

The Reconstruction of *Al-Ma'rifah* Based Islamic Education from Al-Ghazali's Perspective

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Abstract: *Contemporary Islamic Education still faces the challenge of a disconnect between intellectual achievement, spiritual development, and moral education, particularly amid the increasing use of digital technology. This study employed a qualitative case study design at MIN 1 Lumajang from March to June 2026. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews with the madrasah principal, curriculum administrators, teachers, religious counselors, and students, and a review of documents. The data were analyzed using reflective thematic analysis, employing Al-Ghazali's thought as an interpretive lens. This study aims to analyze the embodiment of Al-Ma'rifah values in Islamic Educational practices and to explain the relationship between reason, the heart, knowledge, deeds, and character as the foundation of integrative Islamic Education. The results indicate that the value of Al-Ma'rifah is embodied through integrity-based evaluation, a spiritual culture, the integration of values into the curriculum, reflective pedagogy, adab-based digital literacy, and teachers serving as role models. Reason serves to understand knowledge, the heart guides intention, knowledge forms the basis of action, deeds are the means of application, and character demonstrates consistency in values. However, their application has not yet been fully integrated into institutional policies.*

Keywords: *Reconstruction, Islamic Education, Al-Ma'rifah, Al-Ghazali*

Introduction

Social change, advances in digital technology, and the increasing complexity of life's challenges are driving education to focus not only on academic achievement but also on shaping individuals with moral integrity, spiritual maturity, and social responsibility ([Ibrahim et al., 2024](#)). While the digitization of education has expanded access to information and learning resources, it also presents new challenges, including information overload, dependence on technology, digital plagiarism, a decline in reflective thinking, and a weakening of ethical standards in the application of knowledge ([Mardatillah et al., 2025](#)). Various international reports indicate that the success of 21st-century education is increasingly determined by students' ability to integrate knowledge, values, character, and moral responsibility in addressing the ever-changing challenges of life ([Naila Hanin Naswa & Muthoifin, 2025](#); [Warsah et al., 2024](#)). Therefore, Islamic Education faces the

challenge of presenting a learning model that produces students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually mature and of good character.

In this context, Islamic Education actually possesses an epistemological tradition that views knowledge as a means of forming the whole person. However, contemporary educational practices still often separate academic achievement from moral character development ([Rukhaiyah Abd Wahab, 2025](#)). Knowledge is more often understood as the mastery of concepts and skills, while the dimensions of purifying the heart, cultivating good manners, and fostering devotion to Allah are frequently treated as mere supplements to learning. As a result, students can access a wide range of information but do not necessarily possess the ability to use it responsibly. Various studies on modern Islamic Education also indicate that integrating knowledge and values still faces implementation challenges, particularly in seamlessly linking learning, school culture, assessment, and technology use ([Anggraini et al., 2025](#); [Budiyanti & Parhan, 2024](#)).

These issues demonstrate that Islamic Education requires a philosophical foundation capable of bridging the relationship between reason, the heart, knowledge, deeds, and moral character. One concept of great relevance is *Al-Ma'rifah* in Al-Ghazali's thought. Unlike understandings of knowledge that emphasize only the intellectual aspect, *Al-Ma'rifah* views knowledge as a process involving reason, the purification of the soul, spiritual experience, and guidance from revelation. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, reason serves to understand and evaluate knowledge, while the heart serves as the center of moral orientation, determining how knowledge is applied ([Intania et al., 2025](#)). Knowledge gains value when it is manifested in action and reflected in moral character. Thus, *Al-Ma'rifah* offers an educational paradigm that integrates "knowing," "being," and "doing" in a cohesive manner.

This approach becomes increasingly important in the digital age, when students are not only required to acquire information but also to verify, interpret, use, and ethically account for it. Islamic Education, therefore, cannot be limited to teaching critical thinking skills or digital literacy alone. Learning must cultivate reflective awareness that enables students to understand the relationship between knowledge, moral responsibility, and humanitarian goals. From this perspective, *Al-Ma'rifah* is not understood as an individual mystical experience, but rather as an epistemological framework that integrates intellectual, spiritual, social, and ethical dimensions into the entire educational process.

