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The Relevance of al Zarnuji's Concepts of Education in Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum



[Relevansi Konsep Pendidikan Islam oleh al-Zarnūjī dalam Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia]

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Keywords:

Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, Islamic Education, *Merdeka* Curriculum, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Islamic education in Indonesia continues to evolve in response to modernization and globalization, particularly with the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which emphasizes deep learning and student-centered approaches. One classical work that remains relevant in the context of Islamic education is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by al-Zarnūjī, which outlines the fundamental principles of seeking knowledge. This study aims to analyze the relevance of al-Zarnūjī's educational concepts in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia and to develop strategies for implementing these values in the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The research employs qualitative analysis of al-Zarnūjī's concepts and a literature review of current Islamic education and the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The results indicate that al-Zarnūjī's values including sincere intentions, diligence, effective learning methods, and the teacher-student relationship remain highly relevant and can strengthen the modern curriculum. Implementing these values in the *Merdeka* Curriculum requires strategies, such as integration into project-based learning, teacher training, development of teaching materials, and character building through extracurricular activities.

Contribution: The research therefore, emphasize the importance of aligning classical Islamic education with modern curricula to develop well-rounded students grounded in moral values. Unlike previous studies, this research offers a practical framework for implementing al-Zarnūjī's concepts through project-based learning, teacher training, and character development initiatives. The findings underscore the significance of aligning classical Islamic education with contemporary pedagogical approaches to cultivate well-rounded students with strong moral foundations.

Kata Kunci:

Al-Zarnūjī, Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, Pendidikan Islam, Kurikulum Merdeka, Indonesia

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia terus berkembang seiring dengan arus modernisasi dan globalisasi, khususnya dengan pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka yang menekankan pembelajaran mendalam dan pendekatan berpusatkan pelajar. Salah satu karya klasik yang masih relevan dalam konteks pendidikan Islam ialah Ta'lim al-Muta'allim oleh al-Zarnūjī, yang menghuraikan prinsip-prinsip asas dalam menuntut ilmu. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis relevansi konsep pendidikan al-Zarnūjī dalam kitab Ta'lim al-Muta'allim terhadap pendidikan Islam di Indonesia serta membangunkan strategi pelaksanaan nilai-nilai tersebut dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. Metodologi kajian yang digunakan adalah analisis kualitatif terhadap konsep-konsep al-Zarnūjī serta tinjauan literatur mengenai pendidikan Islam dan Kurikulum Merdeka masa kini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa nilai-nilai al-Zarnūjī termasuk niat yang ikhlas, kesungguhan, kaedah pembelajaran yang berkesan, dan hubungan guru-murid masih sangat relevan dan boleh memperkukuh kurikulum moden. Pelaksanaan nilai-nilai ini dalam Kurikulum Merdeka memerlukan strategi seperti integrasi dalam pembelajaran berasaskan projek, latihan guru, pembangunan bahan pengajaran, dan pengukuhan karakter melalui aktiviti kokurikulum.

Sumbangan: Implikasi kajian ini memberikan penekanan terhadap kepentingan dalam menyelaraskan pendidikan Islam klasik dengan kurikulum moden untuk membentuk karakter pelajar yang seimbang dan berlandaskan moral. Tidak seperti kajian lepas, penyelidikan ini menawarkan rangka kerja praktikal untuk melaksanakan konsep al-Zarnūjī melalui pembelajaran berasaskan projek, latihan guru, dan inisiatif pembangunan sahsiah. Penemuan ini menggariskan kepentingan menyelaraskan pendidikan Islam klasik dengan pendekatan pedagogi kontemporari untuk memupuk pelajar yang menyeluruh dengan asas moral yang kukuh.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has a long and rich history, evolving through various phases from the early spread of Islam in the archipelago to the modern era (Nurdiyanto, Bahar, Kurahman, & Suhartini, 2024). In the classical period, Islamic education in Indonesia was characterized by the emergence of pesantren, which served as the primary educational institutions responsible for disseminating Islamic teachings and shaping the character and morality of society (Fitriyono, 2023). Pesantren became centers of learning that not only taught religious knowledge but also fostered virtuous character through a holistic approach that integrated knowledge, practice, and spirituality (Ghofur, 2023).

Over time, particularly during the colonial period, Islamic education faced challenges with the introduction of Western education systems that brought different paradigms and teaching methods (Fajri & Ilmi, 2024). This prompted a transformation within the Islamic education system, where efforts were made to modernize by adopting certain aspects of Western education while retaining fundamental Islamic values and principles. Following Indonesia's independence, Islamic education continued to develop with the establishment of various formal educational institutions, such as madrasahs and Islamic universities, which aimed to meet contemporary needs without compromising Islamic identity (Kamaludin, 2021).

In the current era of modernity and globalization, Islamic education in Indonesia faces increasingly complex challenges. Modernization has brought positive impacts, such as technological advancements and greater access to information, but it has also introduced challenges like shifts in moral and ethical values, secularization, and the penetration of foreign cultures that can erode Islamic identity and values (Lubis, 2018). Globalization demands that Islamic education produce a generation that is not only well-versed in knowledge but also equipped with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, while firmly adhering to Islamic spiritual and moral values (Hamdanah, Surawan, & Sarifah, 2024). These challenges necessitate innovative and contextually relevant educational approaches that remain rooted in the fundamental principles of Islam.

In this context, the intellectual heritage of past Islamic scholars becomes crucial to study and adapt to current needs. Core principles such as sincerity in seeking knowledge, respect for teachers, effective learning methodologies, and holistic character development are aspects that remain relevant and can serve as a foundation for designing a robust Islamic education system that is adaptable to the changing times. One of the classic works that is still considered a primary reference in Islamic education is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, written by al-Zarnūjī (Huda, 2021). Al-Zarnūjī, whose full name is Burhān al-Islām al-Zarnūjī and also known as Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī, is sometimes referred to in various sources as Tajuddīn Nu'man bin Ibrāhīm bin al-Khalīl Zarnūjī. He was a renowned Islamic scholar and intellectual who lived in the 7th century Hijri, or around the 13th to 14th century CE, and passed away in 645 Hijri. Al-Zarnūjī hailed from the region of Zarnūj, associated with his name, which is located in Turkistan or Afghanistan. He studied in Bukhara and Sar Khan, where he learned from several prominent figures, including Burhanuddin al-Marghinani, Imam Fakr al-Islam Hasan bin Mansur al-Farghani Khadikan, among others (Huda, Selamat, & Salem, 2024). Al-Zarnūjī's thoughts were influenced by the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, which was dominant in his time. Besides being an expert in education, he was also known in the fields of Sufism, literature, jurisprudence, theology, and more. Al-Zarnūjī lived during the golden age of Islam, marked by the establishment of several renowned madrasahs between 750-1250 CE, such as Nizamiyah, an-Nuriyah al-Kubra, and al-Muntasiriyah (Fadlin & Siregar, 2024).

