

EDUCATIONAL INTERACTION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN *TA'LIM AL-MUTA'ALLIM* BY BURHĀNUDDĪN AL-ZARNŪJĪ

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep interaksi edukatif antara guru dan murid dalam pemikiran Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī, khususnya sebagaimana dikemukakan dalam kitab *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis landasan teologis adab, mengidentifikasi struktur hierarkis nilai-nilai adab, serta merekonstruksi relevansinya bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam kontemporer. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan yang bersifat filosofis-interpretatif dalam paradigma konstruktivisme, dengan menerapkan hermeneutika filosofis Hans-Georg Gadamer. Data dikumpulkan melalui dokumentasi, pembacaan intensif (*close reading*), klasifikasi tematik, interpretasi, dan analisis kritis terhadap sumber primer dan sekunder. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa adab merupakan fondasi utama pemikiran pendidikan al-Zarnūjī yang mengintegrasikan dimensi spiritual, intelektual, moral, dan sosial dalam proses pembelajaran. Struktur hierarkis adab dimulai dari adab kepada Allah, kemudian berkembang menjadi adab terhadap ilmu, guru, sesama pelajar, dan diri sendiri. Nilai-nilai tersebut membentuk kerangka pendidikan yang integratif dan transformatif serta berorientasi pada pembentukan *insān ādabī*, yaitu manusia berilmu yang memiliki integritas moral, kesadaran spiritual, tanggung jawab sosial, kedisiplinan, dan kemampuan menggunakan ilmu secara benar, bijaksana, dan bermanfaat bagi kehidupan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pemikiran al-Zarnūjī tetap relevan sebagai landasan penguatan hubungan edukatif dalam pendidikan Islam kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Adab, Interaksi Edukatif, Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī

Abstract

This study examines the concept of educational interaction between teachers and students in the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī, particularly as articulated in his work *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*. The study aims to analyze the theological foundations of adab, identify the hierarchical structure of adab values, and reconstruct their relevance to the development of contemporary Islamic education. This study employs a qualitative approach through philosophical-interpretive library research within a constructivist paradigm, applying Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Data were collected through documentation, intensive reading (*close reading*), thematic classification, interpretation, and critical analysis of primary and secondary sources. The findings indicate that adab constitutes the fundamental foundation of al-Zarnūjī's educational thought, integrating spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions within the learning process. The hierarchical structure of adab begins with adab toward Allah and subsequently develops into adab toward knowledge, teachers, fellow students, and oneself. These values form an integrative and transformative educational framework oriented toward the formation of the *insān ādabī*, namely an educated person who possesses moral integrity, spiritual awareness, social responsibility, discipline, and the ability to use knowledge correctly, wisely, and beneficially. These findings affirm that al-Zarnūjī's educational thought remains relevant as a foundation for strengthening teacher-student educational relationships in contemporary Islamic education.

Keywords: Adab, Educational Interaction, Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental process in human development that is oriented not only toward the development of intellectual abilities but also encompasses the formation of moral, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. From an Islamic perspective, education has a more comprehensive orientation because it aims to develop individuals who are knowledgeable as well as well-mannered. Knowledge is not positioned as an end in itself, but rather as a means of shaping a personality capable of fulfilling the human responsibility as a servant of Allah Almighty and as a *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth. The Qur'an affirms the elevated status of knowledge through the statement of Allah Almighty: "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge by degrees" (QS. Al-Mujādilah [58]: 11). However, the nobility of knowledge in Islam cannot be separated from the moral dimension that accompanies it. The educational principle that emphasizes wisdom, good instruction, and courteous communication, as affirmed in QS. An-Nahl [16]: 125, demonstrates that education is essentially a process of shaping human beings through ethical relationships. Therefore, the success of Islamic education cannot be measured solely by the mastery of knowledge, but also by its ability to cultivate students' character, morality, and *adab* (Al-Attas, 1999; Al-Zarnūjī, 2003).

In this context, interaction between teachers and students constitutes one of the fundamental elements of the educational process. Teachers do not merely function as transmitters of knowledge but also as mentors, role models, and agents of character formation, while students are not merely recipients of information but subjects who develop their potential through educational interaction. Contemporary educational perspectives increasingly reinforce the importance of the quality of such relationships. Research has shown that positive teacher–student relationships are associated with student engagement in learning and can reduce tendencies toward disengagement in the educational process (Pérez-Salas et al., 2021). Teacher–student relationships also play a role in shaping self-worth, which is subsequently associated with student engagement (Huang et al., 2022). Furthermore, the quality of teacher–student relationships is associated with students' academic performance, self-efficacy, and well-being (Bai et al., 2022). Thus, teacher–student relationships are not merely supporting factors in learning but constitute an integral part of the pedagogical ecosystem that influences students' experiences and development.