Various previous studies have examined Al-Ghazali's educational thought from diverse perspectives ([Adnan et al., 2025](#); [Jenuri et al., 2025](#)). Some studies have focused on character education and the cultivation of moral conduct, while others have addressed Sufi epistemology, the concept of the purification of the soul, or the relevance of Al-Ghazali's philosophy of education to the challenges of modern education ([Fadhil & Sebgag, 2021](#); [Maghribi & Hidayah, 2025](#)). Other studies have also begun to link Al-Ghazali's thought to digital transformation, holistic education, and the development of Islamic Education curricula ([Mukti et al., 2021](#)). Nevertheless, most research still addresses these aspects only partially. The relationship between *Al-Ma'rifah* as an educational epistemology and actual learning practices, evaluation systems, madrasah culture, digital literacy, and teacher role modeling has not yet been extensively examined empirically through field research.

This gap is significant because the quality of Islamic Education is determined not only by the existence of a curriculum or religious materials but also by the mechanisms through which knowledge is understood, interpreted, practiced, and embodied in students' lives. Without a framework that unites intellectual and spiritual dimensions, education risks producing learning that emphasizes mastery

of subject matter without corresponding character development. Conversely, moral guidance unsupported by a robust intellectual process can result in normative educational practices that fail to address contemporary issues. Therefore, an educational framework is needed that can holistically connect the processes of knowing, internalizing, and acting.

This study offers a novel approach by reconstructing *Al-Ma'rifah* as the foundation of integrative Islamic Education through an empirical analysis of educational practices at MIN 1 Lumajang. Unlike previous studies, which have largely positioned *Al-Ma'rifah* as an individual philosophical or spiritual concept, this study views *Al-Ma'rifah* as an educational framework that connects five main dimensions: reason, heart, knowledge, action, and character within the curriculum, pedagogy, learning assessment, madrasah culture, digital literacy, and teacher role modeling. This approach shifts the discussion of *Al-Ma'rifah* from the conceptual realm toward educational practices that can be observed, analyzed, and developed as a model for contemporary Islamic Education.

Based on this description, this study aims to: (1) analyze how the values of *Al-Ma'rifah* are embodied in educational practice, and (2) examine how the relationship between reason, heart, knowledge, action, and character is reconstructed as the foundation of integrative Islamic Education. Theoretically, this study expands the epistemological discourse on Islamic Education by reconstructing *Al-Ma'rifah* as an integrative paradigm. In practice, the research findings are expected to serve as the basis for developing curricula, learning strategies, evaluation systems, institutional culture, and digital literacy that balance academic achievement with character development, spirituality, and social responsibility.

Method

This study employs a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the application of *Al-Ma'rifah* values in Islamic Educational practices at MIN 1 Lumajang ([Creswell & Poth, 2018](#)). This design was chosen because the study is not aimed at measuring relationships between variables, but rather at exploring the meanings, experiences, policies, and educational practices that connect reason, the heart, knowledge, deeds, and moral character. The units of analysis include the learning process, assessment, madrasah culture, the integration of values into the curriculum, the use of digital technology, teachers' exemplary behavior, informants' narratives, and institutional documents. The case study approach allows these phenomena to be examined contextually and holistically within clearly defined boundaries of location, actors, and educational activities, so that the actualization of *Al-Ma'rifah* can be understood through the experiences of the madrasah community, rather than solely through normative philosophical explanations.

The research was conducted at MIN 1 Lumajang, Lumajang Regency, East Java, from March to June 2026. The location was chosen because the madrasah integrates academic learning with religious practices, moral education, environmental awareness, and the use of digital technology. These characteristics provide a relevant context for examining the relationship between knowledge, spiritual awareness, action, and character development. Informants were selected for their direct involvement in and knowledge of educational administration, namely the madrasah principal, the vice principal for curriculum, Islamic Religious Education teachers, classroom teachers, religious activity coordinators, and students. The selection of informants took into account the relevance of their experiences, their ability to provide rich information, and the diversity of

institutional, pedagogical, and spiritual perspectives, as well as students' learning experiences.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data used in a complementary manner. Primary data was obtained through observations of learning activities and madrasah culture, as well as in-depth interviews with school leaders, curriculum managers, teachers, religious activity coordinators, and students. This data includes interpretations of the relationship between knowledge and ethics, character development, the application of knowledge in action, assessments of honesty and responsibility, spiritual activities, educators' exemplary conduct, and the ethical use of technology. Secondary data was obtained from curriculum documents, teaching modules, assessment instruments, school regulations, religious programs, activity logs, and guidelines for the use of digital media. The works of Al-Ghazali, particularly *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, and *Mizan al-'Amal*, were used as a sensitizing framework to enrich interpretations without supplanting the meanings emerging from the empirical data.

