

Adab as the Epistemological Foundation of Islamic Education: A Study of Syed Naquib al-Attas

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Abstract

Objective: To address the moral, intellectual, and spiritual dilemmas faced by modern Muslim cultures, this study examines adab as the cornerstone of Islamic education, as outlined by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. **Theoretical framework:** Al-Attas's Islamic educational philosophy, namely his ideas of ta'dīb, the Islamization of knowledge, and the Islamic worldview (ru'yat al-Islām li al-wujūd), which combine revelation, reason, and moral order, serve as the foundation for the study. **Literature review:** In addition to comparative studies on contemporary educational paradigms, the research draws from Al-Attas's foundational writings, such as *Islam and Secularism*, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, and related scholarly assessments on Islamic education, ethics, and epistemology. **Methods:** Al-Attas' source texts and pertinent secondary literature are methodically examined using a qualitative and philosophical content-analysis technique in order to discover important themes pertaining to adab, knowledge, justice, and educational objectives. **Results:** The results show that Al-Attas views adab as the fundamental goal of education, wherein a correct understanding of the hierarchy of being and knowledge leads to justice for both individuals and society. Therefore, education is more than just imparting knowledge; it's also about developing morally sound, intellectually disciplined, and spiritually aware people. **Implications:** This study provides a comprehensive alternative to secular educational

approaches that place more emphasis on technical proficiency than ethical and spiritual formation by restoring adab as the primary goal of education. **Novelty:** This study emphasizes adab as a comprehensive and unifying educational principle in Al-Attas's philosophy, proving its applicability for reorienting modern Islamic education toward the development of responsible and balanced individuals.

Keywords: adab, islamic education, syed naquib al-attas, islamization of knowledge, islamic worldview.

INTRODUCTION

Islam has traditionally viewed education as a sacred and transformational process that fosters a person's intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social development [1]. The Islamic tradition places education within a philosophical and ethical framework centered on tawhīd (the oneness of God), in contrast to contemporary conceptions of education that frequently emphasize utilitarian results, economic productivity, or technological proficiency. It is believed that knowledge (‘ilm) is a gift from God and a way for people to carry out their dual roles on earth as vicegerents (khulafāʿ) and slaves (‘ibād) [2]. As a result, the ultimate goal of education in Islam is not just the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of a good and moral character that incorporates spiritual awareness, moral integrity, and wisdom (ḥikmah) [3].

Muslim societies today are facing a severe educational and civilizational crisis despite this great intellectual legacy. Secular Western paradigms that divide information from values and ethics had a significant influence on educational systems in many Muslim-majority environments [4]. Moral relativism, information fragmentation, and an increasing gap between intellectual success and moral behavior are the outcomes of this division. Graduates may be very skilled technically, but they lack a distinct sense of purpose, moral discipline, and spiritual depth. Muslim academics and educators have been forced by this situation to reevaluate the intellectual underpinnings of education and look for models that are both genuinely Islamic and sensitive to modern issues [5].

One of the most well-known Muslim thinkers of the modern era, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, has tackled this issue with nuance and creativity. His central claim is that the loss of adab, rather than ignorance (jahl), is the fundamental issue facing the Muslim ummah. According to Al-Attas, adab is the understanding of where things belong in the order of creation, which leads to justice (‘adl) in both the individual and society. In this way, adab is based on an authentic Islamic worldview and includes correct knowledge, suitable conduct, and appropriate ethical behavior. Without adab, power is misused, knowledge is warped, and education devolves into a value-neutral endeavor [6].

Al-Attas's larger objective of the Islamization of knowledge is intimately related to his criticism of contemporary education. He contends that a worldview based on skepticism, materialism, and secular humanism, all of which are essentially at war with Islamic metaphysics and ethics, is what shapes contemporary secular knowledge. As a result, Muslim communities' blind acceptance of contemporary educational systems has resulted in knowledge confusion (khalt) and the deterioration of moral and spiritual values [7]. Al-Attas suggests ta’dīb, or the process of establishing adab, as the genuine and all-encompassing idea of Islamic education to overcome this issue. Ta’dīb incorporates intellectual training, moral discipline, and spiritual refinement into a cohesive educational vision, in contrast to ta’līm (instruction) or tarbiyah (nurturing) when considered separately [8].

