



Edutheology as an Idea for Revitalizing Education in Indonesia

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Abstract	
<p>Article Information: Received: 15 April 2026 Revised: 28 May 2026 Accepted: 9 June 2026 Published: 21 June 2026</p> <p>Keywords: Edutheology, Education, Islamic Education, Spiritual Intelligence.</p>	<p>Indonesian education is facing various challenges related to the integrity, morality, and intellectual quality of students. This condition indicates the need to strengthen the foundation of values in the education system. This article aims to examine the educational values contained in QS. Al-'Alaq verses 1-5 and their relevance as an idea for revitalizing education in Indonesia through the concept of Edutheology. This research uses a library research method with a normative, historical, and sociocultural approach. The analysis is carried out through an interpretive study of QS. Al-'Alaq verses 1-5 which is then connected to the historical context of Indonesian society and contemporary educational challenges. The results of the study indicate that the concept of iqra' in the verse not only represents intellectual activity but also contains a theological dimension that positions the learning process as a manifestation of monotheistic awareness. This concept encourages humans to read and understand various realities comprehensively. This conceptual finding leads to the idea of monotheism-based education (Edutheology) as a framework for educational revitalization that integrates scientific and spiritual dimensions so that it can encourage the realization of a more civilized and progressive Indonesian educational climate.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

The complexity of Indonesia's education problems is basically inseparable from the socio-cultural background of the Indonesian nation and various influences that come from outside (Moldaliev et al., 2025). Indonesia is known as a pluralistic nation, comprising diverse religions, ethnicities, and races. This diversity is also accompanied by a diversity of environmental conditions. The region, encompassing both oceans and land, both boasting diverse climates and rich flora and fauna, undoubtedly influences the character of the Indonesian people.

This rich diversity is a challenge in itself for the development of education in Indonesia (V. A. Putri & Suharjanto, 2025). Managing Indonesian education is certainly no easy task. Indonesian education still faces a number of serious problems. Indonesia still faces various issues such as resource inequality, teacher quality, and the implementation of educational innovation (Iriansyah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, progress in Indonesian education is not impossible.

Indonesian education fundamentally has a noble orientation and goals. Undang-Undang (UU) No. 20 of 2003 states that education is directed towards developing students

with spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills necessary for themselves, society, the nation, and the state. From this explanation, we can understand that Indonesian education is not merely oriented towards producing a knowledgeable and skilled next generation, but also one that has good character and even possesses strong spiritual strength. If we examine together, spiritual strength is actually placed first, followed by self-control and personality. This understands the importance of spiritual strength in Indonesian education. With this formulation of educational direction, ideally, we should find students with noble personalities, grounded in solid faith and possessing sound knowledge and skills.

More than 20 years have passed since the law was enacted, and the reality of Indonesian education remains far from ideal. "Far from the truth" seems to be an apt phrase to describe the current state of Indonesian education. The spiritual vision seems to still be failing. There's a saying, "even God is not feared," and this seems to be the case with education in Indonesia. Prohibited acts are carried out as if God is not watching. Based on *Survey Penilaian Integritas (SPI) Pendidikan 2024* released by the *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK)* reveals a startling reality. Cheating cases were still found in 78% of schools and 98% of universities. Cheating activities still occur in the majority of schools and universities. The survey also found that 45% of students and 84% of university students admitted to having arrived late to school and campus. Furthermore, 69% of students stated that some teachers were still late, while 96% of students said that some lecturers were still late. In fact, at 96% of campuses and 64% of schools, respondents found that lecturers and teachers were still absent without clear reasons (Berita KPK, 2025). Furthermore, practices of gratification, which undermine integrity, were still found in 22% of schools, where teachers received "gifts" in exchange for better grades upon students' graduation (Simbolon, 2025). From this data, we can all see that there is a decline in integrity in the world of education in Indonesia.

Regarding personality and morals, Indonesian education also appears to be in worrying condition. Various reports in the mass media and on social media depict inappropriate behavior among students. The facts show that in modern society today, low morality is prevalent, especially among teenagers. They prefer to indulge in pleasure rather than prioritize their responsibilities. Such individuals no longer serve as moral, social, and academic role models for society (Aisyah & Fitriatin, 2025). Even within their own circles, immoral acts against each other occur. According to a 2018 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) survey, 41% of students in Indonesia experienced bullying at least several times a month. According to the 2021 National Assessment, 24.4% of students were found to be at risk of experiencing bullying incidents in their educational institutions within a year (Berita Paudpedia, 2025).

