Abu Darda's Model Of Moral And Spiritual Education: A Qur'anic Perspective For Contemporary Pedagogy

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Article Info	Abstract
	This study addresses the growing need for moral and spiritual educational models in contemporary Islamic education, especially amidst the dominance of formalistic and secular approaches. It aims to explore the Qur'anic-based educational values exemplified by Abu Darda' *raḍiyallāhu 'anhu*, a Companion of the Prophet renowned for his spiritual wisdom and contribution to Islamic learning. Employing a qualitative method with literature-based conceptual and historical analysis, this research finds that Abu Darda's educational model is integrative—combining moral exemplarity, inner purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), and the lived application of Qur'anic values. The model emphasizes holistic character formation beyond cognitive achievement. This study contributes new insights by positioning Abu Darda's model as a strategic alternative for Islamic educational transformation. Its implications include curriculum reform, teacher empowerment as spiritual mentors, and a shift toward value-based pedagogy in policy development. *Penelitian ini menjawab kebutuhan akan model pendidikan moral dan spiritual dalam pendidikan Islam kontemporer, khususnya di tengah dominasi pendekatan formalistik dan sekuler. Tujuan utama studi ini adalah menggali nilai-nilai pendidikan berbasis Al-Qur'an yang dicontohkan oleh Abu Darda' raḍiyallāhu 'anhu, seorang sahabat Nabi yang dikenal akan kebijaksanaan spiritual dan kontribusinya dalam keilmuan Islam. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui analisis konseptual dan historis berbasis literatur, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa model pendidikan Abu Darda' bersifat integratif—menggabungkan keteladanan akhlak, penyucian jiwa (tazkiyah al-nafs), dan aplikasi praktis nilai-nilai Al-Qur'an. Model ini menekankan pembentukan karakter secara holistik, melampaui pencapaian kognitif semata. Studi ini menawarkan kontribusi baru dengan menjadikan model Abu Darda' sebagai alternatif strategis bagi transformasi pendidikan Islam. Implikasinya meliputi reformasi kurikulum, pemberdayaan guru sebagai mentor spiritual, serta pergeseran kebijakan pendidikan menuju pendekatan berbasis nilai.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education is currently facing a complex crisis, particularly in the moral and spiritual dimensions of learners. Amid the rapid current of technology and the globalization of information, there is a growing tendency to reduce the values of Islamic education to mere transmission of knowledge. The ideal aim of education—to form knowledgeable, ethical, and God-conscious individuals—is often reduced to mere cognitive achievement. As a result, education loses its transformative power in shaping noble character and the soul (Salleh, 2019).

The dominance of intellectualism—both in general and Islamic education systems—further distances the affective and spiritual dimensions from the learning process. Education, which should serve as a means of spiritual and moral cultivation, has become trapped in academic routines focused on content mastery (Hosen, 2007). Even religious education in Islamic institutions is often understood partially as rote memorization rather than a process of value internalization and spiritual formation. This imbalance results in a disintegration between knowledge and practice, cognition and ethics, as well as between information and spiritual awareness (Yusof & Roslan, 2021).

Furthermore, many Islamic educational institutions have not yet succeeded in building a system that integrates the values of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) comprehensively into the curriculum and pedagogical practices. Yet, the Qur'an clearly states, *"Truly successful is the one who purifies his soul, and truly doomed is the one who corrupts it"* (QS al-Shams [91]: 9–10). This verse emphasizes the urgency of an educational approach rooted in morality and spirituality to form holistic and upright individuals (Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2022).

One possible solution is to reconstruct the educational model exemplified by the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. The generation of the Companions was the best generation, educated directly by the Prophet, who successfully integrated intellectual excellence, spiritual depth, and moral nobility. Their education was not merely the transmission of knowledge, but also a spiritual transformation that shaped noble character (Nadwi, 2007).

Among those Companions, Abu Darda' raḍiyallāhu 'anhu held an important position as a Qur'anic educator who emphasized character and *tazkiyah al-nafs*. He was known as "the sage of Syria"—not only a *qāri'* but also a spiritual teacher who nurtured the community through personal example, remembrance (*dhikr*), and righteous deeds

(Khalid, 2004). One of his well-known sayings is, *"I prefer a single piece of knowledge that is practiced over a thousand that are merely conveyed"* (Ibn 'Asākir, 1995), reflecting his educational orientation: not merely to know, but to become.

Abu Darda's model of education is highly relevant in addressing today's educational crisis because it offers a paradigm based on exemplary conduct, spirituality, and moral values—not merely administrative or structural frameworks. This approach serves as a concrete alternative that can provide a new direction for reconstructing Islamic education in a more holistic manner, aimed at forming the whole person (Syakir, 2016).