The book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* or *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq at-Ta'allum*, written by al-Zarnūjī, is one of the most significant texts in the tradition of Islamic education. This book provides practical and spiritual guidance for students on how they should seek knowledge. Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes the importance of sincere intentions, proper etiquette in learning, and a good relationship between teachers and students (al-Zarnūjī, 1981). This work has been a primary reference in many Islamic educational institutions for centuries and remains relevant today. Although al-Zarnūjī may not be as well-known as other great scholars, his influence on Islamic education is profound. *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* has been translated into various languages and is taught across the Islamic world, making it one of the enduring classics in Islamic educational literature (Huda, 2021).

The values embedded in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* are highly relevant for adaptation in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia today. For example, the concepts of sincerity and the goal of seeking knowledge to draw closer to Allah can serve as an antidote to the materialistic and pragmatic orientations that often dominate modern education (al-Zarnūjī, 1981). The etiquette and ethics of learning, as well as respect for teachers, can help shape students' character into one of high moral standards and integrity (Smith, 2022). The integration of these values becomes increasingly important within the framework of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, a recent initiative in the Indonesian education system that grants greater autonomy to schools and teachers to design learning processes suited to local contexts and needs (Nurarifah, 2024).

According to Mulyasa (2023), the *Merdeka* Curriculum in Indonesia is an educational policy introduced to provide greater flexibility and autonomy to schools in designing and implementing the learning process. Launched in 2021, the *Merdeka* Curriculum aims to adapt the national education system to be more relevant to local needs and contexts, as well as to respond to the challenges faced by the education sector in the modern era. The *Merdeka* Curriculum gives schools the freedom to develop a curriculum that aligns with the characteristics and needs of their students. This differs from previous curricula that were more centralized and rigid (Lestari, Asbari, & Yani, 2023). In the *Merdeka* Curriculum, teachers play a larger role in designing learning experiences, allowing them to be more creative and responsive to student development. This includes an emphasis on project-

based learning, active learning, and collaborative learning, all aimed at enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes (Anggraini, Yulianti, Nurfaizah, & Pandiangan, 2022).

The policy also introduces the concept of character strengthening and the integration of local values into the curriculum. With this approach, education is expected to focus not only on academic achievement but also on character development and relevance to everyday life. The *Merdeka* Curriculum emphasizes the importance of active student participation in the learning process and the development of competencies that support their readiness to face global challenges (Lestari et al., 2023). The legal basis of the *Merdeka* Curriculum is the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22 of 2022 concerning the *Merdeka* Curriculum. This regulation governs the implementation and guidelines for the curriculum, providing a framework for executing a flexible and relevant curriculum. The *Merdeka* Curriculum is expected to create a more dynamic learning environment that focuses on the holistic development of students' potential (Ndari, Suyatno, Sukirman, & Mahmudah, 2023).

In this context, the principles from *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* can be effectively implemented to enrich the curriculum, ensuring that Islamic education not only produces intellectually smart individuals but also those with strong spiritual and moral depth. By adopting the values from *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, Islamic education in Indonesia can develop a holistic learning strategy that combines mastery of knowledge, character building, and spiritual development. This approach will help students become balanced individuals who can adapt to the dynamics of the modern world while remaining steadfast in the Islamic principles that define their identity (Abd Rahman, Abd Razak, Noor, Yusuf, & Kadir, 2021). Additionally, applying these values within the *Merdeka* Curriculum can foster innovation in teaching methods, enhance student engagement, and create a more inclusive and meaningful learning environment (Mushofa, 2023).

Therefore, Islamic education in Indonesia continues to evolve in response to modernization and globalization, particularly with the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which emphasizes deep learning, student-centered approaches, and flexibility in learning pathways. However, amidst these changes, it is crucial to ensure that the foundational values of Islamic education remain relevant and applicable in contemporary contexts. One classical work that has significantly influenced Islamic educational thought is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by al-Zarnūjī, which provides essential guidance on the pursuit of knowledge, moral values, and the teacher-student relationship. A thorough study of the relevance and implementation strategies of al-Zarnūjī's educational concepts in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* is crucial to ensuring that Islamic education in Indonesia can meet contemporary challenges while continuing to shape a morally grounded and academically competent generation. Moreover, research on this topic is highly urgent to address the gap in the literature. Several previous studies have extensively discussed the educational values in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and their relevance in various Islamic education contexts. For instance, research by Wahid, Awaliyah, & Trisnawati (2022) examined how moral values found in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* are integrated into the learning process during the first semester at Ma'had Idia Prenduan. Using qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach, the study found that the internalization of moral values from the book through various learning strategies, such as lectures, discussions, and teacher role models, is not only effective in character development but also relevant for application in various Islamic education contexts today.

The study by Hidayatulloh, Hadi, & Shafwan (2024) discusses how the character education values taught in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* can be applied in today's educational context, where the researchers identified that the book not only provides guidance on academic aspects but also emphasizes the importance of building good character as the main foundation in seeking knowledge. Values such as respect for teachers, sincere intentions, and diligence in learning are seen as key elements in shaping individuals with noble character. Instilling these values is considered essential to developing students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have high moral integrity. In conclusion, this study asserts that al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* contains many character education values that can be applied in modern education. By integrating these values into the education system, it is hoped that a generation of knowledgeable, virtuous, and well-prepared individuals will emerge, capable of facing global challenges without losing their Islamic identity.

Furthermore, research by Dalimunthe & Siregar (2023) also explores how the teachings in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* are applied to shape students' learning ethics in the modern era. This study focuses on the relevance and effectiveness of applying these classical teachings in the current context of Islamic boarding school education. The results indicate that despite living in a modern era with various challenges and influences of globalization, the teachings in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* remain relevant and have a significant impact on shaping students' character and learning ethics. These values help students stay focused on their spiritual goals in seeking knowledge, as well as maintain good manners and ethics in the learning process. Meanwhile, research by Irwandi (2022) analyzes al-Zarnūjī's thoughts on moral education and how these concepts are relevant and applicable in

the modern educational context, finding that al-Zarnūjī's teachings on moral education remain highly relevant, especially in shaping students' character in the modern era. These values are deemed important for balancing intellectual advancement with the development of a strong moral character. The study also emphasizes that the moral education taught by al-Zarnūjī can be a solution to address the issue of moral degradation often seen among the younger generation today.

