

Integration of Imam Az-Zarnuji's Educational Principles in Strengthening the Growth Mindset of Santri at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of Imam Az-Zarnuji's educational principles from *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* in shaping the growth mindset of female students at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus. Specifically, it investigates how key principles such as sincere intention (*niyyah*), respect for teachers, patience, perseverance, and discipline contribute to fostering a growth mindset characterized by resilience, openness to failure, and continuous self-improvement. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis involving two teachers and fifteen students. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns related to the application of Az-Zarnuji's principles in students' learning behavior and mindset development. The findings reveal that these classical Islamic educational values significantly reinforce modern psychological traits associated with the growth mindset, such as perseverance in learning, intrinsic motivation, and receptivity to feedback. The study offers concrete implications for Islamic education practice by demonstrating how integrating traditional pedagogical ethics with contemporary mindset theory can enhance students' character formation and academic resilience. This integrative model presents a contextualized, holistic approach to developing growth-oriented learners in madrasah settings.

Keywords: Imam Az-Zarnuji; Growth Mindset; Islamic Pedagogy; Madrasah Diniyah; Character Education.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' character, morality, and mindset. Within the framework of *madrasah diniyah*, which operates under the broader umbrella of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), this function becomes even more critical. As institutions rooted in Islamic values, *madrasah diniyah* not only serve to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate students' ethical behavior, spiritual awareness, and intellectual resilience (Ahmad & Nursikin, 2023; Apriyani et al., 2025; Taufikin et al., 2025). Central to this goal is the formation of a proper mindset, which determines how students perceive, respond to, and persist through learning challenges (Emmerling, 2024).

One mindset that has garnered significant scholarly attention is the growth mindset, a concept popularized by Carol (2016). This mindset emphasizes that intelligence and abilities are

not fixed traits but can be developed through sustained effort, reflection, and practice. In the context of Islamic education, especially in *madrasah diniyah*, nurturing a growth mindset is crucial to developing learners who are optimistic, open to failure, and resilient in the face of adversity (Izzan, 2023; Mujahid & Muharromah, 2025). Such learners are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally and spiritually grounded.

Addressing the challenge of forming this type of learning mentality requires drawing on both modern psychological insights and classical Islamic thought. One highly relevant classical text is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, written by Imam Az-Zarnuji in the 6th century Hijri. This treatise outlines key principles of Islamic pedagogy, including sincere intention (*niyyah*), respect for teachers, patience, perseverance, and discipline values that closely mirror the components of the growth mindset (Amin, 2024; Nur & Hafidzi, 2024; Yugo, 2024). These principles offer a moral and spiritual foundation that supports cognitive and emotional development, aligning with the aims of growth-oriented education.

Although past studies have separately addressed the character-building value of Az-Zarnuji's principles (Hidayatulloh et al., 2024) and the importance of the growth mindset in modern education (Rizal, 2023; Suharsono & Fatimah, 2024), few have examined how these frameworks can be integrated within contemporary Islamic learning settings. The convergence of these paradigms classical Islamic pedagogy and modern educational psychology represents an important opportunity for innovation in character education. This study seeks to bridge that gap by analyzing how the integration of Az-Zarnuji's values can reinforce a growth mindset in students at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus. The theoretical foundation for this integration is strong. Az-Zarnuji's emphasis on continuous struggle in learning mirrors Dweck's assertion that growth requires effort, feedback, and a positive view of failure (Li & Bates, 2019; Reimberganovich, 2024). Both perspectives promote resilience and long-term development. Within the *madrasah diniyah* context, these converging ideas can serve as a powerful tool to enhance students' spiritual, emotional, and academic growth.

