



# Revisiting the Curriculum of Madrasah Nizhamiyah: Inspirations for Contemporary Islamic Education in Indonesia.

Alhamuddin,<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Fanani,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam



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## Correspondence

Alhamuddin

Universitas Islam Bandung

✉ [alhamuddinpalembang@gmail.com](mailto:alhamuddinpalembang@gmail.com)



**ABSTRAK:** Penelitian ini menelusuri warisan intelektual Madrasah Nizhamiyah dan pengaruhnya terhadap perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia, dengan fokus khusus pada kurikulumnya. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode historis dan komparatif, penelitian ini mengkaji sumber primer dan sekunder—termasuk teks-teks sejarah, struktur kurikulum, serta filsafat pendidikan Madrasah Nizhamiyah—dan membandingkannya dengan praktik pendidikan Islam kontemporer di Indonesia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Madrasah Nizhamiyah memainkan peran sentral dalam mengintegrasikan ilmu-ilmu keagamaan dengan ilmu rasional dan pengetahuan umum, sehingga menciptakan model akademik holistik yang secara signifikan membentuk pemikiran pendidikan Islam. Kurikulumnya yang seimbang telah menginspirasi lembaga-lembaga pendidikan modern di Indonesia yang berupaya menyelaraskan disiplin ilmu agama dan ilmu sekuler. Namun demikian, masih terdapat kesenjangan yang persisten: banyak sekolah Islam masih menerapkan pemisahan kaku antara mata pelajaran agama dan sekuler, sehingga melemahkan visi integratif yang semula diusung oleh model Nizhamiyah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa warisan Nizhamiyah memberikan wawasan berharga bagi reformasi pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Pendekatan integratifnya dapat dijadikan kerangka kerja untuk mengembangkan sistem pendidikan Islam yang lebih seimbang, inklusif, dan kompetitif secara global. Oleh karena itu, direkomendasikan agar lembaga pendidikan di Indonesia mempertimbangkan penerapan kurikulum terintegrasi serupa guna membekali peserta didik dengan kompetensi modern yang relevan sekaligus mempertahankan identitas keislaman mereka..

**ABSTRACT:** This study explores the intellectual legacy of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah and its influence on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, with a focus on its curriculum. Using a qualitative approach with historical and comparative methods, the research examines primary and secondary sources—including historical texts, curricular structures, and educational philosophies of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah—and compares them with contemporary Islamic education practices in Indonesia. Findings reveal that the Nizhamiyah Madrasah played a pivotal role in integrating religious sciences with rational and general knowledge, establishing a holistic academic model that significantly shaped Islamic educational thought. Its balanced curriculum has inspired modern Indonesian institutions aiming to harmonize religious and secular disciplines. However, a persistent gap remains: many Islamic schools still maintain a rigid separation between religious and secular subjects, undermining the integrative vision originally advanced by the Nizhamiyah model. The study concludes that the Nizhamiyah's legacy offers valuable insights for reforming Islamic education in Indonesia. Its integrative approach can serve as a framework for developing a more balanced, inclusive, and globally competitive Islamic education system. It is therefore recommended that Indonesian educational institutions consider adopting a similarly integrated curriculum to equip students with relevant modern competencies while preserving their Islamic identity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic education has a very significant role in shaping world civilization, both in religious, social and intellectual aspects. One of the most influential examples in the history of Islamic education is the Nizhomiah madrasa, founded by the Prime Minister of the Seljuk Dynasty, Nizam al-Mulk, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Baghdad [1]. Madrasah Nizhamiyah was not only a center of Islamic education but also a pioneering institution in developing a structured and scientific educational system that integrated religious knowledge with rational sciences. Established in the 11<sup>th</sup> century under the patronage of Nizam al-Mulk, this madrasa played a significant role in institutionalizing education in the Muslim world. The curriculum combined traditional Islamic sciences such as *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and *hadith* with rational disciplines like philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, reflecting a holistic educational vision [2], [3]. This integrative model later inspired many Islamic educational institutions globally, including in Indonesia, where similar approaches to curriculum blending have emerged in pesantren and Islamic universities [4].

