

## Reinterpretation of the Islamic Education Thought of Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji: An Analysis of Islamic Epistemology

<sup>1</sup>Benny Afwadzi; <sup>2</sup>Nur Ali; <sup>3</sup>M. Wafiyul Ahdi

<sup>1&2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Universitas KH. A. Wahab Hasbullah Jombang, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>afwadzi@pai.uin-malang.ac.id; <sup>2</sup>nurali@uin-malang.ac.id; <sup>3</sup>wafiamanulloh79@gmail.com

**Abstract.** *The intellectual contribution of al-Zarnuji has significantly impacted the field of Islamic education. However, certain elements of society perceive his ideas as potential hindrances to contemporary progress. This article attempted to comprehensively reinterpret al-Zarnuji's beliefs through the lens of Islamic epistemology to promote constructive discourse between al-Zarnuji's intellectual heritage and the dynamics of the modern era. It used a qualitative approach and a literature review method, with the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* as the primary source. Through an examination of topics related to the diversity of knowledge and its legal dimensions, the intentions underlying the act of learning, and the reverence for knowledge and scholars, this article presents findings that elucidate al-Zarnuji's advocacy of two distinct epistemological paradigms: Bayani and Irfani. Among these paradigms, it is evident that Irfani's epistemology is more dominant than Bayani's. Irfani's reasoning significantly contributes to cultivating moral and spiritual aspects in learners. However, this thinking must not exert excessive hegemony over Islamic education. The most prudent course is maintaining a harmonious equilibrium among the three epistemologies—Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani—to ensure that Islamic education continues to progress.*

**Keywords** Al-Zarnuji; Islamic Education; Islamic Epistemology

**Abstrak.** Pemikiran al-Zarnuji mempunyai pengaruh yang besar dalam dunia pendidikan Islam. Meskipun demikian, bagi sebagian kalangan, pemikiran al-Zarnuji dianggap menghambat kemajuan zaman. Dengan tujuan untuk mendialogkan pemikiran al-Zarnuji dengan perkembangan zaman dan mendapatkan gambaran yang lebih komprehensif, artikel ini mencoba untuk mereinterpretasi pemikiran al-Zarnuji dengan perspektif epistemologi Islam. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka dengan menjadikan kitab *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* sebagai sumber primer dan karya-karya lain mengenai al-Zarnuji dan epistemologi Islam sebagai sumber sekunder. Melalui telaah pada topik ragam pengetahuan dan hukumnya, niat dalam belajar, dan mengagungkan ilmu dan ulama, tulisan ini menghasilkan temuan bahwa al-Zarnuji mempunyai dua jenis epistemologi, yakni bayani dan irfani. Di antara keduanya, yang lebih dominan adalah epistemologi irfani. Pada dasarnya, nalar irfani memang mempunyai kontribusi penting untuk mengembangkan aspek moral dan spiritual peserta didik. Hanya saja, pola pemikiran tersebut tidak boleh terlalu menghegemoni pendidikan Islam. Tetap menjaga keseimbangan antara tiga epistemologi: bayani, burhani, dan irfani adalah pilihan terbaik. Hal ini dimaksudkan agar pengembangan pendidikan Islam dapat berjalan ke arah kemajuan.

**Kata Kunci** Al-Zarnuji; Pendidikan Islam; Epistemologi Islam

## A. INTRODUCTION

Burhan al-Islam, also known as Burhan al-Din al-Zarnuji (from now on referred to as al-Zarnuji), emerges as a distinct and disputed figure in Islamic education. The reason for this distinction is his significant influence, which, on the one hand, exerts a discernible hegemony in the discourse surrounding Islamic education, particularly within Islamic boarding schools. Notably, his *magnum opus*, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, stands as the most extensively studied classic work on ethics in the context of moral education, surpassing the popularity of other ethical writings (Bruinessen, 1999). Furthermore, this book has significantly influenced the relationship between teachers and students at Islamic boarding schools. The model governing the relationship between kiai (Islamic scholars or teachers) and santri (students) in Islamic boarding schools draws inspiration from al-Zarnuji's views in his book (Hafidzah, 2014; Hidayat, Syahidin, & Dhaiman, 2020; Ridwan & Abdurohim, 2022; Syafii, 2014). Conversely, some believe al-Zarnuji's widely popular ideas are legitimized as "*impediments to progress*."