However, a significant gap remains in the literature, as existing studies have primarily focused on the theoretical aspects of al-Zarnūjī's educational values and their application in traditional Islamic educational institutions. There is limited research that specifically examines how these values can be integrated into the modern and flexible structure of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. Furthermore, no prior studies have systematically explored the practical strategies for incorporating these values into project-based learning, differentiated instruction, or deep learning approaches—which are key components of the Merdeka Curriculum. To address this gap, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How can al-Zarnūjī's educational values in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* be effectively implemented within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia? By addressing this question, this study aims to provide a novel contribution to the field of Islamic education by developing practical strategies for integrating classical educational values into modern curricula. This is essential to ensuring that Islamic education remains relevant, responsive to contemporary challenges, and capable of producing well-rounded students who uphold moral integrity while excelling academically. Integrating al-Zarnūjī's values is not merely about preserving tradition, but about harmonizing classical wisdom with modern pedagogical advancements to cultivate a generation of students who can navigate global challenges without losing their Islamic identity.

As outlined above, although much research has been conducted on the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, most of it has focused on historical and theoretical aspects. In-depth studies on how the educational concepts in this book can be integrated into the Merdeka Curriculum remain very limited. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to analyze the relevance of al-Zarnūjī's educational concepts in the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* to Islamic education in Indonesia and to develop strategies for implementing these values within the Merdeka Curriculum. This study offers novelty in the form of merging classical Islamic educational concepts with modern approaches in the Merdeka Curriculum. While much research has been conducted on the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, studies examining its relevance to the Islamic education system in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, are still very limited. This research will bridge the gap between the rich tradition of Islamic education and the needs of contemporary education.

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, it will add insight to the Islamic education literature regarding the integration of classical and modern educational concepts. Practically, the results of this research are expected to serve as a guide for educators, especially in Islamic schools, in designing effective and meaningful learning, and for policymakers in formulating educational policies that balance Islamic values with the needs of modern education. Furthermore, this study is also expected to contribute to strengthening the identity of Islamic education in Indonesia, enabling it to compete globally without sacrificing its noble values.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design to analyze the relevance of the educational concepts advocated by al-Zarnūjī in the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* to Islamic education in Indonesia and its implementation strategies in the Merdeka Curriculum (Auliya et al., 2020). Primary data are derived from the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by al-Zarnūjī, which is analyzed to identify key educational principles, such as the etiquette of seeking knowledge, intentions, learning methods, and the teacher-student relationship. Secondary data are gathered from various relevant literature, including journals, books, and articles discussing *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, Islamic education in Indonesia, and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Data collection is conducted through documentary study, where the researcher reviews various written sources relevant to the research topic (Sugiono, 2017). These sources are analyzed to obtain a comprehensive picture of al-Zarnūjī's educational concepts and the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. The collected data are then analyzed using content analysis techniques (Schreier, 2012). The analysis process involves several stages: (1) Data Reduction, which involves sorting and simplifying data from various sources to identify key concepts relevant to the research objectives; (2) Data Categorization, which involves grouping data based on emerging themes, such as the etiquette of seeking knowledge, learning methodologies, and the relevance of these values to the Merdeka Curriculum; and (3) Data Interpretation, which involves interpreting the analysis results to

understand how the concepts in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* can be implemented in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia today, particularly within the framework of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. In formulating the implementation strategy, based on the analysis results, the researcher will develop strategies for implementing al-Zarnūjī's educational values within the *Merdeka* Curriculum. These strategies will be formulated considering the challenges in Islamic education in Indonesia and the relevance of al-Zarnūjī's classical concepts to the needs of modern education.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The relevance of al-Zarnūjī's educational concepts in the context of Indonesia's *Merdeka* Curriculum can be analyzed through several key findings and results. Al-Zarnūjī, a 12th-century Islamic scholar, is best known for his work *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, which outlines principles of Islamic education, emphasizing ethics, discipline, and the holistic development of students. These principles align with several aspects of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which focuses on student-centered learning, character building, and flexibility in education.

3.1 The Relevance of Al-Zarnūjī's Educational Concepts in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim for Islamic Education in Indonesia

The book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by al-Zarnūjī, written in the 12th century, is one of the most fundamental references in the realm of classical Islamic education. This book not only reflects the educational views and practices of its time but also offers timeless principles that remain relevant in the context of modern education (Huda et al., 2024). Amid the dynamic changes in the education system, especially with the advent of technology and rapid social changes, the values outlined in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* still hold strong relevance (Fadlin & Siregar, 2024). Concepts discussed in this book, such as the importance of *adab* (proper manners) in seeking knowledge, sincere intentions as the foundation of learning, effective learning methods, and a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, continue to be key elements in creating a learning environment that focuses not only on intellectual aspects but also on the formation of character and morality of the students (Dinana & Nurhidin, 2025).

The relevance of these concepts becomes even clearer when we consider the challenges faced by Islamic education in the modern era. On one hand, Islamic education must adapt to the developments of the times and the demands of globalization; on the other hand, it must preserve its fundamental essence and values. The book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* provides a solid foundation for achieving this balance, offering guidelines that are not only theoretical but also practical and applicable in various educational contexts, including in Indonesia (Huda et al., 2024). Therefore, delving deeper into and applying the concepts from this book within the contemporary education system is an essential step to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant, competitive, and capable of producing a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually superior.

3.1.1 Sincere and earnest intentions

Al-Zarnūjī, through his book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, places *adab* as one of the main foundations in the process of seeking knowledge. *Adab*, or ethics in seeking knowledge, encompasses various important aspects such as the intention in seeking knowledge and earnestness in learning (al-Zarnūjī, 1981). This *adab* is not merely a set of etiquette to be followed but is the core of the educational process that can shape the character of the students comprehensively (Huda, 2021).

