



Students' Pursuit of Knowledge in Islam: Framework for Character Education from Quran and Hadith

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Abstract

Seeking knowledge is a fundamental obligation in Islam that encompasses intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions, positioning learning as both an educational process and an act of worship. This study aims to analyze the concept and practice of students' pursuit of knowledge in Islam and to construct an Islamic educational framework for character formation. Using a qualitative approach with the living Quran and Hadith method, data were drawn from the Quran, Hadith, scholarly interpretations, expert opinions, and previous studies published in reputable international journals. Thematic analysis was conducted through Miles and Huberman's interactive technique to identify recurring patterns and values. The findings reveal six essential concepts and practices for students in seeking knowledge: sincere intention for Allah, ethics toward teachers, diligence and perseverance, reliance on Allah, avoidance of sinful acts, and supplication. These elements highlight the integration of spirituality, ethics, and discipline in Islamic pedagogy. The study concludes that these six principles provide a practical framework for Islamic character education, offering guidance for educators and institutions to cultivate students with noble character and integrity in diverse educational contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Education in Islam is not merely an intellectual endeavor but a holistic process that integrates knowledge, ethics, and spirituality (Efendy, 2023; Handayani et al., 2021; Kadir, 2020; Khasanah, 2021; Nahariah, 2022). The Quran emphasizes the importance of knowledge as a means of elevating human dignity, as reflected in "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees" (QS. Al-Mujadilah: 11). Similarly, the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW underscores that seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim, male and female (HR. Ibn Majah). These foundational texts highlight that learning in Islam is inseparable from the cultivation of moral character and spiritual consciousness.

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However, contemporary Islamic education faces challenges in translating these values into practical pedagogy. Studies show that while Islamic schools emphasize religious knowledge, the integration of ethics and spirituality into daily learning practices is often less optimal, leading to gaps in students' moral development (Arifin & Sofa, 2024; Saihu & Aziz, 2020). Character education derived from Quran and Hadith has been widely discussed, yet many approaches remain descriptive rather than operational, lacking frameworks that can be applied consistently in classrooms (Asror et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2022). This situation raises the urgency to revisit the classical Islamic concept of *talab al-'ilm* (seeking knowledge) and reinterpret it for modern educational contexts. By doing so, Islamic education can provide a comprehensive framework that not only transmits knowledge but also shapes students' integrity, discipline, and spirituality.

In the Islamic perspective, the pursuit of knowledge is not merely an intellectual activity but a sacred obligation that encompasses spiritual and moral dimensions. Quraish Shihab, in his work *Grounding the Quran*, emphasizes that the command *iqra'* (read) is not absolute but conditional, as it must be carried out *bi ismi rabbika* in the name of your Lord. This indicates that reading and learning should always be aligned with divine values, rather than being reduced to worldly pursuits. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further reinforced this principle by declaring that seeking knowledge is a compulsory duty (*fardhu 'ain*) for every Muslim, male and female alike. Thus, knowledge in Islam is holistic, encompassing both worldly sciences and religious understanding, guiding believers toward the realization of life's purpose, worship, and morality (Arlina et al., 2023; Daulay et al., 2023).

The Quran affirms that Allah elevates the ranks of those who believe and those endowed with knowledge (QS. Al-Mujadalah: 11), positioning knowledge as a means of human dignity and spiritual refinement. Classical scholars such as Ahmad Maraghi highlight that *adab* (proper conduct) within the learning process such as showing respect in gatherings and honoring teachers is inseparable from the acquisition of knowledge. Similarly, Imam Zarnuji in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* underscores the significance of ethics in learning, stressing that good character is essential for students in their relationships with teachers and peers. Consequently, Islamic education is not confined to the transfer of information but is deeply rooted in the cultivation of sincerity, perseverance, the careful selection of mentors, and the practical application of acquired knowledge (Mujayyanah et al., 2021; Ramadhan et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, contemporary Islamic education faces pressing challenges, particularly the decline of students' moral conduct. The erosion of respect for teachers, the fading of courtesy, and the rise of deviant behaviors such as smoking, drug abuse, and violence illustrate the insufficient internalization of ethical values. Environmental influences and the pressures of modernization further exacerbate this moral crisis (Candra et al., 2020; Ramadhan et al., 2024). Therefore, the success of Islamic education must be measured not only by academic achievement but also by the moral and spiritual quality of learners. Integrating knowledge (*'ilm*), ethics (*adab*), and spirituality (*ruhyyah*).

