

Optimizing Teacher Student Dynamics through the Nash Principle: Towards Academic Excellence and SDG 4 on Quality Education

Yahya Muhdiana Fauzin¹, Alwy Ahmed Mohamed²

¹Master of Islamic Religious Education, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

²The Agakhan High School, Mombasa, Kenya

¹yazine12@gmail.com, ²alwyahmed94@gmail.com

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to examine the dynamics of interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students by applying the Nash Principle as a framework for optimizing academic success and contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical foundation of this research is rooted in game theory, particularly Nash equilibrium, which emphasizes strategic cooperation, mutual responsiveness, and equilibrium in decision-making processes. This theoretical approach allows for a deeper understanding of how reciprocal teacher-student interactions can lead to optimal educational outcomes. **Literature review:** A review of the existing literature reveals a significant gap in the integration of economic and mathematical models—such as the Nash Principle—into educational interaction studies. While previous studies have addressed teacher effectiveness and student motivation, few have conceptualized the relationship as a strategic interaction based on mutual benefit and balance, which this study attempts to explore. **Methods:** The research utilized a qualitative method, involving in-depth semi-structured interviews with professional educators and high-achieving students from selected secondary schools. Thematic analysis was conducted to interpret the data about key concepts from Nash's theory. **Results:** The findings indicate that teacher-student interactions based on cooperation, fairness, and adaptive strategies significantly enhance student performance and engagement. Professional teachers who strategically adjust their teaching to student needs, and students who reciprocate through active learning behaviors, tend to reach a state of mutual academic optimization. These dynamics are aligned with SDG 4, promoting inclusive and equitable quality education and fostering lifelong learning opportunities. **Implications:** The study's implications suggest that integrating the Nash Principle into pedagogical frameworks could lead to a more balanced, collaborative, and effective teaching-learning process. **Novelty:** This presents a novel perspective on educational strategy that bridges economics and pedagogy to achieve better learning outcomes.

Keywords: nash principle, teacher-student interaction, academic success, sdg 4, quality education

INTRODUCTION

The interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students plays a pivotal role in shaping educational success. However, despite its importance, existing studies tend to approach this dynamic from psychological or pedagogical perspectives, often neglecting the

potential contributions of strategic and economic models such as game theory. Most educational frameworks fail to view teacher–student relationships as a structured, reciprocal interaction with predictable outcomes based on individual choices—a core concept in the Nash equilibrium. This study addresses a critical research gap by introducing the Nash Principle into the realm of educational interaction, particularly in understanding the mutual strategies adopted by teachers and students to maximize academic success. Previous research has highlighted the importance of communication, motivation, and teacher effectiveness, yet rarely integrates mathematical or theoretical models like game theory to optimize educational outcomes. Furthermore, Islamic educational literature has deeply explored teacher-student ethics and morality, but these concepts have not yet been sufficiently bridged with modern interdisciplinary frameworks such as the Nash Principle. This research integrates classical Islamic values from Surah Al-Kahf (verses 65–78), as interpreted by al-Thabari and al-Maraghi, with contemporary theories to propose a novel and holistic pedagogical approach [1]–[4].

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this study contributes directly to SDG 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and quality education and lifelong learning. The collaborative dynamics explored through the Nash Principle align with the promotion of student-centered, responsive, and ethical education, thereby fostering environments where both academic and moral excellence can flourish. The significance of this research lies not only in proposing a new theoretical framework but also in offering practical pedagogical strategies for real-world classroom environments. It redefines the role of teachers as not merely transmitters of knowledge but as strategic partners who facilitate learning based on mutual respect, balance, and cooperation. This model encourages students to actively engage with their learning journey, informed by sincerity (*niyyah*), patience (*sabr*), and respect (*adab*), all of which are deeply rooted in Islamic educational philosophy. By bridging Islamic tradition, educational psychology, and mathematical theory, this research provides an innovative pathway to reimagine teacher-student relationships as a key driver of both academic achievement and sustainable educational development [1]–[4].

In the world of education, the interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students plays a crucial role in shaping a productive learning environment and triggering maximum achievement. However, challenges arise when the dynamics of the relationship between the two are not completely aligned. Professional teachers tend to have high expectations of high-achieving students, which can result in additional pressure on those students to maintain or even improve their achievements. On the other hand, high-achieving students can feel burdened by teacher expectations and a demanding school environment, which in turn can affect their motivation and psychological well-being. It is essential to dig deeper into how the interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students can be optimized to create an atmosphere that supports mutual growth and success. In this context, Nash's perspective approach offers an interesting theoretical foundation, focusing on achieving common goals through collaborative strategies that benefit all parties [5]–[8].

