



Exploring the Characteristics and Roles of Students in Islamic Education

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Article Information:

Received April 8, 2026

Revised May 16, 2026

Accepted June 15, 2026

Keywords: *Islamic education, Fitrah, moral character, Insan kamil*

Abstract

Understanding the characteristics and roles of students is fundamental to achieving the goals of Islamic education. From an Islamic perspective, students are viewed as individuals endowed with *fitrah* (natural disposition) and *istidad* (potential), which should be nurtured to support their development toward *insan kamil* (the ideal human being). This article aims to analyze the characteristics and roles of students in Islamic education and their implications for educational practice. It employs a qualitative approach through content analysis of the Quran, Hadith, scholarly books, journal articles, and other relevant literature. The findings reveal that students possess interconnected physiological, psychological, spiritual, and social characteristics that contribute to holistic personality development. Furthermore, students are positioned as seekers of knowledge (*thalib al-'ilm*), cultivators of their personal potential, guardians of moral values and ethics, and individuals responsible for applying Islamic teachings in daily life. The findings indicate that the concept of students in Islamic education extends beyond knowledge acquisition to encompass character formation, spiritual growth, and lifelong learning. These findings highlight the need for educational policies and practices that are humanistic, holistic, and grounded in Islamic values to foster knowledgeable, morally upright, spiritually mature, and socially responsible individuals.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of humanization that aims to develop students' potential holistically, encompassing not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor domains. Through education, students are expected to develop the thinking abilities, attitudes, values, and skills necessary to face various life challenges. Therefore, education is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward the comprehensive development of character and personality (Saihu & Umar, 2022; Setiawan & Rasyidi, 2020). In this context, students are a central component of the educational process because the success of education largely depends on the extent to which their potential can be optimally developed.

From the perspective of Islamic education, students occupy a particularly important position. Islam views every human being as being born in a state of *fitrah*, a natural disposition toward accepting the truth and developing the potential bestowed by Allah SWT. This perspective is consistent with the saying of the Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him): “*Every child is born in a state of fitrah, but their parents make them a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian*” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). This hadith emphasizes that students are not passive individuals who merely receive environmental influences but active subjects of education endowed with innate potential that must be guided and developed through appropriate educational processes. Accordingly, Islamic education views students as a trust whose intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions must be nurtured in a balanced manner.

Various studies have examined the characteristics and position of students in Islamic education. Understanding students’ characteristics is an important factor in successful learning because individuals differ in their intellectual, physical, emotional, and moral aspects, requiring appropriate educational approaches (Muhammad et al., 2024). In line with this perspective, teachers need to understand students’ characteristics within the framework of Islamic Education to create effective and meaningful learning experiences (Jiang, 2017). Furthermore, students possess multidimensional characteristics encompassing biological, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects, which require holistic development (Balqis et al., 2024). Students are also viewed as individuals who continuously develop toward maturity through the assistance and guidance of educators (Ibrahim et al., 2024). This perspective is reinforced by the importance of developing students’ physical, social, and intellectual potential in Islamic education (Waston & Rois, 2017).

Other studies have demonstrated that students are not merely recipients of knowledge but active participants in the educational process. They play an active role in seeking, understanding, and applying knowledge to attain *insan kamil* (the ideal human being) (Haq, 2015). In addition, students possess the potential of *fitrah*, reason, and spirituality, which must be developed in a balanced manner through holistic education (Khozin & Firmansyah, 2024). The position of students as a trust from Allah SWT is also associated with their unique and dynamic characteristics, which require continuous guidance (Masani & Fabanjo, 2026). Similarly, students are regarded as active subjects who develop their spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social potential in a balanced manner (Hussin, 2026). Understanding students’ characteristics is also a prerequisite for optimizing the learning process amid increasingly complex developments in science and technology (Cahyandari et al., 2023). Overall, these studies emphasize that students in Islamic education are individuals with potential, distinctive characteristics, and responsibilities that must be developed comprehensively to achieve the goals of Islamic education.

Nevertheless, contemporary educational practices still tend to position students as passive objects of learning. Educational processes often prioritize academic achievement and mastery of subject matter over the development of students’ character, *adab* (ethical conduct), and individual potential. In contrast, Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, emphasizes that success in seeking knowledge depends not only on the mastery of knowledge but also on *adab*, sincerity, and perseverance in learning. These challenges have become increasingly complex in the digital era, characterized by the rapid flow of information, changes in sociocultural values, and growing diversity in students’ characteristics. In this context, the educational thought of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and Ki Hajar Dewantara regarding the integration of knowledge, character, morality, and humanity remains relevant to addressing contemporary educational needs (Sihab & Haningsih, 2026).

