

Islamic Educational Thinking Of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas And Its Relevance To The Moral Crisis Of Youth

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the Islamic educational thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and examine its relevance to the moral crisis of youth in the modern era. The rapid development of the digital era has significantly influenced adolescents' lifestyles, ways of thinking, and behavior, resulting in various forms of moral degradation such as declining adab, weakening spiritual values, deviant behavior, and identity crises. This study employs a qualitative approach using library research as the research design. Data were collected through documentation studies by examining various primary and secondary sources related to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's educational thought, the concept of ta'dib, Islamic education, and youth moral crises. The data were analyzed using content analysis methods to understand, interpret, and draw conclusions from the examined literature. The findings reveal that the concept of adab in Al-Attas's educational thought occupies a central position in shaping knowledgeable and moral individuals. The moral crisis among youth is essentially caused not only by weak social control but also by an epistemological crisis that leads to the loss of the ability to understand the true nature of knowledge and values. The concept of ta'dib proposed by Al-Attas serves as an important solution because it emphasizes not merely behavioral formation, but also the transformation of consciousness, the integration of knowledge and values, and the development of morality oriented toward truth and spiritual responsibility. Therefore, strengthening adab in Islamic education becomes a fundamental agenda for shaping a young generation with noble character, strong morality, and the ability to face the challenges of modernity.

Keywords:

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas; Islamic Philosophy of Education; Moral Degradation of Youth.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pemikiran pendidikan Islam menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas serta mengkaji relevansinya terhadap krisis moral remaja di era modern.

Kata Kunci:

Syed Muhammad

Perkembangan era digital yang semakin pesat telah membawa perubahan besar dalam pola hidup, cara berpikir, dan perilaku remaja, yang pada akhirnya memunculkan berbagai bentuk degradasi moral, seperti menurunnya adab, lemahnya nilai spiritual, perilaku menyimpang, dan krisis identitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (library research). Data dikumpulkan melalui studi dokumentasi dengan menelaah berbagai sumber primer dan sekunder yang berkaitan dengan pemikiran pendidikan Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, konsep ta'dib, pendidikan Islam, dan krisis moral remaja. Data dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis isi (content analysis) untuk memahami, menafsirkan, dan menarik kesimpulan dari berbagai literatur yang dikaji. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep adab dalam pemikiran Al-Attas memiliki posisi sentral dalam pembentukan manusia berilmu dan bermoral. Krisis moral remaja pada hakikatnya tidak hanya disebabkan oleh lemahnya kontrol sosial, tetapi juga oleh krisis epistemologis yang menyebabkan hilangnya kemampuan memahami hakikat ilmu dan nilai. Konsep ta'dib menurut Al-Attas menjadi solusi penting karena tidak hanya menekankan pembentukan perilaku, tetapi juga transformasi kesadaran, integrasi ilmu dan nilai, serta pembentukan moralitas yang berorientasi pada kebenaran dan tanggung jawab spiritual. Dengan demikian, penguatan adab dalam pendidikan Islam menjadi agenda fundamental untuk membentuk generasi muda yang berkarakter, berakhlak mulia, dan mampu menghadapi tantangan modernitas.

Naquib al-Attas; Pendidikan Karakter Islami; Nilai-nilai Tauhid dalam Pendidikan.

Received : 19 February 2026; Revised: 28 April 2026; Accepted: 1 May 2026

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Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam
Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara



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1. Introduction

Rapid developments, particularly in the digital era, have brought about significant changes in various aspects of human life, including the formation of adolescent morals and personalities. Advances in information technology have made it easier to access knowledge and communication, but on the other hand, they also present serious challenges to the moral life of the younger generation. Various phenomena such as increased bullying behavior, referring to social media, declining respect for parents and teachers, and weakening religious values indicate that adolescents today are facing a quite concerning moral crisis. This phenomenon can occur in the family, school, and community environment, making it an issue that requires serious attention from the world of education. (Fatimah, 2025).

