

# **Islamic Educational Values in *Qona'ah*: A Literature Review from the Perspectives of Sufism and Character Education**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze and conceptualize the Islamic educational values embedded in the attitude of *qona'ah* (contentment) and to explore its relevance as a foundational principle for character education within contemporary Islamic educational contexts. Although Islamic education emphasizes moral and spiritual formation, many educational practices still prioritize cognitive achievement while neglecting the internalization of spiritual dispositions that shape ethical behavior and psychological resilience. This research therefore seeks to reposition *qona'ah* not merely as a personal virtue but as an operational educational value capable of strengthening holistic character development. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative library research design using a descriptive-analytical approach. Data were collected from classical Islamic sources, Sufi ethical literature, and peer-reviewed scholarly publications on Islamic education and character development. The selected literature was systematically reviewed, categorized, and critically analyzed to identify conceptual patterns, theoretical relationships, and pedagogical implications of *qona'ah* within Islamic educational frameworks. The findings indicate that *qona'ah* plays a significant role in shaping students' moral self-regulation, emotional stability, gratitude, and moderation in material pursuits. These dispositions contribute not only to spiritual maturity but also to psychological well-being and social responsibility. The study demonstrates that integrating *qona'ah* into educational practices through habituation, modeling, and value-based curricula can enhance character formation more effectively than behavior-oriented approaches alone. The novelty of this study lies in its synthesis of classical Islamic spirituality, Sufi ethics, and modern character education theory into a coherent conceptual framework that positions *qona'ah* as a teachable and measurable educational construct. This research contributes theoretically by enriching the discourse on Islamic educational values and practically by offering educators and policymakers a value-based model for developing morally grounded, resilient, and socially responsible learners.

**Keywords:** *Qona'ah*; Islamic educational values; character education; Islamic education; Sufi ethics; value internalization; moral development

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## **Introduction**

Islamic education is normatively designed to cultivate not only intellectual competence but also moral integrity and spiritual maturity. Classical Islamic epistemology positions education as a transformative process that integrates faith, ethics, and action into a coherent personality. However, contemporary educational realities reveal a discrepancy between these ideals and actual outcomes. Despite improvements in access to schooling, curriculum modernization, and institutional management, many learners continue to demonstrate moral disorientation, materialistic tendencies, and psychological instability. This phenomenon suggests that the transmission of knowledge has not been adequately accompanied by the internalization of Islamic values that should guide behavior and decision-making (Syarif, 2020).

From a broader social perspective, students increasingly face pressures related to consumerism, competition, and future uncertainty, which often lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction. Empirical findings indicate that spiritual dispositions such as contentment and gratitude significantly contribute to psychological resilience and emotional balance. Nevertheless, these dispositions are rarely incorporated systematically into formal educational practices (Saifuddin & Nisa, 2025). Consequently, Islamic education encounters a theoretical and practical gap: while it aspires to holistic character formation, it lacks explicit conceptual models that translate spiritual virtues into pedagogical mechanisms capable of addressing contemporary moral and psychological challenges.

Previous studies have explored the concept of *qana'ah* or contentment primarily from psychological and behavioral perspectives. Quantitative research demonstrates that students who exhibit higher levels of contentment and gratitude tend to experience lower levels of future anxiety and stronger emotional stability (Saifuddin & Nisa, 2025). Although these findings confirm the positive influence of spiritual attitudes on well-being, they stop short of explaining how such values can be systematically cultivated within educational environments. Thus, the pedagogical implications of *qona'ah* remain underdeveloped.

Other investigations examine the relationship between *qona'ah* and lifestyle patterns, revealing that contentment correlates negatively with hedonic and consumptive behaviors among students (Muawaliyah, 2023). These studies provide useful behavioral insights but still treat *qona'ah* as an individual psychological trait rather than as an educational value that can be intentionally fostered through curriculum, instruction, and school culture. As a result, the educational dimension of *qona'ah* remains conceptually fragmented.

Meanwhile, broader scholarship in Islamic education has emphasized character formation through religious culture, teacher professionalism, and value-based learning environments. Such research highlights the importance

of integrating ethical norms into school systems and classroom practices, yet it rarely identifies specific spiritual dispositions as foundational constructs within character education frameworks (Fauzi, 2019; Fauzi et al., 2024). Consequently, there is still limited theoretical synthesis connecting core Islamic virtues, especially *qona'ah*, with structured character education models. This absence indicates a clear research gap that calls for a conceptual integration of spiritual dispositions with contemporary educational theory.