According to Al-Attas, adab is the cornerstone of education rather than a secondary moral idea. Without diminishing the significance of logical and empirical sciences, it establishes the hierarchy of knowledge, guaranteeing that revealed knowledge has its proper position above them [9]. Additionally, it directs the teacher-student interaction by emphasizing the sincerity of aim, humility in the pursuit of knowledge, and respect for authority (ikhlaṣ). To produce

people who can behave justly, think rightly, and live in accordance with divine guidance, education becomes a process of self-discipline and moral formation [10].

This study uses a methodical examination of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's ideas to investigate adab as the cornerstone of Islamic education. It seeks to investigate the philosophical, ethical, and epistemological aspects of adab as well as its consequences for curriculum development, pedagogical practice, and educational goals [11]. This study adds to the current conversation about Islamic educational reform by discussing Al-Attas's key works and pertinent modern research. Ultimately, the study argues that reinstating adab as the primary goal of education offers a comprehensive and enduring solution to the moral and intellectual challenges that Muslim societies currently face, enabling the development of well-rounded individuals who integrate knowledge, faith, and responsibility [12].

In Al-Attas's view, the concept of adab encompasses not only individual ethics but also the appropriate arrangement of disciplines, organizations, and knowledge. He contends that epistemological confusion, in which knowledge is stripped of its metaphysical and ethical underpinnings, is the root cause of the current educational crisis [13]. The learner's sense of reality is distorted as a result of this misconception, which elevates instrumental and pragmatic sciences above revealed and human sciences. Education regains its ability to direct knowledge toward truth, meaning, and divine purpose through the restoration of adab [14].

Furthermore, Al-Attas highlights that the loss of adab appears not only in individuals but also in leadership and educational institutions. When students lack adab, learning turns into a quest for credentials rather than wisdom, and when educators lack adab, authority becomes hollow or tyrannical [15]. The legitimacy of educational institutions is impacted by this decline in appropriate behavior, which also lessens their ability to produce morally upright citizens. Thus, reinstating adab becomes crucial for communal harmony, institutional integrity, and personal growth.

In modern Muslim societies managing globalization, technological innovation, and cultural pluralism, Al-Attas's approach is especially pertinent. Even though contemporary education provides useful scientific and technological knowledge, its blind acceptance runs the risk of strengthening secular presumptions that disregard ethics and religion [16]. Al-Attas's viewpoint advocates for the cautious integration of contemporary knowledge within an Islamic worldview rather than simply rejecting it. Muslim societies can boldly embrace modernity without compromising their moral and spiritual identities thanks to this well-rounded strategy [17].

Last but not least, the focus on adab as the cornerstone of Islamic education provides a normative criterion by which academic achievement can be evaluated outside of grades, rankings, and financial results. It redefines perfection as the balance of reason and revelation, intellect and character, and knowledge and morality [18]. Islamic education becomes a tool for civilizational rejuvenation by emphasizing adab, producing people who are not only intellectually capable but also ethically upright and socially conscious. This viewpoint affirms adab's continuing relevance in tackling the problems of the contemporary world by positioning it as both the foundation and the ultimate goal of Islamic education [19].

LITERATURE REVIEW

In classical Islamic scholarship, the idea of adab, which includes morality, appropriate behavior, intellectual discipline, and spiritual refinement, has long had a central place. Early Muslim thinkers viewed Adab as an integrated framework that governed the learning and use of knowledge, rather than just as social graces or manners. Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, and Ibn Jamā'ah's *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wa al-Mutakallim* are examples of classical writings that highlight how knowledge without moral discipline leads to hubris and misguidance. These intellectuals emphasized that the true scholar is distinguished not only by intellectual mastery but also by ethical perfection and

God-consciousness, and they consistently connected education to the development of virtue, sincerity, and humility.

In response to the difficulties presented by colonialism, secularization, and Western educational paradigms, Muslim scholars have reexamined the idea of adab in the contemporary era. By fusing contemporary sciences with religious knowledge, scholars like Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and subsequently Ismail Raji al-Faruqi attempted to modernize Islamic education. Critics contend that although these reformist initiatives greatly aided in the revitalization of education, they frequently concentrated on curriculum or structural changes rather than adequately addressing the fundamental philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings of knowledge. As a result, practical and utilitarian factors occasionally took precedence over the moral and spiritual aspects of education [20].

