic educational goals (Rahman, 2025).

Through this reconstruction, this article argues that the Qur'an offers an integrative and holistic framework for educational goals to bridge the gap between spiritual and educational goals. Theoretically, this research is expected to strengthen the conceptualization of the goals of Islamic education based on the

Qur'an within a comprehensive teleological framework. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators, educational institutions, and policymakers in designing Islamic education that balances intellectual development, character formation, and spiritual strengthening.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with library research. This approach was chosen because it focuses on conceptual and analytical studies of the goals of Islamic education through teleological reconstruction based on thematic interpretations of the Qur'an. Library research allows researchers to systematically examine textual sources to formulate an integrative framework for Islamic educational goals that is relevant to contemporary educational challenges.

The data sources in this study are divided into primary data and secondary data. Primary data are verses from the Quran related to the purpose of education, human creation, science, moral development, worship, and human caliphate. These verses are collected based on thematic keywords relevant to Islamic education, such as tarbiyah, ta'lim, tazkiyah, 'ilm, khalifah, and 'ubudiyah.

Secondary data includes books on Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic education literature, including Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Azhar by HAMKA, and the Concise Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition, this study also uses classic works on Islamic education, particularly Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Thariqah at-Ta'allum by Sheikh Burhanuddin az-Zarnuji, as a conceptual reference source regarding the goals, ethics, and orientation of Islamic education. Other supporting literature includes academic books and scientific journal articles discussing thematic interpretation, Islamic educational philosophy, and the challenges of contemporary education.

The analytical method used in this research is thematic interpretation (tafsīr maudhu'ī) which refers to the methodological framework of Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawi, with an emphasis on determining themes, systematically collecting verses, interpretive analysis, and thematic synthesis to obtain comprehensive conclusions (al-Farmawi, 1994).

The application of thematic exegesis in this research is conducted through several systematic stages, namely:

1. determine the main theme of the research, namely the goals of Islamic education;
2. collect relevant verses of the Qur'an based on thematic keywords of education;
3. group the verses into teleological sub-themes, such as spiritual, moral, leadership (caliph), ubudiyah, and intellectual goals;
4. analyze the interpretation of the verses by referring to various tafsir books and classical and contemporary Islamic education literature; and
5. conduct a thematic synthesis to reconstruct an integrative teleological framework of the goals of Islamic education.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, namely by examining the meaning of the verses of the Quran and the interpretations of the commentators in depth, then linking them to the concept of Islamic education and contemporary educational problems. The contextualization process was carried out by bridging the results of the interpretation of the verses and the concept of classical Islamic education, including the thoughts of az-Zarnuji, with the challenges of modern education such as digitalization, character crisis, fragmentation of educational goals, and utilitarian orientation in learning.

Data validity is maintained through source triangulation, which involves comparing interpretations across tafsir books and linking them to Islamic education literature and contemporary research findings. With this methodological procedure, the research is expected to produce a holistic, systematic, and relevant reconstruction of the teleology of Islamic education's goals in addressing the challenges of contemporary education.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Overview of Research Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic education has profound goals, emphasizing not only intellectual growth but also spiritual, moral, leadership, and social development. Through a thematic analysis of selected Quranic verses, this study highlights five interrelated goals that guide educational practice.

Spiritual Development

The Qur'an (QS Al-Baqarah: 207) refers to learning as a means to attain Allah's pleasure. Education is seen not only as the acquisition of knowledge, but also as the development of sincerity, humility, and ethical awareness. Students' intention in learning is a key factor in aligning intellectual endeavor with spiritual growth.

Moral Formation

Piety (taqwa) emerges as the foundation for ethical development. Students who cultivate piety are more likely to act responsibly, follow moral guidelines, and contribute positively to their communities. Moral education is therefore intertwined with the acquisition of knowledge, ensuring that learning translates into constructive behavior.

Leadership and Social Responsibility

The concept of the caliph in the Qur'an (QS Al-Baqarah: 30) views education as preparation for responsible leadership. Students are encouraged to develop decision-making skills, social awareness, and ethical management, so they are able to face social challenges with integrity and accountability.

Education as Worship (Ubudiyah)

Learning is seen as a form of worship (QS Adz-Dzariyat: 56), reinforcing the idea that education is not merely a personal or worldly endeavor. This

perspective fosters intrinsic motivation, perseverance, and a sense of purpose, connecting everyday learning to a broader spiritual framework.