The significance of these relationships has become increasingly evident in recent research. Wang et al. (2024), for example, found that teacher–student relationships are associated with learning engagement, with perceived social support and academic self-efficacy contributing to the quality of educational interaction and learning outcomes. Liu (2024) also demonstrated the relevance of teacher–student relationships to academic engagement through the mechanisms of social support and academic pressure. Meanwhile, Wang (2023) highlighted the importance of teachers' mindfulness and emotional intelligence in developing positive relationships with students. These findings indicate that the quality of pedagogical relationships encompasses complex psychological, social, and emotional dimensions. In this context, educational interaction

needs to be understood more broadly than merely instructional communication because it involves processes of building trust, respect, role modeling, and student engagement (Wang et al., 2024; Liu, 2024; Wang, 2023).

This issue is particularly relevant to Islamic education because teacher–student relationships have historically been constructed upon the principle of *adab*. *Adab* does not merely mean politeness or etiquette but represents a moral awareness of placing human beings, knowledge, teachers, students, and the educational process according to their proper positions. In the thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *adab* is closely related to the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of everything within a correct order, making *adab* a fundamental dimension in the formation of a just and balanced human being (Al-Attas, 1999). This perspective demonstrates that educational relationships in Islam possess both normative and pedagogical characteristics. Teachers and students are not bound solely by academic objectives but also by moral and spiritual responsibilities in the pursuit of knowledge. Al-Zarnūjī's educational thought similarly emphasizes the importance of proper conduct toward teachers, knowledge, and the learning process, indicating that educational relationships are inseparable from ethical formation (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003).

The urgency of strengthening this dimension has become increasingly evident as education faces the challenges of social change and technological development. Digital transformation has expanded the spaces for educational interaction while simultaneously changing patterns of communication between teachers and students. Interaction through digital media can broaden access to learning, but it does not always replace the depth of interpersonal relationships established through role modeling and direct communication. Research on teacher–student relationships in online learning contexts indicates that changes in the learning environment can affect the quality of relationships between teachers and students as well as student well-being (Vagos & Carvalhais, 2022). Therefore, technological development should not displace the ethical and humanistic dimensions of education but should instead encourage the strengthening of the values underlying pedagogical relationships, particularly *adab* and *ta'dib* (Naqiyah & Handayani, 2024; Rahayu et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian context, the issue of character formation through Islamic Religious Education also remains an important concern. Islamic Religious Education occupies a strategic position in strengthening students' moral and religious character through the internalization of Islamic values in educational practice (Azzaky et al., 2024). The implementation of Islamic character education, however, involves various challenges because the presence of character values in educational programs does not automatically guarantee their effective internalization in students' everyday behavior. Research on contemporary Islamic education emphasizes the importance of integrating religious and moral values into learning practices rather than treating character education as a separate educational component (Maslani et al., 2023; Krishnawati et al., 2023). Thus, character formation in Islamic Religious Education cannot be separated from the quality of interaction between teachers and students.

More recent studies indicate that this issue remains relevant to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. Rahayu et al. (2023) emphasized the challenges involved in strengthening Islamic character education in the digital era, particularly in ensuring that Islamic values remain effectively implemented amid changing educational and social environments. Meanwhile, Naqiyah and Handayani (2024) positioned the concepts of *adab* and *ta'dib* as important elements of Islamic education that remain relevant to character development in the digital era. Azzaky et al. (2024) also demonstrated that Islamic Religious Education contributes to the internalization of moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy, although its implementation faces challenges arising from contemporary social and technological influences. These findings indicate that the challenges of contemporary Islamic education do not merely concern the presence of character values in the curriculum but also how these values are internalized through pedagogical practices and everyday relationships between teachers and students (Rahayu et al., 2023; Naqiyah & Handayani, 2024; Maslani et al., 2023).