By putting adab at the center of Islamic education, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas makes a unique and thorough contribution to this discussion. Al-Attas contends in *The Concept of Education in Islam* that *ta'dīb* is the appropriate name for Islamic education because it naturally incorporates the meanings of knowledge (*'ilm*), teaching (*ta'līm*), and nurturing (*tarbiyah*), while guiding people toward moral and spiritual perfection. He unifies ontology, epistemology, and ethics in his concept of adab, which is the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper places of things in the order of existence. Al-Attas's concepts have been further developed by scholars like Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud and Rosnani Hashim, who emphasize that adab guarantees justice in knowledge and avoids the confusion (*khalt*) that results when secular assumptions predominate. Al-Attas's theories have been further developed by academics like Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud and Rosnani Hashim, who emphasize that adab guarantees justice in knowledge and avoids the misunderstanding (*khalt*) that results when secular assumptions predominate in educational discourse [21].

The importance of adab in Al-Attas's educational philosophy is further supported by the literature on his Islamization of knowledge initiative. Al-Attas criticizes the secular worldview in Islam and Secularism for desacralizing knowledge and marginalizing revelation, which results in a disjointed perception of reality. According to secondary research, his strategy is different from previous Islamization models in that it places more emphasis on ethical orientation and worldview correction than it does on content integration. Scholars contend that adab serves as the tenet that directs the choice, categorization, and application of knowledge, guaranteeing harmony between spiritual truth and logical investigation [22].

Al-Attas's approach has been used more and more in recent research on Islamic education to address modern issues, including moral degradation, identity uncertainty, and the commercialization of education. According to theoretical and empirical research, educational approaches based on adab support comprehensive human development by balancing academic success with moral obligation. The research does, however, also highlight a disconnect between theoretical expression and real-world application, especially in contemporary educational systems impacted by secular evaluation techniques and standardized curricula. This gap highlights the necessity for more investigation into the intellectual underpinnings of adab and its applicability to modern Islamic educational reform [23].

All things considered, current research confirms that adab is a fundamental idea in both traditional and modern Islamic educational philosophy. Al-Attas's contribution is notable for its philosophical coherence and depth, providing a thorough framework that combines spirituality, ethics, and knowledge. However, in order to synthesize these ideas and explain how adab, as understood by Al-Attas, can function as a workable basis for Islamic education in the contemporary world, further methodical examination is needed [24].

Table 1. Literature Review on Adab as the Foundation of Islamic Education in Classical and Contemporary Scholarship

Author(s)	Title / Work	Focus of Study	Key Findings / Contribution	Relevance to Current Study
Al-Ghazālī	<i>Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn</i>	Ethics and education in Islam	Emphasizes moral purification, sincerity, and discipline (<i>adab</i>) as prerequisites for true knowledge	Provides a classical foundation linking <i>adab</i> with knowledge and education
Ibn Jamā'ah	<i>Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wa al-Mutakallim</i>	Teacher–student ethics	Highlights <i>adab</i> in learning, respect for teachers, and ethical conduct of scholars	Supports ethical dimensions of Islamic pedagogy
Ibn Miskawayh	<i>Tahdhīb al-Akhlaq</i>	Moral education	Advocates characterize formation as the aim of education	Demonstrate an early integration of ethics and education
Syed M. N. Al-Attas	<i>Islam and Secularism</i>	Critique of secular knowledge	Argues that secularism confuses knowledge and loss of <i>adab</i>	Core theoretical basis for this study
Syed M. N. Al-Attas	<i>The Concept of Education in Islam</i>	Philosophy of Islamic education	Introduces <i>ta'dīb</i> as the proper concept of education centered on <i>adab</i>	Primary reference defining <i>adab</i> as an educational foundation
Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud	<i>The Educational Philosophy of Al-Attas</i>	Analysis of Al-Attas's thought	Systematizes Al-Attas's ideas on <i>adab</i> , justice, and worldview	Strengthens the conceptual clarity of <i>adab</i> in education
Rosnani Hashim	<i>Educational Dualism in Malaysia</i>	Modern Islamic education challenges	Identifies loss of <i>adab</i> due to secular–religious dualism	Shows practical implications of Al-Attas's theory
Ismail Raji al-Faruqi	<i>Islamization of Knowledge</i>	Educational reform	Proposes integration of Islamic values into modern disciplines	Comparative framework to Al-Attas's worldview-based approach
Hassan Langgulong	<i>Manusia dan Pendidikan</i>	Islamic educational psychology	Emphasizes holistic human development	Supports holistic aims aligned with <i>adab</i>
Contemporary scholars	Journal articles on <i>adab</i> and education	Modern applications of <i>adab</i>	Identify the relevance of <i>adab</i> for moral crisis and identity formation	Highlights current relevance and research gap addressed by this study

