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Synthesis of Classical Islamic Educational Epistemology: Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali in the Era of Intellectual Disruption

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ABSTRACT *This study aims to analyze and synthesize the epistemology of classical Islamic education through the perspectives of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali in addressing modern intellectual disruption. This research employs a qualitative approach using a library research design grounded in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm. Data were collected from primary sources consisting of the major works of the thinkers and secondary sources from relevant academic literature. The data were analyzed using content analysis, philosophical hermeneutics, and comparative analysis within an integrative synthesis framework. The findings reveal that Al-Farabi emphasizes logical rationality as a foundation for building a civilized society, Ibn Sina highlights the importance of a biopsychological approach in developing individual potential, and Al-Ghazali places ethics and spirituality at the core of education. The synthesis of these perspectives results in a holistic-integrative education model that integrates intellectual, individual, and spiritual dimensions into a unified framework. This study concludes that reconstructing Islamic educational epistemology based on classical thought holds both conceptual and practical relevance in responding to modern intellectual disruption. The main contribution of this research lies in formulating an integrative epistemological model of Islamic education as an alternative paradigm that is more humanistic, adaptive, and oriented toward character formation and ethical civilization.*

Keywords : *Synthesis, Classical, Islamic Educational, Epistemology, Era of Intellectual*

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education is often trapped in a pragmatic orientation that emphasizes the development of *hard skills* and technical competencies to meet labor market demands (Miley & Read, 2019). However, this orientation frequently neglects the essential dimension of education (Karakas, 2026), namely the formation of character and the development of holistic humanity. This phenomenon contributes to intellectual disruption, leading to the dehumanization of education (Kasa & Leiviskä, 2025), in which learners are reduced to mere instruments of economic production rather than being recognized as spiritual subjects with transcendental potential (Sulaiman et al., 2025).

In this context, the identity crisis experienced by the digital generation calls for a fundamental reconstruction of the epistemological foundations of education (Anwar & Umam, 2025). The classical Islamic intellectual tradition has, in fact, long offered an integrative paradigm that combines rational and spiritual dimensions. Thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali represent significant efforts in this integration (Zul et al., 2026). Each presents distinct yet complementary perspectives that contribute to a comprehensive framework of Islamic education.

Al-Farabi introduces a philosophical-logical approach that emphasizes collective happiness and the establishment of an ideal socio-political order as the ultimate goal of education (Muiz et al., 2026; Putri et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Ibn Sina contributes a rational-empirical perspective that focuses on the biopsychological dimensions of human beings and highlights the importance of developing intellectual independence from an early age (van Dalen, 2021). In contrast, Al-Ghazali offers a theological-sufistic approach that places the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and moral formation at the pinnacle of the educational process (Choiriyah et al., 2026).

Analyzing these three figures simultaneously is not merely an attempt at historical romanticism or nostalgia. Rather, it is a strategic effort to redefine the direction of education in a way that humanizes individuals (*humanizing education*) amid the pressures of modern materialism (del Carmen Salazar & Saldaña-Spiegle, 2026). The synthesis of their ideas provides an integrative epistemological framework in which reason, science (Sanuri et al., 2025), and spirituality are harmoniously interconnected to cultivate individuals who are intellectually excellent and morally refined.

Despite the growing body of research on classical Islamic educational thought, most studies remain partial, focusing on a single figure or a specific perspective (Abozaid & Khateeb, 2026). Furthermore, research that connects classical thought with the context of modern intellectual disruption is still limited and has yet to produce a truly integrative epistemological formulation (Adiyono et al., 2024; Zulkifly et al., 2026). This gap indicates that efforts to synthesize cross-disciplinary and cross-figure perspectives remain underdeveloped, particularly in bridging classical intellectual heritage with contemporary educational needs.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze and synthesize the epistemology of classical Islamic education through the perspectives of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali, and to reconstruct it as a conceptual framework relevant to addressing modern intellectual disruption. This study also seeks to identify the unique contributions of each thinker in developing a holistic and integrative educational paradigm.

