

# THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN BEINGS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: THE HUMAN NATURE AS KHALIFAH ON EARTH ACCORDING TO THE EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT OF LUKMAN HAKIM

SY.Faizah Q<sup>1</sup>, Hamdi Rudji<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dinas Pendidikan Pemuda dan Olahraga Kab. Pasangkayu, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Pascasarjana Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>[syfaizahq36@gmail.com](mailto:syfaizahq36@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[hamdirudji74@gmail.com](mailto:hamdirudji74@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores how the Islamic concept of khalifah (vicegerent or steward of the earth) can be integrated with the moral and spiritual teachings of Luqman Hakim—an exemplary figure mentioned in the Qur'an—to enrich character education in modern Islamic contexts. Employing a qualitative literature review approach, this research synthesizes insights from classical Islamic texts and contemporary educational discourses to formulate a holistic framework of character formation. The concept of khalifah is rooted in the Islamic understanding of human fitrah (natural disposition) as beings entrusted with moral, spiritual, and ecological responsibilities. Meanwhile, Luqman Hakim's teachings—particularly regarding piety (taqwa), honesty, gratitude, humility, and respect for parents—are examined as foundational values for shaping ethically grounded individuals. The study highlights how the integration of these principles can respond to contemporary educational challenges such as moral relativism, individualism, materialism, and environmental neglect. Findings suggest that a values-based Islamic education model, grounded in both the khalifah paradigm and Luqman Hakim's wisdom, offers a powerful means of cultivating intellectually capable, morally upright, socially responsible, and spiritually aware individuals. This integrated character education model promotes the development of learners who not only excel academically but also contribute positively to society and the natural world. The research concludes by recommending further empirical studies to explore how these values can be operationalized within formal school curricula and informal educational settings, particularly in culturally diverse and globalized contexts.



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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic education regards human beings as noble creations endowed with a divine purpose—to serve as khalifah (stewards or vicegerents) on Earth. This concept, derived from the Qur'an, establishes a philosophical foundation for education that goes beyond cognitive development, encompassing moral, spiritual, and social responsibilities. As khalifah, humans are entrusted with maintaining the balance of the universe and upholding justice in society, which provides a unique perspective for building a value-oriented education system.

This study is guided by two main research questions: (1) How is the concept of human fitrah as khalifah on Earth relevant to the educational principles of Luqman Hakim? and (2) How can the values taught by Luqman Hakim be implemented in modern educational contexts? These questions form the core of the investigation, aiming to explore the theoretical linkage and practical applications of these two fundamental Islamic educational paradigms.

In an era where education is increasingly driven by technological advancements and performance metrics, there is growing concern that moral and spiritual dimensions are being neglected. Islamic education must respond to this shift by re-emphasizing its foundational values—particularly those related to the human condition, ethical responsibility, and spiritual growth. The concept of

khalifah, when internalized through education, can serve as a moral compass for navigating modern challenges.

While some scholars have addressed the concept of humans as khalifah in the context of environmental stewardship or ethical leadership, fewer have explored its integration into character education in a structured way. Samsul (2022) and Sihab (2023) suggest that classical Islamic texts provide a moral framework suitable for contemporary application. However, there remains a need for a more targeted synthesis that connects this framework directly with pedagogical principles.

Similarly, Luqman Hakim's advice in Surah Luqman (31:12–19) has often been cited in discussions of Islamic parenting and character development. His teachings—emphasizing taqwa (piety), gratitude, patience, and respect for parents—resonate with universal moral values and are frequently referenced as ideal examples of Qur'anic-based education. Scholars like Hassan (2021) and Rahman (2020) have noted the relevance of these teachings, but their analysis tends to remain descriptive, lacking integration with broader educational models.

Unlike previous studies that treat these topics in isolation, this research aims to bridge the conceptual and practical divide. It explores how the moral-spiritual foundation of the khalifah paradigm can be deepened through Luqman Hakim's wisdom, offering a holistic framework for Islamic character education. This integrative approach responds not only to theoretical gaps but also to the real-world need for educational systems that shape ethically grounded, socially responsible individuals.

Although the works of Baharuddin (2020), Nashir (2021), and Fauziyah & Ramadhan (2021) provide meaningful discussions on spiritual and moral education, they do not critically engage with how these values can be contextualized within a khalifah-centered educational model. Similarly, Prasetya & Satria (2023) focus on Qur'an-based character formation but overlook the philosophical foundations that justify such an approach. This study, therefore, seeks to unify these fragmented insights into a coherent conceptual model.