This issue is also evident in the gap between the normative presence of character values and their implementation in learning practices. The implementation of Islamic character values in learning continues to encounter challenges even though such values constitute an important component of contemporary Islamic education (Alhamuddin, 2025). A critical review of Indonesian curriculum policy likewise indicates that Islamic character education has been accommodated within both the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, while its implementation remains a significant concern (Alhamuddin, 2025). This demonstrates a gap between the values normatively intended and the pedagogical experiences encountered by students. In other words, strengthening character cannot be achieved merely by adding materials or values to the curriculum but requires a reconstruction of the interaction patterns that serve as the primary medium for value internalization (Alhamuddin, 2025; Maslani et al., 2023).

In the classical tradition of Islamic education, this issue had already received substantial attention. Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī regarded *adab* as an integral part of the process of seeking knowledge and emphasized the importance of relationships among teachers, students, knowledge, and the learning process. In *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum*, al-Zarnūjī emphasizes respect for teachers, diligence in learning, sincerity, patience, the selection of teachers and learning environments, and ethics in the acquisition of knowledge (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003). This conception demonstrates that teacher–student relationships in the Islamic educational tradition are not constructed merely on the basis of knowledge transmission but constitute moral-spiritual relationships directed toward the blessing of knowledge and the formation of personality. Such an understanding is consistent with the broader Islamic conception of education, in which knowledge and the cultivation of proper human conduct are inseparable (Al-Attas, 1999).

Although al-Zarnūjī's thought has been widely studied, existing research has more frequently positioned *adab* as an individual norm for students or as an Islamic educational value in general. A bibliometric analysis of Islamic education pedagogy and character education indicates that scholarship in this field continues to develop, particularly around the integration of

Islamic values and character formation in contemporary educational practice (Ni'mah et al., 2023). However, there remains room to expand the discussion beyond character values toward the relational structures that shape educational experiences. On the other hand, contemporary research on teacher–student relationships predominantly employs psychological and empirical approaches to explain engagement, well-being, self-efficacy, or academic performance (Chen et al., 2021; Gan, 2021). Thus, there remains an underexplored space for dialogue between the classical Islamic educational tradition of *adab* and contemporary findings concerning the quality of pedagogical relationships.

This gap gives rise to three main problems. First, there is an empirical gap, namely the continuing challenges in implementing character education and internalizing moral values in Islamic Religious Education practices, despite the strong normative mandate of Islamic education to cultivate character (Azzaky et al., 2024; Rahayu et al., 2023). Second, there is a theoretical gap, namely the lack of optimal formulations that position *adab* as a two-way relational principle between teachers and students rather than merely as a moral obligation of one party. Third, there is a methodological gap, namely the limited use of hermeneutic approaches to classical Islamic educational works that seek to bring the historical meaning of texts into dialogue with the pedagogical needs of contemporary education. The need for such integration is increasingly relevant given the continuing development of scholarship concerning Islamic pedagogy, character education, and teacher–student relationships (Ni'mah et al., 2023; Pérez-Salas et al., 2021).

Based on these gaps, this study offers novelty through a hermeneutic interpretation of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī using Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic approach. This approach enables the classical text to be understood neither literally nor ahistorically, but rather as part of a dialogue between the horizon of the text, its historical context, and the horizon of contemporary education. Accordingly, this study does not stop at identifying values of *adab* but seeks to interpret their pedagogical meanings and reconstruct the concept of teacher–student educational interaction as an ethical, dialogical, humanistic, and transformative relationship. Such reconstruction is important because contemporary research has demonstrated that the quality of teacher–student relationships has consequences for engagement, well-being, self-efficacy, and student development (Bai et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2024), while Islamic education provides a conceptual tradition of *adab* that can contribute moral and spiritual dimensions to these relationships (Al-Attas, 1999; Al-Zarnūjī, 2003).

On this basis, the study is directed toward examining the concept of teacher–student educational interaction in the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī, interpreting the concept of teacher and student *adab* through Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, and reconstructing an educational interaction model based on Islamic *adab* values that is relevant to contemporary Islamic Religious Education. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic educational scholarship by connecting classical educational thought with contemporary theories of pedagogical relationships. Methodologically, it demonstrates the use of hermeneutics as an approach to reading and reconstructing classical Islamic educational thought in a contextual

