



From Competency to *Itqan*: Integrating Prophetic Spiritual Excellence into the Learning Outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum

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Email: faqihabdoel123@gmail.com¹, robirozaqiy.04@gmail.com², alberttaqy12@gmail.com³, akbaryusgiantara@gmail.com⁴, ayusamth71@uinsa.ac.id⁵

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	Abstract
Article Information: Received: 1 March 2026 Revised: 4 April 2026 Accepted: 18 April 2026 Published: 28 July 2026 Keywords: Outcome-Based Education, Merdeka Curriculum, Prophetic Pedagogy, <i>Itqan</i>, Authentic Assessment.	The integration of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) within Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum encounters philosophical friction, as mechanistic competency standards frequently marginalize spiritual values. This study aims to reconstruct OBE's philosophical foundation by synthesizing Prophetic Traditions into a holistic instructional design model. Employing a qualitative library method alongside a hermeneutic synthesis approach, this research systematically analyzes five canonical Hadiths to establish a robust "Prophetic OBE Framework." The findings articulate three fundamental reconstructions. First, concerning learning objectives, the study proposes a hierarchical taxonomy rooted in the Hadith of Jibril (Islam-Iman-Ihsan) and a strict prerequisite logic, termed Prophetic Scaffolding, derived from the Hadith of Mu'adz, prioritizing Adab (etiquette) prior to cognitive mastery. Second, within the learning process, the concepts of "Spiritual Agility" (Hadith of Hanzalah) and "Ecological Behaviorism" (Hadith of the Murderer of 100) are introduced to humanize the educational ecosystem, ultimately mitigating toxic productivity. Third, regarding assessment, the paradigm firmly shifts from minimal competency towards <i>Itqan</i> (Spiritual Excellence). By analyzing the Hadith of the Cave, this research formulates the "Cave Assessment Model," measuring student success through an "Authentic Portfolio" of real-world problem-solving rather than merely standardized testing. Ultimately, this study advocates comprehensive national assessment reforms shaping exceptional professional graduates.
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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the global educational landscape has undergone a fundamental paradigm shift towards Outcome-Based Education (OBE). This approach positions the demonstration of student achievement as the gravitational center of the curriculum, effectively shifting the traditional focus from learning duration to competency mastery (Tewari et al., 2025). Driven by international accreditation standards such as the Washington Accord, this transformation necessitates that educational systems reformulate their objectives into measurable and specific definitions of "what students can do." In Indonesia, this wave of reform has manifested radically through the "Merdeka Curriculum" (Freedom

Curriculum) policy, which explicitly adopts the structure of Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran* or CP) as the anchor of national competency. This policy aims to provide autonomous flexibility for educational institutions to translate the *Pancasila* Student Profile into relevant and contextual learning experiences. However, the massive transition toward this results-based system is not without philosophical tension. Contemporary educational critics, such as (Biesta, 2020), warn of the dangers of "learnification" a phenomenon where an obsession with measurability in OBE potentially reduces a meaning-rich educational process into the mere production of dry technical skills, thereby marginalizing the dimension of subjectivity and trivializing spiritual values.

The tension between the demand for standardized technical competence and spiritual depth becomes increasingly palpable and problematic when applied within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. A recent empirical study reveals that educators often experience epistemological disorientation when translating abstract religious character values into rigid and positivistic OBE assessment rubrics. Consequently, spiritual aspects are frequently reduced to administrative ornamentation within curriculum documents, lacking any tangible transformative impact on the student's soul. (Niyozov & Memon, 2021) characterize this condition as "methodological secularization" in modern education. Without adequate philosophical intervention, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs and Islamic schools risks losing its "ruh" (spirit), leaving behind a technocratic competency framework devoid of the transcendental values that constitute the core of Islamic education (Gordt, 2023).

To delineate the originality of this study, a critical review of prior research is presented as follows. First, Sahin (2018) offered the concept of Critical Islamic Pedagogy to revitalize character education; however, the study remains sociologically and politically oriented, failing to address technical instructional design. Second, Huda & Kartanegara (2020) explored the ethical thought of Ibn Miskawayh for character education, yet this study is disconnected from modern discourse on Learning Outcomes and contemporary assessment instruments. Third, (Retnawati et al., 2021) highlighted the technical difficulties teachers face in assessments within the 2013 or Merdeka Curriculum, but the proposed solutions are limited to technical training without touching upon philosophical reconstruction. Fourth, (Lubis et al., 2022) discussed the integration of religious moderation into the curriculum but remained fixated on the conventional Bloom's Taxonomy without offering a revelation-based taxonomic alternative. Fifth, (Eldy & Sulaiman, 2023) identified that the failure of OBE in developing countries is often caused by the neglect of indigenous contexts, yet they did not specify the role of religious tradition as a solution. Sixth, (Romlah et al., 2025) examined the institutionalization of OBE in Islamic universities, but the focus was on strategic management and leadership rather than curriculum content itself. Finally, (Sholeh & Murhayati, 2025) evaluated the implementation of OBE in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), concluding that evaluations are still dominated by cognitive aspects, indicating a void in holistic evaluation models.

From the literature mapping above, a significant research gap is evident. The majority of existing studies tend to be polarized into two extremes: technical studies of OBE implementation that are devoid of spiritual values, or studies of classical Islamic educational

thought/management that lack dialogue with modern curricular technical terms such as scaffolding or portfolio assessment (Romlah et al., 2025). There is yet to be comprehensive research performing a hermeneutic synthesis of Hadith texts to fundamentally reconstruct the concept of OBE itself. This study seeks to bridge this gap by offering the proposition that the principles of OBE clear objectives, scaffolded learning, and performance assessment actually possess strong theological roots in the Prophetic Tradition, albeit through a significantly more humanistic approach (Hussein et al., 2025).

The primary novelty of this study lies in the introduction of the concept of "*Itqan*" (Excellence/Peak Quality) as an alternative paradigm to refine the secular term "Competence." Departing from a textual analysis of the *Hadith of the Three Men Trapped in the Cave* (*Sabih al-Bukhari* No. 2111), this research defines educational outcomes not merely as technical abilities, but as the capacity to produce a masterpiece tested in real crises as proof of character integrity. Furthermore, this study reconstructs the taxonomy of learning objectives in the Merdeka Curriculum using the framework of the *Hadith of Jibril* (*Sabih Muslim* No. 10), which offers a hierarchy of holistic competencies: from *Islam* (procedural), to *Iman* (internalization), leading to *Ihsan* (meta-cognitive/spiritual excellence). Moreover, this research intervenes in the process and evaluation aspects to make them more humanizing by utilizing the *Hadith of the Advice to Mu'adz bin Jabal* (scaffolding principles) (*Sabih Muslim* no. 27), the *Hadith of Hanzalah* (principles of spiritual agility) (*Sabih Muslim* No. 4938), and the *Hadith of the Repentant Killer* (principles of the learning ecosystem) (*Sabih Muslim* No. 4967), all of which are synthesized to address the critique of rigidity in OBE.