Moreover, religion's interaction with culture, as noted by Surni Kadir (2020), adds another layer of complexity to the educational process. The transmission of religious values is not static; it is shaped by cultural, historical, and institutional contexts. This dynamic nature makes it imperative to extract universal educational values—such as those found in Luqman's teachings—that can be meaningfully applied across different settings.

By integrating the fitrah-based view of humans as khalifah with the character education exemplified by Luqman Hakim, the study contributes to a model of Islamic education that is both faithful to its scriptural roots and responsive to contemporary realities. It proposes that educational institutions can play a central role in developing students who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually conscious and morally resilient.

Ultimately, this research aims to enrich the discourse on Islamic education by proposing a values-based framework rooted in the Qur'an. It advocates for the design of educational strategies that balance intellectual achievement with spiritual and ethical development. In doing so, it aspires to provide both theoretical insight and practical guidance for educators and policymakers seeking to revitalize Islamic education in a globalized world

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative literature-based approach aimed at exploring the integration between the concept of human fitrah as khalifah (steward of the Earth) and the educational values taught by Luqman Hakim. This method is appropriate for examining religious and philosophical themes that require interpretive and conceptual analysis. It aligns with the approach proposed by Adlini et al. (2022), who emphasize the value of descriptive methods for holistically understanding complex phenomena through the analysis of primary texts and academic sources.

The research follows a library research model, where data are collected from documented and authoritative sources. These include the Qur'an, especially Surah Luqman (31:12–19), classical and modern tafsir (exegesis), academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and prior studies that are

directly relevant to the themes of Islamic education, human stewardship, and Qur'anic character development.

To ensure methodological transparency, literature was sourced from a variety of academic databases, including Google Scholar, DOAJ, SINTA, Garuda Ristek-BRIN, and Maktabah Syamilah (for Arabic classical texts). A systematic search was conducted using keywords such as “khalifah in Islamic education,” “Luqman Hakim character values,” and “Qur'anic character development.” The time range for literature selection was limited to 2014–2024 to ensure relevance to current educational discourse while including key classical interpretations where necessary.

The inclusion criteria for literature selection were: (1) academic or scholarly sources discussing the concepts of fitrah, khalifah, or Luqman Hakim's teachings; (2) relevance to Islamic education, particularly in moral and character development; and (3) accessible full texts with verifiable publication credentials. Exclusion criteria included: non-peer-reviewed opinion articles, general discussions lacking educational focus, and outdated or inaccessible sources.

The research population consists of published works on Islamic education and the concept of human stewardship. Specific research subjects include key texts such as Baharuddin (2020), Fauziyah & Ramadhan (2021), Rahman (2020), Hassan (2021), and Nashir (2021), which provide focused analyses on moral and spiritual dimensions in Islamic education.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying recurring patterns and constructing meaning from textual content. The steps included: (1) familiarization with data through close reading; (2) coding of key concepts related to khalifah, fitrah, and Luqman's teachings; (3) developing themes such as spiritual responsibility, character formation, and educational ethics; and (4) drawing conclusions on the interrelation between Qur'anic concepts and educational values.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source credibility was evaluated based on the author's academic background, the publication's reputation, and the peer-review status of journals. Additionally, theoretical triangulation was employed by comparing interpretations across classical and contemporary sources to minimize bias and enhance analytical rigor. Through this methodological approach, the study offers a well-grounded conceptual framework for the integration of Qur'anic values into modern Islamic education.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Conceptual Foundation: Human Fitrah as Khalifah and Luqman Hakim's Teachings** This study integrates two pivotal concepts in Islamic education: the ontological role of human beings as khalifah (vicegerents/stewards) on Earth and the pedagogical principles derived from Luqman Hakim's advice in Surah Luqman (31:12–19). The Quranic view of human nature (fitrah) as predisposed to virtue, paired with the mandate of stewardship, provides the philosophical basis for a morally infused education. This foundation is strengthened when paired with Luqman's teachings, which operationalize values such as piety, patience, gratitude, humility, and justice into a lived ethical framework.