This study offers a new perspective by conceptualizing *qona'ah* not merely as a moral virtue or psychological state but as an operational educational value that can inform character education design. Unlike previous studies that focus on outcomes or descriptive explanations, this research develops a systematic conceptual framework that links *qona'ah* with pedagogical processes such as value internalization, habituation, and reflective learning. Through this synthesis, *qona'ah* is positioned as a practical and teachable disposition within Islamic schooling.

In addition, the study bridges classical Islamic spiritual thought, particularly Sufi ethics, with modern character education theory. This integrative approach enriches contemporary discussions of Islamic education by grounding character development in deeply rooted spiritual traditions while aligning them with current educational needs. Such a synthesis contributes theoretical clarity and offers a foundation for future empirical and applied research.

The objective of this study is to analyze and synthesize Islamic educational values embodied in the attitude of *qona'ah* through a literature review and conceptual analysis, and to formulate a theoretical framework that supports its integration into character education practices within Islamic educational settings.

This study argues that *qona'ah* represents a foundational Islamic educational value that fosters moral restraint, psychological resilience, and spiritual balance, and that its deliberate integration into educational systems can strengthen character formation and address contemporary moral challenges among learners.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to bridging the gap between Islamic ethical ideals and practical educational strategies. By providing a value-based conceptual framework centered on *qona'ah*, this study offers educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers a culturally grounded and spiritually authentic approach to character education that supports the holistic development of students in modern Islamic societies.

## **Method**

This study employs a library research method to explore and conceptualize Islamic educational values embedded in the attitude of *qona'ah*. Library research refers to a systematic investigation that relies on written and documented sources as the primary data, including scholarly books, peer-

reviewed journal articles, classical Islamic texts, and relevant educational studies. This approach is particularly appropriate for conceptual and theoretical inquiries in Islamic education, where the objective is to synthesize normative, philosophical, and pedagogical perspectives rather than to collect field data (Zed, 2020). In qualitative educational research, such an approach enables researchers to construct comprehensive interpretations grounded in established theoretical foundations (Moleong, 2019).

The data collection process was conducted through a systematic literature search. Sources were identified using academic databases, university library catalogs, and reputable national and international journals related to Islamic education, character education, and value internalization. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) publications discussing Islamic educational values or moral education, (2) studies examining *qona'ah* or related spiritual dispositions such as gratitude and contentment, and (3) empirical or conceptual works addressing character education in Islamic schooling contexts. Recent peer-reviewed studies were prioritized to ensure contemporary relevance and scholarly credibility (Alfarisy, 2025; Badri, 2025; Hidayatulloh, 2024).

After identifying relevant sources, the researcher conducted intensive reading, note-taking, and categorization of key themes. Data were organized into conceptual clusters, including definitions of *qona'ah*, theoretical foundations of Islamic educational values, models of character education, and strategies for value internalization. This stage aimed to map similarities, differences, and conceptual relationships across the literature. Previous studies emphasize that character formation in Islamic education involves habituation, exemplification, and integration of religious culture into learning environments, which served as important analytical lenses in this study (Irpan, 2023; Jakandar, 2025).

Subsequently, the study applied a descriptive-analytical technique. Descriptive analysis was used to present concepts systematically and to explain the characteristics of Islamic educational values related to *qona'ah*. Analytical procedures were then employed to interpret, compare, and synthesize arguments from multiple sources in order to construct a coherent theoretical framework. This approach allows the researcher to move beyond mere summary toward critical interpretation and conceptual integration. Similar analytical strategies have been recommended for value-based educational research to generate deeper theoretical insights and practical implications (Maarif, 2024; Hishnuddin, 2025).

Through these stages, the library research method ensures that the findings are theoretically grounded, systematically organized, and academically rigorous. The final outcome is a conceptual synthesis that explains how *qona'ah* can function as an Islamic educational value and how

it may be integrated into character education practices within contemporary Islamic educational settings.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Qona'ah as a Foundational Spiritual and Educational Concept**

Conceptually, *qona'ah* refers to an inner state of spiritual contentment and acceptance toward what has been divinely apportioned by God. It embodies a balanced psychological disposition characterized by gratitude, moderation, and self-restraint, rather than passive resignation or fatalistic surrender. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, especially in Sufi ethics, *qona'ah* is understood as an active spiritual discipline through which individuals regulate their desires, align their intentions with divine guidance, and cultivate emotional stability in the face of life's uncertainties (Syukur, 2013). Therefore, *qona'ah* does not negate effort or ambition; instead, it reframes them within ethical and spiritual boundaries so that worldly pursuits remain subordinate to higher moral purposes.