The pursuit of knowledge has always been regarded as a central obligation in Islam, deeply rooted in the Quran and Hadith. Learning is not only an intellectual exercise but also a spiritual act of worship that elevates human dignity and moral consciousness. The Quran emphasizes that those who are granted knowledge are

raised in rank, while the Prophet Muhammad SAW declared that seeking knowledge is a duty for every Muslim. These foundational teachings highlight the inseparability of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality in Islamic education (Izzati, 2024; Nawawi, 2020; Nissa, 2022).

Despite this strong emphasis, contemporary Islamic education often struggles to fully integrate these values into pedagogical practice. Many institutions prioritize the transmission of religious knowledge but fall short in embedding ethical and spiritual dimensions into the daily learning process. As a result, students may acquire cognitive skills without a parallel development of moral integrity and spiritual awareness, creating a gap between knowledge acquisition and character formation (Andrian et al., 2024).

This study emerges from the recognition that Islamic education must revisit classical concepts of *talab al-'ilm* (seeking knowledge) and reinterpret them for modern educational contexts. By doing so, Islamic pedagogy can provide a holistic framework that not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates sincerity, discipline, and ethical conduct among students. Such a framework is urgently needed to address the challenges of moral decline and fragmented educational practices in contemporary Muslim societies (Sutrisno, 2021).

The objective of this research is to analyze the concept and practice of students' pursuit of knowledge in Islam and to construct an Islamic educational framework for character formation. The study seeks to identify essential values embedded in Quran and Hadith, explore their relevance to student practices, and propose a thematic framework that integrates spirituality, ethics, and discipline into Islamic pedagogy (Handayani et al., 2021).

To achieve this, the research employs a qualitative approach using the living Quran and Hadith method. Primary data are derived from Quran, Hadith, scholarly interpretations, and expert opinions, while secondary data are strengthened by previous studies published in reputable international journals. Thematic analysis is conducted through Miles and Huberman's interactive technique, allowing the identification of recurring patterns and values that shape the pursuit of knowledge in Islam (Arifin & Sofa, 2024).

The findings reveal six essential concepts and practices for students in seeking knowledge: sincere intention for Allah, ethics toward teachers, diligence and perseverance, reliance on Allah, avoidance of sinful acts, and supplication. These elements represent the core values of Islamic pedagogy and provide a practical framework for character education. They highlight the integration of spirituality, ethics, and discipline as inseparable components of learning in Islam.

Research questions guiding this study include: What are the core concepts of students' pursuit of knowledge in Islam according to Quran and Hadith? How are these concepts reflected in student practices within Islamic educational traditions? In what ways can these concepts be transformed into a framework for Islamic character education applicable in contemporary contexts? These questions ensure that the study remains focused on both textual foundations and practical implications.

Previous studies have examined character education from Quran and Hadith perspectives, yet most remain descriptive rather than operational. For example, Fitri, (2018) explored character education values but focused primarily on textual interpretation without linking them to student practices. Ismail, (2016) analyzed values of character education but did not provide a structured pedagogical

framework. Akromusyuhada, (2018) emphasized the paradigm of Quran and Hadith in character education but remained at a conceptual level without empirical application.

Recent works also highlight the integration of Quran and Hadith values into pedagogy as an innovation to improve Islamic education quality. However, these studies often concentrate on curriculum design or institutional transformation, leaving a gap in understanding how students themselves should embody the pursuit of knowledge as a spiritual and ethical practice. Bibliometric analyses of Islamic character education further reveal that most publications emphasize trends and patterns rather than offering concrete frameworks for student character formation.

This research addresses that gap by proposing a comprehensive framework that directly connects Quranic and Prophetic teachings on seeking knowledge with the practical formation of student character in Islamic education. By identifying six key concepts and practices, the study contributes to the development of an Islamic educational model that is both faithful to tradition and responsive to contemporary challenges. Ultimately, it offers guidance for educators and institutions to cultivate students with noble character and integrity in diverse educational contexts.