The Nizhomiah Madrasah was not just an educational institution that imparted religious knowledge, but also a center of scientific development that brought together the intellectual traditions of the East and West. Through the teaching and research conducted at the madrasa, Muslim scientists educated there built an intellectual network that connected the Islamic world with the West. Some of the scientific works of scientists affiliated with the Nizhomiah madrasa were translated into Latin and became the main reference for Western scientists at that time [5]. Thus, the Nizhomiah madrasa played a role in connecting the East and the West in the context of the exchange of knowledge and thought. The educational model applied in this madrasa also contributed significantly to the development of a more systematic and structured Islamic education system [6].

The influence of the Nizhomiah madrasa is not only limited to the Islamic world at that time, but also extends to the present, including in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic education in Indonesia has been influenced by various Islamic education traditions from the Middle East, one of which is the education model adopted from the Nizhomiah madrasa [7]. This education system, which integrates religious and general sciences, has had a major impact on the development of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia [8]. In addition, the Nizhomiah madrasa also introduced a scientific approach that encouraged critical and rational thinking in understanding religious teachings, which is very relevant to be applied in Indonesian Islamic education today.

Madrasah Nizhamiyah, established in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Nizam al-Mulk, played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual tradition of Islamic education by integrating religious sciences with rational disciplines in a formalized curriculum. This institution attracted and produced prominent scholars across various fields. Among the most notable were Imam al-Ghazali, a leading figure in *theology* and *philosophy*; Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, known for his contributions to *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*; al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, an authority in *hadith studies*; and al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik, who contributed to *logic* and *philosophy* [2], [9]. The curriculum also covered *mathematics*, *astronomy*, and *medicine*, reflecting a holistic approach to knowledge that was advanced for its time. Such integration of religious and rational sciences helped establish a model that influenced Islamic educational institutions across the Muslim world, including in Southeast Asia [4], [10].

As an educational institution that prioritizes quality teaching and character building, Nizhomiah madrasa teaches the importance of a well-organized education management system. This more professional management of education is implemented through a strict selection of teachers and the curriculum taught. The

teachers at Madrasah Nizhamiyah were not only renowned religious scholars but also experts in various fields of rational sciences, reflecting the institution's commitment to an integrative model of education. Among them was Imam al-Ghazali, a theologian and philosopher whose works bridged *religious ethics* and *metaphysics*; Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, a master in *Islamic jurisprudence* and *legal theory*; al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, a specialist in *hadith methodology*; and al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik, who contributed to *philosophy*, *logic*, and *science*. These educators not only taught religious subjects but also facilitated the study of *mathematics*, *astronomy*, and *medicine*, allowing students to acquire a comprehensive education (Makdisi, 1981; Nakosteen, 1964; Ibn al-Nadim, 1970). The high quality of instruction and interdisciplinary approach adopted at Nizhamiyah contributed significantly to the formation of a generation of Muslim intellectuals who were proficient in both religious scholarship and scientific inquiry [2], [9], [10], [11].

In addition, the curriculum of Madrasah Nizhamiyah emphasized the importance of developing knowledge that could be applied to improve the social and economic conditions of the community. One of the notable initiatives was the inclusion of practical sciences—such as medicine, astronomy, and mathematics—alongside religious sciences, which allowed students to engage with real-world issues affecting society [2], [9]. Furthermore, scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali, who taught at the Nizhamiyah in Baghdad, emphasized in his works—particularly *Ihya Ulum al-Din*—the ethical responsibilities of scholars and rulers in ensuring justice, welfare, and economic equity within the community [12]. This ethical orientation is evident in the broader educational goals of the madrasa, which went beyond intellectual development to include the formation of moral integrity and social consciousness. Such values—morality, social justice, and care for the *ummah*—remain deeply relevant for Islamic education in Indonesia today, where challenges demand not only academic intelligence but also strong character and social responsibility.