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive–analytical research design to examine *adab* as the foundational principle of Islamic education in the thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable because the subject of inquiry is philosophical, normative, and conceptual rather than empirical or statistical in nature. Al-

Attas's educational framework is deeply rooted in Islamic metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, requiring careful interpretation of meanings, ideas, and intellectual arguments as presented in his writings and related scholarly works [25].

Research Approach

The research is grounded in a philosophical and conceptual analysis approach, focusing on understanding *adab* as a core educational concept within the Islamic worldview. Rather than measuring educational outcomes or institutional practices, the study seeks to critically analyze how Al-Attas conceptualizes *adab*, *ta'dīb*, knowledge (*'ilm*), justice (*'adl*), and worldview (*ru'yat al-Islām li al-wujūd*). These interrelated concepts are examined to demonstrate how they collectively form a coherent and comprehensive foundation for Islamic education. This approach allows the study to engage with the normative dimensions of education, particularly the ethical and spiritual purposes underlying the pursuit of knowledge [26].

Data Sources

The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources to ensure depth and academic rigor. Primary sources consist of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's major works, including *Islam and Secularism*, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, and *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, as well as selected lectures, essays, and speeches that address education, knowledge, and worldview. Secondary sources include books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, dissertations, and conference papers that discuss Islamic education, the concept of *adab*, the Islamization of knowledge, and critical or interpretive analyses of Al-Attas's intellectual contributions by contemporary scholars.

Data Collection Technique

Data are collected through documentary and library-based analysis, involving systematic reading, close textual examination, annotation, and categorization of relevant materials. Key concepts, definitions, arguments, and philosophical positions related to *adab* and Islamic education are identified and organized thematically. This process ensures logical coherence, conceptual clarity, and a comprehensive understanding of Al-Attas's educational philosophy.

Data Analysis

The study applies qualitative content analysis combined with thematic analysis. Texts are examined to identify recurring themes such as the loss of *adab*, confusion of knowledge (*khalt*), justice (*'adl*), hierarchy of knowledge, worldview formation, and the central role of *ta'dīb* in education. These themes are then interpreted within the broader framework of Islamic metaphysics and epistemology as articulated by Al-Attas, allowing for an integrated analysis of educational aims, knowledge classification, and moral formation.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance academic validity and reliability, the study employs source triangulation by cross-referencing Al-Attas's primary texts with authoritative secondary literature. Conceptual consistency is maintained by adhering closely to Al-Attas's original terminology and definitions, minimizing the risk of misinterpretation or conceptual distortion. Critical engagement with multiple scholarly perspectives further strengthens the credibility of the analysis.



Figure 1. Research Methodology

Ethical Considerations

As this research is purely theoretical and library-based, it does not involve human participants or fieldwork. Ethical considerations are addressed through accurate citation, respect for intellectual property, scholarly honesty, and faithful representation of all sources and viewpoints used in the study.

Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to the philosophical and educational thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and does not extend to empirical evaluation, policy analysis, or comparative institutional studies. While the findings provide strong theoretical and conceptual insights into adab-based education, further empirical research is recommended to explore the practical implementation, challenges, and outcomes of this educational philosophy in contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's primary conclusions about adab as the cornerstone of Islamic education in Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's perspective are presented and discussed in this part. The discussion integrates philosophical interpretation with pertinent scholarly discourse and is arranged topically in accordance with the study's aims and analytical framework.

Adab as the Core Objective of Islamic Education

According to the research, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas views adab as the primary goal of Islamic education. According to him, the main goal of education is to create morally upright and intellectually disciplined people rather than qualified workers or technical experts. Adab represents the understanding that everything, including God, people, knowledge, and society, has an appropriate place in the order of reality. Justice ('adl) naturally appears in the individual and, consequently, in the social order when adab is correctly instilled. This result aligns with traditional Islamic scholarship, which has consistently linked knowledge to moral obligation and spiritual development [27].