Intellectual Progress

The command to read (QS Al-'Alaq :1–5) emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge, literacy, and critical thinking. Intellectual growth is not only intended for personal benefit but also for the advancement of society and the maintenance of the ethical and spiritual balance of civilization.

Overall, this research demonstrates that Islamic education is holistic, integrating knowledge, ethics, spirituality, and social responsibility. These findings suggest that an educational framework based on these principles can guide contemporary curriculum design, foster character development, and prepare students to face modern challenges while adhering to moral and spiritual values.

Tabel 1. Thematic Matrix of Qur'anic Educational Purposes

No	Qur'anic Verses	Key Exegetical Concept	Teological Educational Purpose	Classical Pedagogical Parallel (Ta'lim al-Muta'allim)	Contemporary Educational Implication
1	Q.S Al-Baqarah : 207	Mardhatillah (Divine Pleasure)	Spritual Orientation of education, aligning learning with transcendent purpose	Niyyah as the foundation of all learning activities	Re-orienting achievement culture toward meaning, integrity, and purpose beyond metrics
2	Q.S Al-Baqarah: 30	Khilafah (Stewardship)	Formation of responsible leadership and social accountability	Learners's social responsibility and ethical agency	Countering individualistic competence models with civic and ethical leadership
3	Q.S Ali-'Imran: 102	Taqwa (God-consciousness)	Moral and character formation as the core of education	Adab before knowledge; ethical discipline precedes mastery	Addressing moral erosion through intentionality, humility, and ethical self-control

| 4 | Q.S Adz-Dzariyat: 56 | 'Ubudiyyah (Servitude) | Education as worship; cultivating humility and self-regulation | Knowledge pursued as an act of worship and moral responsibility | Integrating critical thinking and lifelong learning with ethical literacy |
| 5 | Q.S Al-'Alaq: 1-5 | Iqra' & 'Ilm (Literacy & Knowledge) | Intellectual development oriented toward civilization-building | Discipline, perseverance, and method in seeking knowledge | |

Table 1.1 synthesizes the principal findings of this study through a thematic interpretation (tafsīr maudhu'i) of selected Qur'anic verses, presented in the form of a structured conceptual matrix. Each verse is analytically mapped to its key exegetical concept, corresponding teleological educational purpose, and classical pedagogical parallel derived from Ta'lim al-Muta'allim. This matrix demonstrates that Qur'anic education is inherently teleological in nature, emphasizing purpose-oriented learning that integrates spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social dimensions within a unified educational vision (Kristjánsson, 2019).

Furthermore, the matrix illustrates that classical Islamic pedagogy does not operate independently of Qur'anic foundations, but rather functions as a practical articulation of these teleological aims. Core pedagogical concepts such as niyyah (intention), adab (ethical discipline), and knowledge as a form of 'ibādah (worship) emerge not merely as moral exhortations, but as formative mechanisms that guide learning behavior and educational orientation (Al-Zarnuji, 1996). By situating these principles within a thematic structure, the matrix highlights the internal coherence between Qur'anic ontology and classical pedagogical thought, offering a holistic and value-oriented educational framework that remains conceptually relevant in addressing contemporary challenges in education (Ramadan, 2009).

Reconstruction of the Teleological Foundations of Islamic Education
Spiritual Teleology: Education as the Pursuit of Divine Pleasure
QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:207.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْرِيْ نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوْفٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ

Meaning:

"Among people there are those who sacrifice themselves to seek the pleasure of Allah. Allah is Forbearing to His servants."

Islamic education, as reflected in QS Al-Baqarah: 207, is based on spiritual teleology that directs learning activities to achieve mardhatillah (the pleasure of Allah). This verse emphasizes that the main purpose of education is to form

humans who are willing to sacrifice for the pleasure of Allah. In thematic interpretation, education is seen as a means of self-improvement towards the highest spiritual goal, namely self-servitude to Allah SWT, so that education is not only worldly oriented but also hereafter oriented (Muliati & Rezi, 2017; Shobirun, 2024).

In the context of education, this demonstrates that the value of learning is measured not only by its final results or achievements, but primarily by its underlying spiritual goals and orientation. Thus, education in Islam is not understood as a neutral process or merely a technical means, but rather as a meaningful activity tied to divine goals.