According to al-Zarnūjī in his book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, the intention in seeking knowledge plays a very important role and must be based on a correct and sincere purpose. Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes that the primary intention in seeking knowledge should be to draw closer to Allah and seek His pleasure, not merely for worldly purposes such as seeking status, wealth, or popularity. He explains that pursuing knowledge with the wrong intention, such as for pride or competition, can undermine the purpose and blessings of the knowledge itself. Conversely, if the intention is pure to improve oneself, deepen religious understanding, and benefit others, then that knowledge will be a means that brings a person closer to Allah and enhances the quality of life both in this world and the hereafter. Al-Zarnūjī states in his book (al-Zarnūjī, 1981):

وَيُنَبِّغِي أُنْسِيْنَوِي لِنَتَعَلِّمُ بِطَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ رِضًا اِرْ وَالْدَّارِ الْآخِرَةِ، وَإِزَالَةَ الْجُهْلِ عَنِ نَفْسِهِ، وَعَنْ سَائِرِ الْجُهَّالِ، وَإِحْيَاءِ
الدِّينِ وَبِنَقَاءِ الْإِسْلَامِ

“A learner should intend by seeking knowledge to attain the pleasure of Allah and the Hereafter, to remove ignorance from himself and other ignorant people, and to revive the religion and preserve Islam.”

Therefore, al-Zarnūjī teaches that before beginning to learn, a student must correct their intention by ensuring that their goal is worship and seeking Allah’s pleasure. This sincere intention, according to him, is the key to success in seeking knowledge and in applying that knowledge in daily life, as commanded by Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Allah says in al-Bayyinah [98] verse 5:

﴿وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ... ﴾

Meaning:

And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion ...

This verse emphasizes that all deeds, including seeking knowledge, must be done with sincerity solely for Allah, to gain His pleasure and reward. In his Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَلَنُوِي

[al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb Bad'i al-Wahy, Bāb Bad'i al-Wahy*, No. 1]

Meaning:

“Indeed, deeds are judged by their intentions, and every person will receive what they intended.”

This Hadith indicates that intention is the determining factor of actions, including in seeking knowledge. If the intention is for Allah, then learning becomes an act of worship; however, if the intention is only for worldly purposes, its benefits will be limited to the world (Al-Nawawī, 1995). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said:

مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ عِلْمًا مَلِيْبُنَعِي بِهِ وَجْهًا اِرْ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَاتَتَعَلَّمُهُ إِلَّا لِيُصِيبَ بِهِ عَرَضًا مِّنَ الدُّنْيَا اِمْ يَجِدْ عَرَفَ الْجَنَّةِيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ نِيْعِي رِيْحَهَا

[Abū Dāwud, *Kitāb al-'Ilm, Bāb Fī Ṭalab al-'Ilm li Ghayr Allāh Ta'ālā*, No. 3664, *Ṣaḥīḥ li Ghayriḥ*]

Meaning:

“Whoever learns knowledge that should be sought for the sake of Allah but does so only to gain some worldly benefit will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise on the Day of Judgment: that is fragrant.”

This Hadith warns against seeking knowledge merely as a tool to achieve worldly goals such as status or position, but it should be intended to gain Allah’s pleasure. These evidences emphasize that maintaining a pure and sincere intention in seeking knowledge is crucial, as only with the right intention, the act of learning can be considered worship and become a provision for good in both this world and the hereafter (Al-'Azīm Ābādī, 2016). In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, emphasizing sincere intentions is crucial to maintaining the orientation and goals of education so that they do not deviate. Amid the demands of the times that often emphasize academic achievement, career, and material success, the values taught by al-Zarnūjī serve as a reminder that education is not only about achieving worldly outcomes but, more importantly, about forming noble character and perfecting oneself as a servant of Allah (Mufi, Elhady, & Mursalim, 2023). Sincere intentions in Islamic education help instill in students the awareness that the knowledge they acquire is not merely to obtain a degree, job, or recognition, but as a means to contribute to society and become a beneficial individual. Islamic education based on sincere intentions aims to produce a generation that is not only intellectually smart but also

possesses high moral integrity and a strong commitment to doing good in the world as a form of devotion to Allah (Irfan, Shofiyah, & Karimah, 2023).

Applying the concept of sincere intentions in Islamic education in Indonesia also has implications for curriculum design and implementation. A good curriculum is one that not only teaches knowledge and skills but also instills deep spiritual and moral values. By incorporating the principle of sincere intentions into the curriculum, students are taught to begin every learning activity with the right intention, so that all the knowledge they gain becomes a blessing and benefit, both for themselves and others. Sincere intention, as taught by al-Zarnūjī, is an essential foundation that every seeker of knowledge must have. In Islamic education in Indonesia, emphasizing the importance of a pure and sincere intention can help ensure that education remains focused on forming noble character and morals, as well as producing graduates who are not only academically excellent but also possess integrity and are committed to making positive contributions to society (Hotimah, Hasyim, & Dewi, 2023).

Diligence and perseverance are other essential elements in the etiquette of seeking knowledge according to al-Zarnūjī (1981). He stated,

ثُمَّ لَا بُدَّ مِنَ الْجِدِّ وَالْمُواظَبَةِ وَالْمُلَازِمَةِ لِطَالِبِ الْعِلْمِ وَإِلَيْهِ الْإِشَارَةُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ فَقَوْلُهُمْ لِمَنْ قَالَ: وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا. وَقِيلَ: مَنْ طَلَبَ شَيْئًا وَحَدَّ وَحَدَّ، مَنْ قَرَعَ الْبَابَ وَجَلَ وَجَلَ

“Students must be diligent in their studies, and must persevere, as alluded to in the Quran: {And those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways.' It is said that whoever strives to achieve something will certainly attain it}. And whoever knocks on the door and keeps advancing will eventually enter.”

Perseverance means studying with discipline, working hard, and not easily giving up when faced with difficulties. In the modern era, where access to information is so easy and fast, perseverance often diminishes due to a tendency to seek instant results without going through a deep learning process. Al-Zarnūjī reminds us that perseverance is not just about how much is learned, but also about how well the knowledge is digested and applied in daily life (al-Zarnūjī, 1981). This perseverance involves continuous effort, which ultimately shapes strong character and deep understanding in students. Even though we live in an era where technology and information are easily accessible, the values of etiquette taught by al-Zarnūjī remain relevant and important. Technology may have changed the way we learn, but principles of etiquette, such as respecting teachers, being diligent in studies, and remaining humble, remain irreplaceable elements in the educational process. In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, integrating these values into the pursuit of knowledge plays a crucial role as a balancing factor in an increasingly modern and complex education system (Nugroho & Ni'mah, 2018). Often, education focuses on the development of cognitive and technical aspects, such as critical thinking skills, practical skills, and academic achievement. However, without a strong moral and spiritual foundation, students risk losing their way in the face of the growing challenges of globalization and modernization (Masnawati, Hariani, Mardikaningsih, Nurhasanah, & Sulipah, 2024).