Moreover, the level of recognition accorded to his intellectual contributions needs to align with the attention given to his biographical details. Many literary sources need help to provide an authoritative account of al-Zarnuji's biography, and even identifying his name can be a formidable task. In this context, historical experts can merely provide speculative insights concerning al-Zarnuji's biography (Fattah & Afwadzi, 2016).

In various scholarly works, examining al-Zarnuji's ideas can be classified into three tendencies. Firstly, research on al-Zarnuji's ideas regarding Islamic education and its related aspects. This approach primarily seeks to elucidate the formulation of al-Zarnuji's educational philosophy and is often presented in a descriptive framework. The outcomes of these studies consistently point to the predominantly Sufi character of al-Zarnuji's thinking (Asnimar, Satria, & Rahman, 2022; Waris, 2015; Zaim, 2020). Secondly, studies have endeavored to unveil the contributions of al-Zarnuji's Islamic educational philosophy in addressing various contemporary issues. This tendency suggests that Islamic educational concepts developed by al-Zarnuji remain relevant and provide solutions to various contemporary educational issues (Choiriyah & Anam, 2023; Musthafa & Meliani, 2021; Syafii, 2014). Thirdly, studies are dedicated to conducting comparative analyses between al-Zarnuji's educational philosophy and that of other prominent figures in the field of education. These figures include Muslim scholars such as al-Ghazali and non-Muslim philosophers such as Thomas Lickona. Through this comparative approach, al-Zarnuji's ideas are juxtaposed with those of these other figures to discern points of convergence and divergence (Hafidzah, 2014; Setiawan, 2014; Tolchah, 2020; Zuhri, Nazmudin, & Asmuni, 2022).

In contrast to the previous three tendencies, this study seeks to provide an objective critique of al-Zarnuji's Islamic educational philosophy. The authors strive to reinterpret al-Zarnuji's ideas through the lens of Islamic epistemology in order to engage with contemporary developments and acquire a more comprehensive understanding. Why opt for Islamic epistemology? This decision arises from the notion that epistemology determines an individual's cognitive framework. A crucial aspect addressed in epistemology pertains to the source or origin of knowledge. In this context, the origins of knowledge exert a significant influence on an individual's cognitive construction.

Furthermore, despite stemming from the same Islamic heritage, the epistemologies employed by Muslim scholars can vary widely (Wijaya, 2020). In Islamic history, Islamic epistemology is categorized into three distinct types: bayani, burhani, and irfani. Each of these epistemological paradigms possesses unique characteristics and may occasionally result in discrediting and, in some circumstances, even excommunication of one another (Abdullah, 2012; Al-Jabiri, 2009).

Based on the previous explanations, this article focuses on three main points. Firstly, it begins with a biographical sketch of Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji, followed by a comprehensive description of his seminal work, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. Furthermore, this section aims to shed light on al-Zarnuji's identity, societal context, and the relevance of his magnum opus. Secondly, the article dives into al-Zarnuji's Islamic educational philosophy described in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. This section highlights three specific points: knowledge diversification and its legal dimensions, learning purposes, and the veneration of knowledge and scholars. According to the authors, these domains can effectively exhibit the discernible patterns of al-Zarnuji's thinking within Islamic education. Thirdly, the article examines al-Zarnuji's beliefs through the lens of Islamic epistemology. The research findings are contextualized and compared with other studies with similar thematic elements in this third focus. This work extends the author's previous research, primarily focused on the interpretative models of al-Zarnuji's Hadith (Fattah & Afwadzi, 2016) and its relevance to Islamic educational thought.