This study thus aims to investigate how the application of Az-Zarnuji's educational principles influences the development of the growth mindset among *santri* at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus. The research specifically asks: (1) How do students apply Az-Zarnuji's principles in overcoming learning difficulties? and (2) In what ways do these applications strengthen their growth mindset? By answering these questions, the study contributes to the formulation of a holistic and transformative Islamic education model. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to integrate two distinct yet complementary paradigms: the classical values of Islamic education and the psychological principles of the growth mindset. The resulting synthesis not only enriches theoretical discourse but also offers practical insights for educators seeking to build resilient, reflective, and value-driven learners in the 21st century Islamic educational context.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore how Imam Az-Zarnuji's educational principles contribute to strengthening the growth mindset of students at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus. The qualitative-descriptive design was chosen because it allows for a contextual and holistic understanding of participants' lived experiences, particularly within a moral-religious educational setting, without manipulation of variables (Badri, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is suitable for investigating complex social phenomena, such as the internalization of classical Islamic pedagogical values and their influence on students' mindset development.

The study involved seventeen informants: two teachers and fifteen female students identified as N1 to N15. All informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance and potential to provide rich, in-depth information aligned with the research objectives. Teachers were chosen for their experience in teaching the text *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and observing students' behavior over time. Students were selected to reflect diversity in educational background, motivation, and participation level in madrasah activities, ensuring representativeness and depth in the collected data.

Data collection was conducted in three stages: in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted individually with both teachers and students using a flexible question guide to explore their understanding and application of Az-Zarnuji's principles. Observations focused on real-time classroom dynamics and student behavior related to learning discipline, persistence, and response to feedback. Document analysis was used to examine supporting materials such as student journals, teacher lesson plans, and school records, providing additional context and verification for observed behaviors (Bowker et al., 2023; Smith & Smith, 2024). To ensure data credibility, the study employed source triangulation by comparing information from different types of informants (teachers and students) and method triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents (Mohammed, 2022). In addition, member checking was conducted by returning interview transcripts to informants for validation and correction, thereby increasing data trustworthiness and authenticity.

The data analysis followed an inductive process consistent with Miles and Huberman's interactive model (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The steps included data reduction to focus on information relevant to the research questions, data display to organize findings thematically, and conclusion drawing based on recurring patterns related to the implementation of Az-Zarnuji's principles and the development of students' growth mindset. This analytic process ensured that the findings were grounded in the data and consistent with the descriptive qualitative paradigm. The following is the Qualitative Research Methodology, as shown in Figure 1.

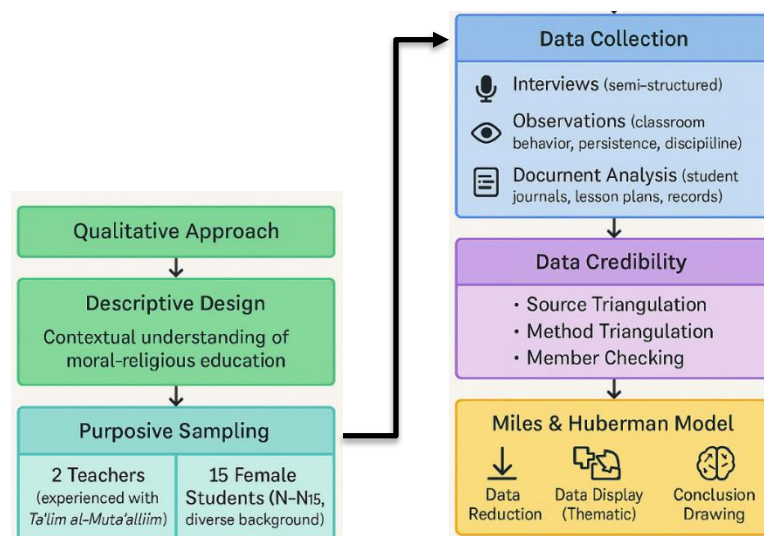


Figure 1. Flow of Qualitative Research Methodology in the Context of Moral-Religious Education

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Application of Imam Az-Zarnuji's Educational Principles in Overcoming Learning Challenges

