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Reorienting the Pedagogy of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim in Shaping the Academic Ethics of Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

The transmission of academic ethics through the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* now meets a generation of learners, Generation Z, whose cognitive habits favor independence and critical reasoning. A literal reading of the book's *mubalaghah* rhetoric may therefore trigger cognitive dissonance. This interdisciplinary qualitative study aims to formulate a framework for reorienting the pedagogy of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* so that it suits Gen Z learners. The procedure had three stages: an in-depth hermeneutic deconstruction using Sahiron Syamsuddin's approach, backed by historiographical verification, to separate the rhetoric from the ethical message; a conceptual comparison with modern scientific literature; and the formulation of a curriculum matrix for academic ethics. The findings show that cognitive dissonance can be anticipated by reorienting three core values: *ta'dzim* as epistemic respect, *wara'* as self-regulation, and *jiddu* as academic grit. Each of these has an analogical-theoretical counterpart in modern scientific findings. The study contributes a conceptual bridge between the *turath* literature and contemporary educational rationality, and it offers an initial blueprint for an academic ethics curriculum in Islamic higher education, one that still needs further empirical validation.

Keywords: *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, Pedagogical Reorientation, Academic Ethics, Generation Z.*

INTRODUCTION

Modern educational culture, driven by the rapid pace of digital technology, calls for change in both pedagogical methodology and practice. In Islamic education, the formation of character and learning ethics has historically rested on classical *turath* texts, known in the pesantren as *kitab kuning*. One of them is the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Shaykh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji. For centuries this work has served as a reference for passing on a learner's ethics, which center on *ta'dzim* (reverence), *wara'* (caution), and *jiddu* (diligence) in the pursuit of knowledge.[1] That transmission, however, now meets Generation Z (Gen Z) learners who

[1] M. Syairozi, "Peran Pembelajaran Kitab Ta'lim Al-Muta'alim dalam Pembentukan Karakter," *PEKERTI: Journal Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti* 7, no. 2 (2025): 270–76, https://journal.iaingorontalo.ac.id/index.php/pekerti/article/download/6770/2906.

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have grown up in a constantly connected environment. Several studies describe Gen Z learners as a group whose learning preferences and motivations differ from those of earlier generations.[2] Born between 1997 and 2012, this generation came of age during the rapid rise of digital technology and tends to put flexibility of rhythm first in both work and learning.[3] This trait fosters independence in the learning process. Peer-group dynamics also shape the preferences of this generation to a significant degree.[4] Behind an active digital presence, forward-looking anxiety pushes them to prepare for empirical realities,[5] and this in turn changes how they take in and process knowledge.[6]

A problem arises when the ethical values of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* are conveyed through metaphorical narratives full of *mubalaghah* (hyperbolic) rhetoric, with no contextual explanation from the teacher. For instance, al-Zarnuji records that Hasan ibn Ziyad began studying fiqh at the age of 80, studied for 40 years, and then issued fatwas for the next 40.[7] Taken at face value, the narrative implies a lifespan of 160 years, which contradicts the historiographical evidence in the *Tarikh Baghdad*[8] and the *Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'*.[9] These works place his birth somewhere between 116 and 133 AH and his death in 204 AH, an empirical lifespan of roughly 71 to 88 years. His chronological position as a direct student of Abu Hanifa (d. 150 AH) also rules out any suggestion that he started his studies at 80. The narrative in the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* should therefore be understood as a pedagogical device that stirs intrinsic motivation for lifelong learning and intellectual commitment, not as a factual historical record.

Gen Z shows a strong tendency to gather information through digital search engines. In keeping with this, in academic settings they show a marked preference for learning tools and for self-directed learning methods.[10] As a result, when they interpret texts full of *mubalaghah* rhetoric on their own, without adequate contextualization, they may well perceive them as disinformation, irrationality, or even toxic positivity.[11] The problem does not lie in the ethical framework of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* itself. It comes from methodological error and from teaching that strips the text of its context. Core values such as *ta'dzim*, *wara'*, and