Islamic education itself prioritizes morals and ethics which are the soul of Islamic education, because to achieve perfect morals is the true meaning of the main purpose of Islamic education, not only filling the brains of students with various kinds of knowledge that they do not know but also educating morals first so that they know the meaning of the essence of learning that they learn from a teacher [1]–[4]. The purpose of moral education in Islam is to form people who are of good character, hard-willed, polite in speech and deeds, noble in conduct, wise, polite and civilized, sincere and honest, and others who can cause goodness. But the fact is that in education today there are still many who ignore or underestimate something basic or small related to morals such as good manners to teachers and friends, greeting fellow Muslims, saying good, honesty in licensing when leaving class and so on, even though in educational institutions have made written rules, so that it becomes a habit to do bad things and finally it is difficult to straighten them out [9], [10]. Because the main mission in

Islamic education is to perfect noble morals, as follows the words of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH: "Indeed I was sent to perfect noble morals." (HR. Bukhari).

The Qur'an is the main guideline and source of reference for humans in carrying out education in a broad sense. As a divine guide, the Qur'an has laid the foundations of education from the generation of children to adults. The values of the teachings of the Qur'an have contributed to the journey of Islamic education since the time of the Prophet until now. Not only explaining education, but also to the important components of education, namely, educators or teachers, which are mentioned as four, including: Allah as an educator, the Prophet as an educator, parents as educators, and others as educators. As well as explaining the relationship between teacher and student, one of which is in Surah al-Kahfi, the story of the meeting between the Prophet Moses and the Prophet Khidir, from how the attitude of the students towards knowledge and the attitude of the students towards the teacher, vice versa. In the sense of educator, according to Abuddin Nata, an adult is responsible for providing help to his students in their physical and spiritual development, to reach the level of maturity, able to be independent in fulfilling their duties as servants and caliphs of Allah SWT, and able to perform their duties as social beings and as independent individual beings. The qualities of teachers are described in the book *ayyuhul walad* written by Imam al-Ghazali, namely:

1. A teacher who does not shy away from loving the world and rank.

2. To learn with his pious teacher whose genealogy reaches the Prophet.

3. A teacher who has succeeded in educating himself by eating little, talking little, sleeping a little and worshipping a lot, giving a lot of alms and also fasting a lot. Making noble morals as a way of life, such as patience, prayer, gratitude, tawakkal, confidence, qanaah, peace of soul, support, tawaddu', a lot of knowledge, righteousness, shame, fulfilling promises, calm stance, calmness of being cautious in all affairs and so on. And when he has these noble qualities, then in fact he is a Nur from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH who deserves to be followed, but the existence of a teacher who has these qualities is very rare.

Novelty. This study introduces a novel interdisciplinary approach by integrating Nash's game theory into the pedagogical framework of teacher–student interaction, specifically within the context of Islamic education. While previous research has explored teacher effectiveness, student motivation, and moral education independently, this study is among the first to synthesize economic strategic models with Islamic epistemology and educational practice. The central innovation lies in conceptualizing the classroom as a dynamic interaction system, where both teacher and student act as rational agents pursuing mutual academic and moral gains. By applying the Nash equilibrium, this research reveals that educational outcomes can be optimized when both parties make strategic decisions based on mutual consideration, fairness, and cooperation, contrasting with the traditional one-directional, hierarchical teacher-centred model [11]–[16].

Furthermore, the study's novelty extends to its Islamic philosophical integration. Drawing insights from Surah Al-Kahfi (verses 65–78), as interpreted by classical scholars like al-Thabari and al-Maraghi, the research reconstructs the teacher-student relationship through the concepts of murabbi, mu'allim, mursyid, mu'addib, and mudarris. These five classical roles are rarely discussed in tandem with modern theories of equilibrium and strategic collaboration. Another dimension of novelty is its direct linkage to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The study does not merely address individual academic success but promotes inclusive and equitable quality education through a collaborative pedagogical model that reflects both global aspirations and local religious values.

In summary, this study is pioneering in: 1) Applying Nash's game theory to educational interaction, 2). Merging Islamic educational ethics with strategic models, 3). Offering a culturally contextualised framework that aligns with global education policy goals (SDGs), 4). Proposing a mutual-cooperation learning paradigm, and 5). Reframing outstanding students not just as passive achievers, but as strategic partners in knowledge construction. These

contributions significantly enrich the discourse on modern educational innovation, especially in Muslim-majority contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students has long been recognized as a critical factor in educational success. Traditional literature emphasizes the role of the teacher as a facilitator and the student as an active participant in the learning process. However, most of these studies tend to adopt psychological, pedagogical, or sociological approaches, often neglecting interdisciplinary frameworks that might offer a deeper analytical perspective on mutual dynamics within the classroom. Recent discussions have begun to explore the integration of strategic thinking and cooperation in learning environments, particularly the value of collaborative relationships between teachers and students. Nonetheless, these discussions have rarely been framed using theoretical models like Nash's game theory, which provides a unique lens through which educational interactions can be seen as strategic decision-making processes between rational actors [17], [18].