manner. Practically, the findings are expected to provide a conceptual foundation for Islamic Religious Education teachers and educational institutions in developing pedagogical relationships that are not only effective in transmitting knowledge but also capable of cultivating respect, role modeling, moral responsibility, diligence in learning, and students' spiritual maturity. Thus, al-Zarnūjī's thought can be revitalized as a conceptual resource for strengthening educational interaction and revitalizing *adab* in contemporary Islamic Religious Education (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999; Muhtarom et al., 2021).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a philosophical-interpretive library research design. The use of library research is based on the nature of the object of inquiry, namely the educational thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī as presented in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq al-Ta'allum*. The study is not intended to empirically examine educational behavior or practices but rather to understand, interpret, and reconstruct ideas concerning teacher–student educational interaction based on the values of Islamic *adab*. Library research is understood as a scholarly process involving the identification, selection, critical reading, analysis, and interpretation of relevant written sources (Zed, 2018). Within the framework of research on Islamic educational thinkers, the analysis does not merely describe the thinker's ideas but seeks to identify the structure of thought, underlying values, relevance, and contribution to the development of Islamic education (Harahap, 2011).

The study adopts a constructivist paradigm and employs Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic approach. The constructivist paradigm views meaning as a construct formed through the interaction of text, interpreter, tradition, and historical context. Gadamerian hermeneutics is employed because it enables al-Zarnūjī's thought to be understood not merely in a literal manner but through a dialogue between the historical horizon of the text and the horizon of contemporary Islamic education. The interpretive process is grounded in the concepts of *Vorverständnis* (pre-understanding), *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* (historically effected consciousness), *fusion of horizons*, and *application* (Gadamer, 2004). Through this process, the values of *adab* embedded in al-Zarnūjī's thought are reinterpreted to establish their conceptual relevance to teacher–student educational interaction in contemporary Islamic Religious Education.

The research data consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq al-Ta'allum* by Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī, particularly the sections addressing the intention to seek knowledge, respect for knowledge and scholars, the selection of teachers, diligence in learning, and the *adab* of teachers and students. Secondary sources include classical and contemporary works on Islamic education, hermeneutic literature, research methodology books, and relevant scholarly journal articles addressing Islamic education, *adab*, teacher–student interaction, al-Zarnūjī's educational thought, and Gadamerian hermeneutics. The sources were selected based on their relevance, academic authority, credibility, and currency.

Data were collected through documentation techniques involving the stages of inventorying, selection, intensive reading (*close reading*), note-taking, and classification according to the themes of adab, teachers, students, educational interaction, and contemporary relevance. Data analysis was conducted hermeneutically through the stages of pre-understanding, understanding the historical context, analyzing the structure of meaning within the text, *fusion of horizons*, application, and conceptual reconstruction (Gadamer, 2004). The interpretations were subsequently synthesized into principles of teacher–student educational interaction based on Islamic adab values that are relevant to the needs of contemporary Islamic Religious Education. The validity of the interpretation was maintained through repeated readings, comparison across sources, and critical dialogue between the primary data and supporting literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Structure of Adab Values in the Thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī

The findings of this study indicate that the structure of adab values in the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī cannot be understood as a collection of independent moral rules, but rather as a value system that serves as the foundation of the entire educational process. Based on an analysis of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*, the study found that adab occupies a central position that connects the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions of the pursuit of knowledge. Accordingly, education according to al-Zarnūjī does not end with the acquisition of knowledge but is directed toward forming individuals who are capable of appropriately positioning knowledge, themselves, teachers, and their social environment. This finding demonstrates that adab in al-Zarnūjī's thought functions as an educational paradigm rather than merely as a behavioral ethic for students (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999; Naqiyah & Handayani, 2024).

This position is evident in al-Zarnūjī's assertion that many students exert considerable effort in seeking knowledge but fail to obtain its benefits and fruits because they take the wrong path and neglect its essential conditions. This statement indicates that educational success is not determined solely by the intensity of learning, intellectual ability, or mastery of subject matter, but also by the moral and spiritual qualities accompanying the learning process. Thus, adab becomes a determining instrument in whether knowledge can produce genuine benefit or instead lose its proper orientation. Within this framework, knowledge is integrally connected to morality and spirituality; consequently, the pursuit of knowledge must be grounded in proper intention, respect for knowledge, respect for teachers, diligence, patience, discipline, and moral responsibility (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999; Krishnawati et al., 2023).