The analysis of interview, observation, and documentation data revealed that students at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus applied several educational principles from *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* specifically sincere intention (*niyyah*), respect for teachers, patience, perseverance, and discipline to address learning difficulties. These principles were frequently mentioned and consistently observed across multiple student experiences, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Application of Az-Zarnuji's principles

Theme	Frequency	Interview Excerpt	Interpretation
Sincere Intention	15	"Sincere intention is very important because when our intention is pure, everything we do feels easier." (N1)	Students perceive <i>niyyah</i> as a motivator for resilience in learning.
Respect for Teachers	13	"Respect is crucial because teachers are like guides..." (N2)	Respect fosters a productive and meaningful learning relationship.
Patience & Perseverance	14	"Sometimes the lessons are really hard... but I try to be patient..." (N3)	Persistence is key in coping with academic difficulties.
Discipline	12	"The biggest challenge is during exams. However, I always try to manage my time..." (N4)	Time management is recognized as an essential tool for academic consistency and success.

These findings illustrate the strong presence of classical Islamic values in student behavior and learning strategies. The consistent application of these principles suggests a deeply internalized ethical framework that supports academic resilience. The findings indicate that the educational principles of Imam Az-Zarnuji are not merely theoretical ideals but are actively applied by students in their academic lives. The principle of sincere intention plays a foundational role in shaping motivation. Students who study to seek Allah's pleasure develop stronger resilience, as supported by [Deci & Ryan \(2015\)](#) Self-Determination Theory. Their learning motivation, rooted in intrinsic values, helps reduce academic stress and enhances perseverance ([Dubayová & Haficová, 2023](#)).

Respect for teachers, as emphasized in classical Islamic pedagogy, was shown to create a positive teacher-student dynamic that supports effective knowledge transmission. This corresponds with modern pedagogical views emphasizing the relational quality of learning ([Hidayatulloh et al., 2024](#); [Taufikin, 2025](#)). Respectful interaction was not limited to etiquette but functioned as a meaningful factor in creating a culture of mutual engagement and discipline. The values of patience and perseverance are also aligned with growth mindset theory [Dweck \(2016\)](#) where academic success is linked to how students respond to setbacks. Rather than viewing failure as a personal deficit, students practiced resilience, sought help, and used obstacles as triggers for reflection and renewed effort. This synergy between Az-Zarnuji's teachings and growth mindset theory reinforces the integrative strength of combining classical ethics with contemporary psychological frameworks.

Discipline, a key recommendation in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, was reflected in students' ability to manage their time and persist through long-term learning processes. Discipline, as observed, was

not merely routine-based but closely tied to students' ethical awareness and goal orientation, further strengthening their learning identity. In synthesis, these results affirm that the implementation of Az-Zarnuji's educational principles promotes a resilient and morally grounded learning mentality. Each principle *niyyah*, *adab*, *sabr*, *ijtihad*, and *inqibad* acts as both a spiritual guide and a psychological tool that enables students to view learning challenges as part of their journey toward knowledge and personal development. These findings support the study's core objective: demonstrating how the integration of classical Islamic educational principles contributes to developing a growth-oriented mindset among *santri*.

3.2 The Influence of Imam Az-Zarnuji's Principles in Strengthening Growth Mindset

As The data reveal that the implementation of Az-Zarnuji's principles has a significant impact on the development of a growth mindset among students at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus. Four key themes emerged from the analysis: acceptance of challenges, perseverance and effort, openness to criticism, and intrinsic motivation. These are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Impact of Az-Zarnuji's Principles on Students' Growth Mindset

Theme	Frequency	Interview Excerpt	Interpretation
Acceptance of Challenges	13	"The lessons aren't always easy, but by continuing to try and be patient, we can understand. Failure is not the end." (N5)	Challenges are seen as part of the learning process, not as failure.
Perseverance and Effort	14	"If something is difficult, I don't give up easily. I keep trying until I understand." (N6)	Sustained effort is essential to overcoming learning difficulties.
Openness to Criticism	11	"The teacher's advice really helps. I accept criticism openly because it can make me better." (N7)	Feedback is internalized as a means for improvement, not rejection.
Intrinsic Motivation	15	"I study to draw closer to Allah and so that the knowledge I gain can be useful." (N8)	Spiritual and ethical goals drive the desire to keep learning despite obstacles.