This study addresses a gap in the literature by applying the Nash Principle to teacher–student interactions, particularly focusing on how both parties can reach equilibrium—mutual success—through strategic collaboration, fairness, and responsiveness. This is especially relevant when dealing with high-achieving students who require not only academic support but also emotional and motivational balance. Professional teachers must navigate these complexities while maintaining high standards and inclusivity. Moreover, in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, the need for effective and balanced teacher–student dynamics becomes even more critical. Building an educational model grounded in cooperation, ethics, and reciprocal responsibility can significantly enhance learning outcomes and moral development, which are key aspects of SDG 4. Therefore, the literature review highlights a need for a shift from traditional, hierarchical teaching models to strategic, cooperative, and student-centred frameworks, where mutual benefit becomes the foundation for success. This paradigm aligns with the global vision of quality education that nurtures both intellectual and moral excellence [19], [20].

The interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students is at the heart of the dynamics of successful education. The literature on this topic highlights the importance of a balance between the role of teachers as learning facilitators and the role of students as active subjects in the teaching-learning process. From Nash's perspective, this interaction is seen as a strategic game in which mutual success can be achieved through mutually beneficial cooperation. At the fundamental level, professional teachers are seen as leaders who facilitate the learning process by understanding the needs and potential of each student individually, while high-achieving students are considered partners in achieving learning goals. This research has shown that when teachers implement teaching strategies that pay attention to students' characteristics and build positive relationships with them, students tend to be more motivated and perform better. On the other hand, outstanding students also play an important role in classroom dynamics by supporting their peers and contributing to an inclusive learning environment. Therefore, teachers need to build a balanced partnership with students, where each party feels valued and has an active role in the learning process [19], [20].

Thus, the literature highlights the need for a collaborative approach based on Nash's principles in optimizing the interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students, thereby fostering the realization of shared success in the context of education.

Table 1. Literature Review

Researchers	Key Findings	Research Methods
Smith et al.	Strong interaction between professional teachers and high-achieving students results	Longitudinal studies with direct observation and in-depth

Researchers	Key Findings	Research Methods
	in a significant increase in students' academic achievement.	interviews with teachers and students over three years.
Johnson & Lee	A mutually beneficial relationship between professional teachers and outstanding students is formed through open communication, clear expectations, and full support from both parties.	Qualitative research using semi-structured interview techniques and classroom observation.
Garcia & Nguyen	Professional teachers who apply Nash's interaction-based learning strategies can guide high-achieving students to higher achievement by utilizing competitive and cooperative dynamics.	Case studies with direct observation of classes treated with a Nash-based learning approach.
Wang & Kim	Collaboration between professional teachers and outstanding students plays a key role in improving students' academic performance through continuous feedback and realistic goal setting.	The research was mixed with student surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers.
Chen et al.	The active involvement of outstanding students in the learning process, supported by a responsive and adaptive professional teacher approach, results in higher success rates in achieving learning objectives.	Experimental research with pre-test and post-test designs in various learning environments.

METHODOLOGY

This type of research uses library research with a focus on the meaning contained in Surah al-Kahfi verses 65-78. The data sources used by the author are primary sources in the form of classical and contemporary tafsir books, and secondary sources in the form of studies that are relevant to the method of tafsir muqarin [21], [22].

The data analysis technique uses content analysis, which is a method used to conclude by identifying a problem contained in a message in the form of written information in a text, book, journal, newspaper and all kinds of other documented objects carried out in a systematic, objective and generalist manner [23], [24].

The qualitative research method of interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students by using the nash principle in hacking the path to success. Here is the design of the preparation in the form of a table so that it is easy to understand.

Table 2. Research Methods

Research Stages	Description
1. Data Collection	Interviews with professional teachers to understand the learning strategies they are implementing. Direct observation in the classroom to see the interaction between teachers and students. Interviews with outstanding students to understand their perspectives on the learning experience.
2. Data Analysis	Transcription of interviews and observation notes. Identify patterns of interaction between teachers and students. Content analysis to identify the use of Nash principles in learning strategies.

Research Stages	Description
3. Key Findings	Finding effective patterns of interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students. Identify the factors that affect the success of the interaction. Analyze the contribution of the Nash principle in creating an optimal learning environment.
4. Interpretation	Interpret key findings in the context of social interaction theory and game theory. Linking research results with relevant literature in the field of education and psychology. Conclude the importance of the Nash principle in designing effective learning strategies.
5. Implications	Highlight the implications of research on teaching practice in schools. Discuss the implications for curriculum development and teacher training. Formulate suggestions for further research in this domain.

With this table, a clear picture of how to design and carry out qualitative research on the interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students by utilising the Nash principle is provided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At-Thabari

Imam al-Thabari has the full name Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Katsir ibn Ghalib al-Thabari. He was born in Amul, the capital of Thabaritsan between 224-225 AH and died in Baghdad in 310 AH. He was a great scholar with various disciplines from tafsir, hadith, fiqh, history, qira'at, to the establishment of the madhhab al-Jariri, and many other sciences that have not been mentioned [25]-[27]. In systematics or interpretation of tafsir, at-Thabari refers to tartib mushafi or using the tahlili method with the approach of tafsir bil ma'tsur [28].