## B. RESEARCH METHOD

This article utilized a qualitative approach with a *library research method*, employing al-Zarnuji's *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Thariq al-Ta'allum* as the primary source. Secondary sources included various works in books, research papers, and scholarly journals that discussed al-Zarnuji's educational philosophy and Islamic epistemology. Data collection in this study involved documenting various data sources, both primary and secondary. After gathering both forms of data, they were classified according to their respective sub-discussions. Subsequently, each sub-discussion was critically and comprehensively analyzed. Following the framework proposed by Miles Huberman (2009), the data analysis method comprised data reduction, data presentation, and the formulation of findings or verification.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Biographical Sketch of Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji and the Book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*

As previously stated, the full name of al-Zarnuji is Burhan al-Islam or Burhan al-Din al-Zarnuji. This name is frequently associated with the author of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. However, it is critical to remember that this name is a title, or *laqab*, in Arabic terminology and not his real name (Qabbani, 1981). His name, al-Zarnuji, is difficult to trace in historical archives (Affandi, 1990). Two individuals are associated with the name al-Zarnuji in the literature (Huda & Kartanegara, 2015, 2016; Qabbani, 1981). First, there is Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji, who lived in the sixth century Hijri or thirteenth century CE, and second, Taj al-Din al-Zarnuji, who passed away in the seventh century Hijri or fourteenth century CE. Both are linked to the al-Zarnuji name (Muizzuddin, 2012; Waris, 2015; Zaim, 2020). Among these two names, Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji is the more widely recognized author of the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*.

Consistent with his name, identifying the birth year of al-Zarnuji proves challenging. Only Sodiman (2013) claims that al-Zarnuji was born in 570 H, while other literature provides no specific information regarding his birth year. Regarding his death there are two widely held beliefs about his demise. First, according to Qabbani (1981), he died in the years 591, 593, or 597 H. Second, it asserts that he died in 620 H. According to Athaillah (1416), the second opinion is the most credible. According to these reports, al-Zarnuji lived during the sixth and seventh centuries of the Hijri calendar, corresponding to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the Common Era. Furthermore, Grunebaum & Abel (1947), the translators of the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* into English, state that al-Zarnuji was a Hanafi

scholar from the northeast areas of Persia (Khurasan) and Transoxiana. Additionally, Abd al-Qadir Ahmad states that al-Zarnuji originated from Afghanistan. This claim is corroborated by his common name, Burhan al-Din, which is commonly used in that country (Affandi, 1990).

The name "al-Zarnuji" is derived from the term "Zarnuj," and it is from this region that his attribution is made. Affandi (1990) associates al-Zarnuji with "Zarandj," a city in Persia that previously served as the capital and a city between Sidjistan and the southern section of Herat (now in Afghanistan), about the book *Mu'jam al-Buldan* by Yaqut al-Hamawi. This attribution supports the notion that al-Zarnuji hails from the Persian region. In another perspective, according to Qabbani (1981), one of the researchers of the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, al-Zarnuji's name is linked to "Zarnuj," which was a region in the country of Turkey, akin to the term "al-Qurasyi" in *al-Jauhar al-Mudhiah*, or an area across the Tigris River that falls within the region of Turkistan, as per the information provided by Yaqut al-Hamawi in *Mu'jam al-Buldan*.