Additionally, Al-Attas highlights that the goal of adab-centered education guarantees the harmonious integration of a person's moral, spiritual, and intellectual capabilities. When adab is followed, knowledge is sought for the realization of truth and wisdom (hikmah) rather than pride, power, or financial gain. This approach promotes humility and accountability in both

personal behavior and academic participation while protecting students from conceit and misuse of knowledge. As a result, education ceases to be only the accumulation of knowledge and instead becomes a process of moral development and self-discipline [28].

The study also concludes that Al-Attas's comprehension of adab creates a distinct hierarchy of values in the educational process. Essential elements of this hierarchy are reverence for revealed knowledge, respect for teachers, and appropriate acknowledgment of authority. Adab ensures that students understand the boundaries of human reason and the guiding function of divine revelation while also fostering respect for intellectual and moral order. This viewpoint opposes modern educational paradigms that frequently encourage excessive individualism and relativism, which might jeopardize societal cohesiveness and ethical clarity [29].

The study also shows that making adab the primary goal of education has significant effects on how people develop their sense of self and societal responsibility. According to Al-Attas, education based on adab creates people who are aware of their obligations to God, society, and themselves. These people can favorably impact social harmony and fairness because they are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded. By internalizing adab, students reduce their propensity for corruption, abuse of power, and moral carelessness by developing a sense of accountability that guides their behavior in both private and public domains.

Additionally, the results show that adab-centered education corrects the information fragmentation that is common in contemporary educational institutions. Al-Attas highlights that knowledge loses its unifying purpose and is vulnerable to abuse when it is separated from its metaphysical and ethical underpinnings. Adab ensures that intellectual endeavors stay in line with moral principles and spiritual objectives by reintegrating many domains of knowledge into a cohesive Islamic worldview. In addition to protecting the integrity of knowledge, this integrative method gives students a well-rounded viewpoint that helps them deal with today's issues without sacrificing their moral character or spiritual awareness [30].

Table 2. Adab as the Core Objective of Islamic Education in Al-Attas's Thought

Dimension	Description	Educational Implications
Ultimate Aim of Education	Education aims at forming morally upright and intellectually disciplined individuals rather than producing technically skilled labor.	Shifts focus from utilitarian outcomes to character and moral formation.
Concept of Adab	Recognition of the proper place of God, humans, knowledge,	Promotes justice ('adl) at both individual and societal levels
Integration of Human Faculties	Harmonization of the moral, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions of the learner	Prevents imbalance between intellectual achievement and ethical conduct
Motivation for Knowledge	Knowledge is sought for truth and wisdom (hikmah), not power, status, or material gain.	Cultivates humility, accountability, and sincerity in learning
Hierarchy of Values	Priority is given to revealed knowledge, respect for teachers, and legitimate authority.	Counters excessive individualism and relativism in modern education
Moral Accountability	Education fosters awareness of responsibility toward God, self, and society.	Reduces tendencies toward corruption, abuse of power, and moral negligence
Unity of Knowledge	Knowledge is viewed as an integrated whole grounded in metaphysical and ethical	Addresses fragmentation of knowledge in contemporary educational systems

principles.

Adab and the Hierarchy of Knowledge

Al-Attas's emphasis on the appropriate hierarchy of knowledge as a crucial aspect of adab is another noteworthy finding of the study. The results show that Al-Attas strongly disagrees with the contemporary inclination to prioritize technical and empirical sciences over revealed and metaphysical knowledge. Rather, he claims that since revealed knowledge (*'ilm al-wahy*) offers ultimate meaning and ethical guidance, it must hold the highest position. Empirical and rational sciences are useful, but they must operate within the parameters set by revelation. According to Al-Attas, the loss of this hierarchy results in the distortion of truth and epistemological confusion (*khalṭ*) [31].

The study goes on to show that adab controls how knowledge is approached, understood, and used. It teaches students about the limitations of human reason and the need for divine direction in order to comprehend reality. This outcome contrasts with contemporary secular educational programs that frequently encourage excessive intellectual autonomy and epistemic relativism, which may jeopardize social cohesiveness and moral clarity.

The analysis also shows that Al-Attas's metaphysical worldview is inextricably linked to his hierarchical idea of knowledge. Knowledge is not neutral; depending on its source and direction, it might have moral and spiritual ramifications. Other types of knowledge become divorced from moral purpose and are readily abused when revealed knowledge is removed from its prominent position. According to Al-Attas, this displacement leads to intellectual arrogance in which human reason takes on absolute authority, marginalizing divine guidance and undermining ethical duty [32].