Furthermore, in terms of cognitive skills, education in Indonesia shows quite serious problems. Recently, social media has been abuzz with reports of high school students who can't master multiplication. This reflects the state of Indonesian education, although we cannot generalize it to the overall condition of Indonesian students. Another fact concerns the IQ level of Indonesians. According to data from the World Population Review, the average Indonesian IQ is 78.49. This score places Indonesia in 127th place out of 197 countries tested in 2024 (Ginjar, 2024). This score can provide a snapshot, and although

it's a sample, it can be used as evaluation material for current Indonesian education. Indonesian education needs to improve itself and develop a series of strategies for improvement.

Based on these diverse issues, serious efforts must be undertaken by various parties, including intellectuals, by conducting various forms of research to generate sound ideas for advancing Indonesian education. Various approaches can be employed to generate these ideas. Literature review is one alternative. One such resource is Islamic values.

Early Islamic history can be a valuable reference for exploring the secrets of the Prophet Muhammad's success in transforming the Arab society of the Jahiliyyah into a highly civilized society, as the Qur'an states, "*minadzdzulumati ilanmur*" Pre-Islamic Arabia, once known for its lack of civilization, became a radically different society. Noble values became their guiding principles in social life. The Prophet's success is undoubtedly inseparable from the spirit of the first five verses revealed to him. Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1-5, are the first verses that begin the history of the Prophet Muhammad's struggle to tread the path of Islamic da'wah. What secrets lie behind these verses that enabled the Prophet Muhammad's da'wah or education to successfully transform the Jahiliyyah society into such a highly civilized society?

A study of interpretations, accompanied by a review of early Islamic history, can be an appropriate way to discover the meaning of these verses. By examining these verses more deeply, along with their historical context, it is hoped that a wealth of educational values underlying the success of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) preaching and struggle will be gleaned.

Numerous studies on the content of Surah al-'Alaq verses 1–5 have been conducted by scholars. Several studies have examined the educational values contained in these verses, such as those carried out by Setiyawan and Fauziah (Setiyawan & Fauziyah, 2023), Miyanto (Miyanto, 2021), Zumrodi (Zumrodi, 2021), while Masliha (Masliha, 2025) explored them through a study on the concept of *talab al-'ilm*. Other studies have discussed the moral values of these verses within the context of modern life by employing the method developed by Fazlur Rahman (Vera & Hilmi, 2021). In addition, discussions on the educational paradigm reflected in these verses have also been presented in the work of Colle Said, who argues that education is fundamentally based on two principal teachings, namely *aqidah* and *akhlak* (Said, 2016). Another related study on the educational paradigm was conducted by Fathonah (Fathonah, 2024).

In addition to these studies, other scholars have examined the verses from the perspectives of educational concepts (Abu Bakar, 2022), the professional ethics of teachers (Subakat, Suwarno, et al., 2022), and the foundations of the Islamic education curriculum (Subakat & Harahap, 2022). Furthermore, there are also studies discussing the epistemology of knowledge contained in these verses (Subakat, Sirait, et al., 2022) as well as the mathematical patterns found within them (Akbar et al., 2024).

This study differs from the previous studies mentioned above, which examine the content of these verses through various forms of analysis. It also differs from other studies that focus on the values contained in these verses and their relevance to contemporary developments. For instance, the study conducted by Sugiarto and Ahlan focuses on exploring

the fundamental values in Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 as guidelines for the implementation of Islamic education in addressing the negative impacts of globalization (Sugiarto & Ahlan, 2025). Meanwhile, the research by Wiandani and Salman emphasizes the exploration of the fundamental values in Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 and Surah ‘Abasa verses 1–10, as well as their relevance to contemporary Islamic education (Wiandani & Salman, 2025). In addition, Zain and Nasrulloh investigate the educational values of Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 from the perspective of Ziauddin Sardar and their relevance in responding to the challenges of the digital era (Zain & Nasrulloh, 2024).

This study seeks to elaborate the educational and theological values of the verse, while also projecting its relevance to Islamic education in Indonesia through historical and sociocultural analysis of Indonesian society. In the historical context, the study explores the genealogy of the Indonesian nation, which has long been characterized as religious, communal, and upholding moral values in social life. This perspective is important to ensure that the resulting educational ideas are not ahistorical but remain aligned with the cultural roots and historical experiences of the Indonesian people. On the other hand, this study also considers the contemporary sociocultural context of Indonesian society, which is currently facing various 21st-century global challenges, such as the development of digital technology, shifts in social interaction patterns, and new competency demands in the field of education.

By integrating normative, historical, and sociocultural approaches, the study of QS. al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 is expected not to remain limited to theological and textual understanding alone, but to produce a contextual construction of Islamic educational thought. This study is also expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of educational paradigms that are relevant to the dynamics of Indonesian society, particularly in addressing the challenges of modern education and digital transformation

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature study method, which relies on the examination of various sources of literature relevant to the research topic (Hamzah, 2020). The research data were obtained from books, scholarly journal articles, works of Qur’anic exegesis, previous studies, as well as various academic documents relevant to the topic under investigation. The primary source for the analysis of QS. al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 is *Tafsir al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab. These sources were subsequently classified, reviewed, and analyzed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and ideas that constitute the focus of the study.