This orientation distinguishes Islamic education from the modern educational paradigm, which generally emphasizes measurable achievements, efficiency, and individual success. Contemporary education is often defined in terms of skill acquisition and economic benefits. In contrast, the Qur'anic perspective places intention and purpose as the basis for assessing learning activities. Learning is understood not merely as a means to achieve external success, but as a form of devotion directed toward God's pleasure.

This teleological view aligns with the classical Islamic pedagogical tradition. In Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, Al-Zarnūjī asserts that niyyah (intention) is the primary foundation in the process of seeking knowledge. Knowledge acquired without proper intention risks losing its ethical and spiritual value. Therefore, intention serves as a guide that aligns intellectual activity with moral and spiritual awareness. Education, in this context, is understood as an integrative process that connects intellectual development with character formation.

The implications of this spiritual teleology are evident in students' learning orientation. Students are guided to approach knowledge with sincerity, humility, and responsibility, not solely for competitive purposes or pragmatic gain. This orientation fosters intrinsic motivation grounded in meaning, thus supporting learning persistence, ethical consistency, and personal responsibility in the educational process.

In contemporary studies of educational philosophy, a number of thinkers also criticize the idea of value-free education and emphasize the importance of purpose and meaning in human development (Halstead, 2004). However, Islamic education offers a more fundamental framework by placing educational goals within a transcendent moral horizon. By linking the learning process to a divine orientation, Islamic education provides a coherent and comprehensive foundation for lifelong human development.

Leadership Teleology: Education and the Concept of Khalifah
QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30

وَاِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰۤىِٕكَةِ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً ۗ قَالُوْٓا اَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَنْ يُّفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاۤءَ ۚ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

Meaning:

"(Remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a vicegerent on earth." They said, "Do You intend to place therein one who will

cause corruption and shed blood, while we glorify You and sanctify Your name?"
He said, "Indeed, I know what you do not know."

In this narrative, humans are given the position of caliph by God. The thematic interpretation states that education aims to prepare humans who can lead and manage the earth for its benefit, as well as make real and responsible contributions to the social and natural environment (Ashhabul Kahfi et al., 2024; Sundari et al., 2023).

The designation of humans as caliphs (God's representatives on earth) in Surah Al-Baqarah: 30 demonstrates that leadership in Islam is not merely a political or managerial role, but rather an existential responsibility inherent in the very nature of human creation. In the context of education, this concept defines the learning process as an effort to foster a sense of responsibility, ethical sensitivity, and moral commitment to oneself and society. Education, therefore, serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a process of moral and civilizational preparation to carry out a divine mandate.

From this perspective, the teleological goal of Islamic education is to shape individuals who are aware of their leadership capacity in various domains of life, from self-management to broader social engagement. Leadership is not understood narrowly as formal authority, but as the ability to act responsibly, make ethical decisions, and contribute constructively to an increasingly complex social reality. Therefore, the concept of the caliph demands an educational orientation that not only produces technical competence but also moral integrity as the primary foundation of leadership.

This Qur'anic perspective differs from the dominant secular educational paradigm, which generally emphasizes academic achievement, individual success, and market-based competencies. While this approach can produce intellectually capable graduates, it often neglects aspects of spiritual orientation and social responsibility. Consequently, education risks producing fragmented personalities, characterized by individualism and ethical disconnection. In contrast, Islamic education emphasizes the integration of intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions as an inseparable whole in human development. This orientation reflects the ideal of Islamic education, in which knowledge ('ilm) is inseparable from morality and social responsibility.

The teleology of leadership within the concept of the caliph also implies the formation of certain ethical character traits in students, such as compassion, patience, courage, humility, social awareness, and responsibility in protecting others. These values are not merely moral complements, but core qualities that shape authentic leadership. The example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a moral leader affirms the synthesis between ethical excellence and social responsibility, while also reinforcing the goal of Islamic education, which prioritizes moral development over intellectual or professional achievement.

Neglecting the caliphate paradigm in education carries significant risks. The absence of an ethical and social orientation can widen moral and social gaps, weaken empathy, and normalize practices of exploitation and injustice. When education is reduced to cognitive achievement detached from moral goals, it has the potential to reinforce social inequality and global suffering, rather than

providing solutions. Therefore, the Qur'anic teleology of leadership positions education as a transformative force aimed at restoring ethical balance, social justice, and responsible stewardship of the earth in a compassionate manner.