The results also show that academic specialization and curriculum design are directly impacted by this hierarchy. Instead of rejecting scientific and technological fields, an adab-based educational system places them in a larger context of significance and responsibility. While being aware of their ethical boundaries and social obligations, students are pushed to become experts in specific disciplines. By fostering balanced individuals who can contribute to society without sacrificing moral and spiritual values, this integrated method avoids the fragmentation of information.

Lastly, the study emphasizes how adab's restoration of the correct hierarchy of knowledge fosters disciplined studying and intellectual humility. Instead of using information as a tool for dominance or self-interest, learners are taught to respect authoritative sources, recognize the boundaries of their knowledge, and pursue knowledge as a trust (*amānah*). By fostering this mindset, education becomes a way to bring human intelligence into line with divine wisdom, strengthening justice, truth, and harmony in society and personal behavior [33].

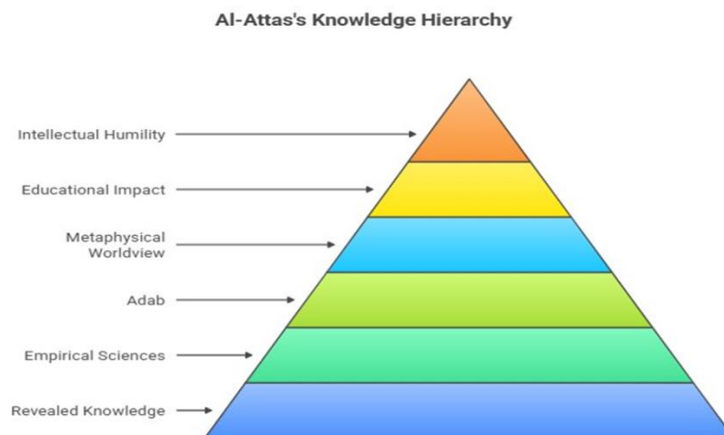


Figure 2. Al-Attas's Knowledge Hierarchy

Adab in the Teacher–Student Relationship

The results also show that adab has a significant impact on how teachers and students interact ethically. Al-Attas contends that a teacher is more than just a disseminator of knowledge; they are moral role models whose behavior reflects the principles they are teaching. The main manifestations of adab are responsibility to students, sincerity in instruction, and respect for teachers. In a similar vein, students are supposed to approach their studies with discipline, humility, and respect for knowledge [34].

According to this study, the decline of adab in educational settings results in the commercialization of information, the weakening of authority, and the conversion of learning into a transactional activity. Education regains its ethical depth and relational integrity when adab is restored, creating conditions that support real moral and intellectual development [35].

Additionally, Al-Attas highlights that the transfer of legitimate knowledge (‘ilm) depends on the teacher-student connection. According to him, knowledge is passed on through a teacher's moral presence and spiritual state rather than just through texts or lectures. Students' reception and internalization of knowledge are greatly influenced by the teacher's attitude, motives, and devotion to adab. This emphasizes that learning is not just a technical process but also an ethical experience [36].

The study also emphasizes how adab, in contrast to authoritarianism, controls authority in schooling. Instead of instilling fear or compulsion, authority that is based on knowledge, wisdom, and moral integrity fosters respect and trust. Students voluntarily submit to instruction in such a situation because they understand the teacher's responsibility in guiding them toward moral development and intellectual maturity. This stands in stark contrast to contemporary educational settings, when authority is frequently questioned or rejected without discernment, resulting in chaos and a decline in respect in academic settings [37].

Lastly, the results imply that there are wider ramifications for educational culture and societal advancement if adab is reinstated in the teacher-student interaction. Students are more likely to develop discipline, responsibility, and ethical sensitivity outside of the classroom when they are taught to respect information and those who possess it. These people are more suited to take on leadership positions based on wisdom and fairness. As a result, Al-Attas's focus on adab not only improves educational interactions but also helps to develop morally upright and socially conscious individuals [38].