Theoretically, moral education and *tazkiyah al-nafs* are foundational elements of the Qur'anic educational system. The Qur'an mentions that among the core missions of prophethood are *tilāwah* (recitation), *tazkiyah* (purification), and *ta'līm* (teaching) (QS al-Jumu'ah [62]: 2). This verse indicates that Islamic education must integratively combine spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions. The Prophet's saying also affirms the centrality of moral character as the main objective of his mission: *"Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character"* (Narrated by al-Bukhārī, No. 6029), which further strengthens the moral foundation of Islamic education (Rahman, 2020).

In Islam, knowledge is never separated from action. The integration of knowledge and practice is a fundamental principle in Islamic education. The Qur'an affirms that God will raise the ranks of those who believe and are endowed with knowledge (QS al-Mujādalah [58]: 11), emphasizing the importance of aligning knowledge, faith, and righteous action in the learning process (al-Ghazali, 1998). Therefore, Islamic education demands the balanced development of cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects.

The concept of *tarbiyah* in Islam is not merely about instruction, but rather the holistic formation of human beings toward the ideal of the *insān kāmil* (perfected human being). Al-Attas (1999) states that the goal of Islamic education is to produce *the good man*, not merely *the clever man*. A figure like Abu Darda' is a concrete example of the application of *tarbiyah* principles in practice—education as the nurturing of the soul and character in a comprehensive manner.

Contemporary Islamic education faces serious challenges in forming learners' character and spirituality amid the massive wave of globalization and digital technology. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2022) shows that although the Islamic religious education curriculum has been implemented nationally,

various cases of moral degradation, student violence, and social deviance continue to increase, indicating a weak internalization of values in the Islamic education system. A study by Roslan and Yusof (2021) reveals that current educational approaches are still predominantly cognitive and focused on academic achievement, while affective and spiritual aspects tend to be neglected.

Most studies on Islamic education in the past decade have been normative-descriptive in nature, focusing primarily on curriculum systems and methodological approaches. These studies rarely explore the praxis models of education from the Prophet's Companions in a historical and contextual manner (Hasan, 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2018). In fact, exemplary conduct and spiritual development from the generation of the Companions constitute an integral aspect of Islamic education. One Companion who has been underexplored in pedagogical contexts is *Abū al-Dardā' raḍiyallāhu 'anhu*, known as a Qur'anic educator with a focus on *tazkiyah al-nafs* (spiritual purification) and moral formation through spiritual practice and exemplary character.

The lack of academic research specifically examining Abū al-Dardā's educational model from a Qur'anic perspective and its relevance to the spiritual crisis in contemporary Islamic education presents a research gap. The disconnect between knowledge and practice, and between information and character formation, has become a root cause of the weak transformative impact of Islamic education today (Salleh, 2019; Hamid, 2021). Through a practical and contextual approach, Abū al-Dardā' exemplifies that education is not merely knowledge transmission, but also soul cultivation and character building through spiritual mentorship.

Therefore, this study limits its scope to the moral and spiritual educational model implemented by Abū al-Dardā', and examines its relevance to the current Islamic education system. By focusing on the pedagogical contribution of this figure, the study aims to offer a conceptual alternative for reconstructing a more holistic and spiritually transformative model of Islamic education.

Research on moral and spiritual education models from a Qur'anic perspective, such as the one offered by Abū al-Dardā', is rooted in and related to several previous studies published in *Civilization Research: Journal of Islamic Studies*. Khalid, Saket, Tsauri, and Rabbani (2022) discussed the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* in Surah al-Shams based on Ibn Kathīr's exegesis. Their study highlighted the centrality of soul purification as a core Islamic teaching, but did not connect these values to educational

practices or historical educator figures—let alone in the context of transformative learning in the contemporary era.

Meanwhile, Sulthoni, Khairi, and Muttaqin (2025), in their comparative study of the story of Maryam in Ibn Kathīr's classical exegesis and a fictional novel by Sibel Eraslan, emphasized the transmission of moral and spiritual values through narrative approaches. This research is rich in textual insights but lacks engagement with education via the exemplary lives of historical figures like the Prophet's Companions, particularly Abū al-Dardā'. Thus, the bridge between Qur'anic narratives and their application in moral education remains underdeveloped in that study.

Furthermore, Wahidi and Syahidin (2024) examined the *uswah ḥasanah* (good example) model in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes in schools. Their study affirmed that teacher role models have a significant influence on students' character and spirituality development. However, the focus was limited to contemporary teachers and did not explore the role models among the Prophet's Companions, who are authoritative sources of Qur'anic education rooted in historical and spiritual depth.