Premised on the aforementioned academic background and theoretical gaps, this study formulates its main problem into a central inquiry: How can Prophetic Traditions be reconstructed to provide a philosophical and methodological foundation for strengthening the concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) within the Merdeka Curriculum? This overarching question is detailed into three interrelated sub-analyses: (1) How do the taxonomy in the *Hadith of Jibril* and the scaffolding in the *Hadith of Mu'adz's Mission to Yemen* reformulate the national Learning Outcomes (CP) structure to be more holistic? (2) How do the psychological dynamics in the *Hadith of Hanzalah* and the role of the ecosystem in the *Hadith of the Repentant Killer* critique and humanize the curriculum implementation process? and (3) How can the concept of *Itqan* in the *Hadith of the Cave* serve as a new authentic assessment standard to measure student character success beyond conventional competency standards? Through answering these questions, this study is expected to yield an adaptive "Prophetic OBE Framework" model for the future of Indonesian education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design utilizing a hermeneutic and modernized *maudhu'i* (thematic) approach to reconstruct the philosophical foundations of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (Snyder, 2019). The primary data sources consist of five canonical Hadiths selected through purposive sampling from *Sabih al-Bukhari* and *Sabih Muslim*, specifically the Hadiths of Jibril, Mu'adz's Mission to Yemen, Hanzalah, the Repentant Killer, and the Three Men Trapped in the Cave, which collectively represent a comprehensive pedagogical cycle. Concurrently, secondary data were systematically acquired

from reputable academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Sinta, strategically limited to publications from the last decade to ensure strict relevance to the Merdeka Curriculum policy.

Data validity was rigorously established through source triangulation, cross-referencing classical Hadith commentaries (*sharh*), such as *Fath al-Bari* by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, with modern educational theories to systematically mitigate anachronistic interpretation bias. The data analysis was executed utilizing Qualitative Content Analysis (Kyngäs, 2020), augmented by a Gadamerian hermeneutic approach emphasizing the "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 2004). Through this analytical lens, the historical Hadith texts were methodically coded, categorized, and coalesced with contemporary curricular demands to ultimately synthesize the adaptive "Prophetic OBE Framework".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prophetic Taxonomy: Reconstructing Learning Outcomes through the Hadith of Jibril

In contemporary educational discourse, the formulation of Learning Outcomes is frequently mired in a psychological fragmentation that dichotomizes the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Suyadi, 2022). Modern taxonomic approaches, such as Anderson and Krathwohl's revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, while systematic, face frequent criticism for failing to encompass the spiritual dimension central to Islamic education amplifies this critique, positing that the obsession with measurability inherent in OBE tends to reduce education to a mere process of technical "qualification," while marginalizing the function of "subjectification" the maturation of the human soul (Mahfuzah et al., 2022). Consequently, a taxonomic reconstruction that extends beyond mere skill acquisition to address spiritual depth is imperative. In this context, the *Hadith of Jibril* offers a hierarchical competency framework that seamlessly integrates exoteric (external) and esoteric (internal) aspects.

Narrated by Umar bin Khattab (r.a.) and recorded in *Sahih Muslim* (No. 10) within the Chapter of Faith (*Kitab al-Iman*), this *Hadith* chronicles the dialogue between the Archangel Jibril and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) concerning the fundamental pillars of the religion. The complete text of the *Hadith* is presented as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِي حَيَّانَ عَنْ أَبِي زُرْعَةَ بْنِ عَمْرِو بْنِ جَرِيرٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمًا بَارِزًا لِلنَّاسِ فَأَتَاهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا الْإِيمَانُ قَالَ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَلِقَائِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْبَعْثِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا الْإِسْلَامُ قَالَ الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَتُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ الْمَكْتُوبَةَ وَتُؤَدِيَ الزَّكَاةَ الْمَعْرُوضَةَ وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ قَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا الْإِحْسَانُ قَالَ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَا تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

Translation (*Sahih Muslim* No. 10): According to the narration of Abu Hurairah, transmitted through the chain of Ismail bin Ibrahim from Abu Hayyan and Abu Zur'ah, it is recorded that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was approached by a man inquiring about the three pillars of religion. When questioned

regarding the essence of *Iman* (Faith), the Prophet explained it as belief in Allah, His angels, His books, the meeting with Him, His messengers, and the Day of Resurrection. Subsequently, regarding *Islam*, he defined it as pure worship of Allah without associating partners with Him, the performance of obligatory prayers, the payment of obligatory *zakat*, and fasting during Ramadan. Finally, concerning *Ihsan* (Excellence), the Prophet elucidated it as the quality of worship wherein a servant worships Allah as though seeing Him, or at the very least, maintaining the conviction that Allah is constantly observing him (Muslim, 2006).

In interpreting this *Hadith*, Imam An-Nawawi (d. 676 AH), in his monumental commentary *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim*, elucidates that the distinction between the terms *Islam*, *Iman*, and *Ihsan* indicates the existence of specific gradations (*maratib*) within the structure of religiosity. (An-Nawawi, 2001) asserts that *Islam* in this context refers to *al-a'mal al-az-zahirah* (measurable external actions), whereas *Iman* pertains to *al-a'mal al-batinah* (internal convictions). The apex of this hierarchy is *Ihsan*, defined by An-Nawawi as "*al-Itqan fil 'ibadah*" (professionalism and diligence in worship) accompanied by a profound awareness of Divine surveillance (*muraqabah*). This explication confirms that within the Islamic tradition, physical and spiritual competencies are not bifurcated but rather integrated into a continuum of spiritual ascension.

Building upon this commentary, this study reconstructs the taxonomy of learning objectives within the Merdeka Curriculum into three intertwined competency levels:

1. The First Level is *Islam* (Procedural Competency)

From an OBE perspective, this corresponds to the psychomotor domain or technical skills. Students are deemed competent at this level if they can demonstrate compliance with Sharia regulations, such as the correct procedures for prayer. A study by (Retnawati et al., 2021) indicates that the majority of religious education evaluations in Indonesia remain arrested at this level limited to assessing the "correctness of movement" without touching upon meaning. The *Hadith of Jibril* validates this level as a foundational Outcome that must be mastered, yet emphasizes that it serves merely as a gateway, not the ultimate objective.

1. The Second Level is *Iman* (Internalized Competency)

This transcends the cognitive realm of "remembering" (C1) in Bloom's Taxonomy. *Iman* constitutes a process of value internalization wherein cognitive knowledge coalesces with affective commitment. The transition from *Islam* (external compliance) to *Iman* (internal conviction) in this *Hadith* necessitates a transformation of motivation (Zulkipli et al., 2025). This concept transcends and simultaneously corrects modern psychological theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan and Deci. While SDT distinguishes between controlled and autonomous motivation, the *Hadith of Jibril* asserts that *Iman* represents the highest form of spiritual autonomy, where religious values have fused with the student's sense of self (integrated regulation) (Pangastuti, 2025). This implies that student obedience stems not from school regulations, but from inner necessity. Without this internalization, adherence will vanish once teacher supervision ceases.

2. The Third Level is *Ihsan* (Transcendental Metacognition)

This is the pinnacle achievement serving as a bridge to the concept of *Itqan*. Within this research framework, *Ihsan* is defined as an internal state of consciousness, while *Itqan* is the external performance evidence of that consciousness. Imam An-Nawawi defines *Ihsan* as *al-Itqan fil 'ibadah* (professionalism in worship). Therefore, in modern educational terminology, this level equates to High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) expanded by a theological dimension (Basri et al., 2026). However, *Ihsan* revises the standard concept of Metacognition in Western psychology. If Flavell defines metacognition as "awareness of one's own thinking processes," then *Ihsan* is "awareness of Divine surveillance over those thinking processes." This yields what this study terms *Transcendental Self-Regulation*. Students attaining this level possess absolute self-monitoring capabilities. In the context of preventing corruption or academic dishonesty, the competency of *Ihsan* is far more effective than even the most sophisticated CCTV surveillance or exam proctoring systems. Research by (Qusairi, 2023) confirms that individuals with transcendental consciousness demonstrate consistent ethical decision-making under pressure a character outcome most sought after in the current era of moral disruption.