These findings show that Az-Zarnuji's values contribute significantly to shaping how students interpret their struggles and success in learning. The consistency of these themes across student narratives underscores the internalization of a mindset focused on growth. The findings confirm that Imam Az-Zarnuji's educational principles provide an ethical framework that actively supports the development of a growth mindset. In line with [Dweck \(2016\)](#), the students' belief in their ability to improve through effort reflects a core tenet of this mindset theory. Rather than perceiving failure as defeat, they view it as a natural part of learning an insight aligned with the concept of *failure-as-feedback* in psychological research on resilience ([Putri & Priyatama, 2024](#); [Rudolph et al., 2025](#)).

A critical contribution of this study lies in how perseverance and effort central to both Islamic and psychological traditions are lived values for the students. Their commitment to sustained effort even in the face of difficulty echoes the theory of grit by [Flutter & Rudduck, 2004](#)), which emphasizes long-term passion and persistence as stronger predictors of success than talent alone

(Tang et al., 2019). Through consistent reference to Az-Zarnuji's guidance, students translate moral perseverance into academic determination.

The theme of openness to criticism further distinguishes the students' mindset development. This dimension is often underemphasized in traditional Islamic pedagogy, yet students in this study embraced feedback as constructive. This convergence between classical ethics and modern feedback theory supports Hidayatulloh et al. (2024), who stress the role of receptivity in forming character. Moreover, it contributes to classroom cultures that are dialogic rather than directive, a valuable insight for future practice in Islamic learning institutions (Taufikin, 2021). Oszwa (2023) Equally important is the role of intrinsic motivation, which emerges as a powerful driver of resilience. The students' learning goals are not limited to performance or achievement but are deeply connected to the intention of worship and ethical application of knowledge. This religiously grounded motivation aligns with Self-Determination Theory Deci & Ryan (2015), in which meaningful goals enhance perseverance and emotional regulation.

In synthesis, the findings demonstrate that Imam Az-Zarnuji's principles provide a rich conceptual and ethical scaffold for nurturing a growth mindset in Islamic educational settings. Students who internalize these values tend to approach learning with optimism, self-regulation, and determination. These results not only validate the relevance of Az-Zarnuji's pedagogy in the 21st century but also strengthen the theoretical proposition that Islamic moral teachings can complement and enrich modern psychological constructs. This integrated perspective is essential for developing transformative educational models in *madrasah diniyah* and beyond.

3.3 Integration of Az-Zarnuji's Principles in Strengthening Growth Mindset

The integration of Imam Az-Zarnuji's educational principles with the growth mindset framework was found to significantly influence students' character formation and learning mentality. Interview data indicate that students who consistently applied Az-Zarnuji's values demonstrated three primary traits: the ability to balance knowledge and practice, independence in learning, and disciplined consistency. These traits are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Integration of Az-Zarnuji's Principles in Supporting Growth Mindset

Theme	Frequency	Interview Excerpt	Interpretation
Balance Between Knowledge and Practice	10	"Knowledge is not just to be understood, but to be practiced..." (N9)	Reinforces practical application of knowledge as key to meaningful learning.
Independence in Learning	12	"I try to find out on my own... I learn more from failures." (N10)	Emphasizes student autonomy and growth through reflection and persistence.
Discipline and Consistency	14	"I always manage my study time..." (N11)	Highlights the centrality of structured routines in sustaining progress and overcoming challenges.