The etiquette in seeking knowledge, as taught in the Islamic educational tradition, emphasizes the importance of respecting teachers, being diligent in studies, and being willing to accept knowledge with a pure heart and sincere intentions (Yugo, 2024). By instilling these values from an early age, Islamic education in Indonesia not only prepares young generations for academic success but also for becoming individuals with noble character, strong personalities, and capable of upholding Islamic values in an increasingly pluralistic and secular society (Hasibuan, Fadly, & Waruwu, 2025). The inculcation of etiquette also aims to instill in students a strong commitment to Islamic values. They are taught not only to pursue worldly achievements but also to remember that the ultimate goal of seeking knowledge is to attain the pleasure of Allah. Thus, Islamic education serves as a fortress that protects the Islamic identity of students from the negative influences of globalization, such as secularism, consumerism, and moral relativism (Naila & Muthoifin, 2025).

Moreover, in the era of globalization, where the flow of information and foreign cultures enters rapidly and often without filters, Islamic education that emphasizes etiquette and morals becomes highly relevant. Students equipped with strong etiquette values will be able to sift through and select the information and cultural values they encounter, allowing them to adapt to changes without losing their identity as Muslims. They will be able to contribute positively to global society while maintaining the Islamic identity they uphold (Munawarsyah, 2023). Therefore, it is important for Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia to continue to uphold and strengthen the teaching of etiquette in the pursuit of knowledge. This can be achieved by integrating the values of etiquette into the curriculum, training teachers to effectively teach etiquette, and creating a learning

environment that supports character and moral formation in students. Thus, Islamic education will remain relevant and capable of producing generations who are not only intellectually smart but also morally and spiritually resilient (Zahira et al., 2024).

3.1.2 Learning methods

Al-Zarnūjī outlines effective learning methods, emphasizing the importance of reviewing lessons, engaging in discussions, and applying knowledge in daily life (al-Zarnūjī, 1981). These methods align with modern educational principles, such as active and collaborative learning, which are also key components of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes three main aspects in his approach to effective learning: repetition of lessons, discussion, and the practical application of knowledge in everyday life. In his book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, repetition is considered essential for reinforcing understanding and preventing forgetfulness (al-Zarnūjī, 1981). He teaches that knowledge must be repeatedly revisited to be firmly embedded in the mind, akin to the concept of spaced repetition in modern learning theory. This repetition is not merely rote memorization but involves reflection and a deep understanding of the underlying meanings. In his book, al-Zarnūjī (1981) states:

وَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَجْتَهِدَ فِي الْفَهْمِ مِنَ الْأَسْتَاذِ أَوْ لِتَأْمَلِ وَالتَّفَكَّرِ وَكَثْرَةَ التَّكْرَارِ فَإِنَّهُ إِذَا قَلَّ السَّبْقُ وَكَثُرَ التَّكْرَارُ وَ
لِتَأْمَلِ يُدْرِكُ وَيَفْهَمُ

Meaning:

“It is essential for the student to strive hard to understand what is explained by their teacher, then repeat it several times on their own and reflect on it to fully grasp it. Hearing and memorizing one statement and understanding it is better than hearing a thousand statements without comprehension.”

According to al-Zarnūjī, discussions are also a crucial means for deepening understanding and testing the validity of knowledge. Discussions involve the exchange of ideas and perspectives, which not only help clarify complex concepts but also foster a critical mindset. This is consistent with modern learning approaches, where collaborative and dialogical learning is central to the educational process. Through discussion, students learn to think independently, explore diverse viewpoints, and develop effective communication skills. In his book, al-Zarnūjī (1981) says:

وَلَا بُدَّ لِطَالِبِ الْعِلْمِ مِنَ الْمُدَاكِرَةِ وَالْمُنَاطَرَةِ وَالْمُطَارَحَةِ فَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَكُونَ لِأَنْصَافِ وَالتَّائِبِي وَالتَّأْمَلِ وَيَسْتَحْزِرُ عَنِ
الشَّعْبِ فَإِنَّ الْمُنَاطَرَةَ وَالْمُدَاكِرَةَ مَشَاوِرَةٌ وَالْمَشَاوِرَةُ إِذَا مَحْضَلُ لِتَأْمَلِ وَالتَّائِبِي وَالْإِنْصَافِ، وَلَا يَحْضَلُ ذَلِكَ
لِعُضْبِ وَالتَّعَبِ.

Meaning:

“Students should frequently engage in discussions or debates on opinions or issues with their peers. Such discussions should be conducted orderly and calmly, without noise or emotion. Calm thinking is the foundation of consultation, and the purpose of consultation is to seek the truth. This goal can be achieved if those involved in the discussion or consultation are calm, think correctly, and are open-minded. Conversely, it will not be successful if there is chaos and mutual emotion.”

فَإِنْ كَانَتْ نِيَّتُهُ مِنَ الْمُبَاحَثَةِ الرَّامِ الْخُصْمَ وَقَهْرَهُ لَا يَجِئُ ذَلِكَ وَإِنَّمَا يَجِئُ ذَلِكَ لِإِظْهَارِ الْحَقِّ وَالتَّمْوِيهِ وَالْحَيْلَةَ لَا
تُحْزِرُ فِيهَا إِلَّا إِذَا كَانَ الْخُصْمُ مُتَعَبًا لَا طَالِبًا لِلْحَقِّ.

Meaning:

“If the aim of the discussion is to defeat the other’s argument, then it is not permissible. Discussion is permissible if its purpose is to seek the truth. Obscuring the issue or giving

inappropriate responses is also impermissible unless the questioner intends to complicate matters rather than seek the truth.”

The discussion method in modern learning, particularly in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, is highly urgent and relevant. This method not only enhances understanding and critical thinking skills but also encourages active student engagement in the learning-teaching process. This aligns with the goals of Islamic education, which emphasize not only cognitive aspects but also the development of morals, character, and social competence.