Al-Zarnuji's intellectual career commenced in Bukhara and Samarkand, which, during that period, were significant centers of scholarly activity. He extensively acquired knowledge from various eminent scholars, including Burhan al-Din Ali bin Abi Bakar al-Marghinani (d. 593 H./1197 CE), a prominent Hanafi jurist of his era, renowned for his work *al-Hidayah fi al-Furu' al-Fiqh*; Rukn et al. bin Abi Bakar, also known as Imam Zada (d. 573 H./1177 CE), an expert in jurisprudence, literature, poetry, and the appointed mufti for the inhabitants of Bukhara; Hammad bin Ibrahim (d. 576 H./1180 CE), a scholar of literature, jurisprudence, and theology; Fakhr al-Din al-Kasyani (d. 587 H./1191 CE), author of the book *Badai' al-Shanai*; Fakhr al-Din al-Qadhi Khan al-Auzajandi (592 H./1196 CE), a mujtahid with numerous contributions in the field of jurisprudence; and Rukn al-Din al-Farghani (594 H./1198 CE), a scholar in jurisprudence, literature, and poetry (Qabbani, 1981).

Al-Zarnuji lived in an era of intellectual and cultural advancement during the Abbasid dynasty. Various educational institutions with a level of higher learning, such as the Nizamiyya Madrasa al-Muluk, al-Nuriyah al-Kubra Madrasa, and al-Mustansiriya Madrasa, emerged during this period (Fattah & Afwadzi, 2016). It was during this time that al-Zarnuji wrote the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, which later spread to the Nusantara region through scholars from the Nusantara who studied in Mecca, one of the regions under the Ottoman dynasty's influence at that time (Hidayat et al., 2020). According to Plessner, al-Zarnuji wrote *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* after 593 H./1197 CE (Qabbani, 1981), corresponding to the most likely narrative of his death year. The motivation for authoring this book stemmed from the social realities of his period, where individuals tended to pursue knowledge in the wrong way (Fattah & Afwadzi, 2016). In the introduction to *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, al-Zarnuji explains that many knowledge seekers needed to be more informed in their pursuit, neglecting the necessary prerequisites. They were earnest in pursuing knowledge yet needed to grasp its essence, benefits, and fruition. For al-Zarnuji, if the path taken were flawed, then only misguidance would be the outcome, and they would not attain any objective, whether small or significant (Al-Zarnuji, 1981, p. 57).

The book "*Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*" is considered the only surviving original work of al-Zarnuji that has reached us. However, other writings by al-Zarnuji may have existed but were lost due to the Mongol invasions (Asnimar et al., 2022). *Alala* is another book credited to al-Zarnuji, viewed as a summary of *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* (Busthomy & Muhid, 2020). Furthermore, in his book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, Al-Zarnuji (1981) presents thirteen chapters that focus on the methods of acquiring knowledge, with a particular emphasis on learners (or students, referred to as santri in the context of Pesantren). These thirteen chapters encompass 1). The definition of knowledge and its excellence. 2). Intention in learning. 3).

Choosing knowledge, companions, and determination in learning. 4). Revering knowledge and scholars. 5). Perseverance, continuity, and noble aspirations. 6). The beginning and intensity of learning and its discipline. 7). Trust in Allah. 8). Learning time. 9). Compassion and giving advice. 10). Drawing lessons. 11). Memorization during study. 12). The causes of retention and forgetfulness. 13). Sustenance and lifespan.

## 2. The Islamic Educational Thought of al-Zarnuji

The Islamic educational thought of al-Zarnuji is derived from his explanations in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. This book has been studied not only by Muslim scholars but also by Western scholars. In 1947, G.E. Von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel translated it into English, titled *Instruction of the Student: The Methods of Learning* (Al-Zarnuji, 1947). This demonstrates al-Zarnuji's position in the realm of Islamic education. Furthermore, as indicated in the introduction, the following are some of al-Zarnuji's thoughts on Islamic education, emphasizing three points: the diversity of legal knowledge, Intentional learning, and the glorification of knowledge and scholars.

### a. Diverse Aspects of Legal Knowledge

There is a significant hadith that al-Zarnuji references when elaborating on this topic. This Hadith is well-known in Islamic education and is narrated by Ibn Majah in his *Sunan*, even though the word *Muslimatin* (*Muslim women*) is not mentioned in Ibn Majah's transmission, and only *Muslim* is used.