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[2] Grendi Hendrastomo and Nur Endah Januarti, "The Characteristics of Generation Z Students and Implications for Future Learning Methods," *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran* 9, no. 2 (2023): 484–496, https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v9i2.7745. Early Ni'mah Hayati, "Karakteristik Belajar Generasi Z dan Implikasinya terhadap Desain Pembelajaran IPS," *Jurnal Pembelajaran, Bimbingan, dan Pengelolaan Pendidikan* 4, no. 8 (2024): 8, https://doi.org/10.17977/um065.v4.i8.2024.8. Shiva Shirazian, Mehdi Vatanpour, dan Pargol Guity, "Generation Z: Learners' Profiles and Teaching Challenges," *Frontiers in Dentistry* 22, no. 40 (2025), https://doi.org/10.18502/fid.v22i40.19906.

[3] Yvonne J. Vermetten, Jan D. Vermunt, and Hans G. Lodewijks, "Powerful Learning Environments? How University Students Differ in Their Response to Instructional Measures," *Learning and Instruction* 12, no. 3 (2002): 263, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752(01)00013-5.

[4] Dana Schwieger and Christine Ladwig, "Reaching and Retaining the Next Generation: Adapting to the Expectations of Gen Z in the Classroom," *Information Systems Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (2018): 45, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1179303.pdf.

[5] Vermetten, Vermunt, and Lodewijks, "Powerful Learning Environments?" 265.

[6] Sri Fani Zis, Nadra Effendi, and Emidar R. Roem, "Perubahan Perilaku Komunikasi Generasi Milenial dan Generasi Z di Era Digital," *Satwika: Kajian Ilmu Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial* 5, no. 1 (2021): 68–87, https://doi.org/10.22219/satwika.v5i1.15550.

[7] Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Thariq al-Ta'allum* (Surabaya: Al-Hidayah, 1995), 12.

[8] Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 2002), 8:242–255.

[9] Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad adz-Dzahabi, *Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1985), 9:543–547.

[10] Schwieger and Ladwig, "Reaching and Retaining the Next Generation," 48.

[11] Doddy Wibowo, "Toxic Positivity: Sisi Lain dari Konsep untuk Selalu Positif dalam Segala Kondisi," *Psychopreneur Journal* 6, no. 1 (2021): 10–25, https://doi.org/10.37715/psy.v6i1.2493.

jiddu remain relevant to modern education; it is the failure of contextualization that produces dissonance for Gen Z learners.[12] The methodological precision of the educator therefore determines the quality and effectiveness of their learning.[13] Reorienting the pedagogy of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* matters because rigid instructional transmission is likely to widen the epistemic distance between the *turath* tradition and learners in the digital age.[14] Through a hermeneutic-conceptual approach, a shift toward dialogical space allows al-Zarnuji's ethical values to be articulated as instruments of self-regulation and as strategies for academic development that fit the cognitive tendencies of Generation Z.[15]

Research on the relevance of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* continues to grow. It covers instilling *ta'dzim* through habituation,[16] upholding *adab* as the epistemological foundation against educational pragmatism,[17] and reactualizing al-Zarnuji's theory in an age of globalization.[18] Although these studies affirm the ethical urgency of the text, earlier work tends to be descriptive and apologetic, demanding passive obedience, and so makes little room for the cognitive dynamics of Gen Z. Hermeneutic decoding of the *mubalaghah* style, aimed at bringing it into line with modern reasoning, also remains scarce. This study seeks to fill that gap by refining the framework for reading the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* through an integration of contextual hermeneutics and modern cognitive science. The approach is interdisciplinary and is oriented toward methodological alignment rather than criticism of al-Zarnuji's ethical values. It validates classical concepts such as *ta'dzim*, *wara'*, and *jiddu* through findings from modern science and psychology, and in doing so turns the traditional narrative into a rational pedagogical principle.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to build a framework for reorienting the pedagogy of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* for Generation Z. The discussion centers on analyzing learners' cognitive dissonance toward classical narratives, deconstructing *mubalaghah* rhetoric into logical reasoning, reinterpreting al-Zarnuji's thought hermeneutically, and comparing its concepts with modern cognitive science. The results are intended as conceptual input for designing an academic ethics curriculum that suits contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