In the context of Islamic education, the discussion method holds several urgencies. First, discussions enable students to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Through discussions, they are encouraged to express opinions, question arguments, and seek answers to complex questions. This process helps them understand key Islamic concepts in a deeper and more contextual manner. Second, discussions also promote communication and collaboration skills. In Islamic education, the importance of *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) and *mushāwarah* (discussion) is highly emphasized, and classroom discussions are a practical embodiment of these values. Students learn to respect others' opinions, communicate effectively, and reach consensus in a respectful atmosphere.

The relevance of the discussion method in Islamic education in Indonesia is also very high. In an era of globalization and modernization, Islamic education faces the challenge of staying relevant to the times without losing its essence. The discussion method offers a way to bridge the gap between Islamic scholarly traditions and contemporary learning methods. With this method, the Islamic values taught are not only memorized or understood textually but are also applied in the dynamic context of real life (Hakim, Ritonga, & Susanti, 2020). This helps students understand and integrate Islamic values into their daily lives and prepares them to contribute positively in an increasingly plural and complex society. Additionally, the discussion method is also relevant in addressing various educational challenges in Indonesia, such as differences in social and cultural backgrounds and disparities in access to quality education. Discussions allow active participation from all students, regardless of their backgrounds, and promote inclusivity and equality in the classroom. This aligns with the goals of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which seeks to develop Pancasila students who are creative, critical, able to work together, and possess noble character (Syahrir, Pujiriyanto, Musdalifa, & Fitri, 2024). Thus, this method contributes to shaping a young generation capable of facing global challenges without losing their Islamic identity.

Furthermore, the application of knowledge in daily life is the third pillar of al-Zarnūjī's learning methods. Knowledge that is not applied is considered unbeneficial and may lose its blessings. In the current educational context, this relates to the concept of experiential learning, where students are encouraged to apply what they learn in real-world contexts (Kong, 2021). This application not only deepens understanding but also ensures that the knowledge is relevant and useful for everyday life. The learning methods taught by al-Zarnūjī are highly relevant to the principles of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which emphasizes active, collaborative, and life-based learning. The *Merdeka* Curriculum encourages students to be active participants in the learning process, deepen their understanding through discussion, and apply knowledge in various life contexts. Thus, al-Zarnūjī's learning methods can be integrated into modern educational approaches to shape students who are not only academically intelligent but also morally and spiritually mature.

3.1.3 Teacher-student relationship

The relationship between teachers and students, as explained by al-Zarnūjī, emphasizes the importance of mutual respect and responsibility from both parties. The teacher is regarded as a spiritual guide, and students are expected to show respect and submission. In the context of modern education, this principle remains relevant in fostering a strong emotional and spiritual bond between teachers and students, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of learning (Surbakti, Harahap, & Hasanah, 2024). Al-Zarnūjī highlights the significance of a good relationship between teachers and students, grounded in respect, responsibility, and sincerity. In al-Zarnūjī's view, the teacher is not merely an instructor but also a spiritual guide and role model in the lives of their students. Teachers have the responsibility to impart beneficial knowledge and guide their students towards a better life, both in this world and the hereafter. Al-Zarnūjī illustrates the status of a teacher with a story: “It is narrated that Caliph Harun al-Rashid sent his son to Ashmuī to be taught knowledge and commendable manners. One day, Harūn al-Rashīd saw Ashmuī performing ablution while his son, the caliph's son, poured water over his feet. Witnessing this, Harūn al-Rashīd rebuked him, saying, “I sent my son to you to learn knowledge and manners, so why did you not instruct him to pour water with his left hand so that his right hand could wash your feet?” (al-Zarnūjī, 1981). Regarding the criteria for a teacher, al-Zarnūjī (1981) also wrote in his book:

وأما إختيار الأستاذ فينبغي أن يختار الأعلام والأروع والأسن كما اختار أبو حنيفة حينئذ حماد بن أبي سليمان بعد التأمل والتفكير. وقال أبو حنيفة رحمه تعالى : وجدته شيخا وقورا حليما صبورا. وقال : ثبت عند حماد بن أبي سليمان فثبت

Meaning:

“When choosing a teacher, seek one who is knowledgeable, devout, and older in age. As Abū Ḥanīfah chose Ḥammād bin Abī Sulaymān because he (Ḥammād) possessed these qualities. Thus, Abū Ḥanīfah studied under him. Abū Ḥanīfah said, “He was a teacher of noble character, gentle, and patient. I continued learning from him until I became who I am today.”

From this, it can be understood that the duty of teaching and learning for a teacher is a religious obligation that is central to Islamic education. With the educator criteria explained earlier, it brings a significant moral responsibility, which is expected to provide a positive educational impact. In his concept, al-Zarnūjī mentions that the ideal educator is someone who is knowledgeable (*‘ālim*), possesses *wara’* (piety, avoiding the unlawful), and is the most senior in terms of age. Educators should also have noble character, be gentle, and patient. This concept remains relevant to current teacher competency standards, which require a teacher to be capable of teaching, an expert in the subject they teach, and to possess the moral qualities that support the teaching and learning process (Lau, Tukan, Sianipar, & Panda, 2023). Additionally, the educator should be mature enough to take responsibility for their duties. Most importantly, a teacher should have personal competence, which relates to being a role model, having noble character, and wisdom, thus becoming a good example for their students.

Students, on the other hand, must show respect and submission to the teacher. This attitude not only reflects proper etiquette in seeking knowledge but is also important for creating a conducive learning environment. Respect for the teacher helps maintain a good relationship and facilitates more effective knowledge transfer. Submission and obedience to the teacher's guidance are also deemed essential for receiving knowledge with blessings (Al-Husseini, El Beltagi, & Moizer, 2021). Respect for teachers is one of the core principles emphasized by al-Zarnūjī. Teachers are considered both spiritual and intellectual guides who play a crucial role in shaping students' character and knowledge. In al-Zarnūjī's view, without respect, the knowledge acquired loses its blessings and essence. Al-Zarnūjī (1981) stated in his book:

إِغْلَمَ نَ طَالِبَ الْعِلْمِ لَحَيْثَالُ الْعِلْمِ وَلَا يَنْتَفَعُ بِهِ إِلَّا بِتَعْظِيمِ الْعِلْمِ وَأَهْلِهِ وَتَوْقِيرِهِ

Meaning:

“Know that students of knowledge will not gain knowledge nor benefit from it without respecting knowledge, its people, and the teacher.”