Data collection was conducted through non-participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis (Creswell, 2009). Observations focused on patterns of interaction between teachers and students, forms of spiritual cultivation, strategies for linking curriculum content to behavior, the implementation of assessments, the use of digital resources, and educators' exemplary conduct in daily activities. Interviews used open-ended questions, developed through probing techniques, to explore the experiences, reasons, goals, and considerations underlying educational practices. Documentation was used to assess the alignment between written policies, informants' narratives, and on-the-ground implementation. Observation results were recorded in field notes, while interviews were audio-recorded with the informants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve the context and meaning of the statements accurately.

The researcher serves as the primary instrument involved in data collection, interpretation, and reflection. Interview guidelines, observation sheets, document analysis matrices, analytical memos, and reflective journals support procedural consistency. The instruments were designed around two research foci: the embodiment of *Al-Ma'rifah* values in Islamic Educational practice and the reconstruction of the relationship among reason, the heart, knowledge, action, and character as the foundation of integrative education. Research questions were reviewed in advance to ensure their clarity, relevance, and suitability for each informant's background. Reflexivity was maintained by documenting initial assumptions, the researcher's position, decisions made during data collection, and the potential influence of Al-Ghazali's framework on the interpretation process, ensuring that the analysis remained open to findings that aligned with or diverged from the conceptual framework.

Data analysis was conducted through a combination of reflexive thematic analysis and an interpretive reading of the concept of *Al-Ma'rifah*. The process began with transcribing the interviews, repeatedly reading the data, writing memos, and identifying units of meaning. The data were then coded inductively based on emerging patterns and deductively based on the research focus and the concepts of *akal*, *qalb*, *ilmu*, *amal*, *adab*, and *akhlak*. Codes with similar meanings were grouped into categories and developed into main themes. Interpretation was conducted by moving between specific data segments, the cases as a whole, the madrasah context, and Al-Ghazali's thought. Provisional themes were continually tested by comparing interview data, observations, and documents to identify patterns, variations, gaps, and relationships among themes.

Al-Ghazali's thought was used as an interpretive lens, not as a category imposed on all the data. The concept of *akal* is used to analyze the process of understanding and evaluating knowledge, while *qalb* is used to interpret inner orientation, intention, and moral consciousness. Knowledge is analyzed based on its function and utility; action is examined through the application of knowledge in practice; and character is understood as the consistency of values in behavior. This framework is used to interpret learning assessments, madrasah culture, curriculum integration, reflective pedagogy, digital literacy, and teacher role modeling. The data is given space to reveal alignments, developments, and gaps between the concept of *Al-Ma'rifah* and the reality of contemporary education in madrasahs.

The validity of the findings is ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, peer discussion, analysis of different cases, and an audit trail ([Miles & Huberman, 2014](#)). Source triangulation is conducted by comparing statements from madrasah principals, curriculum managers, teachers, religious advisors, and students. Methodological triangulation is achieved through cross-validation of interviews, observations, and documentation. Summaries of interviews and preliminary interpretations were confirmed with informants to ensure the accuracy of the meaning and context of their statements. Peer discussions were used to test assumptions, clarify categories, and assess the coherence of themes. Data that did not fit the dominant pattern were still analyzed to ensure that conclusions did not oversimplify the diversity of experiences. The entire process of data collection, coding, theme development, and concluding was documented to ensure the research's credibility, reliability, confirmability, and traceability.

The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of voluntary consent, participant protection, and data confidentiality. Before data collection, the researcher obtained permission from MIN 1 Lumajang and explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, use of data, and the informants' rights. Participation by school administrators and educators was voluntary, while student involvement was subject to approval by the school and the relevant authorities. Informants had the right to refuse to answer questions or to withdraw from participation without any consequences. Informants' identities were disguised using codes, such as W-KM for the madrasah principal, W-WKK for the vice principal in charge of curriculum, W-GPAI for the Islamic Education teacher, W-GK for the classroom teacher, W-PKA for the religious activities coordinator, and W-PD for students. Recordings, transcripts, field notes, and documents were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.