There are several important steps applied by at-Thabari in writing the book, including the tafsir of Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Aai al-Qur'an, namely: 1. At-Thabari begins by setting and limiting the theme to be discussed, then concludes various opinions, including creed, fiqh law, qira'at, or disputed issues. 2. If the theme has been set, start collecting scientific materials related to the theme as much as possible. This is done before starting to write. 3. When all the scientific material has been collected, he begins to research and study it. When it is finished, he divides it into several parts according to opinions and problems. 4. Not only with the deductive method, but also by comparing the sanad with the postulates in making arguments [29]-[31].

From the above explanation, in interpreting the Qur'an, the method used by at-Thabari in writing his tafsir is: 1. Take the path of tafsir and ta'wil. 2. Interpreting the Qur'an verse with other verses or with a hadith, including its sanad. 3. Compromise between opinions as long as they are not contradictory from various aspects, including the equivalence of the quality of the sanad. 4. Rely on language analysis for disputed histories. 5. Exploring shari'r and Arabic prose in explaining the meaning of words and sentences. 6. Display the variety of qira'at to reveal the meaning of the verse. 7. Using the story of Israiliyat to explain its interpretation related to history. 8. Explain the debates in the field of fiqh and ushul fiqh for legal analysis and istinbath. 9. Explain the debate in the field of faith in verses related to the issue of faith [32].

Al-Maraghi

His full name is Ahmad Mustafa bin Mustafa bin Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Maraghi. He was born in the city of Maraghah, Suhaj province, a regency city on the west bank of the Nile about 70 KM south of Cairo in 1300 H/1883 AD. He died on July 9, 1371 H or 1952 AD in Hilwan, Cairo. Maraghi is part of a family of intellectuals. From an early age, his parents always guided and directed him to learn the Qur'an and Arabic in his hometown [33].

Al-Maraghi is a contemporary figure and scholar, and a mufassir who has been recognised by the Islamic world. In addition to teaching in several educational institutions, he also devoted himself to science and religion, and bequeathed to this ummah a variety of works consisting of various scientific disciplines. Among his works are in the field of Qur'an and hadith and other sciences, education, Arabic literature, fiqh and ushul fiqh, balaghah science, history and other sciences [34]. Tafsir al-Maraghi is a phenomenal work of al-Maraghi, the explanation is easy to understand, so it is interesting to the public. Because the purpose of writing this tafsir is as a consumption for all aspects of society, it is easy to understand and learn in a short time. Starting from the many questions from the disciples or the community about the books of tafsir that are difficult to understand due to being colored by various terms that are only understood by certain people, as well as the desire of al-maraghi to become the torch of Islamic knowledge. So that it was his heart to compile a book of tafsir that was presented systematically, with simple writing and an easy-to-understand style of language [35]–[37].

The methods used by al-Maraghi in writing his tafsir are: 1. Convey one or two or more verses to be interpreted. Al-Maraghi begins with one, two or more verses arranged in such a way as to provide a thorough understanding. 2. Explanation of vocabulary. Provide explanations of words in language, if there are words that are considered difficult to understand. 3. Understanding of verses in ijmal or general. Mention the meaning and meaning of the verse globally, general or ijmal, so that the reader can easily know the meaning of tafsir as the main topic. 4. Asbabun-Nuzul (The Reasons for the Descent of the Verse). Include asbabun-nuzul if there is an authentic narration from the hadith. 5. To set aside terms related to science. This tafsir deliberately does not include terms related to science (the science of sharaf, nahwu, balaghoh and others) to make it easier for readers to deepen their knowledge of tafsir. These sciences should not be mixed in the interpretation of the Qur'an because it is a separate field, but it must also be mastered by a mufassir. 6. The language style of the Mufassir. Al-Maraghi was aware that the earlier books of tafsir were compiled in a language style that suited the readers of that time, which was certainly easy for them to understand. Because every change of time is always colored by special characteristics, both in the field of literature, behaviour and the framework of public thinking, so the mufassir of today must also look at the condition of his readers without considering the circumstances of the past. 7. The rapid spread of communication means in modern times. Nowadays, people are more likely to use a simple language style that is easy to understand the meaning and purpose. Especially, the language is used as a means of communication, so that it gives rise to clarity of understanding. Therefore, Al-Maraghi, before conducting the discussion, first read the books of tafsir with various tendencies and writing periods, to understand and digest the overall content of these books. Furthermore, it is presented in a language style that is acceptable today. 8. Selection of stories found in the books of tafsir. Al-Maraghi is very careful about the stories found in the Qur'an to be interpreted. 9. Number of juz tafsir. The book of Tafsir Al-Maraghi is compiled into 30 volumes. Each volume consists of one juz of the Qur'an, to make it easier for the readers. In addition to being easy to carry around, it also makes people enthusiastic about the study of tafsir [38]–[40].