For example, Islamic education in Indonesia currently faces the ongoing challenge of presenting a curriculum that successfully integrates religious knowledge with general knowledge. Education systems that overemphasize religious teachings often risk limiting students' intellectual growth in the fields of science and technology. Conversely, an excessive focus on general knowledge may lead to the erosion of religious values that are essential for shaping moral character and ethical behavior. This tension has been the subject of significant discourse among Islamic education scholars in Indonesia. According to Azra [4], the legacy of Islamic educational reform in the archipelago has long been shaped by the attempt to harmonize *tafaqquh fi al-din* (deep understanding of religion) with modern sciences through curriculum integration. Similarly, Boil [13] emphasizes that a holistic curriculum is essential in preparing students to face the challenges of globalization without losing their moral and religious identity. In this regard, the educational approach promoted by the Nizhamiyah madrasa—which offered a balanced integration of religious and rational sciences—remains highly relevant. This model can serve as a valuable reference for Islamic education in Indonesia today, aiming to produce graduates who are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded and socially responsible.

The relevance of Nizhomiah madrasa education to Islamic education in Indonesia is also reflected in its efforts to create intellectual networks that connect different cultures and scientific traditions. The Nizhamiyah madrasa was not merely a local educational institution, but a pioneering model that facilitated the structured transmission of knowledge across the Islamic world, and indirectly influenced intellectual currents in the West. Founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century under the patronage of Nizam al-Mulk, its institutional structure included standardized curricula, state-sponsored endowments (*waqf*), salaried professors, entrance qualifications for

students, and tiered levels of instruction—features that were unprecedented at the time [2]. According to George Makdisi, the Nizhamiyah system laid the groundwork for many academic practices that were later adopted by medieval European universities, including the *licentia docendi* (license to teach), collegial instruction, and structured faculties [2]. The presence of scholars from diverse regions—such as Khurasan, Nishapur, and the Levant—at Nizhamiyah institutions fostered an intellectual exchange that reached well beyond Baghdad. This system enabled the transmission of classical Greek knowledge (through Arabic translations and commentaries) and its reintroduction into Europe via centers such as Andalusia and Sicily [9], [14]. Therefore, the Nizhamiyah madrasa represents not only a reform in Islamic education but also a catalyst in the global circulation of knowledge. In the current context of Indonesian Islamic education, building global intellectual networks is crucial, given that Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world and has great potential in the development of science, especially in areas such as Islamic economics, education, and technology. By adopting a more global and integrated approach, Islamic education in Indonesia can strengthen its position in the international community and play an active role in the development of global science and technology.

In this regard, the Nizhamiyah madrasa championed the importance of intellectual openness, encouraging diversity of thought and interaction among various schools and traditions of knowledge. Although firmly rooted in the Islamic educational tradition, the madrasa's influence extended beyond the Muslim world—especially through its systematic academic model and transmission of scientific and philosophical texts—demonstrating the critical role of cross-cultural engagement in knowledge development [2], [14]. The novelty of this article lies in its effort to reinterpret the Nizhamiyah model not merely as a historical achievement, but as a living pedagogical framework that offers actionable insights for contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. While existing scholarship has extensively examined the institutional history of madrasas, few have explored how the integrative and interdisciplinary spirit of Nizhamiyah can directly inform curriculum reform in modern Muslim contexts. Given the current challenges faced by Indonesia—ranging from fragmentation between religious and secular knowledge to the demand for globally competent Muslim scholars—revisiting the Nizhamiyah paradigm provides a timely and relevant contribution to the discourse. It encourages a shift from dualism to integration, from exclusivity to inclusivity, and from insularity to global connectivity in Islamic educational thought and practice.

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach to understand the influence of the intellectual heritage and curriculum of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah on Islamic education in Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore data in depth, providing a more nuanced understanding of the historical and contemporary contexts [15]. In particular, this research utilizes a combination of historical and descriptive-analytical methods. The historical method aims to trace the intellectual heritage of Madrasah Nizhamiyah by analyzing primary sources, such as classical books, historical documents, and related literature, which provide insights into the madrasa's curriculum and its intellectual contributions [16]. The descriptive-analytical method is used to connect this historical heritage with the current state of Islamic education in Indonesia, focusing on how the integration of religious and general knowledge promoted by Nizhamiyah can inform modern educational practices [17]. This dual methodological approach enables a comprehensive analysis that bridges the past and present, providing a solid foundation for understanding the ongoing relevance of the Nizhamiyah model.

Data collection was done through literature study, interviews, and observation. The literature study involved a review of primary texts and modern literature on the Nizhamiyah Madrasah. Interviews were conducted with Islamic education experts and historians to obtain their views on the influence of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah. Observations were made in Islamic educational institutions to see the application of values or concepts that may be rooted in the legacy of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Data were coded to find the main themes, such as the intellectual values and curriculum of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah and its influence on contemporary Islamic education. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from literature studies, interviews and observations to ensure the validity of the findings.