This study specifically examines the concept and practice of students in seeking knowledge from the perspective of Islam, grounded in the normative foundations of the Quran and Sunnah. The focus of this research is directed toward how Islamic teachings emphasize knowledge as both an obligation and a means of shaping moral character and spirituality. Thus, the study not only highlights theoretical aspects but also seeks to explore the relevance of learning practices in daily life in accordance with the principles taught by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

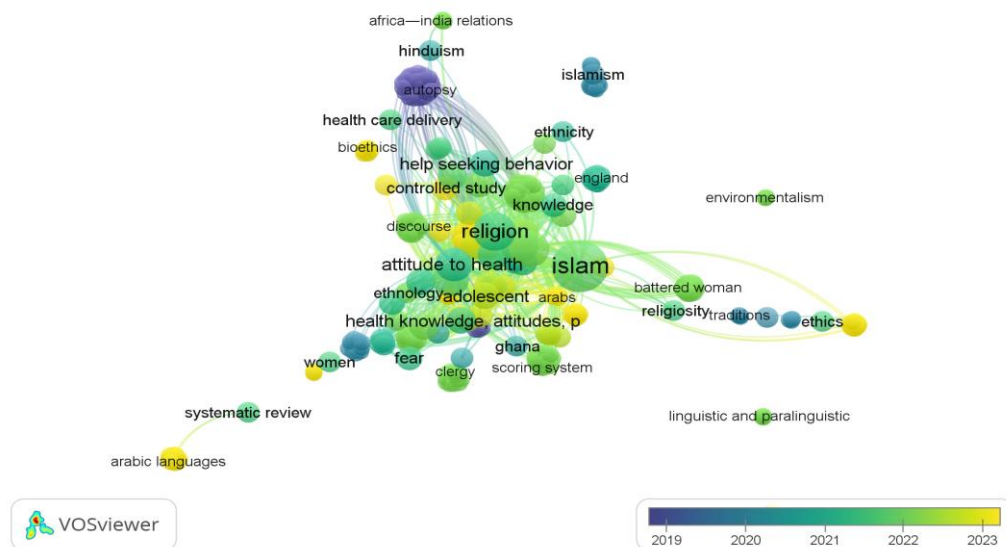


Fig 1. Results of Keyword Analysis on the Concept and Practice of Students Seeking Knowledge in Islam

A bibliometric analysis was conducted using the VOSviewer software on Monday, January 13, 2024, at 8:30 PM. VOSviewer is a data analysis tool that enables the visualization of keywords from highly reputable Scopus-indexed journals worldwide, thereby generating conceptual maps related to the theme of this research. The results of the analysis indicate that the concept and practice of

students seeking knowledge have been widely developed by previous scholars. One of the most recent issues identified is the practice of students toward their teachers, which has become a central concern in the discourse of Islamic education. Nevertheless, the findings also reveal a gap between the ideal concepts prescribed by the Quran and Hadith and the actual practices observed in educational settings. The practice of students seeking knowledge in relation to their teachers, as emphasized in Islamic teachings, has not yet been fully internalized in everyday life. Therefore, this study carries significant novelty, as it seeks to examine in depth how the concept and practice of seeking knowledge can be implemented in accordance with the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah, while contributing to the strengthening of holistic Islamic education.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which is considered appropriate for exploring meanings embedded in religious texts and educational practices (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Creswell, 2014; Engkizar et al., 2024, 2025; Hamdi & Desvia, 2025; Rahawarin et al., 2024; Raodatul, 2024). The type of research employed is living Quran and Hadith, an approach that emphasizes how Quranic and Prophetic teachings are understood and practiced in contemporary contexts (Engkizar et al., 2023; Seminikhyna & Lutsenko, 2024).

Data sources consist of primary and secondary materials. Primary data are drawn from the Quran, Hadith, and scholarly interpretations, while secondary data are obtained from previous studies published in reputable international journals (Busral et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2022; Hamdi & Desvia, 2025; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025). These sources provide both textual foundations and comparative perspectives that strengthen the validity of the findings.

The research instruments include textual documentation and thematic coding sheets. Textual documentation involves systematically collecting Quranic verses, Hadith narrations, and scholarly commentaries relevant to the pursuit of knowledge. Coding sheets are used to classify emerging themes, ensuring consistency and transparency in the analysis (Baroud et al., 2025; Houghton et al., 2015; Putri et al., 2025).

Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This iterative process allows the researcher to refine themes and ensure that interpretations remain grounded in the data (Rogers, 2018). Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring concepts such as sincerity, ethics toward teachers, diligence, reliance on Allah, avoidance of sin, and supplication, which together form the framework for Islamic character education.

By employing this methodological design, the study ensures rigor and relevance. The combination of living Quran and Hadith with thematic analysis provides a comprehensive lens through which the pursuit of knowledge in Islam can be understood as both a textual tradition and a practical framework for shaping students' character in contemporary educational contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a comprehensive framework for understanding the pursuit of knowledge in Islam, derived from Quranic verses, Prophetic traditions, and scholarly interpretations. Rather than viewing learning as

a purely intellectual endeavor, the results highlight its spiritual, ethical, and moral dimensions, positioning education as an act of worship and a means of character formation. Through thematic analysis, six essential concepts and practices emerged as the foundation of Islamic pedagogy: sincere intention for Allah, ethics toward teachers, diligence and perseverance, reliance on Allah, avoidance of sinful acts, and supplication. These principles not only reflect the timeless guidance of the Quran and Hadith but also provide practical direction for contemporary Islamic education, offering a holistic approach that integrates knowledge, spirituality, and ethics in shaping students with noble character and integrity.

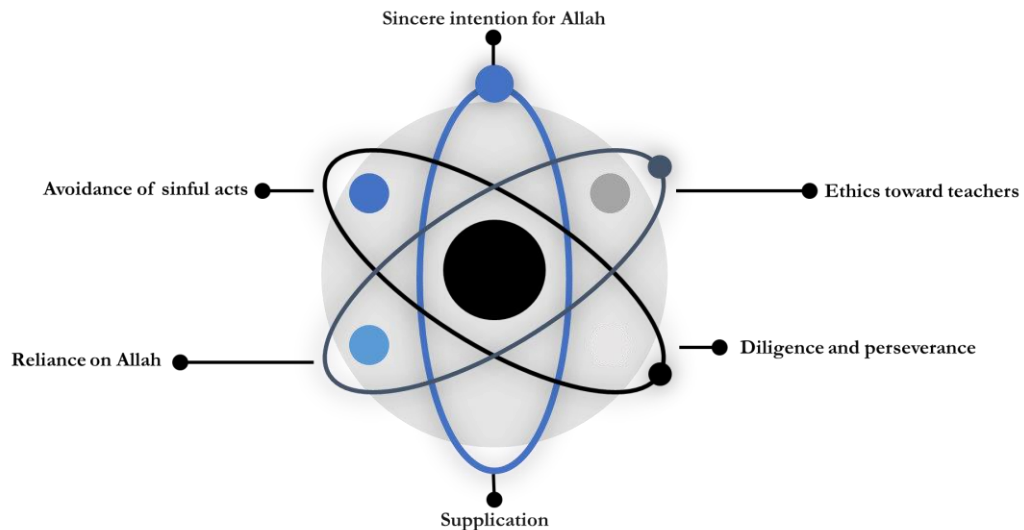


Fig 2. The concept and practice of students seeking knowledge in Islam Sincere intention for Allah

The pursuit of knowledge in Islam begins with a sincere intention directed solely to Allah. Intention (*niat*) is the foundation of every action, and without sincerity, learning loses its spiritual value. The Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized this principle in the famous hadith: “*Actions are judged by intentions, and every person will be rewarded according to what he intended*” (al-Bukhari & Muslim). This teaching elevates learning from a mere intellectual exercise to an act of worship.

وَمَا أَمْرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ هَا خُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ
وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيَمَةِ

The Quran also highlights sincerity in worship: “*And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakat. And that is the correct religion*” (QS. Al-Bayyinah: 5). This verse affirms that sincerity is the essence of all religious acts, including the pursuit of knowledge. Thus, students must align their learning objectives with the desire to gain Allah’s pleasure rather than worldly recognition.