In the analytical process, this study employs historical, sociocultural, and normative approaches. The historical approach is used to trace the development of concepts or ideas related to the research theme over time. The sociological approach is applied to understand the relationship between these concepts and the social dynamics evolving within society. Meanwhile, the normative approach is utilized to analyze the values, principles, and provisions that form the foundation of the study. The data that have been collected are then analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method to generate a systematic and in-depth understanding of the issues under investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Historical Background of Indonesian Education

The people inhabiting the region of the “Nusantara,” now known as Indonesia, possess deep historical roots and are widely recognized as a society closely associated with traditions rich in spiritual values. This characteristic did not emerge solely after most of the population embraced Islam; rather, it has been embedded in the identity of this great nation since ancient times. Agus Sunyoto notes that the Nusantara people had an ancient belief system that developed during the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic periods, and continued into the Bronze and Iron Ages. This ancient belief is known as *Kapitayan*. *Kapitayan* can be described as a belief system centered on the worship of a supreme entity called *Sanghyang Taya*, which signifies emptiness, void, *suwung*, or *awang-uwung*. *Taya* represents the Absolute, something beyond human thought and imagination, and inaccessible to the senses. Ancient Javanese people defined *Sanghyang Taya* in the expression “*tan kena kinaya ngapa*,” meaning that its existence cannot be subjected to any form of human intervention or conceptualization. The term *awang-uwung* itself conveys the paradox of “existing yet not existing and not existing yet existing.” Therefore, in order for this Absolute to be recognized and venerated by humans, *Sanghyang Taya* is understood to manifest in personal forms through divine names and attributes known as *Tu* and *To*, which denote a supernatural or transcendent power (Sunyoto, 2017).

In its subsequent development, as is widely recognized, most of the Nusantara people embraced Hinduism and Buddhism, which were later followed by the spread of Islam. With the arrival of Islam—particularly in Java—Sufi traditions within Islam found a distinctive place among the Nusantara communities. These Sufi traditions are inherently rich in profound spiritual nuances. Consequently, they were readily accepted and absorbed into Javanese traditions. In the following stages, the teachings of Sufism became assimilated into various aspects of social life, including culture, religion, art, literature, education, and customary practices of the society (Sunyoto, 2017).

The Sufi tradition constitutes one of the important elements in the development of Islam in Indonesia (Hadi, 2022). A number of historical studies indicate that the process of Islamization in the Nusantara did not occur solely through trade and political channels, but also through spiritual approaches introduced by Sufi scholars (Wahyuni, 2017). This Sufistic approach emphasizes the inner (esoteric) dimensions of Islamic teachings, such as the purification of the soul, closeness to God, and profound spiritual practices. The flexible and adaptive characteristics of Sufi teachings have made them relatively easy to be accepted by the Nusantara communities, who had previously possessed strong spiritual traditions within their religious life. (Bruinessen, 2012).

Historically, the spread of Islam in the Nusantara was significantly influenced by Sufi teachers who arrived through international trade networks. These Sufi figures not only propagated Islam through formal preaching, but also employed cultural and spiritual approaches that were able to bridge Islamic teachings with the local traditions of the communities (Bruinessen, 2012). This Sufistic *da'wah* enabled Islamic teachings to develop without generating sharp conflicts with existing cultural traditions, thereby allowing Islam to

be widely accepted by the Nusantara communities. Through this approach, a distinctive pattern of religiosity emerged—namely, an Islam that is moderate, tolerant, and open to local traditions. (Alkadzim et al., 2023) (Syakur, 2022). Furthermore, as argued by Taufani, the Sufi tradition has also made a significant contribution to the emergence of intellectual traditions in the Nusantara. This intellectual tradition is reflected in the development of writing activities and the production of scholarly works across various fields, including literature, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qur’anic exegesis, hadith studies, and even political thought (Taufani, 2016).

On the other hand, the Indonesian nation is also known for its strong tradition of courtesy, which is reflected in the ethics and manners observed in everyday social life. This sense of propriety or etiquette constitutes an unwritten set of norms that has been inherited and developed within Indonesian society as a mode of interaction that fosters familiarity, mutual understanding, and respect among individuals in accordance with prevailing customs and social norms (F. S. Putri et al., 2021).

These values of courtesy function not only as social norms within society but also as an essential component in the formation of national character. Across various cultural traditions in Indonesia, respect for elders, the use of polite language, and appreciation for others are principles that are highly upheld in everyday life. These values indicate that Indonesian society has long possessed a strong system of social ethics as a foundation for fostering harmony and order in communal life.