Structurally, the study identified a hierarchical relationship among the adab values articulated by al-Zarnūjī. This structure begins with adab toward Allah as the transcendental foundation and subsequently extends to adab toward knowledge, teachers, fellow students, and oneself. This hierarchy demonstrates that all educational activities first derive their orientation from the human relationship with Allah. Knowledge is then positioned as a means of drawing closer to Him, while the teacher is regarded as a mediator of knowledge who deserves respect because of the knowledge they

carry and transmit. Relationships with fellow students constitute the social dimension of education, whereas adab toward oneself becomes the space in which values are internalized through diligence, discipline, patience, and self-control. Thus, these values form an interconnected sequence that ultimately leads to the formation of the *insān ādabī*, or the person of adab (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999; Naqiyah & Handayani, 2024).

The finding is further strengthened by a hermeneutic synthesis demonstrating that al-Zarnūjī's structure of adab contains three layers of meaning: transcendental, relational, and transformational dimensions. The transcendental dimension is reflected in the intention to seek Allah's pleasure and eternal happiness. Knowledge is not positioned as an end in itself but as a means toward more perfect servitude to Allah. The relational dimension is manifested in the requirement to respect knowledge and its bearers and to establish harmonious relationships within the learning environment. Meanwhile, the transformational dimension is reflected in the emphasis on diligence, perseverance, patience, and the practice of knowledge as a process of personal transformation. Such an integrated conception corresponds with the broader orientation of Islamic character education, which seeks to connect religious understanding with the development of attitudes, habits, and ethical behavior (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Alhamuddin, 2025; Maslani et al., 2023).

When interpreted through Gadamerian hermeneutics, this structure should not be understood merely as an educational set of rules relevant only to Muslim society in the medieval period. Rather, the meanings of adab values can continue to be actualized through a dialogue between the horizon of al-Zarnūjī's thought and the challenges of contemporary education. In the context of modern education, which faces problems such as moral degradation, declining respect for teachers, misuse of technology, and the tendency to separate knowledge from ethical responsibility, the paradigm of adab offers a corrective framework that reconnects knowledge with values. Contemporary studies of Islamic character education similarly demonstrate the continuing importance of integrating moral formation with educational processes, particularly in the context of changing social and digital environments (Alhamuddin, 2025; Rahayu et al., 2023; Azzaky et al., 2024).

Based on the overall findings, the study concludes that the structure of adab values in al-Zarnūjī's thought possesses ontological, epistemological, and axiological characteristics simultaneously. Ontologically, adab directs education toward an awareness of human beings as servants of Allah. Epistemologically, adab determines how knowledge is acquired, respected, and understood. Axiologically, adab ensures that knowledge produces benefit, moral character, and social well-being. Thus, al-Zarnūjī's structure of adab values constitutes an integrated value system that connects human beings with Allah, knowledge, teachers, fellow learners, and themselves. This structure subsequently provides the conceptual foundation for discussing teacher–student educational interaction in the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999; Ni'mah et al., 2023).

The Theological Foundations of Adab in Islamic Education

The findings show that the concept of adab in the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī has a strong theological foundation and cannot be separated from the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings concerning the relationship between human beings and Allah. In this context, adab is understood not merely as a norm of politeness or a code of conduct in social interaction, but as an expression of faith that guides individuals in positioning themselves as servants of Allah, seekers of knowledge, and members of society. An analysis of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* *Tariq al-Ta'allum* demonstrates that all educational activities are oriented toward God-consciousness. Thus, learning is not regarded as a value-free intellectual activity, but as part of devotion to Allah and as a means of attaining a better life in this world and the hereafter (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

This theological foundation can be seen in the way al-Zarnūjī places intention at the basis of the pursuit of knowledge. He emphasizes that a seeker of knowledge should intend to attain the pleasure of Allah and happiness in the hereafter. This statement demonstrates that, from al-Zarnūjī's perspective, the educational value of knowledge is first determined by the spiritual orientation underlying it. Knowledge does not attain its nobility merely because it provides human beings with intellectual abilities, but because it can lead them to recognize Allah, fulfill religious obligations, and contribute to the well-being of life. Within this framework, intention becomes the starting point for the formation of adab because it determines the direction in which knowledge is used and prevents the educational process from becoming trapped in purely worldly interests (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

These findings are closely related to the Qur'an, which places intellectual activity within a framework of God-consciousness. The first revelation, *iqra'*, for example, is accompanied by the expression *bismi rabbika al-ladhi khalaq*, as stated in QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 1. The command to read does not stand as an intellectual activity separate from religious values; rather, it is directly connected to the Lord who created. This provides a foundation for the understanding that the pursuit of knowledge in Islam must take place with awareness of the source, purpose, and responsibility associated with knowledge. Accordingly, al-Zarnūjī's concept of adab demonstrates continuity with the Qur'anic worldview, which places knowledge in a close relationship with faith (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