Building on this argument, this article aims to formulate a model for the pedagogical reorientation of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* in shaping the academic ethics of Generation Z. Specifically, the study examines the forms of cognitive dissonance Gen Z experiences in relation to the classical text, decomposes classical *mubalaghah* into rational terms, and validates al-Zarnuji's principles through hermeneutic and scientific perspectives. The findings are

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[12] Mar'atul Azizah and Akhmad Najibul Khairi Syaie, "Ta'lim Muta'allim: Solutions for Forming the Ta'dzim Attitude of Generation Z Students towards Teachers," *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan dan Keislaman* 13, no. 1 (2024): 15–28, https://pondokjurnal.uwj.ac.id/index.php/ UrwatulWutsqo/article/view/ 1334.

[13] Jodie Eckleberry-Hunt, David Lick, and Ronald Hunt, "Is Medical Education Ready for Generation Z?" *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* 10, no. 4 (2018): 378, https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-18-00466.1.

[14] Hafizh Maulana Nugraha et al., "The Revitalization of the Yellow Book of Turath in the Malay Islamic Education Curriculum: Between Tradition, Modernity, and Scientific Transformation," *RELIGI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 4, no. 1 (2026): 1–11, https://journal.umkendari.ac.id/ religi/article/view/1713.

[15] M. Misnawi and M. Zahid, "Reaktualisasi Nilai Ta'dzim al-'Ilm wa Ahlih dalam Al-Qur'an: Telaah Tematik di Era Disrupsi Digital," Reflection Journal 5, no. 2 (2025): 1046–59, https://journal-center.litpam.com/index.php/RJ/article/view/4213.

[16] Azizah and Syaie, "Ta'lim Muta'allim," 18.

[17] Khairul Abdillah Harahap and Nelly Setia Wati, "Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Adab Dalam Kitab Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim dan Relevansinya terhadap Pendidikan Karakter Kontemporer," *JSPAI: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 2 (2025): 24–32, https://doi.org/10.32806/jspai.v1i2.1394.

[18] Aisyatul Farhah and Zumrotul Mukaffa, "Reaktualisasi Teori Al-Zarnuji Dalam Kitab Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Globalisasi Di Madrasah Aliyah," *FIKRAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 10, no. 1 (2026): 1–15, https://ejournal.uika-bogor.ac.id/index.php/ FIKRAH/article/ view/23950.

expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the formulation of an adaptive and logical scholarly-ethics curriculum for contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

METHOD

This interdisciplinary qualitative study combines contextual hermeneutics with modern cognitive science to delineate the ethico-pedagogical structure of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and to reorient its rhetorical narratives so that they match the cognitive profile of Gen Z.[19] The primary data come from the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* itself, with attention to the values of *ta'dzim*, *wara'*, and *jiddu* and to its *mubalaghah* expressions. Secondary data were collected systematically from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using the keywords "Ta'lim al-Muta'allim," "Islamic pedagogy," "cognitive psychology," "educational neuroscience," and "Gen Z learning strategies." The textual analysis applies Sahiron Syamsuddin's theory of contextual hermeneutics to distinguish *mubalaghah* expressions from literal claims, drawing on linguistic indicators, socio-historical reconstruction, and historiographical verification.[20] Through content analysis and interdisciplinary synthesis, the analytical procedure covers a hermeneutic deconstruction of the text's rhetoric, a scientific validation of al-Zarnuji's concepts against findings in cognitive psychology and educational neuroscience, and a pedagogical synthesis that formulates a rational, adaptive framework of scholarly ethics for Generation Z.[21]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analyzing Generation Z's Cognitive Dissonance toward the Textuality of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*

Transformations in information technology have reshaped the cognitive frameworks and epistemic paradigms of Generation Z, who tend to process information analytically, independently, and on the basis of data verification.[22] As a result, the legitimacy of knowledge has moved away from hierarchical-dogmatic authority and toward transparent reasoning and empirical evidence. This shift produces cognitive dissonance when these learners meet the traditional pedagogical scheme of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, which is transmitted in a monologic-doctrinal mode.[23]

Table 1. Potential Dissonance between Gen Z Cognition and Classical Pedagogy

No.	Gen Z Cognition	Classical Pedagogy
1	Evidence-based and rational	Monologic-doctrinal transmission
2	Culture of independent verification	Demand for hierarchical obedience
3	Authority grounded in transparent logic	Absolute compliance with text and figure

[19] M. Mahrus Ali Haq, "Urgensi Aneka Pendekatan dalam Kajian Islam: Dari Inter-Multidisiplin ke Transdisiplin Menurut Amin Abdullah," *Medina-Te: Jurnal Studi Islam* 19, no. 2 (2023): 159–173, https://doi.org/10.19109/medinate.v19i2.21349.