Prophetic Scaffolding: Sequential Logic from the Hadith of Mu'adz

The subsequent challenge in OBE implementation lies in the logical and phased organization of the curriculum (scaffolding). A primary critique of curriculum implementation in developing nations is curriculum overload and the incongruity between material and students' psychological readiness (Tan et al., 2021). To address this challenge, this study references the *Hadith of the Prophet's Advice to Mu'adz bin Jabal* upon his mission to Yemen, recorded in *Sahih Muslim* No. 27. This *Hadith* provides a blueprint for prioritization sequences in education. The complete text is as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا وَكِيعٌ عَنْ زَكَرِيَّا بْنِ إِسْحَاقَ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي يَحْيَى بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ صَيْفِيٍّ عَنْ أَبِي مَعْبُدٍ عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ قَالَ قَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ وَكِيعٌ عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ أَنَّ مُعَاذًا قَالَ بَعَثَنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّكَ تَأْتِي قَوْمًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ فَادْعُهُمْ إِلَى شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لِذَلِكَ فَأَعْلِمُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لِذَلِكَ فَأَعْلِمُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُؤْخَذُ مِنْ أَعْيَانِهِمْ فَتَرَدُّ فِي فُقَرَائِهِمْ

Translation (*Sahih Muslim* No. 27): It has been narrated to us by Waki' from Zakariya bin Ishaq, who stated: It was reported to me by Yahya bin Abdullah bin Shaifi from Abu Ma'bad, from Ibn Abbas, sourcing from Mu'adz bin Jabal, wherein Waki' explained from Ibn Abbas that Mu'adz said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) dispatched me [to Yemen] with the instruction: "Verily, you will come upon the People of the Book; let your first call to them be the testimony that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah. If they obey you in that regard, then inform them that Allah has made obligatory upon them five prayers every day and night. And if they obey you in that regard as well, then inform them that Allah has made obligatory upon them charity (zakat) to be taken from their wealthy and returned to their poor (Muslim, 2006).

In elucidating this *Hadith*, Imam An-Nawawi (d. 676 AH), in his monumental commentary *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim*, provides a profound analysis emphasizing the

method of *at-tadrij fi at-ta'lim* (gradualism in instruction). (An-Nawawi, 2001) explains that the Prophet commanded Mu'adz to commence with *al-aham fal ahm* (the most important of the important), namely *Tawhid* as the foundation (*as*). He explicitly stated that commands for physical worship (prayer) and social obligation (*zakat*) must not be imposed *daf'atan wahidah* (all at once) before the foundational belief is firmly entrenched, to avoid inducing psychological aversion (*li'alla yanfuru*). Ibn Hajar also highlights the conditional phrase "*fa in hum atha'u li dzalik*" ("if they obey you in that regard") as an absolute prerequisite for material progression, signaling the necessity of mastery at one stage before advancing to the next.

The principle of gradation elucidated by Ibn Hajar is highly pertinent for revising the Learning Objective Flow (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* or ATP) within the Merdeka Curriculum. This *Hadith* teaches a "Strict Prerequisite Logic." The conditional phrase "If they obey you" serves as the oldest theological validation for the Mastery Learning model popularized by Benjamin Bloom. Bloom argued that all students can learn given sufficient time and the mastery of prerequisites. The *Hadith of Mu'adz's Mission to Yemen* rejects the system of "Social Promotion" often applied in modern schooling, where students are promoted to *zakat* material (Phase C) even if their *Tawhid* and prayer (Phase A/B) remain unresolved. (An-Nawawi, 2001) warns that skipping these stages constitutes a form of "pedagogical injustice," burdening the student's intellect and soul with a load they are not yet prepared to bear. Within the Merdeka Curriculum, this demands that teachers possess the courage to conduct radical remedial teaching on aspects of *aqidah* (creed) before compelling students to complete other cognitive materials (Jasiah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this *Hadith* offers a "Gradual Load" model traversing from the personal dimension to the social: Cognitive/Belief (*Syahadat*), Personal Discipline (*Salat*), and Social Responsibility (*Zakat*) (Raies, 2020). The implication of this Prophetic Scaffolding offers a critique of Jerome Bruner's Spiral Curriculum, which is often adopted uncritically. While Bruner suggests repeating the same topics with increasing depth each year, the *Hadith of Mu'adz* suggests "Qualitative Linearity": do not repeat the teaching of *Syahadat* merely as memorization at every level, but ensure that *Syahadat* is finalized as a belief system at the outset before moving to action (*Salat*). This suggests a shift in the focus of the PAI (Islamic Religious Education) ATP: from "breadth of material" (many chapters but shallow) to "depth of mastery" (fewer chapters but mastered). As noted by (Eldy & Sulaiman, 2023) an overcrowded curriculum is the primary adversary of deep learning and character formation.

Humanizing the Learning Process: The Pedagogy of Spiritual Agility and Ecological Design

Once the curriculum has been structured with a logical priority sequence (Prophetic Scaffolding) as elucidated in the *Hadith of Mu'adz*, the subsequent challenge lies in maintaining student consistency throughout the process. Rigid OBE systems often demand unrealistic linear progress. It is here that the relevance of the *Hadith of Hanzalab* and the *Hadith of the Killer of 100 Men* emerges to provide psychological and sociological perspectives on humanizing the educational process.

Within the architecture of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), the "process" dimension is frequently marginalized relative to the "outcomes" dimension. Modern educational literature often critiques OBE as a "factory" system that forces students through

a uniform production line without regard for the internal dynamics of their souls (Romlah et al., 2025). Conversely, in the cosmology of Islamic education, the process (*tarbiyah*) possesses intrinsic value equal in importance to the result. This section will reconstruct the philosophy of the learning process within the Merdeka Curriculum utilizing two Prophetic approaches: Learner Psychology (based on the *Hadith of Hanẓalah*) and the Sociology of the Learning Environment (based on the *Hadith of the Repentant Killer*). This analysis aims to demonstrate that the national curriculum must accommodate the spiritual fluctuations of students and engineer their social ecosystems to achieve authentic character transformation.

1. The Psychology of "Sa'atan wa Sa'atan": Managing Spiritual Fluctuation in High-Stakes Learning

One of the greatest challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is the management of students' cognitive and emotional load. The demand to achieve various Learning Outcomes (CP) within strict timeframes often triggers academic burnout and existential anxiety among learners (Alhapip et al., 2024). To address this phenomenon, it is necessary to deeply dissect the *Hadith of Hanẓalah al-Usayyidi*, which records a psychological-spiritual crisis experienced by a Companion of the Prophet. This *Hadith*, narrated in *Sahih Muslim* No. 4938, provides a theological framework for understanding the dynamics of human learning motivation.