The relationship between knowledge and faith is also evident in QS. al-Mujādilah [58]: 11, which explains that Allah elevates the ranks of those who believe and those who possess knowledge. This verse indicates that the nobility of knowledge does not stand independently but exists in connection with faith. Furthermore, QS. Fāṭir [35]: 28 states that those who possess knowledge have fear of Allah. Based on this verse, the success of knowledge can be understood as being indicated not merely by an increase in knowledge but also by the growth of *khashyah*, namely spiritual awareness that generates submission and moral responsibility. This finding is consistent with al-Zarnūjī's view that beneficial knowledge should influence a person's behavior and orientation toward life (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

The theological foundation of adab is further strengthened by the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. The hadith *innamā al-a'mālu bi al-niyyāt* emphasizes that actions are determined by their intentions. In the context of education, this hadith provides a foundation for the understanding that learning activities are evaluated not only on the basis of their outward forms but also according to the inner orientation accompanying them. Learning, teaching, reading, writing, and developing knowledge can have the value of worship when directed toward Allah and the attainment of human welfare. Conversely, knowledge acquired solely for status, popularity, or material interests risks losing its moral orientation. Therefore, the concept of intention in al-Zarnūjī's thought has both theological and pedagogical functions in shaping students' consciousness (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

In addition, the hadith concerning the perfection of noble character demonstrates that moral formation is an important part of the prophetic mission. This reinforces the view that Islamic education cannot be reduced to a process of knowledge transmission. Education must produce changes in attitudes and behavior. In the context of al-Zarnūjī's thought, such transformation is realized through the habituation of adab in all learning activities, such as respecting knowledge, honoring teachers, striving diligently in learning, protecting oneself from reprehensible behavior, and using knowledge for proper purposes. Thus, adab becomes the meeting point between the intellectual and moral dimensions of Islamic education. Contemporary studies likewise emphasize that Islamic religious education has an important role in strengthening moral character by integrating religious knowledge, habituation, and character formation (Azzaky et al., 2024; Krishnawati et al., 2023; Maslani et al., 2023).

Philosophically, the findings demonstrate that the theological foundation of al-Zarnūjī's adab can be understood through three interrelated dimensions. Ontologically, adab begins with an understanding of the nature of human beings as servants of Allah and as *khalīfah* on earth. Human beings are not viewed merely as rational beings endowed with intellectual abilities, but as beings who bear a divine responsibility. Epistemologically, adab determines how knowledge is acquired, understood, and utilized. Respect for knowledge, teachers, and the learning process becomes part of the mechanism for acquiring beneficial knowledge. Axiologically, meanwhile, adab determines the direction in which knowledge is used so that it produces goodness, human welfare, and closeness to Allah (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

Thus, the analysis shows that *tawḥīd* is the principle that integrates all dimensions of adab in al-Zarnūjī's thought. Awareness that Allah is the source of truth generates respect for knowledge; respect for knowledge generates respect for teachers; and the entire process is ultimately directed toward the formation of human beings who possess moral and spiritual responsibility. From this perspective, adab is not merely a behavioral rule attached to the educational process but a logical consequence of the Islamic worldview concerning human beings, knowledge, and the purpose of life. This understanding is compatible with the conception of *ta'dīb* in Islamic education, in which education is closely associated with the recognition and internalization of the proper order of knowledge, values, and human existence (Al-Attas, 1999; Naqiyah & Handayani, 2024).

The researcher argues that the principal strength of al-Zarnūjī's theological conception lies in its ability to integrate faith, knowledge, and action within a single educational framework. Education does not stop at the mastery of knowledge but is directed toward the formation of individuals capable of using knowledge responsibly. This perspective simultaneously offers a critique of educational models that separate academic achievement from moral development. In the context of contemporary education, the theological foundation of al-Zarnūjī's adab remains relevant because various problems, such as weak academic integrity, the misuse of knowledge, and moral degradation, demonstrate that intellectual intelligence without a foundation of values can lose its direction. Therefore, the theological foundation of adab in al-Zarnūjī's thought can be understood as a philosophical foundation that connects the purpose of education with devotion to Allah, the process of acquiring knowledge with moral responsibility, and educational outcomes with human welfare (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Alhamuddin, 2025; Rahayu et al., 2023; Krishnawati et al., 2023).