Analytically, sincerity shapes the student’s mindset and motivation. It prevents arrogance, fosters humility, and ensures perseverance even in challenging circumstances. By internalizing sincerity, students remain focused on the transformative power of knowledge as a means to serve humanity and strengthen their relationship with Allah. This principle provides a spiritual foundation for Islamic pedagogy, ensuring that education is not detached from faith.

Ethics toward teachers

Respect and humility toward teachers are essential in Islamic pedagogy. Teachers are regarded as guides who transmit both knowledge and values, and

with the reliance He is due, He would provide for you as He provides for the birds: they go out hungry in the morning and return full in the evening” (al-Tirmidhi). This hadith demonstrates that reliance on Allah does not negate effort but complements it with trust in divine wisdom.

Analytically, *tawakkal* nurtures humility and resilience in the learning process. It prevents despair when outcomes are uncertain and instills confidence that Allah’s wisdom governs all results. In education, reliance on Allah encourages students to combine hard work with prayer, ensuring that their pursuit of knowledge remains spiritually grounded and emotionally balanced (Haqi et al., 2024; Sholahudin, 2023).

Avoidance of sinful acts

Avoiding sinful acts is crucial for preserving the purity of knowledge. As Allah explains in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 222 below.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ ۗ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَأَعْتَزِلُوا النَّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرُبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ ۚ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

The Quran warns: “Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves” (QS. Al-Baqarah: 222). Purification here includes moral integrity that supports intellectual clarity. Classical scholars such as Imam al-Shafi’i emphasized that sins darken the heart and obstruct understanding.

The Prophet Muhammad SAW also said: “Knowledge is light, and Allah does not grant His light to a sinner” (reported in classical Islamic scholarship). This statement highlights that sin obstructs the blessing of knowledge and prevents students from fully benefiting from their learning. Moral discipline is therefore essential for intellectual and spiritual development (Habibah, 2021).

Analytically, avoiding sinful acts ensures that students’ minds and hearts remain receptive to knowledge. It creates a disciplined lifestyle that supports both academic success and spiritual growth. In modern contexts, this principle can be applied through ethical codes of conduct, academic honesty, and personal discipline, ensuring that education remains aligned with Islamic values.

Supplication

Supplication connects intellectual effort with divine assistance. As Allah explains in Surah Taha verse 114 below.

رَبِّ وَقُلْ مَطَّلَعِي اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُفْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ ۗ عَلَّمَكَ مَا زِدْنِي

The Quran encourages believers to pray for knowledge: “And say, My Lord, increase me in knowledge” (QS. Taha: 114). This verse directly links learning with prayer, showing that knowledge is ultimately a divine gift.

The Prophet Muhammad SAW also taught specific supplications, such as: “O Allah, benefit me with what You have taught me, and teach me what will benefit me, and increase me in knowledge. Praise be to Allah in all circumstances, and I seek refuge in Allah from the torment of the Fire” (al-Tirmidhi). This supplication reflects the student’s dependence on Allah for guidance and success.

Analytically, supplication instills humility and gratitude, reminding students that knowledge is not merely the result of human effort but a blessing from Allah. It strengthens the spiritual dimension of learning by connecting intellectual pursuit with divine support. In educational practice, regular supplication fosters mindfulness and gratitude, ensuring that the pursuit of knowledge remains holistic and integrated with faith.

Sincerity in learning aligns closely with the concept of moral motivation in character education. [Jalilah, \(2025\)](#); [Khoirina et al., \(2022\)](#); [Sein & Salik, \(2022\)](#) argues that authentic moral behavior is rooted in internal motivation rather than external rewards. In Islamic education, sincerity ensures that students pursue knowledge as a form of worship, which parallels modern theories emphasizing intrinsic motivation as the foundation of ethical learning. This connection highlights that sincerity is not only a spiritual principle but also a pedagogical necessity for cultivating integrity.

Empirical studies support this view. [Rahmawati et al., \(2024\)](#) found that students who internalize sincerity demonstrate greater resilience and humility in their learning process. Their research shows that sincerity reduces tendencies toward academic dishonesty and fosters long-term commitment to education. Thus, sincerity provides a bridge between spiritual devotion and educational integrity, making it a cornerstone of Islamic character education.