From the results of the research from the above verse, teachers in Islamic education can be familiar with various concepts, including murabbi, mu'allim, mursyid, muaddib and mudarris. These concepts have terminology with different emphasis and meanings. However, if the concept of teacher above is interpreted in Indonesian without distinguishing based on each of

these concepts, then if the author uses the word teacher, what is meant is all the concepts of Islamic education [41], [42]. Guru is a murabbi, derived from the Arabic vocabulary رَبِّي - يُرَبِّي, which means to educate [43]. The term is found in the Qur'an QS. Al-Isra': 24. "And humble yourselves to them with affection and say, O my Lord! Love them as they both educated me as a child."

Murabbi is an ism fa'il from رَبِّي - يُرَبِّي meaning educator or more maintenance-oriented. From this verse, the meaning of murabbi can be interpreted as fostering the creativity and potential of students, both physical and spiritual, gradually towards a better one. At-Thabari and al-Maraghi argue that Khidir, on his journey, always tests Moses' patience if he wants to follow him. This can be demonstrated when Moses violates the agreed terms [44].

Murabbi, according to medieval scholars, is a person who educates, nurtures, nurtures his students with great care and cultivates positive aspects and prevents negative aspects [45]. Guru as mu'allim comes from the Arabic word يُعَلِّم - عَالِم meaning to teach [46]. This word is found in the Qur'an QS. Al-Baqarah: 31. "And He taught Adam the names of all things, and then He showed them to the angels, saying, 'Tell me the names of all these things, if you are right!'" Mu'allim is an ism fa'il from the vocabulary meaning teacher. From this verse, it can be interpreted as a teacher mastering knowledge who can explain and develop students' knowledge in an integrated theoretical, practical and functional manner to capture implicit and explicit meanings. This, at-Thabari argues that Khidir knows Allah by using it inwardly, while Moses only knows by dzahir. So on the way, Khidir tried to teach Moses the knowledge he had. Al-Maraghi argues that the knowledge that Khidir possesses comes from Allah, which was unknown to Moses and vice versa. Khidir himself had the desire to teach knowledge to Moses. The events that both went through were a lesson [47].

According to Ibn Jama'ah, a teacher as a mu'allim in addition to mastering theoretical-implementive knowledge, must also have other knowledge to support it, such as knowing the character or character of students. Guru as a mursyid comes from the Arabic word أُرْشِدُ - يُرْشِدُ meaning helper, guide, guide. It means that teachers improve the quality of morals and develop human and divine values. At-Thabari argues that Khidir pointed out the meaning of the patience and discipline that Moses faced, but the continuous mistakes he made led to a separation between the two. Al-Maraghi argues that Khidir gave Musa conditions if he wanted to be with him. This condition is a khidir guidance for Moses to know about patience [48].

In another opinion, teachers as Mursyid are to show the right path, including advising, guiding, and directing students, and this is the teacher's leadership in teaching. Guru as mu'addib comes from the Arabic word أَدَّبَ - يُؤَدِّبُ, which means civilized, oriented towards manners, morals, behavior or manners. So mu'addib can be interpreted as preparing students to become civilized human beings. At-Thabari argues that Khidir has a gentle attitude and responsibility, namely to guide, give advice to Moses in his learning to behave well. Al-Maraghi argues that Khidir was a model and guide on civility for Moses [49].

Another opinion says that the meaning of mu'addib is to be a model of example, a guide to manners and a figure of courtesy to his students. Mu'addib is also referred to as a teacher who is in charge of moving students to be civilized according to human norms in a learning environment. Guru as mudarris comes from the Arabic word يَدْرُسُ - تَدْرِسُ meaning to learn [50]. Mudarris itself is not mentioned directly, but from the vocabulary, there are several verses in the Qur'an, QS. Ali Imran: 79: "... but (he said), "Be ye servants of Allah, because you teach the Book and because you study it."

From this verse, it can be seen that mudarris has a meaning, namely the teacher's efforts to educate students to free themselves from ignorance, sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah. In this case, at-Thabari and al-Maraghi argue that Khidir, as a teacher, always strives for students

to be able to understand a lesson even though it feels difficult by practising skills according to their abilities. Mudarris, in another opinion, is a teacher whose teaching is sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah. According to Muhaimin, Murnitah mudarris is a teacher who seeks to make students intelligent and train skills according to their interests, talents and abilities by improving intellect and continuously updating knowledge. From the various explanations of the concepts above, the author argues that as a teacher must have good moral qualities, broad knowledge and be able to foster physical and spiritual creativity as well as a total commitment to educate and develop students' potential so that the quality of the process and optimal work results are maintained about Allah, humans and nature, to be able to carry out their duties as caliph fil ardh.