The Hierarchical Structure of Adab Values in the Thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī

The findings of the study of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum* show that the adab values in the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī form a systematic, hierarchical, and interconnected structure. Adab values are not presented as a collection of independent rules, but rather as a system that regulates the entirety of relationships within the educational process. This structure begins with the transcendental relationship between human beings and Allah, then extends to relationships with knowledge, teachers, fellow students, and ultimately to the formation of attitudes toward oneself. Thus, al-Zarnūjī's structure of adab demonstrates that education is a process of holistic human formation encompassing spiritual, intellectual, pedagogical, social, and personal dimensions (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

Based on an analysis of the content of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, this structure can be understood through the sequence of adab toward Allah, adab toward knowledge, adab toward teachers, adab toward fellow students, and adab toward oneself. This sequence is not merely a thematic arrangement but indicates functional relationships among the values. Adab toward Allah provides the orientation for all educational activities; adab toward knowledge provides the epistemological direction in the pursuit of knowledge; adab toward teachers regulates pedagogical relationships; adab toward fellow students creates a social environment that supports the learning process; while adab toward oneself internalizes all these values into the learner's personality. The entire process culminates in the formation of a civilized and well-mannered human being (*insān ādabi*) (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999; Naqiyah & Handayani, 2024).

These findings demonstrate that al-Zarnūjī's structure of adab is both hierarchical and integrative. It is hierarchical because there is an order of orientation from transcendental relationships toward interpersonal and personal relationships. It is integrative because each level cannot be separated from the others. For example, adab toward teachers derives its legitimacy from respect for knowledge, while respect for knowledge derives its orientation from the awareness that knowledge is a means of drawing closer to Allah. Likewise, discipline and diligence in learning do not stand merely

as technical requirements but constitute consequences of the learner's responsibility for the trust entrusted to them. Such integration reflects the broader orientation of Islamic education, in which character formation is not detached from knowledge acquisition but constitutes an essential component of the educational process (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Maslani et al., 2023; Krishnawati et al., 2023).

At the first level, adab toward Allah occupies the position of a vertical foundation. Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes that a seeker of knowledge should intend the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of attaining the pleasure of Allah and happiness in the hereafter. This statement demonstrates that all educational activities should possess a transcendental orientation. Knowledge is not regarded as an end in itself, but as a means of overcoming ignorance, improving oneself, fulfilling religious obligations, and benefiting others. Thus, the relationship between human beings and Allah becomes the starting point that determines the direction of the entire educational process (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

Once the relationship with Allah has been established, the structure of adab moves toward the relationship with knowledge. Al-Zarnūjī states that knowledge cannot be acquired without respect (*ta'ẓīm*). Respect for knowledge reflects an awareness that knowledge possesses a noble status and carries moral consequences for those who possess it. In this context, learners are not merely required to have the desire to know but must also adopt the proper attitude toward knowledge. Knowledge must be pursued with diligence, its dignity must be preserved, it must be properly understood, and it must be put into practice in daily life. This demonstrates that adab toward knowledge constitutes an epistemological foundation that connects the process of seeking knowledge with moral responsibility (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999).

Adab toward teachers subsequently occupies an important position within this pedagogical structure. Al-Zarnūjī associates the attainment of beneficial knowledge with respect for knowledge and its bearers. Within this framework, the teacher is not merely a transmitter of instructional content but represents scholarly authority while also serving as a guide for learners in the process of self-formation. Therefore, respect for teachers constitutes part of respect for knowledge itself. The teacher–student relationship is not constructed solely on the basis of administrative or institutional relations, but on trust, respect, exemplary conduct, and moral responsibility. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that, according to al-Zarnūjī, the quality of education is strongly influenced by the quality of the relationship between educators and learners. Contemporary research likewise demonstrates that positive teacher–student relationships are associated with stronger student engagement, academic self-efficacy, well-being, and educational outcomes (Amerstorfer & von Münster-Kistner, 2021; Bai et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Liu, 2024).

The next element is adab toward fellow students. Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes the importance of choosing good companions and a supportive learning environment. The statement *ikhtār al-sharīka thumma al-ṭarīq* indicates that a person's success in seeking knowledge is influenced by the community in which they learn and interact. Learners do not develop within an entirely individual space but through social relationships that can shape habits, attitudes, and character. Therefore, choosing good

companions, respecting one another, assisting each other in learning, and avoiding conflict are integral components of the educational construction of adab. This finding demonstrates that al-Zarnūjī had already positioned the social environment as one of the factors contributing to the formation of learners' character. Contemporary studies similarly show that social support, teacher–student relationships, and classroom relationships are important factors in student engagement and educational development (Gan, 2021; Huang et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2024).