In the context of education, this tradition of courtesy essentially constitutes a highly important form of cultural capital in the formation of students’ character. Education is not merely understood as a process of knowledge transfer, but also as a process of internalizing moral and ethical values that are embedded within society (Thornberg & Oğuz, 2016). Therefore, strengthening the values of courtesy within educational practices becomes an essential component in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also possess moral sensitivity, respect for others, and social awareness in communal life.

Based on these historical roots and characteristics, it is not surprising that the objectives of national education encompass a spiritual dimension that should be inherent in the scholarly tradition of learners. As previously noted, the direction of our national education is to ensure that students develop religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intellectual capacity, noble character, as well as the skills necessary for themselves, society, the nation, and the state.

The values of spirituality and social ethics that have developed within Indonesian society demonstrate that religious and moral dimensions have long been an integral part of the nation’s cultural life. Spiritual traditions influenced by Sufi teachings, along with the etiquette embedded in social practices, reflect a life orientation that emphasizes not only rational and material aspects but also inner and moral dimensions. In this context, education in Indonesia, from a historical perspective, cannot be separated from efforts to shape individuals of character, endowed with spiritual awareness, and capable of living harmoniously within social life.

Nevertheless, in the development of modern education, its orientation often tends to emphasize cognitive aspects and academic achievement alone, while spiritual and ethical

dimensions do not always receive balanced attention. This condition creates a need to revitalize the educational paradigm so that it is not solely oriented toward the mastery of knowledge, but also toward strengthening the theological and moral dimensions within learners.

Challenges of 21st-Century Education

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has triggered profound technological transformations that have had wide-ranging impacts on all aspects of human life, thereby significantly reshaping global structures. The process of digitalization has also occurred on a massive scale across various sectors, with the primary aim of enhancing human work efficiency and reducing negative impacts on the environment (Ejismont et al., 2020). However, behind these benefits, several problems have also emerged. The implementation of various new technologies can disrupt established social structures, including norms, values, worldviews, behavior, and culture. This condition has the potential to lead to dehumanization in various aspects of life. The impact of technological advancement has also extended to all sectors, particularly the field of education (Mubarok & Imtihanah, 2023).

Technological development has fundamentally led to significant changes in patterns of social interaction. The presence of digital media and virtual communication platforms has shifted the way people communicate, from previously prioritizing face-to-face interaction to becoming increasingly dependent on technological devices. This condition carries both positive and negative implications.

On the one hand, technology can help enhance analytical and critical thinking skills, memory, as well as language acquisition through educational applications. Moreover, it enables individuals to gain new experiences and perspectives that may not be encountered directly (Adeyemi, 2025).

On the other hand, the excessive use of technology may reduce attention span and hinder direct interactions that support deeper understanding. Additionally, it can lead to social isolation, diminish empathy, and reduce face-to-face interactions that are essential for the development of communication skills. (Adeyemi, 2025). This condition also has the potential to reduce emotional closeness between individuals and weaken one's social skills. Communication through digital devices often diminishes the emotional depth of interactions. The lack of direct contact limits the ability to interpret facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, which are essential elements in understanding others' feelings. Technology-based communication may also reduce individuals' capacity to express warmth and affection, as well as weaken the sense of closeness in social relationships, particularly among adolescents (Nesi et al., 2017).

In addition, unequal access to technology gives rise to a digital divide, in which certain segments of society are left behind due to limitations in infrastructure or in their capacity to adopt technology (Judijanto & Nurwanto, 2024). In the field of education, although technology can expand access to information and learning, its unwise use may lead to dependency and diminish the character values that should be cultivated through direct interaction and real-life experiences.

The issues outlined above represent challenges that are generally faced by humanity in the twenty-first century. The field of education must undertake reforms and adapt

appropriately so that the various problems arising as challenges from technological advancement can be minimized or even transformed into benefits for humanity. Through education, individuals can be equipped with the necessary knowledge, enabling them to respond to and utilize technological developments in a proper and wise manner.

In responding to the characteristics of the twenty-first century, there are several aspects that must be taken into consideration within the field of education. *First*, technology serves as a crucial element that enables individuals to communicate and interact on a broader scale. *Second*, globalization has dismantled the boundaries of social life, facilitating the exchange of cultures, ideas, and technologies across nations. *Third*, this is an era of openness that allows for more open dialogue and a higher degree of tolerance. *Fourth*, there is a need for innovation to create new products and services that are more effective and efficient. *Fifth*, there is a demand for human creativity to produce new works that are increasingly innovative and creative. (Tampa & Firdaus, 2023). Hal-hal ini perlu diperhatikan dan menjadi pertimbangan ketika meramu atau merancang pendidikan di Abad-21 ini. Selain itu, dalam rangka menemukan formula yang tepat bagi pendidikan di era digital ini mesti mempertimbangkan potensi yang dimiliki oleh suatu bangsa. Potensi ini mesti dicermati secara mendalam dengan memperhatikan tantangan-tantangan yang ada.