A number of Islamic educational thinkers emphasize that leadership must be understood as a moral responsibility, not merely a functional skill. The goal of Islamic education focuses on developing moral agency and communal responsibility (Al–Attas, 2014). This view reinforces the Qur'anic framework of the caliph as a teleological basis for leadership education rooted in responsibility, integrity, and social concern.

Moral Teologoly: Taqwa and Character Formation

QS. Ali Imran: 102

يَاۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ وَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ

Meaning:

"O you who believe, fear Allah with true fear and do not die except as Muslims."

Kemenag Brief Interpretation:

According to thematic interpretation, this verse emphasizes that all educational efforts should be directed toward the goal of serving God. Education is intended to shape individuals who are aware of their spiritual role in the world, not merely for worldly interests (Muliati & Rezi, 2017; Sundari et al., 2023).

In Islamic education, piety occupies a very high position as the main moral goal. Piety is not only understood as a formal religious attitude, but as a form of servitude that reflects the existence of faith in the learner. This faith then forms a moral orientation, because people who are pious try to carry out God's commands and stay away from His prohibitions. Thus, piety functions as an internal foundation that directs human behavior towards goodness. On the other hand, intellectual intelligence that is not accompanied by piety has the potential to give rise to damage, because knowledge is used without moral control.

In this context, the absence of piety produces ethically fragile characters and causes humans to fail in fulfilling their role as caliphs who bring benefit. Piety also plays a crucial role in shaping students' sense of moral responsibility. The spiritual awareness born of piety encourages individuals to take responsibility for themselves, for example, in carrying out religious obligations not due to external pressure, but out of an awareness of their relationship with God. Furthermore, piety teaches self-control and the belief that every action, good or bad, has moral consequences. This principle fosters prudence, ethical consistency, and a drive to always do good. From a Qur'anic perspective, a pious person is one who strives to be a devout and moral Muslim, so that their presence has a positive impact on themselves and their surroundings.

Islamic education places character building at the core of the educational process, not as a byproduct of academic achievement. In real life, character is the most visible aspect and determines whether an individual will benefit or harm their environment. Academic achievement makes a significant contribution, but its impact is limited if not accompanied by good character. Therefore, Islamic education strives to shape students into morally strong personalities, so that their knowledge can be directed toward the common good and benefit.

Within the framework of moral teleology, piety and morality are inseparably linked. Strong piety is reflected in good morality, while good morality is a concrete manifestation of piety. This reciprocal relationship emphasizes that Islamic education cannot separate moral development from spiritual development. Both reinforce each other and serve as the foundation for the formation of a complete character.

A piety-based moral teleology also offers a significant alternative to modern education, which tends to be oriented toward cognitive and instrumental achievement. Educational success is measured not only by mastery of material and academic intelligence, but also by students' ability to apply knowledge in real life with social sensitivity and good morals. Through this orientation, Islamic education seeks to shape the whole person so that the younger generation can become responsible future leaders and bring benefits to the wider community.

The role of educators and the learning environment is crucial in fostering piety and character. Moral education cannot be delivered simply through verbal instruction; it must be realized through role models. The behavior of educators reflects directly on the character development of students. Furthermore, a conducive and consistent educational environment is essential for the sustainable instillation of moral values and ethics.

The history of Islamic civilization demonstrates that the integration of knowledge, morality, and moral leadership gave birth to a golden age of Islam. The scientists and leaders of that era were not only intellectually superior but also possessed strong character and moral responsibility. This confirms that the moral teleology of Islamic education contributed comprehensively to the advancement of civilization.

Conversely, neglecting piety as the moral orientation of education has serious consequences, such as the emergence of injustice, corruption, oppression, and various humanitarian crises. When education loses its moral purpose, knowledge and power have the potential to be misused. Therefore, a piety-based moral teleology reaffirms the role of Islamic education as a means of developing just, empathetic, and responsible characters in both personal and social life..

Ubudiyah Teleology: Education as Worship

QS Adz-Dzariyat: 56

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْاِنْسَ اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ

Meaning:

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they may serve Me."

This verse provides a strong teleological foundation that all human activities, including education and the learning process, are within the framework of ubudiyah (servitude). In the Islamic perspective, learning is not understood solely as an intellectual or social activity, but as a form of worship if intended as an effort to draw closer to Allah. Thus, education becomes part of human existential devotion as a servant, not just a means to achieve worldly goals.