Classical Islamic scholarship provides a precise formulation of this concept. In *Al-Risālah al-Qusyairiyah*, *qona'ah* is defined as *al-iktifā' bi al-maujūd wa zawāl al-ṭama' fīmā laysa bi hāsil*, meaning satisfaction with what already exists and the disappearance of greed for what has not been obtained (Al-Qusyairi, n.d.). This definition highlights two essential dimensions: sufficiency and the elimination of excessive desire. Together, these elements establish *qona'ah* as a mechanism of moral self-regulation that protects individuals from envy, dissatisfaction, and material obsession. In this sense, *qona'ah* functions not merely as a theological virtue but also as an ethical safeguard against the psychological instability often generated by modern consumerist cultures.

The normative foundation of *qona'ah* is also strongly embedded in prophetic traditions and Qur'anic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad emphasized that contentment leads to the highest level of gratitude, implying that happiness is not determined by material abundance but by one's spiritual orientation. Similarly, the Qur'anic promise of *hayātan ṭayyibah* (a good and wholesome life) for believers who perform righteous deeds suggests that spiritual well-being and inner peace are central outcomes of ethical living (Soenarjo et al., 2017). Many exegetical interpretations associate this "good life" with psychological tranquility and satisfaction rooted in *qona'ah*. From an educational perspective, this connection is significant because it indicates that spiritual virtues are not peripheral but essential to the holistic formation of human beings.

Recent conceptual research further supports this interpretation by arguing that *qona'ah* integrates three inseparable components of Islamic education: faith, morality, and lawful conduct. Such integration demonstrates that contentment is not solely an emotional attitude but a comprehensive educational value capable of shaping cognition, behavior, and social

responsibility (Al-Huda et al., 2026). Thus, *qona'ah* can be positioned as a foundational principle for Islamic character education.

### **Psychological and Moral Dimensions of Qona'ah**

From a psychological standpoint, the absence of *qona'ah* often results in chronic dissatisfaction, anxiety, and emotional instability. Individuals who constantly compare themselves to others or pursue unlimited material gain frequently experience stress and frustration. Conversely, those who cultivate contentment tend to display resilience, optimism, and emotional balance. Contemporary studies in Islamic psychology reveal that spiritual dispositions such as gratitude and contentment significantly reduce future anxiety among students in Islamic boarding schools (Saifuddin & Nisa, 2025). These findings confirm that *qona'ah* contributes directly to mental health and well-being.

Furthermore, *qona'ah* plays a crucial role in moral regulation. By moderating desires, individuals become less susceptible to unethical behaviors such as deception, corruption, or exploitation motivated by greed. Fatah (2015) suggests that cultivating *qona'ah* involves shifting one's perspective: materially comparing oneself with those who have less, while morally aspiring toward those who exhibit greater virtue and piety. This dual orientation nurtures humility and moral aspiration simultaneously. Educationally, this principle encourages learners to develop empathy, gratitude, and ethical responsibility rather than competition and envy.

Empirical research on Islamic character education also shows that value internalization related to patience, gratitude, and self-control enhances students' emotional regulation and social harmony (Nasution et al., 2025). These competencies align closely with the characteristics of *qona'ah*, suggesting that contentment can be conceptualized as a moral-psychological competence that strengthens both personal integrity and communal relationships. Therefore, integrating *qona'ah* into educational practices may contribute not only to spiritual growth but also to measurable improvements in students' psychological and social outcomes.

### **Islamic Educational Values as a Holistic Moral System**

Islamic education is historically rooted in a comprehensive value system that integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. Educational institutions such as madrasahs and pesantren have long served as centers for preserving ethical norms and religious identity, especially within Indonesian society (Muhadjir, 2015). These institutions emphasize not only intellectual instruction but also character formation, positioning morality as the ultimate objective of education.

Theoretically, Islamic values function at both normative and operational levels. Normatively, they distinguish between right and wrong, lawful and unlawful, and morally praiseworthy or blameworthy actions. Operationally, they translate into concrete behavioral categories such as obligatory, recommended, permissible, discouraged, and forbidden (Arifin, 2013). This

classification provides learners with a practical ethical framework that guides daily decision-making. Unlike abstract moral systems, Islamic values are directly actionable and context-sensitive, allowing students to navigate complex social realities with clear moral references.

Values are not merely cognitive constructs but lived experiences that must be internalized through reflection and practice. Isna (2011) emphasizes that values become meaningful only when they are personally appropriated. Consequently, education must move beyond theoretical instruction toward experiential learning. Soedijarto (2018) proposes strategies such as social participation, reflective engagement, and habituation to facilitate this internalization process. Recent studies in Islamic character education confirm that school culture, teacher modeling, and daily religious practices significantly influence the development of students' moral character (Hibatullah & Zahra, 2024; Maarif, 2024). Within this framework, *qona'ah* emerges as a core value that can be cultivated through systematic pedagogical design.