The Content of Surah Al-'Alaq Verses 1–5

Surah Al-'Alaq verses 1–5 are the first revelations received by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These five verses mark the initial historical milestone of Islam and serve as the foundational basis for the Prophet in embarking upon his mission of *da'wah*. Equipped with these verses at the beginning of his prophetic journey, he was, over time, able to transform Arab society—then in a state of *Jabilyyyah*—into an Islamic society characterized by the upholding of the noble values of Islamic teachings. The verses of Surah Al-'Alaq (1–5):

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ لَئِنْ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

“Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clinging substance. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught humanity what they did not know.” (Al-Qur’an, 2009)

In these verses, the word *iqra'* can be understood in various senses, including reading, examining, conveying, exploring, investigating, and recognizing the characteristics of something. Notably, the term *iqra'* in this context does not explicitly mention its object. In linguistic principles, when a verb that typically requires an object is presented without one, the implied object is considered general, encompassing all that can be reached by the action denoted by the verb. Accordingly, the object of *iqra'* includes everything that can be engaged with, whether sacred readings derived from divine sources or otherwise; whether related to written or unwritten signs. It may encompass the universe, society, and the self, as well as all forms of written texts, whether sacred or non-sacred (Shihab, 2017).

The phrase *bismi rabbik* follows the word *iqra'*, indicating that the act of reading (or engaging in *iqra'*) is to be carried out based on and grounded in *bismi rabbik*, that is solely for the sake of God, who holds the position of *Rabb*. Furthermore, Abdul Halim Mahmud views

“reading” as a symbol of all human activities, whether active or passive in nature. The underlying spirit of this expression may be understood as: “Read for the sake of your Lord, act for the sake of your Lord, and work for the sake of your Lord.” Meanwhile, the term *rabb* refers to God as the One who performs *tarbiyah* (education), which essentially entails the development, enhancement, and refinement of His creation. (Shihab, 2017).

Furthermore, the term *kbalaqa* conveys several meanings, including creating (from nothing), creating (without any prior model), measuring, refining, organizing, and forming, among others. This term typically emphasizes the greatness and majesty of God as reflected in His creation. The object of *kbalaqa* in this verse, like *iqra'*, is not explicitly mentioned, thereby indicating that God is the Creator of all beings. As for the term *al-insan*, it may be derived from the word *uns*, meaning affection, familiarity, and harmony. May be derived from *nis-y*, meaning forgetfulness. May be derived from *naus*, meaning movement or dynamism. These meanings suggest that the human being is characterized by forgetfulness and the capacity for movement, which gives rise to dynamism. At the same time, humans are beings who naturally generate affection, harmony, and happiness in relation to others. The term *insan* thus portrays human beings in the richness and diversity of their characteristics. It differs from the word *basyar*, which is also translated as “human,” but tends to refer more to the physical and instinctual aspects that are common among all humans. Meanwhile, the word *'alaq* may refer to a clot of blood, or to a leech-like substance that clings when ingested by animals. Many scholars interpret it in the first sense, while others understand it as something that clings to the wall of the womb. It may also be interpreted more broadly as referring to the nature of human beings as social creatures who cannot live independently but are always dependent on others (Shihab, 2017).

The term *al-akram* in the verse may be translated as “the Most Generous” or “the Most Noble.” It is derived from the root *karama*, which conveys meanings such as giving freely without expectation, possessing high value, honor, nobility, loyalty, and a sense of dignity. The use of this term in the superlative form is unique in the Qur'an in describing God in such a manner. This implies that He bestows the highest forms of excellence and praiseworthy qualities upon His servants, particularly in relation to the command to read. Moreover, this term is paired with the word *iqra'* in the third verse, suggesting a distinction between the command to read in the first verse and that in the third. The first command emphasizes the condition that must be fulfilled when engaging in reading (in its broadest sense), namely that it must be done for the sake of God. The second command, however, highlights the benefits derived from reading, including its repetition. In this third verse, God promises that when a person reads sincerely for His sake, He will grant knowledge, understanding, and new insights even when the material being read remains the same. This promise is clear. The activity of “reading” the verse of the Qur'an continually gives rise to new interpretations or the development of existing perspectives. Likewise, the “reading” of the universe has led to various discoveries that unveil the mysteries of nature, even though the object being observed remains the same (Shihab, 2017).