In the context of Islamic education, moral development is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but also the instilling of spiritual values in students. Spirituality in education encompasses inner attitudes such as serenity, gratitude, patience, sincerity, and self-control. These attitudes do not develop instantly but are formed through a process of habituation, repeated religious experiences, and an educational environment that supports the internalization of religious values. Without strong spiritual development, education has the potential to produce

individuals who are intellectually intelligent but weak in self-control and moral maturity. (Eka, 2020). However, the reality shows that current educational practices are not fully aligned with these ideal goals. In many educational institutions, the learning process still emphasizes cognitive aspects and academic achievement, while fostering good manners and morals has not received adequate attention. The educational curriculum tends to be oriented towards grades, exams, and competitions, often marginalizing aspects of character development. As a result, adolescents possess sufficient intellectual abilities but lack self-control, social empathy, and moral responsibility. This situation demonstrates a mismatch between the ideal goals of Islamic education and the moral realities of adolescents in practice. (Fakru, 2025).

It is in this context that the thoughts of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas become important to examine. Al-Attas emphasized that the core of Islamic education is the instilling of *adab* (*ta'dib*), namely the recognition and acknowledgment of the true nature of all things so that humans are able to place things in their proper place. According to al-Attas, the moral crisis occurring in society, including among adolescents, is rooted in the loss of *adab*, which leads to a confusion of knowledge. Education that is not based on *adab* has the potential to produce individuals who are intellectually intelligent but morally and spiritually fragile. (Tamam, 2024) Al-Attas also criticized the modern education system, which separates knowledge from monotheistic and moral values. This separation between religious and general knowledge creates an educational dichotomy that results in an imbalance in the personality of students. Therefore, he proposed an integrative concept of Islamic education, one that unites knowledge, faith, and morals into a unified whole. The ultimate goal of education, in al-Attas's view, is the formation of an *adabi* human being, a person who possesses a balance between intellectual intelligence, spiritual depth, and moral nobility. (Fadhilah, 2025)

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's concept of Islamic education emphasizes that the goal of education is not merely the mastery of knowledge, but the formation of civilized individuals (*insan adabi*) capable of integrating knowledge with etiquette (*ta'dib*). This view aligns with the notion that knowledge is a pillar of civilization, serving not only for intellectual advancement but also as a foundation for the formation of individual morals and character. Therefore, education that emphasizes the integration of knowledge and etiquette can be a solution to addressing the moral crisis in adolescents, as the learning process not only develops cognitive intelligence but also fosters spiritual awareness, self-control, and social responsibility. (Kustiana, 2018)

A moral crisis is a situation in which ethical values and virtues in an individual's or society's life are declining. This crisis indicates a decline in commitment to good values, a diminished sense of responsibility, and the emergence of actions that conflict with religious teachings and social norms. Among adolescents, a moral crisis is typically seen in actions that violate norms, disrespect for parents and teachers, and a lack of understanding of moral boundaries that should be maintained). (Fitriatin, 2018).

Besides the issue of values and attitudes, there is also the term ethics. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that discusses the values of good and bad theoretically, based on rational thought. The main difference between morals, ethics, and ethics lies in their sources and methods of thought. The moral crisis among adolescents can be seen in various actions that violate norms. One common form is bullying, whether physical, verbal, or through digital media. This behavior demonstrates a lack of empathy and awareness of the consequences of actions on others. Another form of moral crisis is the decreasing respect for parents, teachers, and friends. Disrespectful behavior, rebellion, and a lack of respect for authority indicate that the value of manners in adolescent life is declining.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach because the main objective of the research is to explore, understand, and analyze deeply the Islamic educational thinking of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and its relevance to the contemporary moral crisis experienced by youth. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate since this research emphasizes interpretation, understanding of concepts, philosophical analysis, and the examination of educational values contained in Al-Attas' thoughts regarding adab, knowledge, morality, and Islamic education.

The type of research used in this study is library research, where the researcher collects and examines various literature sources related to the topic under study. The research focuses on textual analysis of books, journals, scientific articles, and other academic documents discussing the educational philosophy of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas as well as issues concerning the moral degradation of youth in modern society. Through this method, the researcher seeks to identify the core concepts of Islamic education proposed by Al-Attas and analyze their relevance as a solution to the current moral crisis among adolescents.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. The primary data sources include the original works of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, such as *Islam and Secularism*, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, and other writings related to Islamic education, adab, ethics, and civilization. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources consist of books, accredited journals, theses, dissertations, conference proceedings, and relevant scientific articles that discuss Al-Attas' educational thought, Islamic philosophy, character education, and youth moral issues in the contemporary era.

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation methods by identifying, selecting, reading, classifying, and recording

relevant literature related to the research topic. The collected data were then systematically organized based on themes and categories connected to Islamic educational values and youth morality.