The novelty of this research lies in its epistemological synthesis, which integrates three major approaches, philosophical-logical, rational-empirical, and theological-sufistic, into a unified and comprehensive framework of Islamic education. Unlike previous studies that tend to be fragmented, this research offers an integrative conceptual model that not only reconstructs classical thought but also critically contextualizes it within the challenges of modern intellectual disruption. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of a more humanistic and contextually relevant paradigm of Islamic education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design, focusing on the philosophical analysis of the epistemological construction of classical Islamic education. Paradigmatically, this research is grounded in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, which views knowledge as a contextual and historically constructed reality. Within this framework, epistemology

is not understood as a static entity, but as a dynamic system of knowledge shaped through the dialectical interaction of reason, experience, and revelation.

The object of this study is the epistemological thought of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali in the context of education. The data sources consist of primary and secondary materials. Primary data include the major works of each thinker related to philosophy, education, and ethics. Secondary data are derived from reputable journal articles, academic books, and recent scholarly publications addressing Islamic educational epistemology and the phenomenon of intellectual disruption.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic documentation study involving three stages: (1) literature search based on relevant keywords; (2) selection of sources based on academic relevance and authority; and (3) classification of data into thematic categories aligned with the research focus. To ensure data quality, this study prioritizes academically credible and conceptually relevant sources.

Data analysis was carried out using a combination of content analysis, philosophical hermeneutics, and comparative analysis. Content analysis was used to identify key concepts within each thinker's framework. Philosophical hermeneutics was employed to interpret the deeper meanings of texts by considering their historical, social, and intellectual contexts. Meanwhile, comparative analysis was used to examine similarities, differences, and epistemological intersections among the three thinkers.

Furthermore, this study applies an integrative synthesis framework, which consists of three main stages: (1) *conceptual exploration*, aimed at mapping the epistemological structures of each thinker; (2) *critical comparison*, to identify dialectical relationships among their ideas; and (3) *synthetic reconstruction*, to formulate an integrative and contextual model of Islamic educational epistemology. This process produces a conceptual framework that integrates philosophical-logical, rational-empirical, and theological-spiritual dimensions into a unified system.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, this study employs source triangulation and theoretical triangulation by comparing multiple relevant theoretical perspectives. In addition, a process of critical reflection is conducted to minimize interpretive bias and maintain analytical consistency.

Through this methodological design, the study is expected to generate an epistemological formulation of Islamic education that is not only conceptually robust but also contextually relevant in addressing the challenges of modern intellectual disruption.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study indicate that the epistemology of classical Islamic education developed by Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali exhibits distinct characteristics which, in substance, complement one another in constructing a holistic educational framework.

First, Al-Farabi's educational thought is grounded in logical rationality directed toward achieving collective happiness (*sa'ādah*). Education is positioned as a strategic instrument for shaping rational individuals who not only possess intellectual capacity but are also capable of contributing to the realization of a just and civilized socio-political order. This orientation emphasizes that the goal of education is not merely individual but also deeply social. In the contemporary context, this approach is relevant to the need for strengthening critical thinking skills and intellectual literacy in responding to the complexity of digital information flows.

Second, Ibn Sina conceptualizes education as a process of actualizing human potential that develops progressively in accordance with biopsychological stages. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing students' talents, interests, and mental readiness as the basis for designing learning processes. Therefore, education should neither be uniform nor coercive, but rather adaptive to individual characteristics. This perspective highlights that the success of education largely depends on the system's ability to accommodate the diversity of learners' potentials proportionally.

In addition, Ibn Sina underscores the importance of balance between physical and spiritual dimensions as a fundamental prerequisite for educational success. Physical health is viewed as the foundation for intellectual and emotional development, and neglecting this aspect may result in imbalanced learner development. Hence, ideal education must incorporate holistic well-being as an integral component of the learning process.

Third, Al-Ghazali places ethics and spirituality at the core of all educational activities. The concept of purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) serves as the primary foundation for character formation. In this view, knowledge is not value-neutral; rather, it must guide individuals toward moral development and closeness to God. The relationship between teacher and student is not merely academic but also moral-spiritual, requiring exemplarity, sincerity, and integrity as essential conditions for successful education.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the synthesis of Al-Farabi's logical rationality, Ibn Sina's biopsychological approach, and Al-Ghazali's ethical-spiritual perspective produces a comprehensive and integrative framework of Islamic educational epistemology. This model is capable of addressing the challenges of modern intellectual disruption while maintaining the ethical and transcendental orientation that forms the foundation of Islamic education.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of the Educational Thought