أَخْبَرَنَا جَعْفَرُ بْنُ سُلَيْمَانَ عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ إِيَّاسٍ الْجُرَيْرِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي عُثْمَانَ النَّهْدِيِّ عَنْ حَنْظَلَةَ الْأَسِيدِيِّ قَالَ وَكَانَ مِنْ كُتَّابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَقِيتُنِي أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَقَالَ كَيْفَ أَنْتَ يَا حَنْظَلَةُ قَالَ قُلْتُ نَافَقَ حَنْظَلَةُ قَالَ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ مَا تَقُولُ قَالَ قُلْتُ نَكُونُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُذَكِّرُنَا بِالنَّارِ وَالْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّا رَأَيْنَا عَيْنَ فَإِذَا خَرَجْنَا مِنْ عِنْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَافَسْنَا الْأَزْوَاجَ وَالْأَوْلَادَ وَالصَّيِّعَاتِ فَتَسِينَا كَثِيرًا قَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَوَاللَّهِ إِنَّا لَتَلْقَى مِثْلَ هَذَا فَاِنْطَلَقْتُ أَنَا وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ حَتَّى دَخَلْنَا عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قُلْتُ نَافَقَ حَنْظَلَةُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَا ذَاكَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ نَكُونُ عِنْدَكَ تُذَكِّرُنَا بِالنَّارِ وَالْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّا رَأَيْنَا عَيْنَ فَإِذَا خَرَجْنَا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ عَافَسْنَا الْأَزْوَاجَ وَالْأَوْلَادَ وَالصَّيِّعَاتِ فَتَسِينَا كَثِيرًا فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنْ لَوْ تَدْرُمُونَ عَلَى مَا تَكُونُونَ عِنْدِي وَفِي الذِّكْرِ لَصَافَحْتُكُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةَ عَلَى فُرُشِكُمْ وَفِي طُرُقِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَا حَنْظَلَةُ سَاعَةً وَسَاعَةً ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ

Translation (*Sahih Muslim* No. 4938): We were informed by Ja'far bin Sulaiman from Sa'id bin Iyas Al-Jurai'ri, from Abu 'Utsman An-Nahdi, from Hanẓalah Al-Usayyidi one of the scribes of the revelation for the Messenger of Allah (SAW) who recounted: Once I met Abu Bakr, and he greeted me: "How are you, O Hanẓalah?" I replied: "Hanẓalah has succumbed to hypocrisy (*nifaq*)."
Abu Bakr was startled and exclaimed: "Subhanallah, what are you saying?" I explained: "Know this, O Abu Bakr, when we are in the assembly of the Messenger of Allah and he speaks of Hell and Paradise, it is as if we are witnessing them with our naked eyes. However, the moment we depart from his presence, we return to being preoccupied with our wives, children, and worldly affairs, until we become largely heedless." Abu Bakr responded: "By Allah, we experience the same thing." Then, Abu Bakr and I went to face the Messenger of Allah (SAW). Upon arrival, I said: "O Messenger of Allah, Hanẓalah has become a hypocrite." The Messenger of Allah (SAW) asked: "What do you mean, O Hanẓalah?"

I elaborated: "O Messenger of Allah, when we are near you and you remind us of Hell and Paradise, it is as if we see them in reality. But when we part from you, we return to being absorbed in managing our wives, children, and wealth, until we forget much of the Hereafter." The Messenger of Allah (SAW) then declared: "By the One in Whose Hand my soul rests, if you could continuously remain in the state you are in when with me and constantly engage in dhikr, surely the angels would shake your hands in your beds and on your paths. However, O Hanzalah, [do it] one moment at a time (sa'atan wa sa'atan)." He repeated this phrase three times (Muslim, 2006).

a. Commentary Analysis (Syarah): Validating the Fluctuation of the Heart

Imam An-Nawawi (d. 676 AH), in *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim*, provides a crucial commentary on the phrase "*sa'atan wa sa'atan*" (a time for this and a time for that). He asserts that this *Hadith* serves as evidence for alleviation (*dalil takhfiif*) and an acknowledgement of inherent human nature (*tabi'ah basyariyah*), which cannot remain constant in a single state. (An-Nawawi, 2001) explains that demanding humans to be perpetually in a peak state of spiritual presence (*hudhur al-qalb*) constitutes an imposition beyond capacity (*taklif ma la yutaq*). Furthermore, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, in another treatise, notes that the heart possesses periods of advancement/enthusiasm (*iqbal*) and periods of retreat/lethargy (*idbar*); a wise educator is one capable of managing both phases without condemning the student as a hypocrite.

b. Theoretical Synthesis: Spiritual Agility in Instructional Design

The findings from this commentary analysis can be synthesized with modern psychological theories to generate the concept of "Spiritual Agility" within the Merdeka Curriculum. (1) Countering Toxic Positivity in Education: In many Islamic educational institutions, a phenomenon of "toxic religiosity" frequently occurs, where students are coerced to perpetually appear pious and enthusiastic. A study by (Asmak & Fauziah, 2020) indicates that this pressure paradoxically triggers "academic hypocrisy": students feigning comprehension or devotion solely for grades. The *Hadith of Hanzalah* rejects this approach. The Prophet did not reprimand Hanzalah but rather validated his feelings. This teaches that the Merdeka Curriculum must provide "psychological safety" for students to express their fatigue or doubts as an integral part of the learning process (Alhapip et al., 2024). (2) Cognitive Load & Flow Theory: The concept of "moment by moment" parallels Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, which posits that the human brain requires rest phases for memory consolidation. If learning is forced continuously without pause (akin to Hanzalah's anxiety), "cognitive overload" ensues, hindering deep learning. In the instructional design of the Merdeka Curriculum, this implies the necessity for varied learning methods: periods of intensive learning (akin to Hanzalah with the Prophet/Deep Work Phase) and periods of relaxed or contextual learning (akin to being with family/Diffuse Mode Phase) (Csikszentmihalyi, 2020), in Flow Theory, also emphasizes the balance between challenge and relaxation to sustain intrinsic motivation. (3) Policy Implications: Consequently, attitudinal evaluation instruments in the Merdeka Curriculum must not be rigid (e.g., mandating daily Dhuha prayers for an 'A' grade). Assessment must be based on long-term trends or inclinations, not

momentary snapshots. Teachers must be trained to possess "Spiritual Agility" the ability to read the graph of a student's faith and administer appropriate treatment: motivation during periods of retreat (*idbar*) and challenge during periods of advancement (*iqbal*) (Saa, 2024).

2. The Sociology of the Prophetic Ecosystem: From Individual Competence to Collective Transformation

While the *Hadith of Hanḥalah* addresses the internal dimension, the *Hadith of the Repentant Killer*, recorded in *Sahih Muslim* No. 4967, addresses the external (sociological) dimension. A primary critique of liberal OBE is its excessive focus on individualism, proceeding as if learning success depends solely on student effort while neglecting the surrounding social structure. The analysis of the following *Hadith* demonstrates that character transformation (outcome) is a product of ecosystem design.

حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاذُ بْنُ هِشَامٍ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي عَنْ قَتَادَةَ عَنْ أَبِي الصَّدِيقِ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ أَنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ كَانَ فِيمَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ رَجُلٌ قَتَلَ تِسْعَةً وَتِسْعِينَ نَفْسًا فَسَأَلَ عَنْ أَعْلَمِ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَدُلَّ عَلَى رَاهِبٍ فَأَتَاهُ فَقَالَ إِنَّهُ قَتَلَ تِسْعَةً وَتِسْعِينَ نَفْسًا فَهَلْ لَهُ مِنْ تَوْبَةٍ فَقَالَ لَا فَتَقْتَلُهُ فَكَمَلَ بِهِ مِائَةً ثُمَّ سَأَلَ عَنْ أَعْلَمِ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَدُلَّ عَلَى رَجُلٍ عَالِمٍ فَقَالَ إِنَّهُ قَتَلَ مِائَةَ نَفْسٍ فَهَلْ لَهُ مِنْ تَوْبَةٍ فَقَالَ نَعَمْ وَمَنْ يَحُولُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ التَّوْبَةِ انْطَلِقْ إِلَى أَرْضٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَإِنَّ بِهَا أَتْلَسًا يَعْبُدُونَ اللَّهَ فَاغْبُدْ اللَّهَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَا تَرْجِعْ إِلَى أَرْضِكَ فَإِنَّهَا أَرْضُ سُوءٍ فَانْطَلِقْ حَتَّى إِذَا نَصَفَ الطَّرِيقَ أَتَاهُ الْمَوْتُ فَاخْتَصَمَتْ فِيهِ مَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الْعَذَابِ فَقَالَتْ مَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ جَاءَ تَائِبًا مُقْبِلًا بِقَلْبِهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَقَالَتْ مَلَائِكَةُ الْعَذَابِ إِنَّهُ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ خَيْرًا قَطُّ فَأَتَاهُمْ مَلَكٌ فِي صُورَةِ آدَمَ فَجَعَلُوهُ بَيْنَهُمْ فَقَالَ قِيسُوا مَا بَيْنَ الْأَرْضَيْنِ فَإِلَى أَيَّتَهُمَا كَانَ أَذْنَى فَهُوَ لَهُ فَقَاسُوهُ فَوَجَدُوهُ أَذْنَى إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي أَرَادَ فَقَبَضَتْهُ مَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ قَالَ قَتَادَةُ فَقَالَ الْحَسَنُ ذَكَرْنَا أَنَّهُ لَمَّا أَتَاهُ الْمَوْتُ نَأَى بِصَدْرِهِ

Translation (*Sahih Muslim* No. 4967): Mu'adz bin Hisyam narrated to us, stating: My father related to me from Qatadah, from Abu As-Siddiq, from Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri, that the Prophet of Allah (SAW) said: "Among those who came before you, there was a man who had killed ninety-nine people. He then inquired about the most learned person on earth and was directed to a monk (rahib). He went to the monk and confessed that he had killed ninety-nine people, asking if there was any repentance for him. The monk replied, 'No.' Instantly, he killed the monk, completing the count to one hundred. He then sought the most learned person on earth again and was directed to a scholar ('alim). He said, 'I have killed one hundred people; is there still a chance for repentance?' The scholar replied, 'Yes. Who can stand between you and repentance? Go to such-and-such land, for in it are people who worship Allah the Exalted. Worship Allah with them and do not return to your own land, for it is an evil environment.' So he set out towards the destination. However, when he reached the halfway point, death overtook him. A dispute arose between the Angels of Mercy and the Angels of Punishment regarding his fate. The Angels of Mercy argued, 'He came with the intention of repentance, turning his heart towards Allah.' The Angels of Punishment countered, 'Verily, he has never done a single good deed.' Then, an angel in human form appeared to mediate between them. They agreed to appoint him as the judge. The mediating angel said, 'Measure the distance between the two lands (the land of origin and the destination). To whichever he is closer, that is the ruling for him.' Upon measuring, they found his body was closer to the destination (the land of the righteous). Thus, the Angels of Mercy claimed him.

Qatadah added: Al-Hasan said, "It was mentioned to us that as he was dying, he inclined his chest towards the destination (Muslim, 2006).

a. Commentary Analysis (Syarah): Hijrah as a Pedagogical Strategy

Imam An-Nawawi (d. 676 AH), in *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim*, places extraordinary emphasis on the strategy prescribed by the scholar. He characterizes it as *sadd ad-dzari'ah* (blocking the means to evil) through *taghyir al-makan* (relocation/changing place). Ibn Hajar elucidates that the killer's former environment was a "determinant factor" triggering his criminal behavior; thus, verbal repentance alone is insufficient without severing ties with that toxic environment. The command "Worship Allah with them" illustrates the principle of *al-mu'awanah 'ala al-birr* (mutual assistance in righteousness), wherein worship becomes lighter and more consistent when performed communally (An-Nawawi, 2001).

b. Theoretical Synthesis: Designing a "Learning Ecosystem" in the Merdeka Curriculum

This Hadith offers a model of "Ecological Behaviorism" in character education by revising the individualistic orientation of the conventional behaviorist approach. Character transformation is presented not merely as the result of advice, instruction, or individual will, but also as the product of a supportive social and educational environment. This perspective is consistent with the Reggio Emilia theory, which designates the environment as the "third teacher" after parents and classroom teachers. The Hadith confirms this premise through the story of the killer, who could not transform himself solely through advice from a religious scholar, but was instructed to leave his corrupt environment and move to a "good land." In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this implies that schools should not focus exclusively on formal Learning Outcome documents or Capaian Pembelajaran (CP), but must also evaluate their hidden curriculum, including the social culture in the canteen, teacher–student interactions outside the classroom, peer relationships, and prevailing institutional norms. Rahmawati (2021) found that schools characterised by a toxic culture, including bullying and academic dishonesty, tend to fail in producing graduates with strong character despite their high achievement in religious subjects.

The Hadith may also be interpreted through Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and social capital. The scholar in the story attempts to transform the killer's habitus by relocating him to a new social field that possesses positive social capital. The command to move to a righteous community indicates that sustained moral transformation requires participation in an environment where virtuous behaviour is collectively practised and socially reinforced. In the school context, this suggests that principals and teachers must intentionally construct an educational ecosystem in which piety, honesty, discipline, cooperation, and mutual respect become dominant social norms rather than isolated or alienating behaviours. Programmes such as peer mentoring, collaborative religious activities, and group-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within the Merdeka Curriculum may be regarded as practical manifestations of the instruction to "worship Allah with them."

Hasan (2021) asserts that communal learning can increase the retention of character values by up to 70% compared with individual learning.

Furthermore, the conclusion of the Hadith, which recounts the angels' debate and Allah's command to measure the distance between the deceased man and the two lands, provides a metaphor for process-oriented evaluation. The decision was based on the direction of his movement and on which destination he was closer to, rather than solely on whether he had completely arrived in the righteous land. Within the framework of Prophetic Outcome-Based Education, students should therefore be assessed not only according to their final achievement or their success in becoming perfectly virtuous individuals, but also according to the trajectory of their moral development. A student who has previously demonstrated problematic behaviour but has made genuine efforts to improve should not be judged exclusively by remaining imperfections or occasional failures. The student's progress, commitment, and direction of change must also be acknowledged as meaningful educational outcomes. This perspective critiques assessment practices in the Merdeka Curriculum that may occasionally remain overly result-oriented and insufficiently attentive to gradual personal development. Accordingly, character assessment should value progress, however incremental, and recognise sincere efforts toward improvement as an essential indicator of educational success (Kusumawati et al., 2024).

Redefining Assessment: From Competence to *Itqan*

The pinnacle of the critique and reconstruction of OBE in this study lies within the element of Evaluation (Assessment). How do we measure the success of Islamic education? Through Multiple Choice tests or essays? These conventional methods often fail to capture true character competence. To address this, we turn to the *Hadith of the Three Men Trapped in a Cave*, an epic narrative offering a model of Authentic Portfolio Assessment based on the concept of *Itqan* (Peak Quality/Excellence).

Narrated in *Sahih al-Bukhari* No. 2111, this story is not merely a fable, but a simulation of high-stakes testing where life itself is the wager.