The data analysis technique used in this research is content analysis. Through this method, the researcher analyzes the contents of texts and literature comprehensively to interpret the meaning, concepts, values, and educational principles contained in Al-Attas' thoughts. The analysis process includes data reduction, data categorization, interpretation, and drawing conclusions regarding the relevance of Al-Attas' Islamic educational thinking in addressing the moral crisis of youth, such as declining manners, lack of discipline, weakening spiritual values, hedonistic lifestyles, and the influence of secularism and globalization on adolescent behavior. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education, particularly in strengthening character education and restoring moral values among youth based on the concept of adab proposed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.

3. Result and Discussion

The study, specifically Syed Naquib al-Attas's Islamic education thinking and the reality of the moral crisis of teenagers, still requires further exploration. Many studies discuss the concept of adab and Islamic education normatively, but have not in depth examined the relevance of al-Attas' thinking as a solution to the moral problems of teenagers in the modern era. Al-Attas explained that he rejected the separation of religious and general knowledge. He found that integrating knowledge can shape students into more responsible and morally upright individuals. This research supports your research focus on integrative Islamic education. (Jamil, 2025).

Other research also describes the phenomenon of adolescent moral crisis which is characterized by a decline in moral values, weak self-control abilities, and a decline in religious and moral awareness. The concept of Islamic education according to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas emphasizes that the goal of education is not just the mastery of knowledge, but the formation of civilized humans (*insan adabi*) who are able to integrate science with adab (*ta'dib*). This view aligns with the idea that science is a pillar of civilization, serving not only for intellectual advancement but also as a foundation for the formation of individual morals and character. Therefore, education that emphasizes the integration of science and morals can be a solution to addressing the moral crisis in adolescents, as the learning process not only develops cognitive intelligence but also fosters spiritual awareness, self-control, and social responsibility.

The Concept of Islamic Education According to Al-Attas

The study's findings indicate that Al-Attas' educational thinking centers on the concept of *ta'dib* (*adab*) as the core of Islamic education. Education is not

simply understood as a process of transferring knowledge (ta'lim), but as a process of instilling values and developing a holistic personality. Some key concepts identified include:

- a) Manners as the goal of Education
Education aims to form civilized humans (insan adabi), namely individuals who know and place things appropriately in the order of life.
- b) Islamization of science
Al-Attas emphasized the need to purify science from the influence of Western secularism to conform to Islamic values.
- c) Integration of science and faith
Knowledge is not neutral, but must be connected to the spiritual dimension and monotheism.
- d) The concept of a perfect human being
The ultimate goal of education is to produce complete human beings who are balanced intellectually, morally and spiritually.

Characteristics of Youth Moral Crisis: Based on a literature review, the current moral crisis among youth is characterized by several main phenomena:

- a) Degradation of ethical and moral values (decreased politeness, responsibility)
- b) Increased deviant behavior (juvenile delinquency, technology abuse)
- c) The influence of secularization and globalization
- d) Low spiritual awareness and religiosity

This phenomenon is influenced by an education system that tends to emphasize cognitive aspects rather than character formation.

The Relevance of Al-Attas' Thoughts to the Moral Crisis of Youth

- a) The concept of manners as a solution to moral degradation: Instilling good manners is the main foundation in forming ethical behavior and character of young people.
- b) Islamization of knowledge as a response to secularization: By integrating religious values into science, young people can have a complete and unfragmented worldview.
- c) Integration of science and faith to enhance spirituality: Tawhid-based education is able to build strong spiritual awareness.

The Islamic educational thought constructed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas cannot be understood partially as a normative pedagogical discourse, but must be placed within the larger framework of the Islamic epistemological project that seeks to reconstruct the relationship between knowledge ('ilm), values (adab), and reality (haqiqah). In Al-Attas' formulation, the concept of ta'dib does not merely refer to ethical education in a moralistic sense, but is an ontological-epistemological process that structures human consciousness so that it is able to recognize and place everything according to the correct hierarchy of existence (its proper place). Thus, education functions as a mechanism for the transformation of consciousness that simultaneously integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. This orientation firmly criticizes the reductionism of modern education that tends to instrumentalize knowledge into a

mere tool of economic production, thereby ignoring the teleological dimension of education as a process of forming civilized humans (*insan adabi*).