The term *al-qalam* is derived from the root *qalama*, which means “to cut the tip of something.” Trimming fingernails is referred to as *taqlim*, while a spear whose tip is sharpened is called *maqalim*. An arrow with a pointed tip, which can also be used for drawing lots, is

likewise referred to as *qalam*. The instrument used for writing is called *qalam* because it was originally made from a material that was cut and sharpened at the tip. In the verse, the word *qalam* may also denote the result of using such an instrument, namely writing, since language often employs terms referring to a “tool” or “cause” to indicate the “effect” or “result” produced by it. For example, when someone says, “I am worried about the rain,” what is implied is the consequence, such as getting wet or falling ill due to the rain. In the context of the fourth and fifth verses, there is a rhetorical device known as *ibtibak*, which refers to the omission of certain elements that would ordinarily appear in paired expressions, because the intended meaning is already indicated in the corresponding clause. Accordingly, the two verses may be understood to mean that He (God) teaches through the pen (writing) what has already been known to humankind, and He teaches humankind (without the pen) what was previously unknown (Shihab, 2017).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be understood that human beings are encouraged to “read” in a broad sense, encompassing various domains, including divine revelations, nature, and society. This act of reading is not limited solely to divine revelation but extends to many other aspects beyond it. The study of the natural world—now known as the natural sciences—also falls within the scope of this reading, as do the social sciences. This indicates that Islam maintains an openness toward knowledge. From an ontological perspective, this implies that knowledge in Islam is vast in scope, encompassing multiple domains; thus, it may be said that knowledge in Islam is inherently comprehensive.

Furthermore, upon closer examination, the act of “reading,” which encompasses a wide range of objects, is not confined to specific spaces or periods of time; rather, it can be undertaken in various places and on different occasions. This suggests that, from an Islamic perspective, learning is a lifelong process that may take place anywhere and at any time. Such acts of reading are carried out to equip individuals with the power of knowledge. However, it must be emphasized that all such efforts of reading should be undertaken for, with, and in the name of God, who holds the position of *Rabb* (the Sustainer and Guide) as well as the Creator of all beings. This underscores that Islam encourages human beings to “read,” but with a profound awareness of God. The endeavor to engage with various forms of knowledge must be grounded in a sense of *Ilahiyyah*, a consciousness of God’s presence as *Rabb al-‘alamin*, with all His power in creating everything that constitutes the object of such reading. This explanation is further reinforced by the reference to God as the One who created humankind from *‘alaq*. Reflecting on the meanings inherent in the terms “human” and *‘alaq*, in conjunction with the earlier command to “read,” conveys the impression that in the pursuit of knowledge, one should not become arrogant. Human beings are created from *‘alaq* and remain inherently bound to weakness and the possibility of error.

Moreover, these acts of reading should be carried out repeatedly (as the command *iqra’* is reiterated in the third verse). Human beings are encouraged to engage in more extensive acts of reading, through which God will bestow His various blessings, for He is *al-Akram*, the Possessor of all forms of perfection. This also reinforces the notion that humans should not be arrogant, as all perfection belongs to God, who alone grants diverse forms of grace. It is God who teaches humanity through the “pen” (that is, what has already been known), and He teaches humanity (without the “pen”) what was previously unknown.

Educational Values in Surah Al-'Alaq Verses 1–5

The content of Surah al-'Alaq verses 1–5, as elaborated in the previous discussion, is fundamentally rich in educational values. Based on the meanings that have been outlined, the educational values embedded within these verses include critical thinking, lifelong learning (learning anytime and anywhere), comprehensive and holistic learning, edutheology (*Ilahiyah* consciousness), humility (free from arrogance), and diligence.

1. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is related to the ability to understand concepts, apply, synthesize, and evaluate the information obtained. It is an active intellectual process grounded in observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, and communication. (Suryani, 2022).

The term *iqra'* as mentioned in Surah Al-'Alaq encompasses meanings such as reading, examining, conveying, exploring, investigating, and identifying the characteristics of something. Activities of this nature inherently require cognitive abilities across levels 1 to 6, indicating the necessity of critical thinking skills. Moreover, given that the object of *iqra'* encompasses a wide range of domains, critical thinking becomes essential for achieving a deep and comprehensive understanding of such matters.

2. Lifelong Learning

The encouragement to engage in *iqra'* is not confined to specific spaces or periods of time; rather, it can be undertaken in various places and on different occasions. From an Islamic perspective, learning is a lifelong process that can take place anytime and anywhere. A well-known maxim states, “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.” In the many moments and experiences of life, individuals can derive valuable lessons. Learning is not limited to classroom settings but can occur broadly in diverse contexts. Such a concept is aligned with modern learning theories that view learning as a lifelong process (lifelong learning).