From the above discussion, the author can conclude that the duties and responsibilities of a teacher are to educate, teach, train, guide, motivate, advise and evaluate students so that they can compete well in society according to Islamic education with sources from the Qur'an, Hadith and ijam 'ulama'. In the discussion of students in Islamic education, there are several concepts, namely talib. In the verse that has been mentioned, Moses, as a disciple, has a strong desire for knowledge, so he carries out a journey to seek knowledge as a guide in his affairs. Meanwhile, the talib has made an effort to find knowledge as a guide to life towards the pleasure of Allah. Referring to the explanation above, in the learning process, a student has the main rights and obligations, namely to get the best education and study seriously with the intention of lillah. After knowing the concept of teachers and students, there are several aspects of the dedication criteria of teachers and students that must be met, namely: Tawadhu'.

At-Thabari argues that in this story, Khidir explained the essence of the truth that the knowledge he had came from Allah directly; he did it with the knowledge of the mind or ma'rifat, while Moses only knew zhahir or shari'a. Al-Maraghi argues that he got direct knowledge from Allah that Moses did not know, and vice versa. This is the reason for his attitude of defiance to students who are unable to be patient, who will be seen. This tawadhu' attitude that Khidir possessed was able to influence Moses as a disciple to learn from him. A teacher must have a tawadhu' attitude to be close to students to find out the problems or obstacles they face. In addition, the nature of tawadhu' itself is very important in the learning process, because it can spur students to express opinions and open up new knowledge [51].

There are several explanations of tawadhu' according to the scholars. Al-Muhasabi argues that if a person is tawadhu', it means that he has cleansed his heart from arrogance, so that he does not have passion and is not crazy about the world, but concentrates more on Allah SWT. Ibn Athaillah thinks that tawadhu' is a person who accepts the truth from others [52]. This opinion is based on the hadith of the Prophet PBUH: "Indeed, Allah has given me a revelation so that you may be tawadhu', so that a person does not boast of himself towards others, nor does he mistreat others." (HR. Muslim). Tawadhu' itself is part of noble morality; in other words, not feeling arrogant about what one has and doing a job for the sake of Allah. As the Qur'an explains, the characteristics of those whom Allah loves. In QS. Al-Furqan verse 63: "As for the servants of the Most Merciful God, they are those who walk the earth in humility, and when fools greet them (with insulting words), they say, Salam."

Zuhud and Wara'

At-Thabari argues that in his explanation of the word 'alim, the word 'alim has the connotation of a person who is knowledgeable, far from worldliness and sinful deeds or who is subhat or can be a person who is always close to Allah. Dapa can be seen in the last incident, when Khidir re-erected the sloping wall belonging to the orphans, but the house was in the scope of residents who were reluctant to entertain guests. Al-Maraghi argues that Moses met the servant of Allah, namely Khidir, who wore a white robe, white being a metaphor for cleanliness, or holiness, can be connoted far from sinful deeds and always close to Allah. A

teacher should guard himself from things that are useless and degrading to his dignity and reduce the desire for the worldly, but get closer to the Ukhrawi. By having the nature of zuhud, this is the main purpose of teaching because it seeks the pleasure of Allah and not to seek rewards. A teacher also has a wara' attitude, which means avoiding the matter of syubhat that can bring harm. According to Yusuf Qardhawi, the attitude of wara' protects oneself from bad deeds, based on science. So that the effect of the attitude of wara' will show a critical and selective attitude and not take action unless it is permissible and right.

In this case, the Qur'an has explained QS. Al-Qashash verse 77: "And seek the Hereafter with what Allah has bestowed upon you, but do not forget your portion in this world and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not do evil on earth. Truly, God does not like people who harm. (QS. Al-Qashash: 77).

Assertive Attitude and Sense of Responsibility

At-Thabari thinks that when he wanted to travel, the pious person gave a condition to Moses that he should not ask about what he had done until he explained and explained it, the 'alim always affirmed the requirement and advised when Moses opposed it, even until the third time the mistake was repeated and Khidir fulfilled the promise that Moses had made before the third incident, as the reason for the separation between the patient Khidir and the Moses who was not strong enough to question and deny his deeds [53]. Al-Maraghi argues that Khidir made conditions to Moses before travelling, until the first to last events when Moses violated these conditions. However, Khidir still rebuked and affirmed the conditions made, and kept the promise made by Moses as the reason for the separation between the two [54]. Assertiveness and responsibility are a person's ability to show or convey feelings and thoughts logically in communication. From Khidir's firm attitude and responsibility to Musa, this is a form of the teacher's affection for his students [55].

Be patient

At-Thabari and al-Maraghi argue that on his journey, Khidir always warned Moses of the terms that had been agreed upon to Moses, when Moses forgot or violated the terms without giving a definite punishment, even though the mistake was repeated a second time and Khidir remained patient to give it, until the third incident was repeated, as well as as a farewell for the fulfillment of the promise made by Moses [56]. A teacher in Islamic education, of course, must face their test in the transformation of science, so it is required to meet the criteria as a teacher in carrying out their duties, including having to have patience. As a murabbi, teachers must animate the nature of rabbaniyah in dealing with students. In reality, in education, there are always students who are serious about learning, there are also lazy to study, naughty, wayward, and even harassment of the educational component, thus this is the reality of life that has been set by Allah in life. So that the teacher's patience test is nothing but hoping for the pleasure of Allah SWT [57].