Thematic Interpretation:

Islamic education aims to create a quality society, active in goodness and worship, anfa'uhum linnafsi wa linnas and capable of maintaining social values that are moral and just (Nadlif, 2022; Yulianti, 2024).

The meaning of education as worship can also be understood within the framework of non-military jihad. The Qur'an emphasizes that not all believers must go to war; rather, some are commanded to deepen their knowledge in order to safeguard and pass on the teachings of Islam: "...It is not fitting for the believers to go out all together (to war). Why should not some from every group of them go out to deepen their knowledge of religion..." (QS At-Taubah: 122)

This verse demonstrates that seeking knowledge is a form of intellectual and spiritual jihad that serves to maintain the continuity of Islamic values. The learning process, with all the accompanying sacrifices of time, energy, thought, and sincerity, is a concrete manifestation of mujahadah in devotion to Allah. Therefore, education cannot be reduced to a technical activity, but rather an act of worship that demands perseverance and patience.

The teleology of ubudiyah also emphasizes an inner orientation in the learning process. When education is based on a consciousness of servitude, learners are driven by intrinsic motivation that is spiritual, not merely external encouragement such as achievement or social recognition. This orientation forms inner steadfastness, sincerity, and moral strength in facing various academic challenges. In the tradition of classical Islamic pedagogy, the pursuit of knowledge requires sincerity, sacrifice, and the right intention so that the knowledge brings blessings and benefits.

The role of intention (niyyah) is a central element in bridging learning activities with the values of worship. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that every deed depends on its intention. In the context of education, sincere intention makes the learning process a form of worship and determines the spiritual quality of the knowledge gained. The crisis in modern education is rooted in the detachment of knowledge from spiritual goals, resulting in the loss of meaning and direction. By making ubudiyah the orientation, Islamic education returns knowledge to its original purpose: knowledge and devotion to God..

The teleology of education as worship demands the integration of cognitive, moral, and spiritual aspects. The goal of Islamic education is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge, but rather directed toward the formation of a perfect human being, a person with a balance of intellectual intelligence, moral maturity, and spiritual awareness. This balance is a hallmark of Islamic education and distinguishes it from fragmentary educational systems. Therefore, Islamic education places the formation of divine awareness at the heart of students' moral and character development.

The worship orientation also has implications for students' learning attitudes, such as sincerity, responsibility, and awareness of human limitations. Students are encouraged to strive for maximum effort in the learning process, while recognizing that the final outcome is in God's will. This attitude fosters a healthy learning ethos, avoiding the trap of intellectual arrogance and remaining grounded in humility.

In this context, the role of educators becomes highly strategic. Educators serve not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral and spiritual role models. The realization that education is an act of worship requires educators to maintain personal integrity, as their behavior and attitudes will be emulated by their students. An educational environment that supports the values of worship is also a crucial factor in instilling sustainable spiritual awareness.

The neglect of the teleology of worship in education has serious consequences. When the learning process is detached from a servitude orientation, divine and humanitarian values are potentially eroded. Knowledge and power can be misused without clear moral boundaries, giving rise to various forms of corruption and injustice. Therefore, understanding education as worship is a crucial foundation in Islamic education to maintain a balance between intellectual advancement and human moral-spiritual responsibility.

Intellectual Teleology: Knowledge, Literacy, and Civilization

QS. Al-Alaq: 1-5

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ ۚ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۚ اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ ۙ الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۙ عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Meaning:

"Read in the name of your Lord who created; He created man from a clot of blood; Read! Your Lord is the Most Glorious; who teaches (mankind) by the pen; He teaches man that which he did not know."

Dalam perspektif Islam, ilmu pengetahuan menempati posisi fundamental dalam pembentukan peradaban manusia. Wahyu pertama yang diturunkan kepada Nabi Muhammad ﷺ, yakni QS Al-'Alaq: 1–5, menegaskan perintah membaca, belajar, dan mengenal Tuhan sebagai fondasi awal kebangkitan manusia. Ayat ini menunjukkan bahwa lahirnya peradaban tidak dapat dilepaskan dari aktivitas intelektual yang berkelanjutan. Berbagai kemajuan dalam kehidupan manusia baik dalam bidang sains, teknologi, maupun sosial yang merupakan hasil dari proses belajar, pengamatan, dan eksperimen yang dilakukan secara terus-menerus. Dengan demikian, ilmu dalam Islam bukan sekadar alat kognitif, melainkan pilar utama terbentuknya peradaban yang beradab dan bermakna.