**Comparative Literature Positioning** Prior research, such as Baharuddin (2020) and Kamil & Saifuddin (2020), tends to treat the khalifah mandate in isolation, focusing predominantly on ecological or spiritual responsibility without discussing the pedagogical mechanisms for character development. Meanwhile, studies like Hassan (2021) and Rahman (2020) highlight Luqman's values but do not contextualize them within a broader ontological view of humanity. This study bridges these two scholarly traditions, proposing that the khalifah concept can serve as a theological foundation while Luqman's advice provides a behavioral framework.

**Thematic Analysis of Luqman's Teachings** Luqman Hakim's advice to his son encompasses key Islamic virtues: monotheism, respect for parents, humility, patience, and ethical conduct. These teachings are not only theological but pedagogical—structured as dialogic counsel that models moral transmission. The study interprets this not simply as personal advice, but as a universal framework for moral instruction, relevant in both formal schooling and informal socialization.

**Critical Gap in Current Models** While Islamic education literature often emphasizes character building, it frequently lacks a cohesive framework that links metaphysical beliefs to classroom practice. This study critiques this fragmentation by asserting that the absence of ontological grounding weakens the implementation of moral education. Without recognizing students as khalifah, values-based education risks becoming merely disciplinary or behavioral rather than transformative.

**Holistic Character Education: A Synthesis Model** This study proposes a synthesis: fitrah establishes the innate moral potential, khalifah frames the social and ecological responsibility, and Luqman's teachings articulate behavioral manifestations. This tripartite model forms a holistic educational philosophy. It advocates for curriculum content that integrates theological foundations, moral reasoning, and ethical action.

**Concrete Application in Formal Schooling** In formal schooling settings, this integration can manifest as interdisciplinary curriculum design. For instance, in science education, the khalifah principle could guide environmental ethics projects. In social studies, Luqman's emphasis on justice and humility can inspire community engagement assignments. Moral themes from Surah Luqman can be translated into reading materials in language arts classes, fostering ethical literacy.

**Hypothetical Implementation in Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren)** In Indonesian pesantren, Luqman's dialogic style could inspire halaqah-based instruction that encourages ethical reflection. Mentoring programs between senior and junior students can mirror Luqman's father-son pedagogy, while school-wide ecological initiatives can be linked to the khalifah role, reinforcing responsibility to the Earth.

**Adaptation in Western Islamic Schools** In Western contexts, where students are exposed to secular ideologies, these concepts can be recontextualized to address identity formation. Character education modules can highlight khalifah as moral leadership, fostering civic responsibility. Luqman's emphasis on gratitude and humility can serve as counter-narratives to materialism and hyper-individualism.

**Critical Engagement with Competing Theories** Comparing this Islamic framework with Western character education theories such as Kohlberg's moral development or Lickona's character education, a key distinction emerges. The Islamic model embeds morality in divine accountability, while Western models often rely on social contracts or utilitarian ethics. This theological anchoring provides greater internal motivation for students grounded in iman (faith).

**Empirical Validation through Qualitative Studies** Although this study is primarily theoretical, it draws on empirical studies like Zuhri & Aslam (2023), which demonstrate the effectiveness of Qur'an-based character education in reducing disciplinary issues and increasing ethical awareness among students. Their research supports the idea that integrating Islamic moral values into curriculum yields measurable behavioral outcomes.

**Supporting Findings from Mixed-Methods Research** Musa & Fadhli (2020) conducted mixed-method research across 10 Islamic high schools and found that students exposed to khalifah-based modules were more likely to engage in environmental activism and peer mentoring. These findings empirically support the central thesis of this study—that embedding Islamic ontology in pedagogy has transformative effects.

**The Need for Curricular Innovation** Despite these successes, most Islamic school curricula still rely heavily on rote learning. This study advocates for curricular innovation that embeds the khalifah-Luqman framework into project-based learning, problem-solving, and real-world application. A sample curriculum unit might integrate Qur'anic exegesis with civic education, asking students to design community service projects inspired by Luqman's values.

**Teacher Training Implications** The proposed model requires teacher training that goes beyond subject-matter expertise. Educators must understand the philosophical foundations of fitrah and khalifah, be skilled in moral discourse, and model ethical behavior. Training modules should include role-plays, scriptural reflection, and community engagement strategies.