Dimension	Al-Farabi	Ibn Sina	Al-Ghazali
Main Focus	Logic and politics	Rationality and medicine	Moral and theological dimensions
Source of Knowledge	Reason and observation	Reason and experimentation	Revelation and intuition (<i>kashf</i>)
Ultimate Goal	Worldly and hereafter happiness	Intellectual perfection	Divine pleasure (orientation toward the hereafter)
Main Method	Demonstrative-logical approach	Practice and experimentation	<i>Mujahadah</i> and exemplification

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of the educational thought of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali results in a conceptual model that can be formulated as *holistic-integrative education* (Sholeh et al., 2025). This model is highly relevant in addressing the challenges of modern intellectual disruption, particularly in the context of the abundance of information that is not always accompanied by clarity of truth due to the prevalence of disinformation and data manipulation.

Within this framework, Al-Farabi's logical rationality functions as an epistemological instrument for filtering information (Sajjadi, 2026). These findings suggest that logic is not merely a theoretical tool, but also a critical mechanism for navigating the complexity of the digital ecosystem. Therefore, strengthening logical literacy becomes a fundamental prerequisite for building students' intellectual resilience.

Furthermore, Ibn Sina's biopsychological perspective emphasizes that education should be oriented toward the proportional development of individual potential (ZABIDI, 2025). The findings demonstrate that a differentiated approach based on students' talents, interests, and mental readiness is highly relevant in overcoming the tendency toward rigid standardization in modern education. In addition, the emphasis on the balance between physical and mental health reinforces the importance of a holistic well-being approach as an integral part of the educational process.

On the other hand, the ethical-spiritual dimension developed by Al-Ghazali provides an essential normative foundation for guiding the use of knowledge and technology. The findings indicate that without moral orientation, intellectual and professional advancement risks losing direction and value. Therefore, the concept of *taẓkiyat al-nafs* becomes a key element in ensuring that education (Azhari et al., 2026) not only produces cognitive intelligence but also fosters spiritual maturity and moral integrity.

Conceptually, the synthesis of these three approaches aligns with the Islamic educational perspective that emphasizes the integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions in shaping a complete human being (Anshori & Wasehudin, 2024). The findings further confirm that education focusing solely on one dimension tends to produce imbalance. The dominance of rationality alone may lead to intellectually capable individuals lacking social sensitivity, while professionalism without ethical grounding may result in pragmatic tendencies. Conversely, a purely spiritual approach without sufficient intellectual capacity may hinder civilizational progress.

Moreover, this study demonstrates that the holistic-integrative education model contributes conceptually to bridging the dichotomy between religious and general sciences, which remains a persistent issue in Islamic education. The integration of *fard 'ain* and *fard kifayah* is not merely normative but must be systematically implemented within curriculum structures and learning practices (Muiz et al., 2026).

In conclusion, the findings of this study affirm that the synthesis of classical Islamic educational epistemology holds not only historical value but also practical relevance in formulating an educational paradigm that is adaptive to modern disruption. The holistic-integrative model proposed in this study has the potential to serve as a strategic alternative in developing Islamic education systems that are not only resilient but also capable of contributing to the construction of a more humane and ethical civilization.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications for the development of contemporary Islamic education. Theoretically, this study underscores the importance of reconstructing the epistemology of Islamic education through a synthesis of classical thought, particularly by integrating logical rationality, a biopsychological approach, and ethical-spiritual dimensions into a holistic and integrative educational framework. This model contributes to overcoming the long-standing dichotomy of knowledge and enriches the intellectual foundation of Islamic education. Practically, the study highlights the need for transforming curriculum design and learning practices within Islamic educational institutions by systematically integrating critical thinking skills, individual potential development, and spiritual character formation. It also emphasizes the role of educators as moral exemplars who not only transmit knowledge but also cultivate values and ethics among learners. However, this study is limited to a conceptual library-based approach and has not empirically tested the proposed model. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct field-based studies using qualitative and quantitative approaches to

examine the effectiveness of the holistic-integrative education model in practice. Further studies may also expand the scope by incorporating additional classical and contemporary thinkers, as well as adopting interdisciplinary approaches that engage with technological developments such as artificial intelligence and digital ecosystems. Such efforts are expected to strengthen both the conceptual validity and practical applicability of Islamic educational models in addressing contemporary challenges.

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