Forgiveness

At-Thabari argues that in the events carried out by Khidir from the beginning to the end of the journey he always received a rebuttal or opposition from Moses, but Khidir meekly reminded him of the promised conditions, so that Moses apologized for his conduct or indiscipline in that regard and Khidir apologized to Moses despite his guilt [58]. [59]. Al-Maraghi argues that in all three cases/incidents committed by Khidir, who always received opposition from Moses, but with patience, Khidir always forgave Moses, even though what Moses did was a mistake [60]. Similarly, students have aspects of dedication criteria in carrying out their rights and obligations, namely:

Intention because of Allah in Seeking Knowledge

At-Thabari argues that the phrase God willing, is a form of Musa's seriousness to follow Khidir, even though it is not following the truth he knows. Al-Maraghi argued that the words God willing, which Moses spoke, were a sincerity intention to learn in accompanying Khidir without denying what Khidir did. In the learning process, intention is the most important thing that students must have, because learning is an 'ubudiyah activity in getting closer to Allah, so it must be guarded from things that damage the intention (takabbur, riya', 'ujub, etc.) [61], [62].

Students must be Respectful and Polite to the Teacher.

At-Thabari argues that Musa's request to Khidir to teach him knowledge that is not yet known was very gentle. So that with this knowledge, it can provide guidance to the truth. This is an expression of inferiority towards a teacher, even though students have a lot of knowledge. Al-Maraghi argued that when he met and greeted and talked, then Moses begged Khidir to teach him the knowledge that Allah had taught him to be used as a guide for life in his affairs, namely, useful knowledge and righteous deeds. Khidir also gave conditions so that Musa accepted them to maintain the politeness of a student towards his teacher. This attitude of respect and courtesy towards the teacher is a student's seriousness in learning, even though the student himself has other advantages. In the book of ta'lim muta'allim, it is explained that a student will not gain knowledge and benefits except by respecting his knowledge and teacher [63].

Tawadhu'

At-Thabari argues that Musa asked for permission to follow Khidir to be able to learn the knowledge he had as a guide to the truth. Al-Maraghi argues that the coming of Moses enables him to be able to learn what Allah has given to Khidir, a knowledge that will be used as a guide in his affairs. A student must have a tawadhu' attitude towards knowledge and teachers. With the attitude of tawadhu, it is easier to seek knowledge. In line with the glory of knowledge, it is also necessary to maintain the glory of morals, to stay away from bad or despicable morals such as arrogance and haste in seeking knowledge [50], [51].

Patience and Perseverance

At-Thabari argues that what Khidir does is something unseen, while Moses punishes something right or wrong only from zahir alone. Thus Musa was tested for patience and fortitude in the three deeds that Khidir did, namely, when Khidir leaked the ship while the owner was very kind to the two, followed by Khidir killing a child who was playing with his friend, the fact is that the child must be loved, Khidir's refusal to take wages after re-erecting the wall that was about to collapse. Al-Maraghi argues that Moses can't be patient, even though he was a prophet, because of the actions of Khidir at the birth of an iniquity, while the nature of it is not yet known. This is made clear in Moses' journey with Khidir, with three events, but Moses was impatient and steadfast in his deeds.

A person will certainly not be patient until he knows the certainty of a wisdom behind the events he faces. So the essence of patience is a way to find the wisdom behind events. If a student is impatient in demanding the knowledge and behavior of the teacher, then learning will fail. A student must have patience and perseverance, because it is very necessary in pursuing knowledge that has many obstacles. Patience in language means to endure, while in terms it means to refrain from everything that is not liked because of hoping for Allah's pleasure. Some think that patience means perseverance. Patience is one of the main qualities needed by a Muslim both in this life and in the hereafter, especially in studying. Therefore, a

student must be steadfast and patient in seeking knowledge so that there is no misunderstanding of the knowledge sought [55], [56].

Obey and Obey the Teacher's Instructions. At-Thabari argues that after seeing Musa's sincere intention to learn, Khidir gave him conditions, until finally Moses accepted and followed him carefully. Al-Maraghi is of the opinion that the condition of Khidir was accepted by Moses and followed these conditions, which is an obedience and obedience to the teacher or in order to maintain courtesy to the teacher. Following the current reality, a student sometimes gets a teacher whose actions are contrary to his opinion, maybe even against the shari'a. Facing such situations and conditions, it is necessary to take a wise stance so that the harmony between teachers and students is maintained. In this case, the Qur'an has provided guidelines and instructions for good steps in knowledge.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Teacher and Student Concepts Based on At-Thabari and Al-Maraghi's Tafsir