[20] Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawesea Press, 2017), 45.

[21] Wildan Sururi, Mohammad Ahyan Yusuf Sya'bani, and Ahmad Saefudin, "Hermeneutika sebagai Pendekatan dalam Studi Islam Kontemporer," *Al-Muhith: Jurnal Ilmu Qur'an dan Hadits* 4, no. 2 (2025): 112–125, https://jurnal.stiq-amuntai.ac.id/index.php/al-muhith/article/view/5669.

[22] Oktavia Ramadhani and Khoirunisa, "Generasi Z dan Teknologi: Gaya Hidup Generasi Z di Era Digital," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu Sosial (JUPENDIS)* 3, no. 1 (2025): 323–31, https://doi.org/10.54066/jupendis.v3i1.2916.

[23] Stefanus Adi Wijaya, *Mendengar yang Transformatif: Pendampingan Pastoral Berbasis Naratif dan Spiritualitas Kontemplatif bagi Generasi Alpha dan Z* (Bandung: Elementa Media Literasi, 2026), 141.

Without a hermeneutic bridge, tension arises from the failure to decode the *mubalaghah* and the stylistic metaphors that Shaykh al-Zarnuji used to discipline the learners of his own time.[24]

Based on an analysis of the text of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, this mismatch in perception falls into four types of narrative:

First, narratives of physical sacrifice (historiographical *mubalaghah*), such as the story of Hasan ibn Ziyad's studies and the account of Imam al-Sarakhsi's ablutions, are a stylistic means of instilling an ethos of perseverance (*jiddu*), yet Gen Z readers are prone to perceive them as chronological inaccuracies.[25] Second, epistemic restrictions, including the prohibition of the science of debate, the preference for the classical sciences, and the choice of Wednesday as the day to begin study, reflect the institutionalization of medieval education and risk being read as academic determinism when taken literally.[26] Third, expressions of hierarchical reverence (*ta'dzim*), such as physical service to the teacher, are presented as scholarly ethics but may be perceived as a kind of feudalism at odds with the culture of modern education.[27] Fourth, symbolic acts (*wara'*) and recommendations about daily diet reflect medieval local wisdom. Teaching them literally, without separating the spiritual dimension from modern medical-scientific validation, risks provoking cognitive distrust.[28]

Hermeneutic Deconstruction: Separating Ethical Substance from Classical Rhetoric

In the context of contemporary education, studying the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* calls for a careful methodological approach, namely hermeneutic decoding of the text's stylistic devices. From a historical-philological standpoint, Shaykh al-Zarnuji's use of *mubalaghah* rhetoric belongs to the medieval tradition of pedagogy, where it served as a motivational instrument.[29] These narratives were composed not as empirical historical records but as metaphorical vehicles that stress how urgent an ethical value is.

Hermeneutic decoding serves to separate the rhetorical device from its substantive message.[30] Stories of extraordinary lifespans or extreme physical sacrifice are not read as factual data. A contextual reading treats them as *pedagogical exaggeration*, a medieval stylistic technique for depicting mental endurance and deep reverence for learning.[31] Through this hermeneutic analysis, the meaning of the classical text can be understood critically on the basis of its metaphorical structure.