Furthermore, the idea of the Islamization of science articulated by Al-Attas represents an epistemological critique of the hegemony of the secular paradigm that dominates contemporary knowledge structures. The secularization of science, from this perspective, not only signifies the institutional separation between religion and science but also reflects a process of desacralization of meaning, which implies a loss of value orientation in the production and distribution of knowledge. As a result, science loses its normative-transcendental dimension and tends to operate within a positivistic framework that negates metaphysical reality. In this context, the Islamization of science is not an attempt at "surface Islamization," but rather a process of deconstruction and conceptual reconstruction of key categories in science to align them with the monotheistic worldview. In other words, the Islamization of science functions as an attempt to reintegrate epistemology and axiology, so that science is not only methodologically correct but also morally and spiritually correct.

In relation to the phenomenon of the youth moral crisis, the results of the literature review indicate that the crisis is structural and multidimensional, encompassing cognitive, affective, and existential aspects. The ethical degradation evident in deviant behavior, increasing moral relativism, and weakening spiritual awareness are indicators of a more fundamental crisis, namely a crisis of meaning and a crisis of identity (identity dislocation). Modern youth find themselves in a fragmented epistemic situation, where the knowledge they acquire is not integrated with a coherent value system, resulting in a dissonance between what they know and what they practice. This condition is exacerbated by the penetration of globalization and digitalization, which accelerate the flow of information without being balanced by critical capacity and an adequate ethical foundation. Thus, the youth moral crisis cannot be reduced to a matter of individual behavior, but must be understood as a consequence of the failure of the education system to build integration between knowledge, values, and life orientation.

Within this framework, the relevance of Al-Attas's thought becomes increasingly significant as a conceptual basis for formulating an alternative, holistic-integrative educational paradigm. The concept of *adab* serves as an internal organizing principle that regulates not only human relations with others, but also with knowledge and God, thus producing an ethical awareness that is intrinsic, not merely normative-external. Meanwhile, the integration of knowledge and faith within the framework of monotheism allows for the formation of a cohesive personality structure, where the rational and spiritual dimensions are not in an antagonistic relationship, but rather mutually reinforcing. Thus, *ta'dib*-based education is not only oriented towards knowing and doing, but also towards being, namely the formation of an authentic and meaningful human existence.

Conceptually, these findings indicate that Al-Attas' educational thought has the theoretical and practical capacity to respond to the moral crisis facing youth in the context of late modernity. Implementing this paradigm demands a

fundamental reorientation in curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and the role of educators as agents of value transmission and moral role models. Thus, the revitalization of the concept of ta'dib is relevant not only as an academic discourse but also as a strategy for educational transformation that has the potential to produce a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also possesses moral integrity and spiritual depth.

4. Conclusion

The dominance of the concept of adab in the construction of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's educational thought emphasizes that the moral crisis of youth is essentially rooted in an epistemological failure to understand and properly position knowledge. In Al-Attas's framework, adab is not merely an external ethical norm, but rather an internal structure of consciousness that hierarchically regulates human relations with knowledge, the self, and reality. When the educational system ignores this dimension and becomes trapped in cognitive-instrumental reductionism, what is produced is not a knowledgeable human being, but rather an individual experiencing value disorientation. Thus, the moral degradation evident in various forms of deviant behavior cannot be understood as mere social deviation, but as a manifestation of a deeper crisis of meaning—namely, the loss of the ability to distinguish truth ontologically, not merely normatively. At this point, adab functions as a corrective mechanism that not only shapes behavior but also reconstructs ways of thinking and interpreting reality.

Furthermore, the relevance of adab as a solution lies not in its normative-prescriptive nature, but in its capacity as an integrative principle capable of bridging the fragmentation between knowledge and values generated by the secular paradigm. The moral crisis of youth in the context of modernity is triggered not only by weak social control, but also by the disconnect between the knowledge possessed and the ethical orientation that guides action. In this situation, the internalization of adab becomes crucial because it operates at the level of moral agency formation, namely the individual's ability to act based on internalized awareness of values, rather than external pressures. Thus, the implementation of the concept of adab in education cannot be done sufficiently through a formal curricular approach, but must be directed at a transformation of consciousness that touches the existential dimension of students. Therefore, strengthening adab is not only a pedagogical strategy, but also a fundamental epistemological agenda to return education to its original function as a process of forming whole, meaningful, and value-oriented human beings.

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