Respect for teachers is central to Islamic pedagogy and resonates with sociocultural theories of learning. [Swe Dberg, \(1978\)](#) emphasized the teacher's role as a mediator of knowledge, suggesting that learning is shaped through social interaction and respect for authority. In Islamic education, ethics toward teachers ensure that knowledge is transmitted with dignity and that students develop humility alongside intellectual growth.

Research confirms the importance of this principle. [Htay et al., \(2025\)](#) demonstrated that ethical conduct toward teachers enhances student discipline and strengthens learning outcomes. Their findings show that respect for educators fosters a positive classroom environment and ensures the continuity of moral values. Ethics toward teachers, therefore, serve as both a spiritual obligation and a practical strategy for effective pedagogy.

Perseverance in learning is consistent with [\(Parong & Mayer, 2018\)](#) self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes persistence as a key factor in achieving success. In Islamic education, diligence reflects the belief that sustained effort leads to intellectual maturity and spiritual growth. This principle ensures that students remain committed to their studies despite challenges, embodying resilience as a moral and academic virtue.

[Muflihun & Makhshun, \(2025\)](#) highlighted that perseverance in Islamic education cultivates resilience and prepares students for lifelong learning. His study found that students who consistently practice diligence are better equipped to face academic and personal challenges. Thus, perseverance is not only an academic requirement but also a spiritual discipline that reflects devotion and commitment to holistic development.

Reliance on Allah complements diligence by providing emotional and spiritual stability. Resilience theory in education emphasizes coping strategies in uncertain outcomes. *Tawakkal* functions as a spiritual coping mechanism, ensuring that students balance effort with trust in divine wisdom. This principle prevents despair and nurtures confidence in the learning process.

[Yahya et al., \(2024\)](#) found that integrating *tawakkal* into pedagogy nurtures emotional stability and prevents burnout among students. His research shows that reliance on Allah fosters optimism and reduces anxiety in academic contexts. *Tawakkal*, therefore, provides psychological grounding and spiritual resilience, making it a vital component of Islamic character education.

Avoiding sinful acts safeguards the purity of knowledge and aligns with

Kohlberg's (1981) moral development theory, which emphasizes ethical conduct as a prerequisite for moral reasoning. In Islamic education, moral discipline ensures that students' intellectual pursuits remain coherent with spiritual values, preventing contradictions between knowledge and behavior.

Rachman et al., (2023) demonstrated that students who uphold moral discipline exhibit greater receptivity to knowledge and stronger character formation. His findings confirm that ethical integrity enhances academic success and spiritual growth. Avoidance of sinful acts, therefore, is not only a moral requirement but also a pedagogical strategy for cultivating disciplined and ethical learners.

Supplication integrates intellectual effort with spiritual reflection, resonating with (Wardhani & Khadavi, 2025) concept of spiritual pedagogy. Prayer and reflection provide students with mindfulness, gratitude, and humility, ensuring that learning remains holistic and connected to faith. This principle highlights that knowledge is ultimately a divine gift, not merely a human achievement.

Faridah, (2023) found that supplication fosters mindfulness and gratitude among students, strengthening their perception of knowledge as a sacred trust. Their study shows that prayer enhances emotional well-being and reinforces ethical learning practices. Supplication, therefore, enriches the spiritual dimension of education and ensures that intellectual growth is accompanied by moral and spiritual development.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the pursuit of knowledge in Islam is a holistic process that integrates intellectual effort, ethical discipline, and spiritual devotion, offering a comprehensive framework for character education. By identifying six essential principles sincere intention, respect for teachers, diligence, reliance on Allah, avoidance of sin, and supplication the study not only answers its research questions but also provides practical implications for curriculum design, classroom practice, and student development. The novelty of this work lies in its synthesis of Quranic and Prophetic teachings with contemporary educational theories and empirical findings, moving beyond descriptive accounts to present an operational model of Islamic pedagogy. This framework contributes to the advancement of Islamic education by bridging tradition and modernity, ensuring that students are nurtured as individuals of integrity, resilience, and faith who can meet the challenges of contemporary society while remaining rooted in timeless values.

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DECLARATIONS

Author contribution

Nuha Sufina Binti Saidi: data curation, writing-original draft preparation, **Mutathahirin & Nur Akashah Binti Zulkefli:** conceptualization, methodology, **Dasrizal:** visualization, editing, analysis.

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