Although numerous studies have examined students’ characteristics, potential, and position in Islamic education, most have addressed these aspects separately. Some studies have focused on students’ characteristics, while others have explored their potential and development. Still others have examined the relationship between educators and students. However, studies integrating the nature of students, their characteristics, roles, rights and responsibilities, and *adab* toward knowledge and

educators within a unified conceptual framework remain relatively limited. Consequently, the understanding of students as the central subjects of Islamic education has yet to be comprehensively established.

The novelty of this article lies in its holistic analysis of students from the perspective of Islamic education by integrating their nature, characteristics, roles, rights and responsibilities, and *adab* in seeking knowledge into a comprehensive conceptual framework. Unlike previous studies, which tend to examine these aspects separately, this article employs a content analysis approach to the Quran, hadith, and classical and contemporary Islamic educational literature. This approach aims to produce a more comprehensive synthesis of the position of students as subjects of education in Islam.

The findings of this article are expected to make a theoretical contribution to strengthening the concept of students in Islamic education as individuals whose intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions must be developed in a balanced manner. Practically, the findings may serve as a foundation for educators, educational institutions, and policymakers in designing learning processes that are more humanistic, participatory, and oriented toward optimizing students' potential. Furthermore, this article is expected to strengthen the development of Islamic education that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the cultivation of *adab*, moral character, and Islamic personality, thereby fostering a generation that is knowledgeable, morally upright, and distinguished in character.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this article aims to analyze the nature, characteristics, roles, rights, and responsibilities of students from the perspective of Islamic education and to explain the importance of *adab* toward knowledge and educators as a foundation for achieving the holistic goals of Islamic education.

METHODS

This article employs a qualitative approach using the content analysis method to examine the characteristics and roles of students from the perspective of Islamic education. A qualitative approach was selected because the study of students in Islam involves not only empirical facts but also the values, concepts, and principles embedded in Islamic sources. Through content analysis, various ideas contained in the Quran, hadith, and Islamic educational literature can be identified, interpreted, and synthesized to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and position of students in Islamic education. This approach is considered appropriate because it enables the exploration of meanings embedded in texts while establishing a systematic conceptual understanding (Adlini et al., 2022; Rambe et al., 2025; Savin-Baden & Major, 2025).

Data Sources

The data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include Quranic verses and hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) addressing human nature, the obligation to seek knowledge, students' characteristics, and the relationship between students and educators. The secondary sources comprise books on Islamic education written by Abuddin Nata, Ramayulis, Zakiah Daradjat, Hasan Langgulung, Al-Ghazali, and Al-Zarnuji, as well as scholarly articles relevant to the topic of students in Islamic education. These two types of sources are used to obtain a comprehensive understanding, as the primary sources provide a normative foundation, while the secondary sources offer theoretical and contextual support for the concepts under investigation (Ghani et al., 2024; Hasballah et al., 2021).

Instrument

In this article, the author serves as the primary instrument (human instrument), responsible for identifying data sources, selecting relevant data, interpreting

information, and developing a conceptual synthesis in accordance with the focus of the study. The use of the author as the primary instrument is a characteristic of qualitative research because the analytical process requires the ability to understand the context, meanings, and relationships among concepts identified across various data sources. To support this process, a documentation sheet and an analytical matrix are used to organize the main categories, including the nature of students, students' characteristics, students' roles, students' rights and responsibilities, and *adab* (ethical conduct) toward knowledge and educators (Bingham, 2023; Bryant & Charmaz, 2019; Lindgren et al., 2020).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through documentation by searching, reading, identifying, classifying, and recording relevant information from various literature sources. Documentation was selected because all the data used in this study were derived from written documents directly related to the research topic. The collected data were then organized into specific thematic categories to facilitate the analytical and interpretive processes. This technique enables the author to obtain in-depth and meaningful data, making it suitable for examining the concept of students from the perspective of Islamic education (Bahishti, 2022; Renz et al., 2018).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using the content analysis method. The first stage involved data reduction to select information relevant to the research focus. The second stage involved data categorization based on the main themes, including the nature of students, their characteristics and roles, their rights and responsibilities, and *adab* in seeking knowledge. The third stage involved interpretation by comparing and connecting various perspectives identified in the literature. The interpretations were then synthesized into a conceptual framework that systematically explains the characteristics and roles of students from the perspective of Islamic education. Content analysis enables the identification of patterns, themes, and meanings embedded in texts, thereby generating a deeper and more comprehensive conceptual understanding (Monaro et al., 2022).