Result and Discussion

Result

1. Embodying the Values of *Al-Ma'rifah* in Islamic Education

The first manifestation of the value of *Al-Ma'rifah* is evident in the learning assessment process. Teachers do not merely consider the accuracy of answers but also pay attention to how students arrive at, understand, and justify their answers. Diligence, independence, discipline, honesty, and responsibility are all taken into account during the assessment process. When an answer is found to be too similar to a classmate's work or copied from the internet, the teacher does not immediately assign a grade; instead, the teacher asks the student to reread the source, explain the answer's content, and rewrite it in their own words. An Islamic Education teacher explains,

"When grading assignments, I don't just look at whether the answers are right or wrong. I also assess whether the student completed the work independently, understands the answer, and takes responsibility for the assignment. If the answer is the same as a classmate's, I usually ask them to explain it again in their own words." (W-GPAI/2026)

This practice demonstrates that academic outcomes are inseparable from the accompanying moral process. From the perspective of *Al-Ma'rifah*, knowledge is not sufficiently evaluated by the sheer volume of information mastered, but also by the honesty and awareness with which it is acquired. A correct answer loses its educational significance if it is produced through imitation or reliance without understanding. Students also experience this firsthand. A student shared,

"If my answer is the same as a classmate's, the teacher usually asks where I got the answer from. We are then asked to read the material again and rewrite it in our own words. The teacher says we must understand the answer, not just to finish the assignment." (W-PD-1/2026)

The values of *Al-Ma'rifah* are also embodied through the madrasah's culture. Activities such as greeting one another, praying before and after lessons, reading the Qur'an, performing congregational prayers, maintaining cleanliness, respecting teachers, and helping classmates are part of the students' daily lives. These practices are not only intended to foster discipline but also to shape behavioral tendencies that can be applied at home and in the community. The madrasah principal stated,

"We routinely conduct activities such as praying, reading the Qur'an, praying in congregation, maintaining cleanliness, and exchanging greetings so that they become habits for the children. The hope is that they will not only practice these at the madrasah but also carry them into their lives at home and in the community. (W-KM/2026)

Although these religious practices have been carried out routinely, the students' level of awareness is not yet entirely consistent. Some students can participate in activities without constant reminders, while others still engage in horseplay or act undisciplined when teacher supervision is reduced. The religious activities coordinator explained,

"The children are indeed accustomed to participating in religious activities, but their levels of awareness vary. Some are already well-behaved without being reminded, but others still joke around when the teacher is not nearby. Therefore, they need to be continuously guided and have the purpose of the activities explained to them." (W-PKA/2026)

The embodiment of the value of *Al-Ma'rifah* is further evident in the integration of religious values into various subjects. The curriculum documents indicate that faith, piety, moral character, intelligence, responsibility, and environmental awareness are integral parts of the

educational orientation. These values are not solely the responsibility of religious education teachers; they are also developed in general education. Material on the environment, for example, is linked to the responsibility to care for God's creation. Language instruction is linked to honesty and politeness, while social studies is focused on cooperation and compassion. The madrasah's vice principal for curriculum explained,

"Strengthening religious values and character is the responsibility of all teachers. Every subject actually has values that can be developed. For example, environmental education is directed toward caring for God's creation, while language education is directed toward honesty and courtesy in communication." (W-WKK/2026)

The integration of these values does not stop at offering advice but extends to concrete actions. When discussing environmental pollution and cleanliness, teachers help students understand that protecting the environment is a form of human responsibility toward God's creation. Afterward, students are guided to apply this understanding through simple activities, such as keeping the classroom clean. A classroom teacher shared,

"When discussing environmental pollution and cleanliness, I don't just explain the material. I also help the children understand that protecting the environment is a human responsibility toward God's creation. Afterward, they are guided to take simple actions, such as keeping the classroom clean." (W-GK-1/2026)

The value of *Al-Ma'rifah* is also fostered through reflective learning. Teachers do not always end a lesson once students can provide the correct answer; instead, they encourage them to reflect on the material's benefits, the consequences of their actions, and its application in daily life. When discussing honesty, for example, students are not merely asked to memorize a definition but are also encouraged to connect it to behaviors such as cheating, admitting mistakes, telling the truth to their parents, and returning a classmate's belongings. An Islamic Education's teacher explained,

"If students are only asked to memorize the definition of honesty, they might be able to answer during a test, but they may not necessarily understand how to apply it. That's why I relate it to things close to their lives, such as cheating, admitting mistakes, telling the truth to parents, and returning a friend's belongings." (W-GPAI/2026)