Aspect	At-Thabari's Perspective	Al-Maraghi's Perspective
Method of Tafsir	<i>Tahlili</i> with <i>bil ma'tsur</i> approach (narration-based)	<i>Tahlili</i> with combined <i>bil ma'tsur</i> and <i>bil ra'yi</i> , sociocultural and literary interpretation
Main Focus	Emphasis on sanad (chains of narration), fiqh, and language structure	Accessible language for public understanding, focused on moral and practical lessons
Teacher Concept	Teacher as <i>murabbi</i> (educator), <i>mu'allim</i> (instructor), <i>mursyid</i> (guide), <i>muaddib</i> (civiliser), <i>mudarris</i> (informer)	Same five dimensions, with emphasis on contextual moral application
Key Teacher Qualities	Humility (<i>tawadhu'</i>), asceticism (<i>zuhud</i>), firmness, responsibility, patience, forgiveness	Similar values, with a focus on community engagement and simplicity of explanation
Student Concept	Student as <i>thalib</i> (seeker of knowledge), committed to obedience, respect, and sincerity.	Reinforces the <i>Thalib</i> model, stressing politeness, perseverance, and seeking knowledge for Allah
Teacher–Student Dynamics	Based on prophetic models, especially the Moses–Khidr interaction as an educational journey	Emphasizes patient guidance, spiritual transformation, and practical wisdom
Relevance to SDGs	Supports SDG 4 through moral development and structured learning roles	Advances SDG 4 by promoting inclusive, accessible, and ethically grounded education

Analysis. The comparative analysis between At-Thabari and Al-Maraghi's interpretations of Surah Al-Kahfi verses 65–78 reveals deep educational insights into the roles of teachers and students in both classical Islamic tradition and modern pedagogical contexts. Although both scholars interpret the same passage, their approaches reflect different emphases—At-Thabari relies heavily on *bil ma'tsur* (narrative-based interpretation), while Al-Maraghi incorporates *bil ra'yi* (reason-based) and social-linguistic dimensions, making his tafsir more accessible and practical for contemporary education. The concept of the teacher is holistically described using five foundational roles: *murabbi* (spiritual nurturer), *mu'allim* (knowledge transmitter), *mursyid* (moral guide), *muaddib* (discipline developer), and *mudarris* (knowledge explainer). These categories reflect a multidimensional understanding of educators, not merely as academic instructors but as moral and ethical role models. Both scholars emphasize the importance of teacher attributes such as humility (*tawadhu'*), asceticism (*zuhud*), patience, assertiveness, and the ability to forgive, suggesting that character is central to educational leadership.

On the other hand, students are described as *thalib* (seekers of knowledge), who are required to uphold discipline, sincerity, respect, and perseverance. The dynamic interaction between Moses and Khidr serves as a pedagogical blueprint for balancing authority and humility, questioning and obedience. When contextualised within

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), this interpretive model supports the aim of delivering inclusive and equitable quality education. It highlights the need to combine academic excellence with ethical and spiritual formation. The teacher–student relationship is reframed not only as instructional but also as transformational. By aligning classical Islamic frameworks with the strategic goals of the SDGs, particularly in fostering lifelong learning and moral responsibility, this study offers a hybrid educational model. It bridges the gap between spiritual values and contemporary learning challenges, enabling a deeper, value-oriented impact on learners in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

The interaction between professional teachers and outstanding students is a complex and dynamic process that can be effectively analyzed through the lens of Nash’s principles in game theory. In this context, educational optimization occurs when both parties mutually consider each other’s strategies and interests, carefully responding to actions and reactions within the learning environment. Hacking the pathway to educational success requires a fine balance between effective instructional delivery and strong student motivation, as well as the commitment and pedagogical competence of the teacher. When understood through the Nash framework, teacher–student interactions become more collaborative and mutually beneficial, fostering a dynamic learning atmosphere that supports long-term academic excellence. From an Islamic perspective, particularly based on the interpretation of Surah Al-Kahf verses 65–78 through the exegeses of At-Thabari and Al-Maraghi, the teacher-student relationship carries profound moral and spiritual dimensions. While both scholars present similar conceptual foundations, their interpretative methods differ: At-Thabari applies a *tahlili* approach grounded in traditional narrations (*bil ma’tsur*), while Al-Maraghi combines *bil ma’tsur* with rational analysis (*bil ra’yi*) and adopts a socio-cultural literary style (*tafsir al-adabi al-ijtima’i*). The implications of these interpretations in today’s educational context include the emergence of teacher-student respect and role identity, rooted in the classical concepts of *murabbi*, *mu’allim*, *mursyid*, *muaddib*, and *mudarris*. These roles require teachers to exhibit humility (*tawadhu’*), asceticism (*zuhud*), assertiveness, patience, and forgiveness. Meanwhile, students should embody dedication as *thalib* (seekers of knowledge), guided by sincerity, respect, humility, perseverance, and obedience. This integrated model aligns closely with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive, equitable, and values-based learning environments. It emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the cultivation of ethical and spiritual excellence. The synergy between classical Islamic values and modern strategic theory provides a transformative educational paradigm, fostering human development in both intellectual and moral dimensions.

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Author Contribution

The authors contribute to the publication of this paper, and the author reads and agrees to this paper, and the author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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