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم ومسلمة

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for Muslim men and Muslim women."

Although the previously mentioned Hadith obligates Muslims to seek knowledge, Al-Zarnuji (1981, pp. 59–60) points out that not all knowledge is necessary to study. According to Al-Zarnuji, the knowledge required for Muslims includes theological and transactional knowledge (*Muamalah*), which he calls *al-hal knowledge*. For instance, this includes knowledge about the essential elements and conditions for the validity of acts of devotion, such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage. Likewise, understanding commercial transactions (*Muamalah*) is necessary while engaging in commerce to ensure compliance with what is acceptable and avoid what is prohibited. Al-Zarnuji (1981, p. 62) also obliges the study of knowledge related to commendable and blameworthy ethics, such as generosity, stinginess, cowardice, bravery, humility, arrogance, safeguarding oneself from evil, excessiveness, miserliness, and so forth. Consequently, *al-hal knowledge* (knowledge concerning the religious conditions of Muslims) primarily pertains to religious knowledge.

In addition to the knowledge that is religiously obligatory to learn, Al-Zarnuji (1981, pp. 63–64) also mentions knowledge deemed obligatory on a communal basis, such as the knowledge of performing funeral prayers. If individuals in a community have acquired this knowledge, the rest of the community is exempt from the obligation. Conversely, if no one in the community has acquired this knowledge, all individuals are liable for negligence. Al-Zarnuji also discusses religiously forbidden information, such as astrology (*Nujum*), frequently used for fortune-telling. Concerning this knowledge, Al-Zarnuji permits its study solely to determine prayer times and the qiblah direction (the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca). Lastly, there is permissible information (*Jawaz*), such as medical knowledge, as the Prophet sought medical treatment. Al-Zarnuji (1981, p. 63) draws a simple analogy regarding obligatory, obligatory on a communal basis, and prohibited knowledge:

obligatory knowledge is like food that everyone needs; obligatory on a communal basis knowledge is like medicine that is required only in certain situations; and prohibited knowledge is akin to a disease.

### **b. Learning Intention**

Intention is crucial for Al-Zarnuji when seeking knowledge since it is the foundation for all actions (Al-Zarnuji, 1981). In this context, he quotes a hadith emphasizing the importance of Intention in actions: "*Innama al-'amalu bi al-niyyat*" (The deeds depend on the Intention). Additionally, there is another hadith, or what is believed to be a saying of the Prophet due to its phrasing, as follows:

روى عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: كم من عمل يتصور بصورة عمل الدنيا، ثم يصير بحسن النية من أعمال الآخرة، وكم من عمل يتصور بصورة عمل الآخرة ثم يصير من أعمال الدنيا بسوء النية.

"It is narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): 'Many deeds, though they appear to be worldly, become deeds of the Hereafter due to good intentions. Likewise, many deeds that may seem like acts of the Hereafter can become worldly deeds because of bad intentions.'"

According to Al-Zarnuji (1981, pp. 66–67), someone who seeks knowledge must have good intentions. A good intention here involves seeking Allah's pleasure and happiness in the Hereafter, eradicating one's own and others' ignorance, spreading and preserving the faith, and expressing gratitude for Allah's intellectual and physical blessings. On the other hand, bad intentions that knowledge seekers should avoid include seeking popularity, worldly pleasures, and honor before rulers. However, Al-Zarnuji (1981, pp. 68–69) still permits the objective of seeking knowledge to attain a respected position, provided that it is aimed at enjoining good, forbidding evil, advocating for the truth, and respecting the religion, rather than satisfying the seeker's desires. He emphasizes the importance of intelligent people not demeaning themselves through greed and avoiding the valley of disgrace.