حَدَّثَنِي سَالِمُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ
اِطْلُقْ ثَلَاثَةً رَهْطٍ مِمَّنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ حَتَّى أَوْوَا الْمَبِيتَ إِلَى غَارٍ فَدَخَلُوهُ فَأَنحَدَرَتْ صَخْرَةٌ مِنَ الْجَبَلِ فَسَدَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْغَارَ فَقَالُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ هَذِهِ الصَّخْرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَدْعُوا اللَّهَ بِصَالِحِ أَعْمَالِكُمْ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مِنْهُمْ اللَّهُمَّ كَانَ لِي أَبَوَانِ
شَيْخَانِ كَبِيرَانِ وَكُنْتُ لَا أَغْبِقُ قَبْلَهُمَا أَهْلًا وَلَا مَالًا فَتَأَيَّيْتُ فِي طَلَبِ شَيْءٍ يَوْمًا فَلَمْ أُرْخِ عَلَيْهِمَا حَتَّى نَامَا فَحَلَبْتُ
لَهُمَا غُبُوقَهُمَا فَوَجَدْتُهُمَا نَائِمَيْنِ وَكَرِهْتُ أَنْ أَغْبِقَ قَبْلَهُمَا أَهْلًا وَلَا مَالًا فَلَبِثْتُ وَالْقَدْحُ عَلَى يَدَيَّ أَنْتَظِرُ اسْتِيقَاطَهُمَا
حَتَّى بَرَقَ الْفَجْرُ فَاسْتَيْقَظَا فَشَرِبَا غُبُوقَهُمَا اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتُ فَعَلْتُ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءً وَجْهَكَ فَفَرِّجْ عَنَّا مَا نَحْنُ فِيهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ
الصَّخْرَةِ فَأَنْفَرَجَتْ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ الْخُرُوجَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ اللَّهُمَّ كَانَتْ لِي بِنْتُ عَمٍّ
كَانَتْ أَحَبَّ النَّاسِ إِلَيَّ فَأَرَدْتُهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهَا فَأَمْتَنَعَتْ مِنِّي حَتَّى أَلَمْتُ بِهَا سَنَةً مِنَ السِّنِينَ فَجَاءَتْنِي فَأَعْطَيْتُهَا عَشْرِينَ
وَمِائَةً دِينَارٍ عَلَى أَنْ تُحَلِّيَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ نَفْسِهَا فَفَعَلَتْ حَتَّى إِذَا قَدَرْتُ عَلَيْهَا قَالَتْ لَا أَحِلُّ لَكَ أَنْ تُقْصَ الْحَاتَمُ إِلَّا بِحَقِّهِ

فَتَحَرَّجْتُ مِنَ الْوُقُوعِ عَلَيْهَا فَانْصَرَفْتُ عَنْهَا وَهِيَ أَحَبُّ النَّاسِ إِلَيَّ وَتَرَكْتُ الذَّهَبَ الَّذِي أُعْطِيتُهَا اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتُ
 فَعَلْتُ ابْتِغَاءً وَجْهَكَ فَافْرُجْ عَنَّا مَا نَحْنُ فِيهِ فَانْفَرَجَتْ الصَّخْرَةُ غَيْرَ أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ الْخُرُوجَ مِنْهَا قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى
 اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَقَالَ الثَّالِثُ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي اسْتَأْجَرْتُ أُجْرَاءَ فَأَعْطَيْتُهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ غَيْرَ رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ تَرَكَ الَّذِي لَهُ وَذَهَبَ
 فَتَمَرَّتْ أَجْرُهُ حَتَّى كَثُرَتْ مِنْهُ الْأَمْوَالُ فَجَاءَنِي بَعْدَ حِينٍ فَقَالَ يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ أَذِلَّ إِلَيَّ أَجْرِي فَقُلْتُ لَهُ كُلُّ مَا تَرَى مِنْ
 أَجْرِكَ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ وَالْبَقَرِ وَالنَّعَمِ وَالرَّقِيقِ فَقَالَ يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ لَا تَسْتَهْزِئْ بِي فَقُلْتُ إِنِّي لَا أَسْتَهْزِئُ بِكَ فَأَخَذَهُ كُلَّهُ
 فَاسْتَأْقَه فَلَمْ يَتْرِكْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا اللَّهُمَّ فَإِنْ كُنْتُ فَعَلْتُ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءً وَجْهَكَ فَافْرُجْ عَنَّا مَا نَحْنُ فِيهِ فَانْفَرَجَتْ الصَّخْرَةُ
 فَخَرَجُوا يَمْشُونَ

Translation (Sahih al-Bukhari No. 2111): Narrated to us by Salim bin Abdullah, that Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) recounted: I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) say: "In times past, three men from a nation before you were on a journey. Eventually, they were compelled to seek shelter and spend the night in a cave. Suddenly, a massive boulder rolled down from the mountain, completely sealing the mouth of the cave. They said to one another: 'Truly, nothing can save you from this rock unless you beseech Allah by invoking your righteous deeds (tawassul).' Thus, one of them prayed: 'O Allah, I have two parents who are very old. I never gave milk to my family or slaves before serving them. One day, I returned late from gathering wood and found them both asleep. I milked the share for them, but they were sleeping. I was loath to wake them, yet I did not wish to give the drink to my family before them. So I remained standing, waiting for them to wake, with the vessel of milk in my hand until dawn broke, while my children cried at my feet. When they awoke, they drank it. O Allah, if I did this solely seeking Your Countenance, then open a gap for us in this rock.' The rock shifted slightly, but they could not yet emerge. The Prophet (SAW) continued: The second man prayed: 'O Allah, I had a female cousin whom I loved most dearly. I desired her, but she refused me. Then a year of famine struck her, and she came seeking aid. I gave her one hundred and twenty dinars on the condition that she yield herself to me. She agreed. However, when I was poised to be intimate with her, she said: It is not lawful for you to break the seal except by right. I was startled and left her, though she was the woman I most desired, and I left the gold I had given her. O Allah, if I did this seeking Your pleasure, then open the door of this cave.' The rock opened further, but the gap was still insufficient for their bodies to pass. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) spoke again: Then the third man prayed: 'O Allah, I once hired several workers and paid them their wages, except for one man who left without taking his due. I managed and invested that wage until it grew into abundant wealth. After some time, the man returned and said: O servant of Allah, pay me my wage.' I replied: 'Everything you see before you camels, cows, sheep, and the herdsmen is the result of your wage.' He said: 'O servant of Allah, do not mock me.' I answered: 'I am not mocking you.' So he took all the livestock and drove them away, leaving nothing behind. O Allah, if what I did was purely out of hope for Your pleasure, then open the remainder of the rock trapping us.' The rock opened completely, and they walked out safely (Al-Bukhari, 2002).

In elucidating this *Hadith*, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH), in his monumental commentary *Fath al-Bari*, provides a profound analysis of the phenomenon of the acceptance of these three men's prayers. He highlights that the deeds used for *tawassul* (intercession) were not ordinary actions, but deeds possessing the quality of *khushbiyyah* (specificity/exclusivity) performed under conditions of *masyaqqah* (extreme hardship). (Al-Asqalani, 2013) explains that the essence of their salvation was *Ikhlās* (sincerity) and *Sidq al-Lajju'* (honest reliance on Allah) when material causes were severed. This classical explanation asserts that in the Islamic view, the value of a deed is measured not only by "legal validity"

(valid/void) but by the "weight of quality" or the perfection of its execution (Al-Asqalani, 2013).

1. The Concept of *Itqan* as an Achievement Standard

Based on Ibn Hajar's commentary, this study formulates that the competency standard offered by this *Hadith* is the concept of *Itqan* (Excellence/Professionalism). *Itqan* is defined here as the ability to produce "peak performance" with tested integrity during crisis situations. Through hermeneutic analysis of the three character narratives in the *Hadith*, three competencies are identified:

a. *Itqan* in *Adab* and Value Priority (Extraordinary Filial Piety)

The first character represents the competency of Domestic Ethics or *Adab*. In the narrative, he recounts his routine of serving milk (*ghabnuq*) to his parents before his wife and children. The pinnacle of his competency was tested when he returned late one day to find his parents asleep. In terms of formal *fiqh*, he would not be sinful if he woke his parents or fed his starving children (Shokirova et al., 2025). However, he chose a far higher standard of *Itqan*: performing *tadhiyah* (sacrifice) of personal comfort to honor his parents' rest, standing with the vessel of milk throughout the night until dawn.