The fundamental difference between the Islamic perspective and the instrumental approach to knowledge lies in their goals and orientations. In Islam, knowledge is viewed as a trust that must be safeguarded, inherited, and developed responsibly. Knowledge does not cease to be a pragmatic tool for momentary gain, but rather becomes part of the continuity of civilization and a tribute to the struggles of previous scientists. This orientation prevents science from losing its humanitarian and moral values, while ensuring that knowledge continues to serve the benefit of humanity.

The intellectual teleology of Islamic education also emphasizes the inseparable relationship between reason, revelation, and knowledge. Revelation serves as a guide, directing reason to avoid deviating from the truth, while reason processes information, conducts critical analysis, and develops research. Knowledge is then born as a result of a rational process guided by the values of

revelation. This relationship demonstrates that Islam does not deny rationality but rather places it within a clear moral and spiritual framework, so that knowledge does not lose its direction and purpose.

In this context, literacy in Islam has a broad and profound meaning. Literacy is not limited to the technical ability to read and write, but encompasses the process of acquiring knowledge, deepening understanding, critical observation, and applying knowledge in real life. Such literacy fosters intellectual awareness and moral responsibility, so that knowledge does not remain theoretical but becomes a force for social transformation.

Knowledge and literacy play a vital role in shaping civilized human beings. Civilized individuals are individuals who are able to balance their rational function with ethical behavior and good moral attitudes. With respect for the heritage of knowledge and a commitment to its continuous development, Islamic education strives to create a harmonious, just, and peaceful social order. A civilization built on knowledge and morality will produce a strong and sustainable social balance.

Islamic intellectual teleology also critiques modern education, which is overly oriented toward utilitarianism and academic achievement. When education is detached from religious and humanitarian values, the learning process has the potential to result in a void of meaning, ethical crises, and social inequality. Knowledge developed without a moral orientation can lose its transformative power and even become a source of new problems in human life.

Therefore, Islamic education emphasizes the importance of the concept of 'ilm nafi' (beneficial knowledge) as a learning objective. Ideal knowledge is knowledge that has a positive impact, enlightens human life, and guides individuals closer to God. The ultimate goal of education is not merely to produce an intellectually intelligent generation, but a generation whose knowledge brings goodness to the universe and social life.

The role of educators and the educational environment is key to realizing this intellectual teleology. A culture of knowledge is built through cultivating a love of knowledge, respect for the learning and experimentation process, and upholding Islamic and humanitarian values. In such an environment, Islamic education not only produces knowledgeable individuals but also responsible inheritors of civilization who are oriented towards the common good.

When analyzed as a whole, the verses presented form a framework for the goals of Islamic education that is complete and complementary. QS Al-Baqarah emphasizes the spiritual orientation and leadership of humans as caliphs, while QS Ali Imran strengthens the moral dimension through the command of piety and consistency of faith. QS Adz-Dzariyat directs education to the goal of ubudiyah which is the basis of all human activities, while QS Al-'Alaq emphasizes the urgency of mastering science as the foundation of civilizational progress. The integration of these values shows that Islamic education does not stand on one dimension alone, but is a unity between spirituality, morality, leadership, ubudiyah, and intellectual development (Yahya, 2022). This integrative framework is also in line with the view that the goal of Islamic education must be able to form people who have character, are knowledgeable,

and contribute to society, especially in facing the challenges of modern education such as digitalization, literacy crisis, and cultural shifts.(Fauzi et al., 2025). Thus, the integration of these objectives becomes an important foundation for the development of Islamic education that is comprehensive, contextual, and relevant to the needs of the times.

Thus, the aim of education in Islam according to thematic interpretation is to:

1. Achieving the pleasure of Allah and strengthening monotheism
2. Forming moral and responsible leaders
3. Cultivating pious and ethical individuals
4. Encouraging devotion to Allah
5. Producing knowledgeable and competent individuals, creating student competencies
6. Creating a dynamic society full of social benefits (Muliati & Rezi, 2017; Sundari et al., 2023)

Reconstruction of the Teleology of the Goals of Islamic Education in Answering the Challenges of Contemporary Education

This section discusses how the teleological reconstruction of the goals of Islamic education based on thematic interpretation of the Qur'an can address the fragmentation of spiritual and pedagogical-instrumental goals, which are the main challenges of contemporary education. This reconstruction repositions the goals of Islamic education within an integrative framework that unites the spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual dimensions as a unified educational orientation.