The next manifestation of the value of *Al-Ma'rifah* is evident in the use of digital technology. Videos, the internet, and digital devices help students understand the material and access a wider range of learning resources. However, teachers also face the tendency for students to seek instant answers and copy information without understanding it. Therefore, students are guided to read, analyze, and paraphrase the information in their own words. A classroom teacher explained,

"Using videos and the internet helps children understand the material more easily. The problem is, when given an assignment, some children immediately copy the answers they find. That's why I ask them

to read first, understand the content, and then rewrite it in their own words." (W-GK-2/2026)

A teacher's exemplary conduct is the most tangible manifestation of *Al-Ma'rifah*. Students learn not only through advice but also through the behavior they observe daily. Discipline, courtesy, patience, engagement in worship, attention to cleanliness, and the way teachers correct students are all integral parts of the educational experience. The madrasah principal emphasized,

"It is not enough for teachers to simply offer advice. When asking children to be disciplined, teachers must also demonstrate discipline. When teaching courtesy and religious practice, the teacher's behavior must also be consistent. Children are more likely to imitate what they see every day." (W-KM/2026)

Setting a good example demonstrates a direct connection between knowledge, action, and character. The value of discipline becomes more meaningful when teachers arrive on time, while courtesy takes tangible form when teachers correct students without belittling them. Nevertheless, maintaining consistency in setting a good example is also challenging. Administrative burdens, classroom dynamics, learning objectives, and emotional states sometimes cause teachers to reprimand more quickly than they do explain. This indicates that the realization of *Al-Ma'rifah* requires not only the guidance of students but also the educator's continuous self-reflection and self-development.

2. The Relationship Between Reason, the Heart, Knowledge, Good Deeds, and Morality as the Foundation of Islamic Education

In the learning process, reason serves as a means of understanding knowledge through thinking, discussion, and connecting material to students' experiences. Teachers do not merely explain concepts verbally but encourage students to provide reasons, express their opinions, and relate the material to issues they encounter in their daily lives. When discussing honesty, for example, students are not merely asked to memorize its definition but are invited to discuss behaviors such as cheating, being honest with parents, admitting mistakes, and the responsible use of digital media. An Islamic Religious Education teacher explained,

"If children are only asked to memorize the definition of honesty, they might be able to answer during an exam, but they may not necessarily understand how to apply it. That's why I relate it to things close to their lives, such as cheating, admitting mistakes, being honest with parents, and returning a friend's belongings." (W-GPAI/2026)

These findings indicate that the mind is not only used to receive information but also to understand meaning, weigh reasons, and connect religious concepts to real-life situations. However, this rational thinking process is inseparable from the dimension of the heart (qalb). Teachers strive to instill the awareness that sincere intentions, honesty, and responsibility must accompany knowledge. Therefore, learning is always accompanied by spiritual practices through prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, congregational prayer, and brief reflections before and after lessons. The madrasah principal explained,

“We routinely engage in activities such as praying, reciting the Qur'an, praying in congregation, maintaining cleanliness, and exchanging greetings so that these become habits for the children. The hope is that they will not only practice these while at the madrasah but also carry them into their lives at home and in the community.” (W-KM/2026)

This practice demonstrates that the heart is not viewed merely as an emotional aspect but as the center of moral orientation that guides the application of knowledge. Knowledge is considered meaningless unless accompanied by the awareness to use it correctly. During some learning activities, teachers also pose reflective questions about the benefits of the material studied and the attitudinal changes students need to make. One teacher explained,

“After class, I usually ask what the benefits of the material are and what attitudes they need to improve. Their answers are still simple, but at least they're starting to realize that lessons aren't just about solving problems.” (W-GPAI/2026)

The relationship between reason and the heart then evolves into a discipline that goes beyond mere conceptual knowledge. Observations show that learning materials are always designed to be relevant to real life. Environmental education is linked to the responsibility of caring for God's creation; language education is connected to courtesy and honesty; and internet use is associated with the ethics of obtaining information. The madrasah's vice principal for curriculum explained,

“Strengthening religious values and character is the responsibility of all teachers. Every subject actually contains values that can be developed. For example, environmental education is directed toward caring for God's creation, while language education is directed toward honesty and courtesy in communication.” (W-WKK/2026)

This relationship extends to the dimension of action, that is, the application of knowledge in concrete deeds. Teachers consistently guide students to apply what they have learned through habits such as keeping the classroom clean, taking turns on duty, speaking honestly, returning classmates' belongings, and using the internet responsibly. A classroom teacher explained,