Data Trustworthiness

Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation by comparing and cross-checking information obtained from the Quran, hadith, books on Islamic education, and relevant scholarly articles. In addition, consistency checks were conducted between normative and academic sources to ensure the coherence of the concepts analyzed. These procedures were essential for enhancing the credibility, dependability, and validity of the findings, thereby ensuring that the resulting interpretations were grounded in a strong academic foundation. Through triangulation, each concept discussed was supported by multiple complementary sources rather than relying on a single reference (Kocaman, 2024; Takona, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Nature of Students from the Perspective of Islam

The analysis reveals that students occupy a central position in Islamic education as individuals who possess *fitrah* (natural disposition) and the potential to develop their intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social capacities. From an Islamic perspective, students are not merely recipients of knowledge but individuals who actively engage in the process of learning and character development. Their educational development is directed toward achieving *insan kamil* (the complete human being), who demonstrates a balance between intellectual competence, spiritual awareness, and noble character. This perspective emphasizes that education should address the whole person rather than focus exclusively on academic achievement (Alouzi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2026).

The concept of *fitrah* indicates that every student possesses an innate disposition that can be nurtured through appropriate educational processes. Therefore, education should facilitate the development of students' potential through the integration of knowledge, faith, and moral values. Islamic education recognizes that each student has distinctive characteristics and learning needs that require thoughtful pedagogical responses. Teachers consequently need to understand students as individuals whose development is influenced by their physical, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions (Defriyanto et al., 2026; Hafizah et al., 2025).

Student Characteristics from the Perspective of Islam

Students in Islamic education possess characteristics that distinguish them as learners and as individuals undergoing continuous development. These characteristics include their intellectual abilities, emotional conditions, spiritual dispositions, and moral responsibilities. Understanding these dimensions is essential because students' learning processes cannot be separated from their personal experiences, backgrounds, and developmental needs. Islamic education therefore emphasizes the importance of recognizing individual differences while nurturing students' potential in accordance with Islamic values (Az-Zahra et al., 2025; Mustafa et al., 2026; Salamah et al., 2026).

From this perspective, students are understood as individuals who have the capacity to reason, reflect, and develop their understanding through learning experiences. The use of *'aql* (intellect) enables students to acquire and evaluate knowledge, while *qalb* (heart) represents the spiritual and moral dimension that guides their attitudes and behavior. The integration of these dimensions is important for ensuring that learning does not merely produce intellectual competence but also cultivates faith, responsibility, and noble character. Accordingly, educational practices should support the balanced development of students' intellectual and spiritual capacities (Rizal et al., 2023).

Students also require guidance in developing self-discipline, responsibility, and appropriate social behavior. Their characteristics should not be interpreted solely in terms of academic performance, but also in relation to their capacity to demonstrate respect, maintain ethical conduct, and apply knowledge in everyday life. This understanding positions Islamic education as a process that integrates cognitive development with spiritual formation and moral education (Celine et al., 2025).

The Roles and Position of Students in Islamic Education

In Islamic education, students occupy a position as seekers of knowledge, commonly referred to as *thalib al-'ilm*. This position entails not only the pursuit of intellectual understanding but also a commitment to ethical conduct throughout the learning process. Seeking knowledge is regarded as an important activity that should be accompanied by sincerity, discipline, humility, and responsibility. Students are therefore expected to participate actively in learning while maintaining appropriate relationships with teachers, peers, and the knowledge they acquire (Faliyandra et al., 2025).

The role of students extends beyond receiving and memorizing information. They are expected to understand, reflect upon, and apply knowledge in ways that contribute to personal development and social well-being. Within the Islamic worldview, human beings are also understood through the concepts of *'abdullah* (servant of Allah) and *khalifah fi al-ard* (vicegerent on earth). These concepts provide a foundation for understanding the broader purpose of education: nurturing individuals who demonstrate devotion to Allah and fulfill their responsibilities toward other people and the environment (Engkizar et al., 2024).

Consequently, the educational process should encourage students to develop intellectual independence while remaining grounded in Islamic ethical principles.

Teachers play an important role in facilitating this process by providing meaningful learning experiences, encouraging critical reflection, and guiding students in applying knowledge responsibly. Such an approach enables students to understand learning as a process of personal transformation rather than merely a means of obtaining academic qualifications (Terblanche et al., 2020).

Adab in Seeking Knowledge

Adab is a fundamental component of Islamic education because it connects the pursuit of knowledge with moral responsibility and spiritual development. In this context, learning is not limited to acquiring information or mastering particular subjects; it also involves cultivating appropriate attitudes toward teachers, fellow students, and the learning process itself. Students are expected to demonstrate humility (*tawadu'*), perseverance (*mujahadah*), sincerity, and trust in Allah (*tawakkul*) while pursuing knowledge.