This action demonstrates absolute mastery of the Hierarchy of Values. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this serves as a critique of often superficial character education. This figure teaches that *Adab* (respecting parents) supersedes *Practical Logic* (sleeping immediately or feeding children). He demonstrates what (Huda & Kartanegara, 2020) term perfect internalization of *adab*, where ethical knowledge is not merely cognitive but manifests in the mental resilience to prioritize noble values under severe psychological pressure (crying children) (Huda & Kartanegara, 2020).

b. *Itqan* in Moral Integrity (Integrity in the Private Sphere)

The second character represents the competency of Moral Integrity in the private sphere. This narrative is dramatic as it involves the accumulation of three sin-triggering factors: profound romantic desire, financial power (120 dinars), and wide-open opportunity due to the woman's desperate condition. Yet, when the woman uttered the key phrase "Fear Allah and do not break the seal except by right," he instantly stopped and abandoned everything. (An-Nawawi, 2001) explains that abandoning sin when one has the capability to commit it represents the highest degree of piety (*Muraqabah*), which is far more difficult than avoiding sin due to lack of opportunity.

From an educational psychology perspective, this is a demonstration of high-level Self-Regulation. The competency of *Itqan* here lies in the ability to brake desire precisely when one is at the peak of power and no other human is watching (Littlefield, 2020). Relinquishing the 120 dinars without demanding a return indicates that his integrity is non-transactional. (Sahin, 2018) emphasizes that the outcome of Islamic education must be capable of producing characters possessing such autonomous moral immunity, remaining upright even absent external surveillance systems.

c. *Itqan* in Professionalism (Fiduciary Stewardship)

The third character represents the competency of Business Professionalism or *Muamalah*. His story begins with a worker who left his wages behind. Under the law of *Wadi'ah* (trust/deposit), the employer's obligation is merely to store the wage and return it in the same amount (Jabar, 2018). However, this character performed extra-role behavior: he invested the wage until it multiplied into a valley full of livestock. When the worker returned, he surrendered everything (principal + profit) without taking a penny in management commission.

This action radically redefines the concept of Fiduciary Stewardship. His *Itqan* is visible in two aspects: (1) Productive Initiative, i.e., not letting another's asset remain idle but developing it professionally; and (2) Total Honesty, i.e., surrendering the proceeds of development which, under positive law, he might partially claim. (Qusairi, 2023) term this the manifestation of *Amanah* and *Itqan* in leadership. This is the vocational graduate profile envisioned in Prophetic OBE: not merely a technically competent worker, but an intrapreneur with integrity capable of providing added value to society.

Synthesis: *Itqan* vs. Minimal Competency Through deep analysis of the three archetypes above, it becomes clear that a synthesis with modern quality management theory (Total Quality Management/TQM) positions *Itqan* beyond the standard of "Minimal Competency" (KKM). In conventional OBE, students are considered to have passed if they meet minimal standards. However, in the Prophetic Framework, the goal of education is to produce a "masterpiece" (best work) such as extreme devotion, sexual integrity in solitude, and total business honesty. As asserted by (Eldy & Sulaiman, 2023), educational system failure often occurs due to setting graduation standards too low (merely cognitive), whereas global challenges demand graduates with character depth and mental resilience achievable only through the standard of *Itqan* (Eldy & Sulaiman, 2023).

2. The Cave Model: A Framework for Authentic Portfolio Assessment

This study formulates "The Cave Assessment Model" as an alternative framework for evaluation within the Merdeka Curriculum. The model consists of three interrelated components: the problem context, portfolio defense, and validity check. First, the problem context is represented by the boulder as a real-world challenge. The three men in the Hadith were not tested through written examinations or artificial classroom tasks, but were confronted with a concrete, life-threatening problem that required meaningful action. This narrative critiques school assessments that often remain detached from real social conditions. Bashori (2022) argues that Assessment of Learning, which is commonly associated with final examinations, should shift toward Assessment as Learning through authentic problem-solving activities. In this framework, students should not only be asked to demonstrate what they know, but also whether their religious competencies can be applied to resolve concrete societal problems, such as through social projects, conflict mediation, community service, and economic empowerment (Bashori, 2022).

The second component is portfolio defense, symbolised by tawassul as evidence of competence. Each of the three men presented his most meaningful righteous deed

rather than recounting every good action he had ever performed. In curriculum terminology, this resembles a portfolio-based assessment in which students select and present their strongest evidence of learning and character development. This approach suggests that assessment should provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their best practices and most significant achievements rather than merely identify their weaknesses. Within the Merdeka Curriculum, students may therefore be encouraged to curate a “Portfolio of Goodness” throughout their schooling. Such a portfolio could document sustained evidence of honesty, social responsibility, leadership, service, religious commitment, and contributions to the community, and may be considered as part of the graduation requirements (Suryadi, 2020).

The third component is the validity check, represented by the phrase “If I did this solely seeking Your Countenance,” which functions as a form of spiritual validation. In the Hadith, the rock moves only when the claim is sincere and truthful. In modern educational terms, this principle is closely related to academic integrity. A portfolio, regardless of how impressive it appears, has little educational value if it is based on plagiarism, fabrication, manipulation, or false claims. The Hadith therefore teaches that outcome assessment must be accompanied by an audit of honesty in the learning process. The visible outcome, symbolised by the shifting rock, should not be separated from the integrity of the actions that produced it. In this sense, achievement is not merely the result of performance, but a consequence of sincerity, honesty, and ethical consistency. Thus, the validity of educational outcomes depends not only on what students produce, but also on whether the process through which those outcomes are achieved reflects genuine integrity and *ikhlas*.

3. Implications for National Assessment Policy

The findings derived from the Hadith of the Cave highlight the need for substantial reform in the National Assessment (Asesmen Nasional/AN) and school examination systems, particularly in the evaluation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). First, assessment should shift from conventional worksheet-based evaluation toward performance- and project-based assessment. PAI learning outcomes should no longer be measured predominantly through Lembar Kerja Siswa (LKS), multiple-choice tests, or written examinations that merely assess students’ cognitive understanding. Instead, students should be required to demonstrate the practical application of religious values through authentic projects. For example, they may undertake an “Amanah Project,” inspired by the integrity of the third man in the Hadith, or a “Service Project,” reflecting the devotion and responsibility demonstrated by the first man. These projects should be systematically documented through reports, reflections, photographs, videos, or other evidence that demonstrates both the process and the outcomes of students’ actions.

Second, schools need to establish a character-tracking record that documents students’ moral development over time. This system may take the form of a digital portfolio that records meaningful instances of integrity, responsibility, empathy, and honesty, such as returning lost property, maintaining honesty during examinations, fulfilling commitments, assisting peers, or participating in community service. Such records should not be treated merely as anecdotal notes, but as legitimate qualitative data

that complement academic report grades. Through this approach, character assessment becomes continuous, evidence-based, and contextual rather than dependent on temporary observations or general teacher impressions.