This respect encompasses various actions, including attentively listening when the teacher speaks, following their advice with full conviction, and maintaining etiquette in interactions with the teacher. In Indonesia, this concept remains highly relevant, especially in the educational culture of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), which emphasizes the importance of manners and character. In the context of modern education, these principles are still very relevant. A teacher-student relationship based on mutual respect and responsibility creates a strong emotional and spiritual bond, which is crucial in the learning process (Wang, 2023). In an era of globalization and digitalization, where human interaction is often distorted, the importance of the personal relationship between teacher and student becomes even more significant. This bond not only aids in the transfer of knowledge but also in the development of students' character and morals. To see the relevance of al-Zarnūjī's values in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* to Islamic education in Indonesia, kindly refer to Table 1.

Table 1

Relevance of al-Zarnūjī's Values in the Book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* to Islamic Education in Indonesia

Aspect	Description
Sincere Intention and Diligence	According to al-Zarnūjī, seeking knowledge should be driven by the intention to please Allah, not merely for worldly gain. This is important to ensure that education is not solely focused on academic achievement but also on the cultivation of noble character.
Learning Methods	Al-Zarnūjī outlines learning methods such as repetition, discussion, and the application of knowledge in daily life. These methods align with modern learning principles such as active and collaborative learning, which are also key components of the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum.
Teacher-Student Relationship	The relationship described by al-Zarnūjī emphasizes mutual respect and responsibility. The teacher acts as a spiritual guide, and students show respect. This principle remains relevant in modern education to foster strong emotional and spiritual bonds.

Furthermore, in modern education, the role of teachers has evolved into that of facilitators and mentors, helping students fully develop their potential (Aderibigbe, Holland, Marusic, & Shanks, 2022). Al-Zarnūjī's principles on the teacher-student relationship can enrich this role by adding a spiritual and moral dimension, which is essential for nurturing a generation that balances intellectual intelligence with morality. By strengthening this relationship, learning effectiveness can be enhanced, as students feel supported, valued, and motivated to learn better. Therefore, the values taught by al-Zarnūjī regarding the teacher-student relationship are not only relevant but also essential for implementation in modern educational systems, particularly in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. These values can help create a more harmonious and effective learning environment, supporting the holistic development of students. Al-Zarnūjī's educational concept is highly relevant for today's students, as reflected in the Indonesian National Education System Law No. 20 of 2023 (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). Students are expected to possess noble character, have a disposition pleasing to Allah, and exhibit traits such as humility, self-restraint, perseverance, patience, and reliance on God. Additionally, they must love knowledge, respect their teachers, family, and peers, and be committed to seeking knowledge.

3.2 Challenges in Implementing Al-Zarnūjī's Values in the *Merdeka* Curriculum

Although the values promoted by al-Zarnūjī are highly relevant, their implementation within the *Merdeka* Curriculum faces several challenges:

3.2.1. Curriculum flexibility

The *Merdeka* Curriculum provides significant opportunities for schools and teachers to tailor learning materials to local needs. This freedom allows for adjustments based on the unique characteristics and challenges faced by each region. However, this flexibility also presents challenges, particularly in balancing educational innovation with the integration of fundamental moral and spiritual values inherent in Islamic education (Putri, Fauziyah, & Nadzifah, 2024). Without clear guidelines, there is a risk that essential aspects of Islamic education, such as ethics and morality, could be overlooked or implemented suboptimally. Therefore, well-designed guidance is needed to assist teachers in systematically and effectively integrating the values taught by al-Zarnūjī into the *Merdeka* Curriculum. This guidance should include teaching strategies that are contextually appropriate, ensuring that moral and spiritual values are not only maintained but emphasized in the learning process. Thus, the flexible curriculum not only supports innovation but also reinforces the Islamic foundations that are core to Islamic education in Indonesia.

3.2.2 Impact of globalization

Globalization brings with it a flow of new cultures and values that often conflict with Islamic principles. Its impact is felt not only in everyday life but also in the education system, where global values that are secular and materialistic begin to dominate (Winata, 2024). This challenge requires Islamic education to not only maintain its relevance but also to effectively compete with these global influences. Implementing al-Zarnūjī's values must be done carefully, ensuring that these classical values remain relevant amid the pressures of globalization. The integration of values such as sincerity, ethics, and the relationship between teacher and student, as taught by al-Zarnūjī, should be adapted to the modern context without diminishing their original essence. This approach allows Islamic education in Indonesia to compete with global values while maintaining its Islamic identity. In

this way, Islamic education not only survives globalization but also offers highly valuable solutions rooted in Islamic tradition.

3.2.3. Teachers' limited understanding of classical values

Not all teachers have the background or deep understanding of the classical values taught by al-Zarnūjī. This lack of knowledge can lead to ineffective implementation and even lower the quality of Islamic education. To address these limitations, teacher training and capacity building are crucial. Teachers need to be equipped with a deep understanding of al-Zarnūjī's values and relevant teaching methods to integrate these values into the modern curriculum. Such training can include workshops, seminars, or capacity-building programs specifically designed to enhance teachers' understanding of classical values and how to teach them in the context of contemporary education (Huda, 2021). With enhanced capacity, teachers are expected not only to effectively deliver lesson content but also to instill strong moral and spiritual values in their students. This is essential to ensure that Islamic education in Indonesia remains effective and relevant, shaping a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also morally and spiritually robust.

3.3. Strategies for Implementing Al-Zarnūjī's Concepts and Values in the Merdeka Curriculum

Implementing al-Zarnūjī's concepts and values within the *Merdeka* Curriculum requires a systematic and creative approach. Here are several strategies that can be employed to ensure these values are well-integrated into the learning process. For better understanding kindly refer to Table 2.

Table 2
Strategies for Implementing al-Zarnūjī's Values in the Merdeka Curriculum

Strategy	Description
Integration of al-Zarnūjī's Values into Project-Based Learning	Project-Based Learning within the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum can include projects that integrate moral and spiritual aspects. For instance, projects on ethics in pursuing knowledge or the importance of sincere intentions can be implemented to instill al-Zarnūjī's values in practical contexts.
Teacher Training	Teachers need training to understand and teach al-Zarnūjī's values. This training could include workshops, seminars, or the development of teaching modules that help teachers integrate these values into various subjects and teaching practices.
Development of Teaching Modules and Learning Materials	Modules and learning materials that contain al-Zarnūjī's values should be developed to ensure the application of these values in daily learning. This includes creating teaching resources that consistently incorporate al-Zarnūjī's principles.
Character Strengthening through Extracurricular Activities	Values such as etiquette and sincere intentions can be integrated into extracurricular activities, like religious events or mentoring programs. These activities help strengthen students' character and enable the application of al-Zarnūjī's values in real-life situations.