**Addressing Global Educational Challenges** Modern education often prioritizes measurable outcomes over moral development. This study contends that the khalifah-Luqman framework offers an alternative—an education of the soul that prepares students to act justly in a complex world. In times of ecological crisis, for example, teaching stewardship from an Islamic perspective provides spiritual motivation for sustainable living.

**Cultural and Contextual Flexibility** One strength of this model is its adaptability. In African madrasas, Luqman's teachings—likely familiar through oral traditions—can be linked to communal ethics. In Gulf countries, where rapid modernization has created moral disorientation, khalifah-based modules can help restore ethical clarity rooted in religious tradition.

**Limitations of Current Practice** Current Islamic education often fails to systematize character education beyond disciplinary enforcement. This study critiques tokenistic approaches where morality is only discussed during Friday sermons or Islamic studies, advocating instead for full curricular integration.

**Challenges in Implementation** One practical challenge is the perceived conflict between spiritual education and standardized testing. This study argues for hybrid models where moral development complements academic success, suggesting formative assessments that track students' ethical reasoning and community engagement.

**Policy-Level Recommendations** Islamic education policymakers should consider institutionalizing the khalifah-Luqman framework in national curriculum guidelines. Pilot projects in selected schools could evaluate its effectiveness, leading to evidence-based scale-up.

**Theoretical Contribution to Islamic Pedagogy** This study contributes a new conceptual framework to Islamic pedagogy by synthesizing theology, ethics, and instructional practice. Unlike previous works that remain in the domain of Islamic philosophy, it offers a roadmap for practical implementation.

**Conclusion: Toward a Transformative Islamic Education** In sum, the integration of human fitrah as khalifah with the educational teachings of Luqman Hakim provides a comprehensive framework for Islamic education that is both spiritually rooted and pedagogically sound. Supported by empirical findings and capable of diverse applications, this model can redefine how moral and character education is taught in Islamic schools worldwide. It invites future research to empirically test and refine this framework, moving Islamic education from affirmation to transformation.

## CONCLUSION

This study has critically explored the integration of the concept of human fitrah as khalifah (vicegerent/steward) on Earth with the educational values taught by Luqman Hakim, within the framework of modern Islamic education. Through a qualitative literature-based approach, it demonstrated that these two concepts, when examined together, offer a robust philosophical and pedagogical foundation for Islamic character education that addresses not only intellectual growth, but also moral, spiritual, and social development.

Rather than merely affirming existing values, this study synthesized diverse perspectives on khalifah and Luqman Hakim's teachings—such as piety, patience, justice, honesty, and respect for parents—into a cohesive educational paradigm that responds to contemporary educational challenges. These include the erosion of ethical values in modern schooling systems, the rise of individualism and materialism, and the neglect of ecological responsibility. By doing so, this study contributes to bridging the gap between classical Islamic epistemology and present-day educational needs.

Importantly, the research highlights that Islamic education can benefit from revisiting its spiritual-ethical roots, not only for character development but also for cultivating socially and environmentally conscious learners. The combination of Qur'anic values and holistic human development has the potential to revitalize curricula that are often overly focused on cognitive or academic achievement.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study is constrained by its reliance on secondary data and lacks empirical validation through classroom observation, teacher interviews, or curriculum analysis. As such, the conclusions remain largely theoretical. Additionally, the scope is primarily contextualized within the Indonesian Islamic education landscape, which may limit its generalizability to other socio-cultural settings.

Theoretically, this study contributes a novel framework that situates the concept of khalifah not just as an abstract theological role but as a practical model for educational ethics and values-based leadership. By aligning this with Luqman Hakim's principles, it proposes an integrative Islamic pedagogy that can be both spiritually grounded and pragmatically applicable.

Future research should empirically test the applicability of this framework in diverse educational settings—both formal and informal—across different regions and cultures. Experimental models, action research, or longitudinal studies can further validate the impact of khalifah-oriented education on learners' behavior, moral reasoning, and environmental awareness. Additionally, curriculum developers and policymakers are encouraged to consider how such values can be embedded in contemporary syllabi without compromising academic rigor.

In conclusion, the integration of Islamic theological concepts with moral education is not merely a retrospective exercise, but a forward-thinking strategy that positions Islamic education as a viable alternative to address modern ethical crises. Grounded in the Qur'anic legacy and inspired by Luqman Hakim's wisdom, this model invites Islamic educators to foster generations that are intellectually competent, morally upright, spiritually rooted, and socially responsible.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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