## RESULTS

This study aimed to explore the contribution of the Nizhamiyah madrasah in creating a systematic and structured Islamic education and its relevance to Islamic education in Indonesia. The Nizhamiyah madrasa, founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Nizam al-Mulk in the Persian region, became one of the Islamic educational institutions famous for its ability to integrate religious and general sciences in its curriculum system.

### Structured and Integrative Education System in Nizhamiyah Madrasahs

The Nizhamiyah Madrasah was one of the first examples in the history of Islamic education to develop a well-organized education system that combined religious and general sciences. This integrated approach was groundbreaking, as it aimed to produce well-rounded scholars proficient in both religious and rational knowledge. The curriculum implemented at the Nizhamiyah madrasa included religious sciences such as fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and theology, alongside subjects like mathematics, astronomy, logic, and philosophy [2]. The madrasa's educational framework was highly structured, with a system of faculties and professors specializing in different disciplines, which reflected the integration of various fields of knowledge into a coherent curriculum [14]. This interdisciplinary approach was essential in fostering intellectual development and contributed to the madrasa's influence on the educational systems that followed.

The success of the Nizhamiyah madrasa in developing a structured educational system can be attributed to its innovative classroom management and teaching methods. In the 11th century, scholars at these madrasas adopted pedagogical practices that were ahead of their time, including interactive discussions and case studies that encouraged critical thinking. This approach was based on the method of dialectical reasoning and empirical observation, which made the learning process dynamic and engaging [16]. Students were not only taught from religious texts but also from scientific and philosophical works, which helped them understand the world in a more comprehensive way. These methods facilitated the development of scholars who were capable of producing groundbreaking ideas in both the Islamic intellectual tradition and Western scholarship.

Therefore, the Nizhamiyah madrasa was not only a center of religious education but also a model of an educational institution that fostered interdisciplinary learning. The madrasa's contribution to Islamic education was foundational in shaping a generation of scholars who were both religiously learned and intellectually capable, setting the foundation for the development of other institutions of learning, which would go on to influence the curricula of universities in both the Islamic world and medieval Europe [2], [14].



### Relevance of Nizhamiyah Madrasah to Islamic Education in Indonesia

Islamic education in Indonesia currently faces significant challenges in terms of curriculum preparation that can effectively integrate religious and general sciences. In many educational institutions, Islamic education is often trapped in the separation between the two disciplines. The curriculum in most Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia still emphasizes the teaching of religious sciences, while general sciences such as science and technology are often neglected. The educational model implemented in the Nizhamiyah madrasa, however, offers an opportunity to overcome these challenges by integrating religious and general sciences into one comprehensive curriculum. This integration is not merely an Islamization of general knowledge, but rather a synthesis of both domains, where religious knowledge complements and informs the understanding of scientific concepts, and vice versa. As Nasr [18] explains, Islamic knowledge is holistic, encompassing both religious and secular knowledge, with the aim of advancing the well-being of both individuals and society.

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia today, this approach could improve the quality of existing education by offering students not only religious teachings but also skills and knowledge relevant to the demands of the modern world. Al-Attas [19] argues that Islamic education should develop a holistic view, where religious teachings and secular sciences are intertwined to foster a balanced intellectual and moral character. The integration seen in the Nizhamiyah madrasa was grounded in the belief that knowledge, whether religious or secular, serves the greater purpose of advancing individual and societal well-being. By applying a holistic curriculum, as seen in the Nizhamiyah model, students could be taught to view science through an Islamic ethical and philosophical lens, while simultaneously gaining a deep understanding of empirical sciences.

Such an approach would not only foster intellectual growth but also the development of a generation that is both knowledgeable in their faith and capable of addressing global challenges. For Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country, adopting this integrated curriculum could lead to the development of a more holistic Islamic education system that balances religious teachings with contemporary knowledge, preparing students to contribute effectively to both the spiritual and technological progress of society [2], [14], [18], [19], [20].