The goals of Islamic education, formulated through a thematic analysis of Quranic verses, demonstrate strong conceptual relevance to the dynamics and challenges of education in the contemporary era. Digital transformation, the acceleration of information technology, and changes in the mindset of the modern generation have driven a shift in educational orientation that demands technological literacy, critical thinking skills, and a high degree of adaptability. In this context, Quranic values emphasizing the importance of iqra' (recitation of the Quran), deepening knowledge, and developing reasoning provide a teleological foundation for students to participate meaningfully in the digital education ecosystem (Fahmi et al., 2024).

The command to read in the Quran cannot be understood narrowly as a purely textual activity, but rather encompasses the ability to read social realities, scientific developments, and technological dynamics as part of the scientific mandate of modern humanity. Thus, the goal of Islamic education is not limited to the normative-theological dimension, but is responsive and transformative to changes in social structures and the challenges of learning in the digital age.

In addition to digital challenges, the character and morality of the younger generation are crucial issues in contemporary education. Cultural globalization, the intense use of social media, and the rapid flow of information make students vulnerable to moral degradation, egoism, and identity crises. In this context, the reconstruction of the teleology of Islamic education, which emphasizes the

formation of piety and noble morals, provides a strong conceptual foundation for strengthening character education. The value of piety, as emphasized in Surah Ali Imran, verse 102, functions as an internal moral filter that shapes students' ethical awareness in facing the complexities of modern life (Jabar & Subagyo, 2025).

Another equally important challenge is society's demand for a generation capable of competing globally while simultaneously possessing social sensitivity and environmental awareness. In this regard, the concept of humans as caliphs on earth, as affirmed in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 30, provides normative direction regarding the importance of education that fosters ethical leadership, social responsibility, and the ability to manage change. Education oriented toward leadership and social sensitivity is an urgent need to face the complexities of the 21st century (Nurhayati et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the dimension of worship within the goals of Islamic education emphasizes that all educational activities are essentially part of worship to Allah (QS Adz-Dzariyat: 56). In the contemporary context, this orientation is relevant for balancing the tendency of modern education, which often falls into utilitarianism and instrumental pursuits. Education based on worship values can foster stable learning motivation, ethical awareness, and psychological resilience in students amidst the pressures of modern life (Sukarlan, 2025). In this context, the value of ubudiyah serves as a counterbalance to the utilitarian tendencies of modern education.

From an intellectual perspective, the command to read, write, and research in Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1–5, has direct relevance to the demands of literacy and the development of 21st-century knowledge. Revelation-based Islamic education places mastery of knowledge as the foundation of civilizational progress, in line with the needs of information literacy, digital literacy, and technological literacy in modern education (Khasanah & Herina, 2019).

Overall, the teleological reconstruction of the goals of Islamic education, encompassing spiritual, moral, social, ubudiyah, and intellectual dimensions, offers a holistic educational framework capable of addressing the complex challenges of contemporary education. These Qur'anic values are not merely idealistic and normative, but serve as conceptual and practical guidelines for curriculum development, learning, educational management, and student character development. Thus, Islamic education has strong potential as an integrative educational model capable of bridging the fragmentation of modern educational goals while simultaneously building a civilized, knowledgeable, and personable civilization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the fragmentation of goals between spiritual and pedagogical-instrumental orientations is a fundamental problem in contemporary Islamic education. Through a thematic interpretation of the Qur'an, this study reconstructs the teleology of the goals of Islamic education as an integrative and holistic framework. The analysis shows that the goals of Islamic education encompass interrelated spiritual, moral, intellectual, social,

and ubudiyah dimensions, so they cannot be reduced solely to technical achievements and job market needs. This teleological reconstruction confirms that Islamic education has a normative-conceptual mechanism to respond to the challenges of modernity, including the character crisis, educational utilitarianism, and value disruption due to technological developments. Thus, Islamic education has the potential to become a transformative educational model that balances competency development, character formation, and transcendental orientation. This study is limited to a literature review, therefore further research is recommended to examine the implementation of the teleology of the goals of Islamic education in curriculum practice and empirical learning.

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