Table3. The Role of Adab in Shaping the Ethical Teacher–Student Relationship in Islamic Education

Aspect	Role of Adab	Implications for Education
Teacher's Role	The teacher acts as a moral exemplar, not merely a transmitter of information.	Knowledge is conveyed with ethical integrity, sincerity, and responsibility.
Student's Attitude	Students approach learning with humility, discipline, and reverence for knowledge.	Learning becomes a moral and spiritual process, not only an intellectual one.
Transmission of Knowledge	Knowledge is transmitted through moral presence and spiritual state, not texts alone.	Deep internalization, knowledge, and character formation are achieved.
Authority in Education	Authority is grounded in wisdom, moral integrity, and knowledge, not coercion.	Respect and trust replace fear and compulsion in educational settings.

Educational Culture	Adab restores ethical depth and relational integrity	Prevents the commercialization of knowledge and transactional learning
Social Outcomes	Adab cultivates discipline, responsibility, and ethical sensitivity	Produces morally upright individuals capable of just leadership

Adab as a Response to the Crisis of Modern Education

The study also finds that Al-Attas's adab idea offers a logical solution to the current educational problem that Muslim cultures are confronting. Knowledge and ethics have been separated as a result of the dominance of secular Western paradigms, creating people who may be very intelligent but lack moral guidance and spiritual awareness. According to Al-Attas, this condition is not just a lack of technical proficiency but rather a civilizational issue stemming from the loss of adab [39]. According to the study, adab provides a framework that can include contemporary information without sacrificing Islamic ethical and metaphysical values. Al-Attas pushes for modern disciplines to be reoriented within an Islamic perspective rather than being rejected. This strategy enables Muslim societies to maintain their moral underpinnings and spiritual identity while critically and productively interacting with modernity [40].

The results also show that adab serves as a countermeasure to the value-neutral focus of contemporary education. Education frequently loses its moral compass under institutions that prioritize efficiency, competition, and market-driven results. Al-Attas's focus on adab gives education new meaning by grounding it in accountability to God, society, and oneself. This perspective addresses the spiritual emptiness present in many modern educational methods by transforming education into an act of moral cultivation rather than just a process of skill acquisition [41]. Additionally, the study emphasizes how adab-centered education fosters moral restraint and intellectual humility, qualities that are crucial in a time of technological dominance and information overload. Without adab, information can be abused, weaponized, or exploited, resulting in moral degeneration and societal injustice. Al-Attas's framework protects society from the damaging effects of unbridled rationalism and materialism by ensuring that intellectual progress is accompanied by ethical accountability [42].

Lastly, the study emphasizes that long-term civilizational rejuvenation is significantly impacted by the restoration of adab. Adab-based education creates people who are not just capable professionals but also morally upright leaders who can lead society with discernment and fairness. Muslim societies may overcome the division brought about by secular paradigms and restore a comprehensive understanding of knowledge that balances faith, reason, and action by re-centering education on adab. This presents adab as a revolutionary and long-lasting solution to the problems facing contemporary education [43].

Foundations of Adab-Centered Education



Figure 3. Foundations of Adab-Centered Education

Implications for Curriculum and Educational Goals

Lastly, the results show that curriculum design and educational goals are significantly impacted by using adab as the cornerstone of education. Alongside academic content, adab-informed curricula place a high priority on moral development, spiritual awareness, and intellectual equilibrium. Therefore, the degree to which students exhibit justice, wisdom, and responsible behavior is a better indicator of educational achievement than grades, certifications, or financial results [44]. Overall, the study's findings confirm that adab, as defined by Syed Muhammad Naquib al- Attas, is the guiding principle of Islamic education rather than a peripheral ethical idea. Its rehabilitation enables the development of well-rounded people who balance knowledge, faith, and responsibility and provides a holistic solution to the moral, intellectual, and civilizational issues facing modern Muslim nations [45].

Table4. Implications of Adab for Curriculum and Educational Goals in Islamic Education