The emphasis on *adab* indicates that the quality of education should be evaluated not only through academic achievement but also through the ethical development of students. Knowledge is expected to guide conduct and strengthen students' awareness of their responsibilities. Therefore, educational practices should integrate intellectual instruction with the cultivation of moral values and spiritual awareness. This integration is particularly important in Islamic education, where the acquisition of knowledge is closely connected to the development of faith and character.

Teachers contribute to the development of *adab* by serving as role models (*uswah hasanah*) and creating learning environments that encourage respectful interaction. Through habituation (*ta'wid*), advice and moral guidance (*mau'izah*), and dialogical interaction (*hikmah*), teachers can help students internalize Islamic values and apply them in their daily lives. These approaches demonstrate that character development requires consistency between what teachers communicate and what they practice in educational settings (Fadhil & Sebgag, 2021; Tambak et al., 2021; Wachida et al., 2021).

Implications of Student Characteristics for Educational Practices

Understanding students' characteristics and roles has important implications for educational practices. First, learning should be designed to accommodate students' diverse intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Teachers need to recognize individual differences and employ learning strategies that encourage active participation, critical thinking, reflection, and independent learning. Such practices allow students to develop their potential while remaining attentive to the moral and spiritual objectives of Islamic education (Geng et al., 2019).

Second, the learning process should integrate knowledge acquisition with character formation. Academic content needs to be connected with Islamic values so that students can understand the ethical implications of what they learn and apply their knowledge responsibly. This approach requires teachers to combine appropriate instructional methods with consistent moral guidance, meaningful dialogue, and positive role modeling.

Third, teachers should establish learning environments that promote respect, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. The principles of *adab* can be incorporated into classroom interactions, learning activities, and assessment practices. Through consistent habituation and guidance, students can gradually develop ethical dispositions that support both academic learning and personal development.

Finally, the understanding of students as individuals endowed with *fitrah* and potential encourages teachers to view education as a comprehensive developmental process. The goal is not merely to transmit knowledge but also to nurture individuals who possess intellectual competence, spiritual awareness, and noble character. Therefore, Islamic education should integrate cognitive, affective, spiritual, and moral

dimensions in order to support the development of *insan kamil* (Atmaja et al., 2019; Engkizar et al., 2026; Masturin et al., 2022; Nugraha, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates that, from the perspective of Islamic education, students are individuals endowed with *fitrah* (natural disposition) and potential that must be optimally developed to achieve the ultimate goal of education, namely the formation of *insan kamil* (the complete human being). The analysis reveals that students are not merely recipients of knowledge but also active participants in developing their intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social capacities through the learning process. Their characteristics encompass physiological, psychological, spiritual, and social dimensions that are interconnected in shaping their personalities. Furthermore, students serve as *thalib al-'ilm* (seekers of knowledge), individuals responsible for developing their potential, and agents in the formation of Islamic character, as well as future *khalifah* (vicegerents) responsible for implementing Islamic values in their lives. Thus, the article's objective of analyzing the nature, characteristics, and roles of students from the perspective of Islamic education demonstrates that students are both the central focus and active partners in an educational process oriented toward holistic human development.

The novelty of this article lies in its holistic conceptualization of students in Islamic education by integrating their nature, characteristics, roles, rights and responsibilities, and *adab* (proper conduct) in seeking knowledge into a comprehensive conceptual framework. Unlike previous studies that generally examine these aspects separately, this article positions them as interconnected dimensions that collectively contribute to the development of *insan kamil*. The findings highlight the importance of developing Islamic education policies and practices that focus not only on academic achievement but also on students' moral character, spirituality, and social responsibility. Therefore, educators, families, educational institutions, and policymakers need to develop a humanistic and holistic educational system grounded in Islamic values to nurture a generation that is knowledgeable, morally upright, possesses strong personal qualities, and can face life's challenges responsibly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this research.

DECLARATIONS

Author contribution

Dinda Salsabila: data curation, writing-original draft preparation, **Rizka Sari:** analysis, conceptualization, **Hambali Jaili:** methodology, visualization, **Yumna:** editing.

AI Statement

The data and the grammatical structure in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

Funding statement

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that this research was conducted without any conflict of interest in the research.

Ethical clearance

The research company has agreed to carry out the research and is willing if the results of this research are published.

Publisher's and Journal's Note

Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta as the publisher and Editor of Qiro'ah: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam state that there is no conflict of interest towards this article publication.

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Qiro'ah: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam

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