### Development of Global Intellectual Networks

One of the major contributions of the Nizhamiyah madrasa was its ability to build robust intellectual and institutional networks that connected the Islamic world with centers of learning in both the East and West. The madrasa became not only a hub of scholarship but also a model of institutional excellence that produced great scholars such as Al-Ghazali in theology and philosophy, and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in tafsir and natural sciences—individuals who engaged in critical discourse across disciplines, some of which later intersected with Western intellectual traditions [2], [9]. These networks were supported by a systematic curriculum, patronage from the state (notably under Nizam al-Mulk), and a commitment to academic rigor that encouraged open intellectual exchange and interdisciplinary inquiry [14], [21].

In the context of Indonesia today, Islamic education can learn from this model by institutionalizing international partnerships, establishing joint research centers, initiating faculty and student exchange programs, and integrating multilingual curricula to foster global academic engagement. For example, Islamic universities and pesantren could collaborate with international Islamic studies departments or global research institutes to create dual-degree programs, host global conferences, and publish in international scholarly journals—thus positioning

Indonesian Islamic education as a serious contributor to global academic discourse [18], [20].

Such institutional development would require not only policy reforms but also the creation of strategic frameworks at the ministerial and institutional levels. These would include the establishment of an international office in every Islamic higher education institution, greater investment in ICT infrastructure for virtual collaborations, and curriculum reforms that encourage multilingualism and comparative religious studies [22], [23], [24], [25]. By emulating the intellectual openness and strategic foresight of the Nizhamiyah model, Indonesia can elevate the quality and reputation of its Islamic education system while preparing students to become globally engaged and intellectually diverse leaders.

### Character and Morality Building

Madrasah Nizhamiyah not only focused on teaching religious and rational sciences, but also placed significant emphasis on character formation (*tahdzib al-akhlaq*). The curriculum and educational ethos of Nizhamiyah promoted core values such as discipline, justice, humility, respect for teachers, social responsibility, and leadership grounded in ethical conduct [2], [9]. These values were not taught separately, but were embedded in the learning process through mentorship-based pedagogy, daily interactions, and the moral examples set by prominent scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali, who emphasized the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and ethical reasoning in all aspects of life (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*) [12].

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, this integrated approach to character building is highly relevant, especially in facing the socio-moral complexities of the digital era—where students are increasingly exposed to challenges such as digital ethics, instant gratification, and social disconnection. Building character traits such as discipline (*al-intizām*), respect for teachers (*ta'zim al-mu'allim*), honesty (*sidq*), and a sense of responsibility (*'amānah*) is essential to nurturing well-rounded individuals who not only possess intellectual competence but also spiritual and moral depth [26], [27]. To implement this in Indonesian Islamic education, character education must be integrated within every subject, not treated as an isolated module. Teachers need to be trained not only in subject expertise but also in *akhlaq* pedagogy, and school environments should foster holistic learning climates that promote spiritual practice (such as congregational prayers), mutual respect, and community engagement.

### Dynamic and Inclusive Curriculum Adaptation

Islamic education in Indonesia often faces criticism for having a curriculum that is too rigid and less adaptive to the demands of contemporary life. One potential solution can be drawn from the educational model of Madrasah Nizhamiyah, which was revolutionary in its time. Unlike earlier madrasah models that primarily focused on religious sciences (*al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah*) such as fiqh, tafsir, and hadith, Nizhamiyah introduced a structured curriculum that also integrated rational sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah*)—including logic (*manṭiq*), philosophy (*falsafah*), astronomy (*'ilm al-hay'ah*), mathematics (*riyāḍiyyāt*), and medicine (*ṭibb*)—within the formal educational setting [2], [9].

This inclusion of diverse disciplines was a significant innovation that marked a shift from traditional rote-based learning towards a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, aiming to produce scholars (*'ulamā'*) who were intellectually versatile and socially responsive. The curriculum encouraged analytical thinking, debate (*munāẓarah*), and the application of knowledge for the benefit of society—setting it apart from earlier educational forms that often limited students to narrow fields of religious study [18], [19].

In the context of Indonesia today, where Islamic education still tends to emphasize religious knowledge without sufficient integration of science and technology, the Nizhamiyah model serves as a valuable inspiration. A modern adaptation of this approach could involve curriculum redesign that includes subjects such as digital literacy, environmental science, entrepreneurship, and civic education—taught alongside core Islamic studies. This integration would help students become not only spiritually grounded but also intellectually competitive and socially engaged, thereby addressing educational inequality and promoting inclusive development.