Aspect	Conventional Education Model	Adab-Centered Islamic Education (Al-Attas)
Ultimate Goal of Education	Academic success, certification, and economic productivity	Formation of morally upright, spiritually aware, and intellectually balanced individuals
Curriculum Orientation	Fragmented disciplines, value-neutral knowledge	Integrated curriculum linking knowledge, ethics, and spiritual purpose
Measurement of Success	Grades, standardized tests, credentials	Justice (‘adl), wisdom (hikmah), responsible conduct, and ethical maturity
Knowledge Structure	Equal or prioritized emphasis on empirical and technical sciences	Hierarchical knowledge system with revealed knowledge guiding other sciences
Teaching Focus	Information delivery and skill acquisition	Moral formation, intellectual discipline, and character development
Assessment Methods	Quantitative exams and performance metrics	Holistic evaluation, including behavior, sincerity, accountability, and understanding
Student Development	Cognitive and technical competence	Balanced development of intellect, soul, and character
Institutional Role	Administrative and instructional function	Moral community embodying justice, integrity, and adab
Educational Outcomes	Skilled but ethically disconnected graduates	Individuals who harmonize knowledge, faith, and social responsibility

The results also imply that adab-based programs need an integrative and comprehensive framework. Education should focus on the linkages between disciplines, ethics, and spiritual purpose rather than dissecting information into discrete areas. Through this kind of integration, students are encouraged to see knowledge as a cohesive whole that is focused on justice and truth. The study also shows that reevaluating assessment techniques within an

adab-centered paradigm is necessary. Character development and ethical advancement may be neglected if standardized testing and quantitative measurements are overused. The goals of Islamic education, as stated by Al-Attas, are more closely aligned with alternative evaluation techniques that take behavior, accountability, and intellectual sincerity into account [46].

Lastly, the study emphasizes the need for educational institutions to embody adab at the organizational level. Justice, accountability, and moral integrity should be reflected in institutional cultures, leadership styles, and policies. The incorporation of adab into curriculum and pedagogy runs the risk of becoming symbolic rather than transformative in the absence of institutional commitment.

Analysis

The analysis reveals that Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' conception of adab provides a coherent epistemological foundation for Islamic education that directly addresses contemporary moral and intellectual crises in Muslim societies. Rather than treating education as a value-neutral process, Al-Attas situates knowledge within a divinely ordered worldview where truth, ethics, and meaning are inseparable. In this framework, adab functions as the principle that governs the proper recognition of reality, ensuring that knowledge is acquired, interpreted, and applied in accordance with moral and spiritual responsibility.

Central to this analysis is Al-Attas' argument that the loss of adab results in confusion of knowledge and the erosion of justice. When education prioritizes technical competence without ethical orientation, it produces individuals who may be intellectually skilled but morally disoriented. By contrast, Al-Attas' emphasis on ta'dib seeks to cultivate disciplined intellects that understand the hierarchy of knowledge and the rightful place of human beings within creation. This orientation aligns intellectual pursuit with humility, accountability, and justice, reinforcing education as a transformative moral process.

The integration of revelation and reason further distinguishes Al-Attas' educational philosophy from secular paradigms. Knowledge is not reduced to empirical utility but is understood as a trust that demands ethical application. Consequently, education aims to form balanced individuals capable of harmonizing spiritual awareness with rational inquiry. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that adab serves as a unifying educational principle that links epistemology, ethics, and purpose. Al-Attas' framework offers a viable alternative for reorienting Islamic education toward producing morally grounded, intellectually coherent, and socially responsible individuals in the modern world.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that adab, as defined by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, is not an additional moral concern but rather the fundamental and organizing principle of Islamic education. Adab unifies knowledge, ethics, spirituality, and social duty into a cohesive framework with the goal of creating just and balanced people by basing education on a cogent Islamic worldview. The results show that the loss of adab is the primary cause of the current educational crisis in many Muslim societies, which is characterized by moral disorientation, epistemological misunderstanding, and the separation of knowledge from values. Al-Attas offers a strong alternative to utilitarian and value-neutral educational approaches with his emphasis on the correct hierarchy of knowledge, the moral teacher-student interaction, and the integration of revealed, rational, and empirical sciences. The study comes to the conclusion that reinstating adab as the primary goal of education provides a long-term solution to contemporary issues, allowing Muslim societies to critically interact with contemporary knowledge while maintaining their moral and spiritual identity, and ultimately producing people who balance intellectual prowess with moral rectitude and divine awareness.

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Author Contribution

Alwy Ahmed Mohamed conceptualized the study and developed the theoretical framework. M. Abdur Rozaq contributed to literature analysis and methodological design. Muhammad Ndow assisted in data interpretation and contextual analysis. Mohd Rabe contributed to critical review, refinement of arguments, and final manuscript editing. All authors approved the final version.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could influence the objectivity, interpretation, or integrity of the findings and conclusions presented in this study.

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