Once the rhetorical decoding is done, the ethical values in the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* are extracted so that they can be compared critically with modern discourse on academic ethics. This alignment of meaning turns contextual-traditional norms into universal principles of scholarly ethics:

1. From Social Subordination to Epistemic Respect (*Ta'dzim*)

   The metaphor of being willing to "become a slave for the sake of a single letter," or of honoring the teacher's family, is reinterpreted, moving from a form of social subordination to epistemic respect. *Ta'dzim* is understood not as feudal personal

[24] Ahmad Nawawi, "Etika Dalam Belajar Menurut Az-Zarnuji Dan Implementasinya Pada Pendidikan Modern" (master's thesis, Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2023), https://repository.ptiq.ac.id/id/eprint/1324.
[25] Al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, 29.
[26] Al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, 48.
[27] Al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, 27.
[28] Al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, 82.
[29] Nawawi, "Etika Dalam Belajar Menurut Az-Zarnuji," 25.
[30] Mohammad Nor Ichwan, *Dekodifikasi Hermeneutik Teks Agama: Menuju Metodologi Penafsiran Yang Kritis dan Emansipatoris* (Yogyakarta: RISA Book, 2021), 3.
[31] Asep Rudi Nurjaman, Sarwani, Durotul Yatimah, Silvi Puspa Widya Lubis, Dewi Diana Paramata, Hendrikus Maku, Wahyudi, et al., *Filsafat Pendidikan: Refleksi Kritis untuk Merancang Pendidikan yang Emansipatoris dan Transformatif*, ed. Riyanton (Purbalingga: CV Eureka Media Aksara, 2025). 50.

obedience but as intellectual humility and appreciation of the educator's expertise and scholarly authority.[32] In academic practice, *ta'dzim* appears when learners listen to an explanation with full attention to the educator's expertise and then voice their responses or critical questions politely and with supporting data.

2. From Traditional Restraint to Self-Regulation and Integrity (*Wara'*)

Various behavioral prohibitions and recommendations to limit intake are distilled into the principle of self-regulation and moral integrity. *Wara'* is transformed from a mystical-symbolic notion into a critical awareness aimed at keeping the mind clear, managing the limits of one's concentration, and guarding academic honesty against cheating such as plagiarism.[33] In independent learning, *wara'* shows up in efforts to minimize irrelevant cognitive load, for example by limiting digital distraction, and to protect the authenticity of scholarly work.

3. From Physical Sacrifice to Academic Resilience (*Jiddu*)

Narratives about extreme study durations are reinterpreted as the concept of intellectual resilience and consistency. *Jiddu* is not a form of neglecting one's physical health. It is a commitment to allocating time and holding focus amid an abundance of digital information.[34] In practice, *jiddu* takes the form of perseverance and structured time management, such as studying the material steadily and continuously without ignoring one's physical limits.

Table 2. Ethical Reorientation of al-Zarnuji's Pedagogical Concepts in a Modern Context

No.	Classical Concept	Literal / Rhetorical Text	Extracted Core Value (Modern)
1	Ta'dzim	Subordination & service →	Epistemic Respect & Humility
2	Wara'	Mystical prohibitions & asceticism →	Self-Regulation & Integrity
3	Jiddu	Irrational physical sacrifice →	Academic Grit & Resilience

The final stage of this hermeneutic reading is to rationalize traditionalist norms through historical and contextual analysis, so that al-Zarnuji's thought is placed in its proper academic proportion:

1. Rationalizing the Prohibition of Polemical Debate and the Reverence for Ancient Literature

Al-Zarnuji's prohibition of debate and his advice to give priority to classical literature need to be understood in context. The debate he had in mind refers to the medieval polemical-pragmatic tradition, whose aim was to bring down an opponent and win quick reputation.[35] In the modern academic setting, this advice remains relevant as a reminder to master a solid theoretical foundation before joining interactive discussion, so that the exchange of ideas stays substantive.

2. Rationalizing the Setting of Study Times

[32] Ummu Diana Munawwarah et al., "Tipologi Guru dan Otoritasnya dalam Transmisi Ilmu Pengetahuan," *Kartika: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 5, no. 3 (2025): 1463–1478, https://lptnunganjuk.com/ojs/ index.php/ kartika/article/view/263.

[33] Dewi Parwati, *5 Dosa di Perguruan Tinggi* (Jakarta: PT Bukuloka Literasi Bangsa, 2025) 30.