### Challenges of Implementing the Nizhamiyah Model in Indonesia

While the Nizhamiyah madrasah education model offers significant potential for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, its implementation faces several contextual challenges. One of the main challenges is the need to adapt the integrated curriculum—combining religious and general sciences—to the local socio-cultural context of Indonesia. Given the diversity in ethnicity, language, and educational background across the archipelago, a uniform application of such a model may not be effective. Local wisdom and societal needs must be taken into account to ensure relevance and acceptance of the curriculum [26], [28].

Another critical challenge lies in the availability of educational resources and infrastructure, especially in rural or underdeveloped regions. Many madrasahs and pesantren still struggle with limited access to quality facilities, teaching materials, and well-trained educators [29]. This disparity impacts the consistency and quality of education delivery. Moreover, the professionalism and pedagogical competence of teaching staff remain a crucial issue; many educators lack adequate training in interdisciplinary teaching that integrates both religious and secular subjects [30]. To address these issues, strategic efforts are required, such as: (1) developing context-sensitive curriculum models, (2) providing capacity-building programs for teachers, and (3) strengthening educational management at the institutional level. These steps are essential to realize a holistic and integrated Islamic education model inspired by Nizhamiyah, which not only upholds the richness of Islamic knowledge but also equips students with the skills needed in a rapidly changing world.

### Collaboration with the Global World

In this era of globalization, Islamic education in Indonesia needs to develop a wider international network. Madrasah Nizhamiyah can serve as a model in this regard, with its ability to establish links with the Western world. Islamic education in Indonesia can benefit greatly from exchanging knowledge, ideas and experiences with international educational institutions. This collaboration can enrich the perspective of Islamic education in Indonesia and help students to develop a broader understanding of the world, as well as prepare them to play a role in a global society [31], [32].

### Addressing Equitable Access to Islamic Education

One of the biggest challenges in Islamic education in Indonesia is unequal access to quality education. Many regions, especially those located in remote areas, still lack adequate educational facilities. Madrasah Nizhamiyah, although initially restricted to certain circles, developed an education system that was inclusive and accessible to various levels of society. In the Indonesian context, it is important to ensure that Islamic education is accessible to all, regardless of their social or economic background. Providing adequate educational facilities and improving the quality of teaching in remote areas will greatly contribute to the equitable distribution of quality Islamic education [6].

The study of the Nizhamiyah madrasa reveals an educational approach that remains highly relevant to the

development of Islamic education today, particularly in the Indonesian context. Established by Nizam al-Mulk in the 11th century, the madrasa became a pioneer in integrating religious sciences (such as fiqh, tafsir, and kalam) with general sciences (including philosophy, mathematics, logic, and astronomy). This integration reflects a balanced vision of education, where faith and reason co-exist to cultivate holistic human development [2], [9].

This approach aligns well with constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is constructed through experience, reflection, and interaction with the environment [15]. By integrating theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge, the Nizhamiyah model encourages critical thinking and contextual application—traits urgently needed in facing modern educational demands.

However, the current state of Islamic education in Indonesia often reveals a sharp dichotomy between religious and general knowledge. Many institutions still maintain parallel curricula that treat religious education and general science as separate, rather than complementary domains. This fragmentation has several consequences: (1) religious knowledge becomes abstract and disconnected from contemporary challenges, and (2) general knowledge is presented without spiritual or ethical grounding [19], [26], [28]. Such compartmentalization hampers the formation of well-rounded individuals who are spiritually grounded and intellectually competent.

The core problem in integrating knowledge in Islamic education today lies in the absence of a unified epistemological framework that accommodates both revelation-based and rational/scientific knowledge. Efforts toward Islamization of knowledge, as proposed by al-Attas (1993) and others, have not yet been widely adopted or institutionalized in Indonesia's curriculum systems. As a result, many educators and policymakers still struggle to conceptualize and implement integrated learning that is both Islamic in worldview and modern in pedagogical practice [8].