3.3.1 Integration of al-Zarnūjī's values into project-based learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an effective method for integrating al-Zarnūjī's values, as it allows students to engage in tasks that touch on various aspects of their lives. Within this context, projects can be specifically designed to include moral and spiritual elements taught by al-Zarnūjī. For example, students could undertake a project on "Ethics in Pursuing Knowledge," where they investigate and present principles of etiquette and sincere intentions in practical contexts. Another project could involve "Applying Sincere Intentions in Daily Activities," where students practice and reflect on good intentions in their academic and social activities. In this way, al-Zarnūjī's values are not only learned theoretically but also applied in real-life contexts, enhancing students' understanding and internalization of these values.

3.3.2 Teacher training

To ensure that al-Zarnūjī's values can be effectively taught, it is crucial to provide training for teachers. This training should aim to enhance teachers' understanding of these classical values and effective teaching methods to integrate them into the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Workshops and seminars can serve as platforms to discuss creative and practical ways of integrating these values (Mumtaz, Zafar, & Andleeb, 2024). Additionally, developing teaching modules that outline how to incorporate al-Zarnūjī's values into various subjects is essential.

This training will help teachers design lesson materials and teaching strategies that align with al-Zarnūjī's principles, and it will enhance their capacity to guide students in internalizing these values.

3.3.3. Development of teaching modules and learning materials

Developing teaching modules and learning materials that include al-Zarnūjī's values is a critical step to ensure these values are consistently applied in daily learning processes. The modules should encompass elements such as learning etiquette, sincere intentions, and appropriate teaching methods aligned with al-Zarnūjī's principles. These learning materials should emphasize how these values are relevant to the modern curriculum context, providing examples and activities that allow students to apply these principles (Logan, Johnson, & Worsham, 2021). With systematic modules and teaching materials, the integration of al-Zarnūjī's values into the *Merdeka* Curriculum can be conducted consistently and structurally, aiding students in understanding and applying these values in their lives.

3.3.4 Character strengthening through extracurricular activities

Al-Zarnūjī's values, such as etiquette and sincere intentions, can be reinforced through extracurricular activities that involve religious and character-building aspects. For instance, religious activities like study groups, Quranic recitations, or mentoring programs can be designed to emphasize the importance of these values. These extracurricular activities provide a space for students to practice al-Zarnūjī's values outside the classroom environment, in a more informal and practical manner. Mentoring programs, for example, can involve interactions between students and mentors who help students apply principles of etiquette and sincere intentions in their daily lives. In this way, extracurricular activities play a significant role in strengthening students' character and ensuring that al-Zarnūjī's values are not only learned but also applied in various aspects of their lives. By implementing these strategies, the integration of al-Zarnūjī's values into the *Merdeka* Curriculum can be carried out effectively, ensuring that Islamic education in Indonesia remains relevant and meaningful amidst changing times (Rahayu & Dong, 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the relevance of the educational values taught by al-Zarnūjī in his book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and how the challenges and strategies of these values can be integrated into the *Merdeka* Curriculum in Indonesia. The analysis shows that the educational concepts promoted by al-Zarnūjī in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, such as sincere intention, perseverance, effective learning methods, and the relationship between teachers and students, remain highly relevant for implementation in Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in supporting the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Integrating these values into the *Merdeka* Curriculum can strengthen the moral and spiritual foundation of students and support the formation of strong character amidst the challenges of globalization and changing times. However, effectively integrating these values requires strategies involving curriculum development, teacher training, and support from the entire educational ecosystem. Moreover, this study highlights that although the *Merdeka* Curriculum offers freedom in learning, without proper guidance, there is a risk that Islamic education may lose its identity. Therefore, integrating classical values into the modern curriculum is essential not only to preserve the essence of Islamic education but also to ensure that students are not only academically proficient but also possess a strong moral and spiritual foundation.

As a key implication, the integration of al-Zarnūjī's values into the *Merdeka* Curriculum provides a holistic approach to education, which focuses not only on academic achievement but also on the formation of students' character and morals. This is crucial for creating a balanced educational environment that blends academic knowledge with character development. Additionally, this study emphasizes the need for teacher training to understand and teach al-Zarnūjī's values. Enhancing teachers' capacity will contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and the application of these values in daily learning practices. Strengthening character through extracurricular activities that integrate al-Zarnūjī's values also serves as an additional strategy to instill these values practically in students' lives.

However, this study faces some limitations. The diverse local contexts across Indonesia may not be fully covered, and therefore, the implementation of al-Zarnūjī's values may encounter different challenges in various regions, depending on the local culture and specific needs. Additionally, the data used in this study may be limited to certain sources and may not encompass all aspects of the implementation of al-Zarnūjī's values across

educational institutions, which could affect the generalizability of the findings and recommendations. Variability in the quality of teacher training can also impact the consistency and success of integrating these values, as differing levels of understanding and application among teachers may influence the effectiveness of implementation.

For future research, it is recommended to focus on case studies in various regions of Indonesia to explore how al-Zarnūjī's values are implemented in different local contexts. This will provide deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities faced in integrating these values. Evaluating the impact of integrating al-Zarnūjī's values on character formation and students' academic performance should also be conducted. This research could involve measuring educational outcomes and gathering feedback from students, teachers, and parents to assess the effectiveness of applying these values. Additionally, future studies could adopt a more advanced methodological approach, such as Systematic Literature Review (SLR) or bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer, to provide a comprehensive mapping of existing research trends and identify gaps in the study of al-Zarnūjī's educational concepts. Furthermore, developing and testing specific teacher training models for teaching al-Zarnūjī's values could be a next focus, including assessing the effectiveness of various training methods and teaching materials used. Lastly, further research can explore how al-Zarnūjī's values can be integrated not only into the *Merdeka* Curriculum but also into other curricula and educational programs in Indonesia, to create a broader and more inclusive approach to value-based education.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Azwar played a key role in this research, overseeing conceptualization, data collection and management, as well as formal analysis. The investigation was conducted collaboratively with Kamarulnizam Sani and Mohd Farid Ravi Abdullah to strengthen the research findings. Azwar and Kamarulnizam Sani designed the research methodology, while supervision and validation were carried out jointly by all three researchers. Additionally, Azwar handled data visualization, drafted the initial manuscript, and worked with Kamarulnizam Sani on review and editing to ensure the final quality of the research.

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