[34] Miftahul Adila et al., "Pengembangan Strategi Dalam Membangun Motivasi Belajar Siswa Di Tengah Distraksi Digital," *Lentera Salam Institute* 2, no. 2 (2025): 1-13, https://doi.org/10.67716/rdgcbd64.

[35] Anggun Putri Melati, "Sejarah Perkembangan Ilmu di Barat dan Dunia Islam: Dari Abad Kuno, Pertengahan, Modern Hingga Kontemporer," *Jurnal Pesona Indonesia* 2, no. 2 (2025): 88–94, https://pesona.tpi.or.id/index.php/pesona/article/view/47.

Fixing a particular day (such as Wednesday), which the classical text links to a theological narrative, is reinterpreted here as a strategy of habituation. Setting aside a specific day or time is, at bottom, a way of organizing one's schedule, preparing mentally, and making a structural commitment before learning begins.[36] In the modern context, this is reflected when a study group or an individual learner agrees on a fixed day to start discussions, instead of making sudden arrangements. A planned schedule builds mental readiness and helps keep the weekly agenda in order.

3. Rationalizing the Standardization of Writing

Specific rules on how to write (such as the ban on certain ink colors) are read as an early awareness of the importance of standardizing scholarly documentation. In contemporary academic practice, this corresponds to following a house style, keeping the format tidy, and observing uniform conventions of scholarly writing so that a work is documented professionally.[37] A concrete example is compliance with writing guidelines, such as the standard of black font, paper type, and A4 margins. Avoiding nonstandard visual elements trains the discipline of keeping a scholarly document readable and neat.

This hermeneutic reorientation positions the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* not as dogma demanding absolute obedience but as an object of study in scholarly ethics, to be understood historically, critically, and contextually.

Interdisciplinary Scientific Validation: Al-Zarnuji's Principles through the Lens of Modern Science

The ethical contextualization of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* needs more than hermeneutic interpretation and contextual-historical analysis. It also calls for a dialogue with cognitive science, neuroscience, and educational psychology. Without claiming direct empirical validation of Generation Z's perceptions, a conceptual comparison with modern research can enrich how classical values such as *ta'dzim*, *wara'*, and *jiddu* are articulated in contemporary educational discourse. This theoretical alignment points to an analogical resemblance between al-Zarnuji's practical guidance and the principles of modern scientific rationality.

On the physiological side, al-Zarnuji stresses regulating food intake, for example eating small portions to keep the memory sharp, and recommends natural foods such as honey and red raisins. Conceptually, this practical advice runs parallel to modern discussions of the gut-brain axis and cognitive metabolism, although it cannot be taken as direct proof of the specific quantities prescribed in the medieval text.

1. Reduced Intake and Cognitive Dynamics

Overeating can set off spikes in insulin and fluctuations in blood sugar that lower cognitive efficiency, or brain fog, a condition that some of the literature associates with weaker information processing and executive function.[38] Al-Zarnuji's advice to limit food consumption shares a basic principle with the concept of caloric restriction in neuroscience, which has been linked to optimized expression of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) in support of synaptic plasticity and neurogenesis in the hippocampus.[39]

2. Nutritional Aspects of Red Raisins and Honey

Al-Zarnuji's specific advice on eating red raisins (*zabib*) and honey can be read as the local medical wisdom of his time, which meets modern nutrition research at certain

[36] Hidayat, *Manajemen Waktu, Jiwa, dan Produktivitas dalam 5 Waktu Sholat* (Ponorogo: Detak Pustaka, 2025), 15.
[37] Marina Wardaya and Shienny Megawati Sutanto, *Penulisan Akademik Dalam Praktik Desain* (Surabaya: Penerbit Universitas Ciputra, 2026), 40.
[38] Gonçalves et al., "Association Between Consumption of Ultraprocessed Foods," 145.
[39] Jumraini and Tammasse, *Neurorestorasi Berbasis Puasa: Kunci Memperbaiki Otak dan Sistem Saraf* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2026), 22.

points. Raisins contain polyphenols (such as resveratrol and flavonoids) that act as neuroprotective antioxidants against oxidative stress.[40] Their natural glucose gives the brain an initial supply of energy without causing an extreme glycemic spike. Honey, for its part, contains bioactive compounds that support the balance of gut microbiota, which the gut-brain axis literature links to the regulation of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and GABA, thereby supporting emotional stability and focus.[41]

Al-Zarnuji also stresses caution (*wara'*) toward things thought to damage memory, such as random visual distractions or experiences that disrupt concentration. Hermeneutically, this can be understood through modern cognitive psychology, in particular Cognitive Load Theory and attentional control.