Lifelong learning is a continuous process of learning that takes place throughout an individual's life, not limited to formal education in schools or universities. Learning can occur through various activities and life experiences across formal, non-formal, and informal contexts, such as within the family, community, workplace, and social interactions. Through this process, individuals continuously develop knowledge, skills, values, and understanding that enable them to adapt to change and improve their quality of life (Thwe & Kálmán, 2024).

3. Comprehensive and Holistic Learning

The encouragement to engage in *iqra'* is not limited to specific objects but rather encompasses all forms of objects that can be “read.” This act of reading is not confined to divine revelation alone, but extends broadly to the universe, including natural phenomena. It may also include social phenomena and other aspects of reality that can be examined and understood. From this, it can be inferred that Islam does not restrict the act of *iqra'* to domains; instead, it provides broad scope for engaging with a wide range of subjects. Accordingly, the activity of *iqra'* in the Islamic perspective is not confined solely to religious texts but encompasses various realities that can serve as sources of knowledge. This indicates that Islam offers a wide space for human beings to

read and understand different aspects of life as part of the process of acquiring knowledge. From this viewpoint, it can be understood that knowledge in Islam is comprehensive in nature and open to diverse sources of knowledge.

This perspective aligns with the concept of holistic learning in modern educational theory, which emphasizes that the learning process should approach knowledge in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Holistic learning highlights *connectedness*, namely the relationships among various fields of knowledge, life experiences, society, and the environment. Within this framework, learning is not rigidly separated by academic disciplines; rather, it is integrated to help learners understand the world in a unified way (Mahmoudi et al., 2012). The paradigm of *iqra'*, which encourages engagement with revelation, nature, and social phenomena, can thus be understood as a form of holistic learning approach, as it positions diverse sources of knowledge as an interconnected whole that complements one another in the process of acquiring knowledge.

4. Edutheology

All acts of “reading” as a manifestation of the command *iqra'* must be carried out for, with, and in the name of God, who holds the position of *Rabb* (the Sustainer and Guide) as well as the Creator of all beings. This affirms that Islam encourages human beings to “read,” but with a strong consciousness of God. The endeavor to engage with various forms of knowledge must be grounded in *Ilahiyyah* consciousness, an awareness of God’s presence as *Rabb al-‘alamin*, with all His power in creating everything that constitutes the object of such reading. From this understanding, reading or learning in the Islamic perspective must be accompanied by *tawhid*, learning activities grounded in a consciousness of divine unity. Likewise, all educational efforts in Islamic education should be directed toward cultivating modes of learning that are rooted in *tawhid* and characterized by a theological orientation. Accordingly, in Islam, education is not merely education; it is inherently theological (*edutheological*) in nature. Islamic education is not only a process of knowledge transmission, but also a process of nurturing *tawhid* consciousness, whereby learning activities are positioned as an act of devotion to God.

This perspective is in line with the view of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas regarding the Islamic worldview, which places *tawhid* as the primary foundation for understanding knowledge and the educational process. Within this perspective, learning is not merely regarded as a cognitive process, but also as an effort to comprehend reality as part of the signs of God’s power. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge in Islamic education is directed not only toward the mastery of knowledge, but also toward the formation of *tawhid* consciousness that guides individuals to perceive knowledge and the universe within the framework of devotion to God (Al-Attas, 1995).

5. Humility

The act of reading fundamentally enables an individual to acquire knowledge (thereby accumulating knowledge within oneself). Through this process, a person may attain various forms of excellence, as can be observed in contemporary reality. In such a condition, however, one must not become arrogant, for human beings are created from *‘alaq* and remain inherently bound to weakness and fallibility. All forms of perfection

ultimately belong to God, and it is He who bestows His manifold blessings, for He is *al-Akram*. Accordingly, individuals who possess knowledge should uphold such ethical principles. Those who are educated must not take pride in or boast about their knowledge, as it is, in essence, a gift from God. On the contrary, they should express gratitude to God for all such blessings.

6. Perseverance

The activity of reading, through which knowledge is accumulated and benefits are derived, should be carried out consistently and with perseverance. Such efforts of reading should be undertaken repeatedly, as this repetition enables deeper insights and the unveiling of the underlying realities of the object being studied. Individuals are thus encouraged to engage in more extensive acts of reading, through which God will bestow His manifold blessings. It is God who teaches humanity through the “pen” (that is, what has already been known), and He teaches humanity (without the “pen”) what was previously unknown.

Revitalizing Indonesian Education through the Spirit of Edutheology

Indonesian education is currently confronted with a range of challenges, including disparities in access and quality. It must undergo reforms to address these issues to cultivate a progressive and civilized generation capable of facing future challenges. In this regard, Indonesian education can draw valuable insights from the intellectual and spiritual heritage of Islam.