### **Integrating Qona'ah into Islamic Educational Practice**

Based on the synthesis of classical texts and contemporary research, the educational integration of *qona'ah* can be operationalized across several character dimensions.

First, simplicity of intention and purpose encourages learners to orient their actions toward divine approval rather than social recognition. Hamka (2016) argues that life's true essence lies in sincere intention rather than outward prestige. This orientation strengthens intrinsic motivation and moral authenticity.

Second, simplicity of thought involves self-control in speech and reasoning. Ethical communication prevents social conflict and fosters respect, thereby supporting harmonious learning environments (Hamka, 2016). Critical and reflective thinking also protects students from impulsive behavior.

Third, moderation in material needs emphasizes lawful and responsible consumption. Qur'anic guidance concerning halal and wholesome sustenance (Soenarjo et al., 2017) reinforces the importance of ethical economic behavior. Teaching students to differentiate needs from desires helps counteract consumerism.

Fourth, emotional stability derived from contentment promotes optimism and resilience. Students who internalize *qona'ah* are better equipped to handle failure and uncertainty, reducing stress and burnout (Saifuddin & Nisa, 2025).

Fifth, ethical management of wealth redefines property as a trust rather than an ultimate goal. Hamka (2016) maintains that wealth should serve social and spiritual purposes, encouraging generosity and social justice.

Sixth, humility in reputation discourages the pursuit of fame and status, reinforcing sincerity and authenticity in social engagement.

Seventh, leadership and authority are framed as responsibilities rather than privileges. Islamic concepts of *khalifah* emphasize accountability and service to others (Fakih & Wijayanti, 2017).

Eighth, work ethic is highlighted as a form of worship. Islam encourages productive effort and discourages dependency, as emphasized by Qardhawi (2018). This principle prepares students to become responsible and self-reliant members of society.

Collectively, these dimensions demonstrate that *qona'ah* is not a single trait but a comprehensive educational paradigm shaping intention, cognition, emotion, behavior, and social responsibility.

The overall analysis indicates that *qona'ah* functions as a central Islamic educational value that integrates spiritual depth with psychological resilience and ethical conduct. It promotes balanced living, self-restraint, gratitude, and social responsibility, all of which are essential for character formation. Rather than being limited to Sufi spirituality, *qona'ah* emerges as a practical pedagogical principle capable of addressing contemporary challenges such as materialism, anxiety, and moral decline.

Therefore, embedding *qona'ah* within Islamic educational frameworks offers a theoretically grounded and empirically supported approach to strengthening character education. Through habituation, modeling, reflection, and value-based curricula, *qona'ah* can serve as a cornerstone for cultivating morally grounded, emotionally stable, and socially responsible learners.

## **Conclusion**

This study finds that *qona'ah*, as an Islamic educational value, exerts a more significant impact on students' moral formation, psychological resilience, and character stability than previously assumed. Rather than functioning merely as a spiritual or ascetic virtue, *qona'ah* operates as a comprehensive educational principle that shapes intentions, regulates desires, fosters emotional balance, and guides ethical behavior in everyday life. These findings challenge the longstanding assumption that Islamic character education primarily depends on external discipline or cognitive religious instruction. Instead, the results demonstrate that internal spiritual dispositions, particularly contentment and gratitude, play a foundational role in cultivating holistic character development. This perspective opens new discussions regarding the integration of spiritual-ethical constructs into formal educational frameworks.

From a scholarly standpoint, this research reinforces previous studies emphasizing the importance of value internalization and religious culture in Islamic education while simultaneously questioning approaches that treat character education as merely behavioral training. By synthesizing classical Islamic ethics, Sufi spirituality, and contemporary character education theory,

this study introduces *qona'ah* as a conceptual and pedagogical framework that enriches academic discourse in Islamic educational studies. The study contributes a new integrative model that positions *qona'ah* not only as a moral virtue but also as an operational educational value that can inform curriculum design, teaching strategies, and student development programs. This conceptualization broadens the theoretical foundations of Islamic character education and offers practical implications for educators and policymakers.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. As a library-based conceptual analysis, it relies primarily on documented sources and specific case-related literature, which limits direct empirical verification and generalizability. The findings are not based on large-scale field data, and variables such as gender differences, age groups, socio-cultural diversity, and contextual variations were not comprehensively examined. Future research should therefore employ empirical methods, including surveys, experiments, or mixed-method approaches, with larger and more diverse samples to validate and expand upon these findings. Further investigations are also recommended to develop practical instructional models and evaluate the effectiveness of *qona'ah*-based character education in real educational settings.

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