1. Cognitive Interference and Memory Load

   Human working memory has limited capacity. Exposure to random visual stimulation or to irrelevant disturbances in the environment creates extraneous cognitive load. This can lead to proactive and retroactive interference, in which the processing of nonessential information disrupts the consolidation of long-term memory.[42]

2. Stress Response and Hippocampal Function

   Neurobiologically, perceiving the environment as confusing or threatening can trigger an amygdala response and the release of cortisol.[43] Excessive cortisol is known to potentially impair synaptic function in the hippocampus, which plays a role in encoding memory.[44] Seen in this light, al-Zarnuji's guidance can be read as an intuitive medieval strategy for minimizing informational noise and emotional disturbance during study.

Al-Zarnuji's advice on setting a regular study schedule (such as the tradition of beginning lessons on a particular day), together with his emphasis on *jiddu* (perseverance and endurance), shows an analogical equivalence with modern behavioral psychology.

1. Habituation and Implementation Intentions

   Setting a specific day or time to start a study routine serves as a structural cue in forming habits. In cognitive psychology, planning a specific time of execution parallels the concept of implementation intentions, which helps reduce decision fatigue and improve consistency of action.[45]

2. Deliberate Practice and Grit

   The principle of *jiddu*, illustrated by persistence in repeating material and in keeping focus, is consistent with findings in modern psychology on the importance of Ericsson's deliberate practice and Duckworth's grit.[46] Research shows that long-term academic achievement is strongly shaped by structured practice and mental endurance. The accounts of the scholars' perseverance in the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* can be read as behavioral modeling that builds learners' academic resilience.[47]

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[40] Iis Inayati Rakhmat et al., *Sayuran Dan Buah Berwarna Ungu Untuk Meredam Radikal Bebas* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2021), 18

[41] Aliya Amalia, *Vitabumin: Sinergi Madu dan Albumin untuk Tumbuh Kembang Optimal* (Surakarta: Afdan Rojabi Publisher, 2021), 10.

[42] Cholichul Hadi, *Dinamika Biopsikologi: Strategi Memahami Perilaku untuk Profesional* (Surabaya: Universitas Airlangga, 2026), 88.

[43] Diny Amenike et al., *Biopsikologi* (Purbalingga: CV. Eureka Media Aksara, 2024), 55.

[44] Hadi, *Dinamika Biopsikologi*, 92.

[45] Nina Trenz and Nina Keith, "Promoting New Habits at Work through Implementation Intentions," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 97, no. 4 (2024): 1813–34, https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12540.

[46] K. Anders Ericsson, "Deliberate Practice and the Acquisition and Maintenance of Expert Performance in Medicine and Related Domains," *Academic Medicine* 79, no. 10 (2004): S70–S81, https://doi.org/10.1097/00001888-200410001-00022.

[47] Angela Lee Duckworth and Patrick D. Quinn, "Development and Validation of the Short Grit Scale (Grit–S)," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 91, no. 2 (2009): 166–74, https://doi.org/ 10.1080/00223890802634290.

This interdisciplinary comparison points to a conceptual compatibility between al-Zarnuji's ethics of learning and the findings of modern cognitive science. Although it is not meant as direct empirical proof of historical claims, the approach offers a dialogical perspective that brings the wisdom of the *turath* and contemporary rationality together in a more measured and critical way.