“When discussing environmental pollution and cleanliness, I don't just explain the material. I also help the children understand that protecting the environment is humanity's responsibility toward God's creation. After that, they are guided to take simple actions, such as keeping the classroom clean.” (W-GK/2026)

Students' experiences show that the connection between knowledge and action makes learning easier to understand because they can see the benefits firsthand. A student shared,

“Teachers usually ask us to give examples from our own lives. After learning about responsibility, I realized that doing homework, keeping the classroom clean, and taking turns on duty are also part of that responsibility.” (W-PD/2026)

The entire process ultimately leads to the development of character. Observations show that teachers do not merely convey values through lectures but exemplify them through their daily conduct. Students observe the teachers’ discipline, patience, polite speech, involvement in religious practices, and how they resolve conflicts and correct students without humiliating them. The madrasah principal emphasized,

“It’s not enough for teachers to simply offer advice. When asking children to be disciplined, teachers must also demonstrate discipline. When teaching politeness and religious practices, teachers’ behavior must also be appropriate. Children are more likely to imitate what they see every day.” (W-KM/2026)

Reason helps students understand knowledge rationally; the heart provides spiritual and moral guidance; knowledge serves as the foundation for understanding reality; deeds translate knowledge into concrete actions; and character is the manifestation of the consistency of those actions in daily life. Although this relationship is evident in various teaching practices at MIN 1 Lumajang, its implementation has not yet been fully integrated into the curriculum, assessment, or institutional policies. Most of these practices continue to develop through individual teacher initiatives and the madrasah’s culture.

Discussion

Embodying the Values of *Al-Ma’rifah* in Islamic Education

In learning assessments, teachers do not merely evaluate whether answers are right or wrong but also consider how students acquire and apply their knowledge. Honesty, independence, discipline, and the ability to explain answers are all part of the assessment process. This practice aligns with Al-Ghazali's view that knowledge is valuable not merely because of the amount of information mastered, but because of its impact on behavior and character. Academic achievement, therefore, cannot be considered complete if it is obtained through imitation, copying, or reliance on other sources without understanding. This finding reinforces the views that Islamic Education must address both the intellectual and moral development of students ([Dr. Sheeba Zafar, 2025](#); [Nurhikmah, 2024](#)).

However, the moral dimension in evaluation is still not supported by systematic instruments. Attitude assessment largely depends on teachers' observations and recollections, while indicators regarding reflection, the ethical use of digital sources, and the application of knowledge in social life have not yet been formulated in detail. From the perspective of *Al-Ma’rifah*, evaluation is not intended to measure students' inner essence in an absolute sense, but rather to help them understand the relationship among knowledge, the process of acquiring it, and the responsibility for its use ([Murdani & Fauzi, 2024](#)). Therefore, assessment can be strengthened through reflection journals, self-assessment, attitude portfolios, anecdotal records, and social projects.

Madrasah culture also serves as a vital space for embodying the values of *Al-Ma’rifah*. The practice of prayer, reciting the Qur'an, congregational worship, cleanliness, discipline, and social responsibility demonstrates that character

development cannot be achieved through verbal instruction alone. Values require practice, repetition, guidance, and exemplary behavior to develop into enduring habits. These findings who identify habit formation as a crucial element in Al-Ghazali's moral education ([Ariesi Apriyanti & M. Sirozi, 2025](#); [Salaeh et al., 2023](#)). This study expands on these findings by demonstrating that spiritual culture is also shaped by how teachers communicate with, correct, guide, and treat students.

Although habit formation has been carried out routinely, students' levels of awareness remain uneven. Some children can participate in activities in an orderly manner without supervision, while others still rely on the teacher's presence. This situation indicates a gap between external compliance and internal awareness. From the perspective of *Al-Ma'rifah*, habit formation must be accompanied by explanations of meaning, dialogue, and reflection so that activities do not devolve into mere formal routines ([Uswatun Khasanah, 2024](#)). Students need to understand that worship, cleanliness, discipline, and compassion are forms of responsibility toward Allah, fellow human beings, and the environment.

The integration of values across various subjects demonstrates that *Al-Ma'rifah* can serve as a foundation for reducing the separation between religious studies and general education. Environmental studies focus on the responsibility to care for Allah's creation; language learning emphasizes honesty and courtesy; and social studies promote compassion and cooperation. These findings support who have criticized the dichotomy in scholarship ([Joni Putra et al., 2025](#); [Sri Kadarsih et al., 2025](#)). However, meaningful integration cannot be achieved merely by including values in documents or adding advice at the end of a lesson. Values must influence the objectives, activities, experiences, and evaluation of learning.