Third, educational success must be redefined beyond the achievement of perfect scores. In the Hadith, success is represented by the ability of the three men to “exit the cave,” meaning that they were able to confront danger, mobilise their moral resources, and find a solution to a real problem. This metaphor suggests that the ultimate measure of educational success is not merely a score of 100, but the capacity to survive challenges, make ethical decisions, collaborate, and provide constructive solutions. Therefore, graduates of the Merdeka Curriculum should be developed as individuals who are capable of becoming problem solvers for society and the nation, rather than passive recipients of knowledge or demographic burdens. In this sense, assessment reform must ensure that academic achievement, moral integrity, and social usefulness are evaluated as interconnected dimensions of student success.

The Prophetic OBE Framework: An Integrated Model for Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum

Having atomistically dissected the five *Hadiths* in the preceding sections, the final and most fundamental step of this study is to reconstruct that analysis into a unified conceptual model, termed in this study "The Prophetic OBE Framework." This framework is offered as a constructive antithesis to the secular OBE model adopted by (Spady, 1994), which is frequently criticized for its linear-mechanistic nature. Unlike the Western model which views education as an assembly line, Prophetic OBE views education as a soul transformation ecosystem integrating the dimensions of the heavens (revelation) and the earth (social context) (Sahin, 2018).

This model integrates the three curriculum dimensions (Objectives, Process, Evaluation) into a circular unity centered on the concept of *Itqan*. To provide a comprehensive overview of the philosophical reconstruction and its practical implications for national policy, the details of the Prophetic OBE Framework are presented in Table 1. Predicated on the preceding table, this framework is constructed upon three mutually reinforcing pillars.

The First Pillar is "The Scaffolding of Faith." Grounded in the *Hadith of Jibril* and the *Hadith of Mu'adz's Mission to Yemen*, learning objectives are no longer structured linearly, but rather hierarchically. The foundational outcome is procedural competence (*Islam*), ascending to value internalization (*Iman*), and culminating in transcendental metacognition (*Ihsan*). Within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this necessitates a restructuring of Learning Outcomes (CP) to position *adab* (etiquette) and *aqidah* (creed) as absolute prerequisites prior to the mastery of science and technology. The "loss of *adab*" occurs when knowledge is imparted without the correct hierarchy (Al-Attas, 2019). The *Hadith of Mu'adz* provides methodological validation that "sequence" is the key to curricular success; inverting this order teaching Sharia before *aqidah* is a recipe for pedagogical failure.

The Second Pillar is "The Humanized Ecosystem." Based on the *Hadith of Hanzalah* and the *Hadith of the Repentant Killer*, the learning process is designed using principles of agility and ecology. (Biesta, 2020) critique of "learnification" is addressed through an approach that

humanizes the student: acknowledging the fluctuation of their spirit (*sa'atan wa sa'atan*) and providing a supportive social environment (*hijrah al-bi'ah*). In implementation, Merdeka Curriculum schools must transform from mere sites of knowledge transfer into "Healing Communities" that accept students with all their past deficits, guiding them toward transformation without premature judgment that stifles potential (Rahmawati, 2021).

Table 1. The Reconstruction of OBE Framework based on Prophetic Traditions for Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum

OBE Components	Prophetic Foundation (Hadith Sources)	Key Concepts (Theological Theory)	Modern Concept Reconstruction	Implications for Merdeka Curriculum Policy
OBJECTIVES (Learning Outcomes)	Hadith of Jibril (Muslim No. 10)	Maratib ad-Din (Islam-Iman-Ihsan)	Hierarchical Taxonomy: Supplanting Bloom's linear domains with a spiritual hierarchy (Procedural → Internalized → Transcendental).	Restructuring Learning Outcomes (CP) to prioritize Adab (Etiquette) and Aqidah (Creed) as prerequisites prior to cognitive mastery.
	Hadith of Mu'adz (Muslim No. 27)	At-Tadrij (Gradual Scaffolding)	Prophetic Scaffolding: Strict prerequisite logic wherein spiritual submission precedes legal obligation (Taklif).	Designing the Learning Objective Flow (ATP) based on psychological readiness rather than solely on the academic calendar.
PROCESS (Delivery System)	Hadith of Hanzalah (Muslim No. 4938)	Sa'atan wa Sa'atan (Human Fluctuation)	Spiritual Agility: Acknowledging the fluctuation of learning motivation as a natural phenomenon, rather than hypocrisy.	Introducing "Curriculum Pauses" and flexible instructional methods to prevent student burnout and toxic positivity.
	Hadith of the Repentant Killer (Muslim No. 4967)	Hijrah al-Bi'ah (Ecological Transformation)	Ecological Behaviorism: Character transformation relies on ecosystem design, not merely individual effort.	Shifting focus from classroom instruction to School Culture Design (ecosystem) as the "Third Teacher."
ASSESSMENT (Evaluation)	Hadith of the Cave (Bukhari No. 2111)	<i>Itqan</i> & Ikhlas (Authentic Masterpiece)	The Cave Assessment Model: Transitioning from standardized testing to Authentic Portfolios focused on real-world problem solving.	Replacing paper-based exams with Project-Based Assessment wherein students demonstrate integrity & impact (Masterpiece).

The Third Pillar is "The Authentic Portfolio." Grounded in the *Hadith of the Three Men Trapped in the Cave*, evaluation is shifted from standardized testing toward authentic portfolio assessment. The final outcome is not a numerical score, but *Itqan* the best work tested for its integrity. This framework defines a "Quality Graduate" as an individual possessing tangible problem-solving capacity (capable of shifting the "boulder" of problems) through the integration of technical competence and spiritual strength (prayer/*ikhlas*). Research by (Qusairi, 2023) confirms that the integration of transcendental values within

Total Quality Management yields performance that is more sustainable than mere compliance with administrative standards.

The most significant theoretical implication of this framework is the paradigm shift from the term "Competence" to *Itqan*. Competence, in its secular definition, is often limited to the ability to perform tasks (*doing*). Conversely, *Itqan*, as distilled from Ibn Hajar's commentary on the aforementioned *Hadiths*, encompasses the dimensions of *doing* (performing with perfection), *being* (becoming a God-conscious character), and *serving* (serving others/devotion). By adopting *Itqan* as a quality standard, the Merdeka Curriculum can transcend materialistic PISA standards, advancing toward a holistic educational standard characteristic of a religious Nusantara (Eldy & Sulaiman, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study successfully reconstructs the philosophical and methodological foundations of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) within the Merdeka Curriculum by introducing the "Prophetic OBE Framework". By synthesizing five canonical *Hadiths*, the research shifts the mechanistic paradigms of education toward a holistic, spiritually integrated instructional design. The core synthesis establishes that educational objectives must be stratified from procedural mastery to spiritual excellence (*Islam-Iman-Ihsan*), with a strict ethical prerequisite of *Adab*. Additionally, the learning process is humanized through ecological design and spiritual agility, which accommodates students' psychological fluctuations instead of demanding constant, toxic productivity. Ultimately, the framework redefines the assessment paradigm by moving away from minimal cognitive competence toward *Itqan* (perfect excellence), utilizing an authentic "Tawassul Portfolio" to measure real-world, high-integrity problem-solving rather than relying on standardized testing.

The profound novelty of this research lies in its epistemological shift: it positions canonical *Hadiths* not merely as abstract moral guidelines, but as a systematic, operational framework capable of intervening in modern educational design and national policy. Unlike prevailing global OBE models that strictly emphasize secular, market-driven competencies, this prophetic model distinctively integrates psychological balance and ecosystem-based evaluation directly into the core of the curriculum. To bridge the gap between this conceptual framework and practical application, future research should empirically test the implementation of the Prophetic OBE Framework within diverse institutional settings to evaluate the efficacy of its portfolio-based assessment across different educational tiers in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

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