Table 3. Conceptual Matrix for the Pedagogical Reorientation of Ta'lim al Muta'allim in an Academic Ethics Curriculum[48]

Classical Concept of Al-Zarnuji	Pedagogical Reorientation	Learning Components & Implementation Strategies	Academic Behavior Indicators	Evaluation Mechanism
Ta'dzim *(Reverence)*	*Epistemic Respect*	**Component:** Communication Ethics & Academic Dialogue. **Strategy:** Learning through guided discussion and critical analysis of the authority of information sources.	Shows intellectual humility, respects scholarly expertise, and voices criticism ethically.	Peer review and an observation rubric for participation in discussion.
Wara' *(Caution)*	*Self-Regulation & Integrity*	**Component:** Digital Hygiene & Scholarly Integrity. **Strategy:** Applying a focus protocol (digital detox while studying), together with workshops on citation and on the ethical use of artificial intelligence.	Controls digital distractions, avoids plagiarism and data falsification, and uses AI transparently and ethically in line with citation conventions.	Self-reflection log and an integrity audit of academic work.
Jiddu *(Diligence)*	*Academic Grit & Resilience*	**Component:** Workload Management & Learning Endurance. **Strategy:** Scaffolded learning methodology and step-by-step timelines for completing assignments.	Shows sustained focus (deep work), consistent time allocation, and timely completion of targets.	Portfolio documenting how assignments were carried out (process-based assessment). The ability to recover after failure or revision.

Formulating the Pedagogical Reorientation: A Curriculum Model for Academic Ethics

The results of the hermeneutic analysis and the conceptual comparison with modern cognitive literature form the basis for drafting a conceptual framework for an academic ethics curriculum. Integrating the values of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* into modern learning is designed not as a claim of empirical proof for the classical text but as an effort of pedagogical reorientation that turns traditional norms into cognitive and academic behavioral strategies. This conceptual model rests on three main pillars:

1. Pillar of Epistemic Respect (Reorientation of *Ta'dzim*)

[48] The indicators of academic behavior and the evaluation mechanisms in Table 3 are conceptual proposals that have not been empirically validated. They were drawn up as an initial framework for developing instruments, and they require content validation, piloting, and psychometric testing before they can be used as standardized assessment tools.

In theory, the curriculum steers the meaning of *ta'dzim* away from a culture of hierarchical obedience and toward epistemic humility and respect for competence-based expertise. Learners are trained to tell constructive criticism from destructive skepticism, and to value the scholarly authority of educators as a guide through an abundance of information.[49]

2. Pillar of Self-Regulation & Integrity (Reorientation of *Wara'*)

The principle of *wara'* is interpreted conceptually as a strategy of attentional control and self-regulation. Learners are guided to manage the extraneous cognitive load caused by digital distraction, to stay aware of their cognitive balance and lifestyle, and to practice strict academic integrity in order to minimize technology-based cheating.[50]

3. Pillar of Academic Grit & Resilience (Reorientation of *Jiddu*)

Adopting the value of *jiddu*, the model formulates a learning pattern that emphasizes deliberate practice, sustained focus, and structured time management. The narratives of perseverance in the classical literature are hermeneutically transformed into an articulation of mental endurance (grit) in completing complex academic tasks.[51]

Operationally, this conceptual framework maps al-Zarnuji's classical concepts onto learning components, implementation strategies, indicators of academic ethics, and evaluation mechanisms in table 3. This curriculum formulation offers an initial conceptual framework for bridging al-Zarnuji's classical ethics with the demands of modern learning. Because the framework rests on theoretical synthesis and has not yet been tested with direct empirical data from learners, its effectiveness cannot yet be concluded. Evidence of its acceptability, cognitive impact, and degree of success still calls for further empirical testing, through experimental studies or classroom action research in formal educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the pedagogical reorientation of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* can be achieved by integrating contextual hermeneutics with modern science, which conceptually transforms the values of *ta'dzim*, *wara'*, and *jiddu* into epistemic respect, self-regulation, and academic grit. The analysis of Generation Z's cognitive dissonance, and the points of convergence with modern science found here, must nonetheless be read as analogical-theoretical equivalences drawn from the literature, not as direct empirical proof of learners' perceptions or of the medical claims of a medieval text.

The limitations of a study centered on textual-qualitative synthesis imply that the operational effectiveness of the curriculum model has not been validated in practice. Future research is therefore recommended to test this conceptual framework empirically with Generation Z learners, using quantitative, experimental, or classroom action research designs, in order to measure its effects on cognitive responses, ethical perceptions, and academic resilience in the digital era.

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