In Al-Ghazali's thought, the value of knowledge is determined not only by its type but also by the purpose and benefits of its application. General knowledge can be considered an act of worship if directed toward the common good, whereas religious knowledge can lose its nobility if used for personal gain or self-promotion. Therefore, an *Al-Ma'rifah*-based curriculum does not require every subject to be labeled as religious, but rather directs each field of knowledge toward its ethical responsibilities. Science requires honesty regarding facts; language demands courtesy; technology requires responsibility; and the social sciences foster compassion and justice.

Reflective pedagogy serves as a crucial mechanism linking knowledge to students' experiences and actions. When honesty is associated with avoiding cheating, acknowledging mistakes, and speaking the truth, students not only understand concepts but also assess the consequences of their behavior. These findings support in asserting that Islamic pedagogy must integrate values throughout the learning experience ([Roihatul Jannah, 2023](#)). Within the framework of *Al-Ma'rifah*, reason helps us understand knowledge; the heart guides its application; action implements it; and character demonstrates its consistency.

The use of digital technology also highlights the relevance of *Al-Ma'rifah* to contemporary education. The internet and videos aid learning but simultaneously give rise to copying answers, uncritical acceptance of information, and dependence on technology. Teachers' guidance in reading, understanding, and paraphrasing information is the first step in building adab-based digital literacy ([Arroisi et al., 2025](#); [Rivaldi & Ramadhan, 2024](#)). However, this study emphasizes that digital issues are not merely about technical skills. The more fundamental issues are honesty, independent thinking, verification of information, and responsibility to sources.

Teachers' exemplary conduct is the most tangible manifestation of the actualization of *Al-Ma'rifah*. Teachers who are disciplined, courteous, engaged in

worship, and who correct students without belittling them demonstrate the unity of knowledge, action, and character. These findings reinforce the work of Memon, who position teachers as moral guides ([Haq et al., 2026](#)). However, the consistency of this exemplary behavior is influenced by administrative burdens, classroom dynamics, and emotional states. Therefore, teachers' professional development must include self-reflection, empathetic communication, emotional regulation, and the strengthening of integrity not merely technical training.

The embodiment of the value of *Al-Ma'rifah* at MIN 1 Lumajang takes place through six domains: integrity-based assessment, spiritual culture, curriculum integration, reflective pedagogy, adab-based digital literacy, and teacher role modeling. These six domains demonstrate that *Al-Ma'rifah* can serve as a bridge between academic activities and moral development. However, its implementation is not yet fully systematic because it depends on teachers' initiatives, lacks consistent reflection tools, and has not been incorporated into a comprehensive institutional policy. These findings underscore that *Al-Ma'rifah*-based education must be directed toward transforming knowledge into awareness, awareness into action, and action into character.

The Relationship Between Reason, the Heart, Knowledge, Good Deeds, and Morality as the Foundation of Islamic Education

Research findings indicate that reason, heart, knowledge, deeds, and character in educational practices at MIN 1 Lumajang do not operate in isolation but form a single, mutually reinforcing educational continuum. Reason serves to understand, weigh, and examine knowledge; the heart provides direction for the intentions and purposes behind its application; knowledge forms the basis for determining one's attitude; good deeds translate knowledge into action; while character demonstrates the consistency of those actions in daily life. This relationship underscores that Islamic Education must not only produce students who know what is good but also cultivate the awareness to choose and practice it.

The role of reason becomes evident when students are asked to restate answers, evaluate information, and connect the material to real-world issues. Teachers do not merely demand correct answers but also seek accountable understanding. This practice demonstrates that reason is not a tool for memorizing information but rather the ability to understand, distinguish, and evaluate. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, while this function is important, reason does not operate in isolation ([Aminullah Poya & Habiburrahman Rizapoor, 2023](#)). Knowledge that has been understood requires moral guidance so that it is not misused or employed merely to achieve academic grades.

In madrasah learning practices and culture, the heart is nurtured through prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, communal worship, reflection, and the cultivation of virtuous behavior. These activities are designed so that students do not merely comply with rules but gradually develop an awareness of the reasons behind and the purpose of their actions. This finding aligns with Al-Ghazali's philosophy, which positions the qalb as the center of intention, awareness, and the internalization of values ([Md Isa et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, education of the heart cannot be limited to routine rituals; it must be accompanied by dialogue and reflection so that habits evolve into conscious moral choices.