### **c. Exalting Knowledge and Religion**

According to al-Zarnuji, a seeker of knowledge must revere knowledge, scholars, and teachers to obtain useful information. In this regard, exalting knowledge serves as the beginning point for an individual in their pursuit of knowledge. He quotes sayings that emphasize, "One attains something only by exalting it, and fails to attain it because of not exalting it." There are also other sayings, "Exalting is better than obeying. Do you not see that a person does not become a disbeliever due to their sins, but becomes a disbeliever by legitimizing those sins and forsaking exalting (God)?" (Al-Zarnuji, 1981).

According to Al-Zarnuji (1981, p. 78), venerating the teacher is an integral part of venerating knowledge. The teacher is entitled to guide the student and determine the knowledge that students will acquire (Al-Zarnuji, 1981). In this regard, Al-Zarnuji also quotes the famous saying of Ali ibn Abi Thalib:

قال على رضي الله عنه: أنا عبد من علمني حرفا واحدا، إن شاء باع، وإن شاء استرق

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I am a servant to the one who has taught me a single letter. He has the option of selling me or keeping me as his servant."

Al-Zarnuji also conveys several etiquettes that learners should observe regarding their teachers. This work serves as a form of respect for the teacher, fostering willingness

and avoiding their anger. Some of these etiquettes include not walking in front of the teacher, sitting in their designated place, refraining from initiating conversation unless permitted, avoiding irrelevant chatter, refraining from asking tedious questions, and patiently waiting outside until the teacher emerges from their residence (Al-Zarnuji, 1981). The seating arrangement with the teacher is also regulated. The student should stay within the teacher, maintaining a distance of about one bowshot (Al-Zarnuji, 1981).

According to Al-Zarnuji (1981, p. 80), one of the behaviors that constitute respect for a teacher is showing reverence to the teacher's children and those associated with them. Al-Zarnuji tells a story about his teacher, Burhan al-Din, the author of *al-Hidayah*. He says, "There was a great imam in Bukhara, and during one of his gatherings, he would occasionally stand up and then sit back down. When questioned why he did this, he replied, 'It is because one of my teacher's sons is playing in the courtyard with his friends, occasionally coming to the front of the mosque's entrance. When the author sees him, I stand up out of respect for my teacher.'"

Furthermore, Al-Zarnuji argues that demonstrating appreciation for knowledge extends to appreciating the Holy Qur'an. This appreciation includes not touching them except in a state of ritual purity, not stretching one's legs toward them, placing the Holy Qur'an on top of other books, and refraining from putting anything on top of the Holy Qur'an. Interestingly, Al-Zarnuji believes that the Holy Qur'an should not be written in red ink because that was the practice of philosophers and not the early scholars (*salaf*). Moreover, some of Al-Zarnuji's teachers preferred something other than red-colored vehicles. Al-Zarnuji also states that respecting fellow learners is a part of venerating knowledge (Al-Zarnuji, 1981).

### 3. Analysis of Islamic Epistemology on the Thoughts of al-Zarnuji

There are three models of Islamic epistemology. First is the Bayani epistemology. It emphasizes the Quran and Hadith texts as its sources. These scriptures have given rise to several Islamic disciplines. The majority of scholars develop this epistemology. Second, the Burhani epistemology. It is rooted in reason, based on the natural, social-humanitarian, and religious world. Burhani's epistemology employs *Manthiq* (logical reasoning) to guide individuals to realize their intellectual potential. Philosophers are the proponents of this epistemology. Third, the Irfani epistemology. It relies on intuition through direct experiences in the spiritual realm of religion. Sufis are the developers of Irfani epistemology (Abdullah, 2012; Afwadzi, 2023; Ridlo, 2020; Syarif, 2022; Utomo & Mu'anayah, 2020; Viruliana & Kholili, 2022).