Thus, the Nizhamiyah model offers a valuable reference point—not merely as a historical legacy but as a pragmatic paradigm for rethinking curriculum design. Adopting this approach could lead to a recontextualized Islamic education that links the sacred and the scientific, fosters analytical reasoning, and promotes moral responsibility in addressing contemporary social and global challenges [2], [9], [33].

The application of integral education theory, which emphasizes that education should encompass all aspects of human life—intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social—is highly relevant to Islamic education in Indonesia [26], [28]. However, the main problem lies in the implementation: Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia still struggle to determine which general sciences are relevant to be integrated into the religious curriculum, and how such integration should be structured pedagogically. Currently, religious and general knowledge are often taught in silos, without a shared epistemological foundation [34]. For integration to be meaningful, subjects such as environmental science, digital literacy, health science, and economics—especially those with ethical implications—should be contextualized through Islamic perspectives to foster not only scientific competence but also moral discernment.

The Nizhamiyah madrasa provides a valuable historical model for this integration. It offered a curriculum that combined theology with logic, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy—disciplines that were previously absent or marginal in Islamic education. In modern Indonesia, this approach could be adapted by developing interdisciplinary modules (e.g., "*Fiqh of the Environment*," "*Technological Ethics in Islam*") that train students to navigate contemporary issues with both religious insight and scientific literacy.

In terms of character education, while Islamic education in Indonesia has emphasized moral values through subjects like Akhlak

and Fiqh, the current issue is that character formation is often limited to theoretical instruction, lacking structured, experiential implementation. Drawing from Nizhamiyah's emphasis on justice, leadership, and responsibility, character education should include programs that actively engage students in leadership training, community service, interfaith and interethnic dialogue, and simulation-based moral decision making. For example, students should experience how to lead ethically in school organizations, how to respond to corruption through ethical debates, or how to manage pluralism respectfully. This requires a pedagogical shift toward values internalization through action [35].

As for building global intellectual networks, the problem is twofold: (1) limited proficiency in international academic discourse (e.g., English, Arabic) among students and teachers; and (2) lack of institutional partnerships that allow for knowledge exchange. Unlike Nizhamiyah, which served as a knowledge bridge between East and West, many Indonesian Islamic institutions remain isolated from global academic developments. To emulate Nizhamiyah's success, Indonesia should implement concrete actions such as establishing dual-degree programs, virtual exchange classrooms, collaborative research with international Islamic studies centers, and participation in global educational summits. Institutions like UIN and pesantren-university hybrids could lead this initiative.

Overall, implementing these educational ideals in Indonesia faces serious systemic challenges, including bureaucratic rigidity, lack of interdisciplinary teacher training, and uneven educational resources between urban and rural areas. Hence, a phased reform is needed—starting from pilot projects that develop integrative curricula, to teacher capacity-building programs, to long-term policy support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education [29], [31], [36], [37].

The next recommendation is the need for multicultural education that teaches students to appreciate differences and build a more global intellectual network [38]. Madrasah Nizhamiyah shows how education can function as a bridge between cultures, which is very relevant to Indonesia's ethnic and religious diversity. Islamic education in Indonesia should open up more space for students to understand and appreciate cultural diversity, both local and global. By introducing the values of tolerance and inclusivity, Islamic education can help create a generation that is not only intelligent, but also has a sense of empathy and the ability to cooperate with various social and cultural group [39].

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Nizhamiyah madrasa is a model of Islamic education that is very relevant to Islamic education in Indonesia today. The curriculum that integrates religious and general sciences, as well as the scientific approach that emphasizes critical and rational thinking, is very relevant to be applied in Indonesian Islamic education. In addition, the historical traces of the Nizhamiyah madrasa that built intellectual networks between East and West provide inspiration for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia that is more inclusive, professional, and globally competitive.

Nizhamiyah madrasa has a major contribution in the development of Islamic education that is structured, systematic, and integrates religious knowledge with general knowledge. The educational model applied in this madrasah is very relevant to the challenges of Islamic education in Indonesia, which currently requires reforms in curriculum, management, and character building. By adapting the principles of the Nizhamiyah madrasa, Islamic education in Indonesia can become more holistic, relevant to the times, and ready to compete at the global level. Although there are challenges in terms of implementation, this educational model provides a solid foundation for creating a more adaptive, inclusive and quality Islamic education in Indonesia.

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