Early Islamic history demonstrates that Islam emerged within a society that was far from being considered civilized. Equipped with Surah Al-'Alaq verses 1–5 at the outset of his mission, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was able to transform the Arab society of *Jahiliyyah* into a civilization characterized by noble values rooted in Islamic teachings. These five verses constituted the initial foundation upon which the Prophet embarked on his mission of *da'wah*. Within them are embedded educational values that can serve as exemplars not only for Muslims but also for humanity at large.

The edutheological paradigm embedded in Surah Al-'Alaq encourages all educational efforts to be integrated with *tamhid*. All acts of “reading,” as a manifestation of the command *iqra'*, must be carried out for, with, and in the name of God, who holds the position of *Rabb* (the Sustainer and Guide) as well as the Creator of all beings. Islam thus encourages human beings to “read” with a profound awareness of God. In essence, Islamic education is inherently edutheological in nature.

Observing the current state of Indonesian education, the concept of edutheology appears to be highly relevant for its future development. The influence of secular Western traditions remains embedded within the educational practices of Indonesia. Such a tradition has given rise to a dichotomy of knowledge, which in turn has impacted character development. According to Abudin Nata, this dichotomy of knowledge has generated various problems. Ideally, different branches of knowledge should be interconnected, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to human life (Nata, 2019).

Education grounded in *tamhid* is, in essence, aligned with the historical roots of the Indonesian nation. Since ancient times, the people inhabiting the Nusantara (present-day Indonesia) have been closely associated with spiritually oriented traditions. *Kapitayan*, as an

ancestral belief system, is rich in spiritual values. These spiritual values can cultivate a sense of humility and submission in human beings, thereby reducing tendencies toward egocentrism and arbitrary behavior.

Furthermore, reflecting on the conditions of the twenty-first century, *tawhid* is indeed indispensable. Various forms of immoral and unethical behavior have become widespread across public spaces, both in direct social interactions and within digital environments. The presence of *tawhid* can shape ethical conduct and moral character; it is not merely a doctrine about God, but also a guiding framework for living an ethical and moral life (Khairunisa, 2025). *Tawhid* is not merely a matter of belief, but is also transformative and progressive in nature; it can be actualized in concrete forms through actions that embody noble moral values (Nata, 2019). *Tawhid* can shape character and behavior in a positive manner, thereby contributing to the creation of a just and harmonious society (Khairunisa, 2025). *Tawhid* constitutes a fundamental foundation for confronting the challenges of the digital era; it guides individuals toward wisdom and reminds them that the ultimate source of all needs and happiness is God (Usman, 2025).

Therefore, education integrated with *tawhid* (edutheological education) is indeed necessary in the present context, particularly for Indonesian education. Although, in principle, education in Indonesia has generally been directed toward a connection with the divine dimension as stated in UU No. 20 2003, current realities indicate that this connection needs to be further strengthened. The concept of edutheology is expected to reaffirm the importance of divine values in the education of the Indonesian nation, thereby contributing to the realization of a more civilized and progressive educational climate. This approach is relevant not only for Islamic education, but also for education in Indonesia more broadly.

In this context, the concept of edutheology becomes relevant to be developed as an approach that integrates theological values with the educational process. Ultimately, education is expected to produce individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also possess spiritual awareness and moral responsibility in social life.

CONCLUSION

Indonesian education has historical roots as part of a nation that is deeply religious and upholds moral values in social life. However, in its development, Indonesian education has also faced various serious challenges, particularly in terms of integrity, morality, and the intellectual quality of learners. These conditions indicate the need to reinforce the value-based foundations of the educational system so that it can respond to contemporary challenges without losing its moral and spiritual orientation. In this context, the educational values embedded in Surah Al-'Alaq verses 1–5 can serve as an important source of inspiration for the development of education in Indonesia. The concept of *iqra'* contained in these verses emphasizes that learning is not merely an intellectual process, but also a manifestation of *tawhīd* consciousness that encourages individuals to read and understand various realities comprehensively. This conceptual finding leads to the idea of *tawhid*-based education (edutheology) as a framework for revitalizing education by integrating the dimensions of knowledge and spirituality. Through this approach, it is expected that the importance of

divine values in Indonesian education can be reaffirmed, thereby contributing to the realization of a more civilized and progressive educational environment.

However, it should be emphasized that this study is limited to a philosophical and conceptual level through a literature review approach and has not yet been tested through empirical field research. Therefore, further empirical studies are needed to examine the implementation of the concept of *tawhid-based education (edutheology)* in educational practice, both at school and university levels, so that the proposed concept can be more comprehensively validated within the real context of Indonesian education.

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