The data confirm that Az-Zarnuji's ethical teachings, when applied consistently, cultivate both spiritual depth and psychological resilience hallmarks of the growth mindset. The integration of Az-Zarnuji's classical principles with growth mindset theory presents a compelling model of character and mindset formation that is rooted in Islamic tradition yet aligned with modern psychological thought. One of the most prominent contributions is the re emphasis on knowledge as action. Students understood that memorization or conceptual mastery alone was insufficient;

instead, internalizing and applying knowledge through behavior was the path to personal growth. This finding not only reflects Az-Zarnuji's insistence on actionable learning (Fatoni, 2025), but also mirrors Dweck's (2016) assertion that real growth comes through effortful practice.

The principle of independent learning further reinforces the role of personal responsibility in educational success. Az-Zarnuji advocates for learners to strive independently without excessive dependence on teachers (Aziz, 2025). The students demonstrated the ability to seek solutions, make decisions, and reflect on their mistakes. These behaviors support the psychological notion that autonomy and agency are critical components of learning motivation and long-term resilience. This intersection of traditional Islamic emphasis on *ijtihad* (independent effort) and psychological theories of self-regulated learning is especially relevant for Islamic education today. Another key area of convergence is the value of discipline and consistency. Students who maintained structured study habits and demonstrated perseverance exemplify the combination of Islamic moral obligation (*mujahadah*) and modern theories of grit (Tang et al., 2019). The emphasis on consistency is not merely about routine but reflects a sustained moral effort to fulfill one's responsibilities an ethic that reinforces both spiritual integrity and academic success.

In synthesis, the integration of Az-Zarnuji's pedagogical framework and the growth mindset results in a dual-axis development of students: the moral-spiritual axis rooted in intention, humility, and discipline, and the psychological-growth axis anchored in perseverance, self-reflection, and openness to failure. This intersection presents not only theoretical advancement linking classical Islamic texts to contemporary psychology but also practical implications for educators. Teachers in *madrasah diniyah* settings can design learning experiences that deliberately cultivate both values and mindset, fostering students who are spiritually rooted and mentally adaptable.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study expands the discourse on Islamic education by positioning *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* as a valid lens for 21st-century learner development. Practically, it offers a replicable model for designing curriculum and pedagogy in Islamic schools that is both authentic to tradition and responsive to contemporary cognitive needs. Future studies may test this model in other Islamic institutions to measure long-term impact on learner independence, academic resilience, and character maturity. To conclude, this study confirms that the synergy between Az-Zarnuji's principles and the growth mindset framework enables students to develop robust learning mentalities marked by autonomy, ethical motivation, and long-term perseverance. It affirms that classical Islamic education, when interpreted in dialog with modern psychological frameworks, holds transformative potential for cultivating well-rounded learners in the digital and moral complexities of today's educational world.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how the integration of Imam Az-Zarnuji's educational principles contributes to strengthening the growth mindset of students at Madrasah Diniyah Putri TBS Kudus. The research found that values rooted in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* such as sincere intention, respect for teachers, patience, perseverance, discipline, and the balance between knowledge and practice are not only understood conceptually but also consistently applied by students in addressing academic challenges. These values were shown to shape students' learning behaviors, including their willingness to embrace difficulties, persist in the face of failure, accept constructive feedback, and remain intrinsically motivated.

The findings demonstrate a clear and direct alignment with the research objectives: students who internalize Az-Zarnuji's principles exhibit growth-oriented traits as described in Dweck's

theory of growth mindset. This includes their capacity to reinterpret setbacks as opportunities for learning, rely on self-directed effort, and develop resilience rooted in moral purpose. Moreover, the study affirms that classical Islamic educational values, when contextualized within modern learning environments, provide a strong foundation for both character formation and psychological development.

Through a qualitative-descriptive approach, this research has synthesized traditional Islamic ethics with contemporary educational psychology, showing that the two are not only compatible but also mutually reinforcing. The application of Az-Zarnuji's principles encourages a holistic educational experience intellectual, spiritual, and emotional that cultivates students who are morally grounded and mentally prepared to navigate complex learning demands. In essence, the study concludes that the integration of classical Islamic pedagogy with the growth mindset framework offers a transformative model of Islamic education that is contextually relevant, theoretically grounded, and practically effective for character and mindset development in today's learners.

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