It is evident from the previous discussion that al-Zarnuji's epistemology is a collaboration between Bayani and Irfani's epistemologies. The Bayani thought pattern is observable in including Quranic verses and Hadith, from which he deduces their laws. On the other hand, the Irfani thought pattern is portrayed in how al-Zarnuji delivers explanations imbued with Sufi nuances. Despite being of the Hanafi school, which should lean towards rationality, Burhani reasoning needs to be more emphasized, and there is a leaning towards Irfani reasoning, akin to the Sufis (Fattah & Afwadzi, 2016). Developers of both Bayani and Irfani epistemologies frequently oppose Burhani's reasoning. This opposition is evident in al-Zarnuji's rejection of red in books associated with philosophers, typically considered negative figures known for using red ink in their writings.

Aziz and Kawakip (2022) mention that the Islamic educational thought of al-Zarnuji encompasses three epistemologies simultaneously: Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani, and is used to formulate the epistemology of Islamic education. From the Bayani epistemological perspective, the theory and practice of Islamic education must empower texts as sources of knowledge, including the Quran, Hadith, and relevant literature, particularly works by

Muslim scholars. Meanwhile, from the Burhani epistemological perspective, the theory and practice of Islamic education should expand and strengthen learners' intellectual performance spaces in the learning process, allowing them to develop both Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). As for the Irfani epistemological perspective, the theory and practice of Islamic education must stay within Sufi values, both at the epistemological framework level (prescriptive) and in the practice of education and learning (descriptive).

Nonetheless, the authors dispute the claim that al-Zarnuji employs burhani epistemology. If required, it may be more accurate to say that he "somewhat pays attention" to this epistemology. Aziz and Kawakip (2022) arguments are mostly based on remarks by al-Zarnuji that instruct growing cognitive ability by memorizing and understanding the content the teacher delivers. The authors believe that the intellect is not entirely "discarded" in Bayani epistemology; rather, it is employed to "secure" the meaning of a text (Rangkuti, 2019). In other words, the text holds a primary position, while reason occupies a secondary one. Meanwhile, in Burhani's epistemology, reason stands independently and is not overshadowed by the text. As a result, the authors believe that the intellect or mind indicated by al-Zarnuji remains within the sphere of Bayani epistemology.

When both of al-Zarnuji's epistemologies, Bayani and irfani, are examined closely, it becomes apparent that the irfani epistemology is more prominent than Bayani. This epistemological model helps students become individuals who rely on cognitive and affective attributes. According to Badri (2022), al-Zarnuji's concept of education is aimed toward a holistic view of knowledge. Al-Zarnuji's description of Islamic education is relevant to the development of Islamic education in the contemporary era. As is well known, contemporary students frequently overlook the spiritual dimension in their learning (Muliatno & Aznil, 2021; Saman, Sukandar, & Fathurrohman, 2021; Siregar, Saleh, & Fuadi, 2023). They may be misled in their pursuit of knowledge, overlooking its blessings. This situation bears similarities to the circumstances surrounding al-Zarnuji's lifetime, and it serves as the reason for the writing of the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, as explained in its preface. Drawing from al-Zarnuji's Sufi-ethical-influenced thoughts, Zaim (2020) proposes a reconstruction of education-oriented morality and spirituality as a critique of modernization that promotes the understanding that education is solely focused on material progress.

As previously stated, the Irfani epistemology holds significance in Islamic education, and al-Zarnuji plays a vital role in developing students' spirituality. However, there is a concern regarding the potential hegemonic implications within Islamic education. If such a situation were to occur, it would lead to negative consequences. The same applies when either the Bayani or Burhani epistemologies exert excessive dominance over the thoughts of the Muslim community. More specifically, regarding the Irfani epistemology, acquiring knowledge can become challenging if an individual becomes overly content with their spiritual aspects. Historically, several decades after al-Zarnuji's time, a divide arose between "religious knowledge" and "secular knowledge," which might have solidified the Sufi influence in the Muslim community and resulted in secular knowledge receiving less attention (Fattah & Afwadzi, 2016). Moreover, for al-Zarnuji, religious knowledge is considered obligatory, individually or communally, whereas secular knowledge is permissible (*Jawaz*) and forbidden (*haram*), as previously discussed. Therefore, the three Islamic epistemologies –Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani–should intermingle without any single one exerting excessive hegemony over the thoughts of the Muslim community.