The relationship between the mind and the heart then provides direction for knowledge. At MIN 1 Lumajang, knowledge is understood not merely as mastery of subject matter but as increasingly linked to its benefits and the responsibilities it entails. Environmental studies are connected to the duty to preserve God's creation; language studies to honesty and courtesy; and technology to digital responsibility. This finding underscores that the value of knowledge is determined not only by its

content or category but also by the orientation of its application. In Al-Ghazali's view, knowledge becomes valuable when it leads humans toward the common good, self-improvement, and closeness to Allah.

Knowledge understood and guided by the heart is then tested through action. Practices such as maintaining cleanliness, performing duty shifts, speaking truthfully, admitting mistakes, and using the internet responsibly demonstrate that learning is directed toward concrete action. In this context, deeds are not merely an afterthought to the learning process but serve as proof that knowledge has been truly understood and internalized ([Gyagenda, 2021](#); [Patrice Lumumba RUDN University et al., 2023](#)). This finding supports that Islamic Education must shift from "knowing" toward "being" and "doing." Learning becomes meaningful when students can connect concepts to their daily decisions and behaviors.

Consistent practice ultimately shapes character. Character does not emerge merely through explanations or advice, but through repeated practice, continuous experience, and the teacher's exemplary conduct. A teacher's discipline, polite speech, engagement in worship, and the ability to correct students without belittling them serve as concrete examples for students ([Fadhil & Sebgag, 2021](#); [Yono, 2025](#)). These findings position teachers as moral guides. Within Al-Ghazali's framework, setting a good example demonstrates the unity between the knowledge taught and the behavior practiced.

The research findings also indicate that this relationship has not yet been fully institutionalized within the educational system. General instruments still dominate assessment; reflection is not yet conducted consistently; the integration of values depends on teachers' creativity; and digital policies have not been formulated in detail. These conditions indicate that the relationship between reason, the heart, knowledge, action, and character is evident in practice but has not yet fully become an official framework within the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and madrasah culture.

Theoretically, this study positions these five elements as the foundation of integrative Islamic Education. Reason shapes the ability to understand and evaluate; the heart builds spiritual and moral orientation; knowledge provides guidance; action serves as the manifestation of application; and character demonstrates the stability of values. This framework unites the cognitive, spiritual, practical, and moral dimensions within a single educational process. Its contribution lies in emphasizing that integrative Islamic Education is not merely about combining religious and general subjects but also about connecting the ways of knowing, the purposes of knowing, the application of knowledge, and character development.

The practical implication is the need for an educational design that consciously connects these five elements. The curriculum must direct knowledge toward the common good; learning must provide space for reflection; evaluation must value process and integrity; madrasah culture must foster conscious habits; and teachers must be supported in maintaining exemplary conduct. The relationship between reason, heart, knowledge, deeds, and character can serve as a foundation that shapes students to be not only academically intelligent but also spiritually mature, responsible, and of good character.

Conclusion

The values of *Al-Ma'rifah* at MIN 1 Lumajang are realized through integrity-based assessment, a spiritual culture, the integration of values into the curriculum, reflective pedagogy, adab-based digital literacy, and teachers serving as role models. These practices demonstrate that education is not only directed toward mastery of

subject matter but also toward how students acquire, understand, apply, and take responsibility for their knowledge. Honesty, independence, responsibility, the habit of worship, concern for the environment, and the ethical use of technology are integral parts of the educational process. Nevertheless, the implementation of *Al-Ma'rifah* is not yet fully systematic because it still relies on teachers' initiatives, lacks consistent tools for reflection, and has not been fully integrated into the madrasah's institutional policies.

The relationship between reason, the heart, knowledge, action, and character has been shown to form the foundation of integrative Islamic Education. Reason serves to understand and evaluate knowledge; the heart guides intentions and moral orientation; knowledge forms the basis for determining attitudes; action translates knowledge into practice; and character demonstrates the consistency of values in daily life. These relationships are dynamic and mutually reinforcing, so that education does not stop at "knowing" but moves toward "being" and "doing." The implications of this research underscore the need for a curriculum oriented toward the common good, learning that provides space for reflection, evaluation that values process and integrity, a madrasah culture that fosters awareness, and teacher development that continuously strengthens exemplary behavior and moral responsibility.

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