At the next level, adab toward oneself constitutes the internalization of all educational values. Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes diligence (*jidd*), perseverance (*muwāḏabah*), patience, time management, and self-control as essential components of the process of acquiring knowledge. Adab toward oneself demonstrates that educational success ultimately depends to a considerable extent on the learner's ability to regulate and discipline themselves. Knowledge acquired from teachers and the learning environment will not produce transformation unless it is internalized through habits and self-control. Thus, discipline is not merely an instrument for improving academic achievement but also an integral part of character formation (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Alhamuddin, 2025; Maslani et al., 2023).

When this structure is viewed as a whole, it becomes apparent that al-Zarnūjī develops an educational pattern that moves from God-consciousness toward personality formation. The relationship with Allah provides orientation; the relationship with knowledge provides an epistemological foundation; the relationship with teachers provides a pedagogical mechanism; the relationship with fellow students provides a social space; and the relationship with oneself produces the internalization of values. This structure demonstrates that education does not end with the transmission of knowledge but constitutes a gradual process of human transformation. In the terminology of Al-Attas, this process can be associated with the formation of human beings who recognize and acknowledge the proper place of everything within the order of life (Al-Attas, 1999; Al-Zarnūjī, 2003).

From the perspective of Gadamerian hermeneutics, this hierarchical structure can be understood as the result of a dialogue between classical educational texts and human needs in different contexts. The values formulated by al-Zarnūjī emerged within the context of classical Islamic education, but their fundamental meanings are not confined to that historical context. Respect for knowledge can be interpreted in the context of academic integrity; respect for teachers can be related to the development of healthy pedagogical relationships; the selection of companions can be expanded into concern for the learning environment; while diligence and discipline can be contextualized in relation to the demands of modern learning. Thus, al-Zarnūjī's structure of adab has the capacity to engage in dialogue with contemporary educational problems without losing the value-based foundation that constitutes its essential character. Contemporary Islamic education scholarship likewise emphasizes the need to contextualize Islamic pedagogical values in response to contemporary educational and digital challenges (Ni'mah et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2023; Alhamuddin, 2025).

Based on the overall analysis, the researcher finds that the hierarchical structure of adab values in al-Zarnūjī's thought ultimately forms an educational system with three principal

orientations. First, there is a vertical orientation connecting learners with Allah as the source of values and the ultimate purpose of education. Second, there is a horizontal orientation governing learners' relationship with knowledge, teachers, and the learning community. Third, there is an internal orientation directing learners toward the development of discipline, responsibility, and self-control. These three orientations do not operate separately but constitute an integrated whole that culminates in the formation of *insān ādabī*. Therefore, the structure of adab values in the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī can be understood as an educational framework that integrates spiritual, epistemological, pedagogical, social, and personal dimensions. This structure subsequently provides an important foundation for understanding how al-Zarnūjī constructs educational relationships and interactions between teachers and students (Al-Zarnūjī, 2003; Al-Attas, 1999; Naqiyah & Handayani, 2024; Amerstorfer & von Münster-Kistner, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the thought of Burhānuddīn al-Zarnūjī places *adab* as the fundamental foundation of Islamic education, integrating spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions. Adab is not understood merely as etiquette or proper conduct, but as a paradigm that determines the orientation, process, and objectives of education. Theologically, *adab* is rooted in *tamhīd* and the awareness of human beings as servants of Allah. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge is directed toward attaining the pleasure of Allah, happiness in the hereafter, and the welfare of human life. The structure of *adab* values in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* demonstrates a hierarchical pattern that begins with *adab* toward Allah, followed by *adab* toward knowledge, teachers, fellow students, and oneself. This structure reveals functional interconnectedness among transcendental awareness, respect for knowledge, educational relationships, social life, and the development of personal discipline. Adab toward Allah constitutes the transcendental foundation that provides direction for all educational activities, while the other values represent their actualization throughout the learning process. Thus, according to al-Zarnūjī, education is oriented toward the formation of *insān ādabī*, namely a knowledgeable human being who possesses moral integrity, spiritual awareness, social responsibility, and the ability to use knowledge correctly and beneficially.

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