The reinterpretation of al-Zarnuji's Islamic educational thoughts is crucial in the contemporary context, where the development of Islamic education must not be limited to a single perspective. In this sense, Islamic education should encompass the three



epistemological dimensions: Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani. These epistemologies work together to address the issues plaguing Islamic religious education, particularly contemporary ones. With this rationale in mind, Afwadzi (2023) proposes the interconnected entities thinking model, which aligns with Amin Abdullah's approach to connecting Islamic epistemology with Islamic religious education. This thinking pattern has implications for somewhat "shifting" the traditional interpretation model of al-Zarnuji's book, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and aligning it with the socio-cultural developments of the present era.

While *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* is commonly considered the most widely studied ethics book in Islamic boarding schools, it is essential to recognize that *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* is a historical product intricately related to the historical context of the time when it was authored. There are three models of religious academic epistemology: the science of Hadith, the science of kalam (theology), and the science of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) (Hasan, 2000). *The first*, the science of Hadith, focuses on ensuring the continuity of narrations and their validity as the basis of knowledge. *The second*, the science of kalam, engages in religious studies using rational arguments from the perspective of belief. *The third*, the science of fiqh, involves the study of religion through a combination of Hadith and kalam, with a more contextual approach relating to human behavior and conduct in daily life.

Hence, the epistemological framework of Islamic educational philosophy in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* is closely aligned with the third model, the science of fiqh. Consequently, institutions of Islamic education that reference *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* consider socio-cultural issues as one of the foundations of their educational management activities (Ali, 2021). This reference is evident in the patterns of interaction and communication between students and teachers and the pedagogical activities.

#### D. CONCLUSION

This article reveals that the Islamic education of Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji has a strong Sufi character with a prominent epistemological style of Irfani. He believed that the knowledge of al-hal, which pertains to religious concerns and transactions (*Muamalah*), is essential for a Muslim to acquire. In addition, there are areas deemed communal obligatory (*fardhu kifayah*), permissible, and even forbidden. Moreover, the intention in seeking knowledge must be positively oriented, aiming to seek Allah's pleasure and the happiness of the hereafter, to dispel one's own and others' ignorance, to uphold and perpetuate the faith, and to be grateful for Allah's endowments of intellect and body. Furthermore, al-Zarnuji emphasizes that learners should revere and honor knowledge, teachers, the children of teachers, and anyone associated with teachers, as well as their peers who accompany them in the learning process.

This thought pattern is excellent for nurturing students' moral and spiritual dimensions, which are often compromised in modern education that predominantly emphasizes materialistic aspects. The epistemology of Irfani significantly contributes to this endeavor. However, maintaining a harmonious balance among the three epistemologies, Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani, is paramount. It is due to none of these epistemological paradigms dominating the intellectual landscape of the Muslim community, including the epistemological framework of Irfani that distinctly characterizes al-Zarnuji's educational philosophy. This approach is indispensable to ensure that the development of Islamic education advances progressively. Furthermore, such reinterpretation serves the essential purpose of resolving contemporary challenges Islamic education encounters.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this paper, as it stands, primarily focuses on the theoretical analysis of Islamic epistemology. As a result, the discourse offered herein does not extend to practical explanations. Future researchers may adopt this approach to gain a more comprehensive insight into the reinterpretation of al-Zarnuji's Islamic educational philosophy. Furthermore, utilizing alternative analytical frameworks will be imperative to examine al-Zarnuji's ideas from diverse viewpoints. Lastly, a multidimensional approach to scrutinizing someone's views will effectively illuminate both the merits and limitations of their ideas. This, in turn, seeks to promote a thorough and holistic understanding of an individual's intellectual contributions.

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