All three studies share a common emphasis on values of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, morality, and Qur'anic spirituality. However, this present research adopts a different approach by specifically highlighting the figure of *Abū al-Dardā'* as a model of authentic and historical Qur'anic moral and spiritual education. Unlike the prior studies which were either textual or practical, this study combines a personal-historical approach, Qur'anic theory, and the educational praxis of a Companion into a holistic transformative education model.

This study offers novelty in several key aspects. First, it focuses on a historical figure—*Abū al-Dardā'*—who has not been extensively studied within a formal pedagogical framework. Second, it formulates a comprehensive pedagogical model that integrates *tazkiyah al-nafs*, moral values, and exemplary character into a modern educational context. Third, the personal-historical approach transforms scriptural narratives into real educational practices, making the Companions' exemplary lives a foundation for character education relevant to the contemporary era.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

(1) To describe the model of moral and spiritual education practiced by *Abū al-Dardā' raḍiyallāhu 'anhu* as a Qur'anic educator; (2) To analyze the continuity of *tazkiyah al-nafs* and moral values in contemporary Islamic education through his

model; and (3) To provide recommendations for curriculum development and pedagogical strategies that center spiritual role models among the Companions as pillars in forming holistic individuals within the modern Islamic education system.

Based on the above elaboration, this study aims to answer two fundamental questions: (1) What is the model of moral and spiritual education implemented by *Abū al-Dardā' raḍiyallāhu 'anhu*? (2) How relevant is this model to the contemporary Islamic education system?

By addressing these two questions, it is expected that the study will offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a more humanistic, spiritual, and transformative model of Islamic education

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive research design aimed at exploring in depth the moral and spiritual education model of Abu Darda' from a Qur'anic perspective and its relevance to contemporary Islamic pedagogy. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the meaning, values, and dimensions of spiritual education both contextually and textually (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2. Research Approach

The approach used in this study is library research, utilizing primary sources such as the Qur'an, classical tafsir (e.g., *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*), and contemporary Islamic education literature. This approach supports the exploration of spiritual meanings found in primary texts relevant to Abu Darda's profile as an educational figure (George, 2008).

3. Research Method

The method employed is content analysis of Qur'anic verses, ḥadīths, classical exegesis, and scholarly literature that contain educational values inspired by Abu Darda', along with texts discussing value-based and spiritual learning in Islam. The main focus is to extract moral and spiritual messages that can be transformed into the context of modern education (Krippendorff, 2018).

4. Research Instrument

The primary instrument of this research is the researcher himself (human instrument). The researcher collects, evaluates, and interprets data with the assistance

of supporting tools such as data recording sheets, concept maps, and thematic categorization tables of Qur'anic themes (Patton, 2002).

5. Data Collection Technique

Data are collected through documentation of literature from books of tafsir, ḥadīth collections, scholarly journals, and Islamic education books. The literature is selected purposively based on its relevance to Abu Darda's educational values and Qur'anic moral themes (Bowen, 2009).

6. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis involves data reduction, thematic categorization, and interpretation of thematic exegesis. This process includes tracing Qur'anic verses and interpretations by classical exegetes and linking them to maqāṣidī principles and contemporary Islamic pedagogical values (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

7. Data Credibility (Data Validity)

To ensure the credibility of the data, source and theoretical triangulation were applied by comparing multiple authoritative tafsir sources and strengthening the findings with relevant theories in modern Islamic education. Member checking was also conducted through discussions with scholars in the field of Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic education to review the researcher's findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Abu Darda' as a Figure of Spiritual Education

Abu Darda' (raḍiyallāhu 'anhu), whose real name was Uwaimir ibn Mālik al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī, was one of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) from the Anṣār in Madinah. He embraced Islam after the Battle of Badr and became known as one of the most prominent *qāri'* (reciters of the Qur'an). During the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Abu Darda' was appointed as a judge in the region of Greater Syria (*Shām*) and became widely recognized for his role in educating the Muslim community through knowledge circles (*majālis al-'ilm*) (al-Dhahabi, 1990).

His deep love for the Qur'an was not only evident in his memorization and teaching but also in his simple, profound, and contemplative spiritual life. Abu Darda's home functioned as a spiritual school for the people of Shām, earning him the title *ḥakīm Ahl al-Shām* ("the Sage of the People of Syria") (Ibn Sa'd, 2000). This home-based

educational model aligns with what is now referred to as community-based religious education, as explored by Hasanah et al. (2025) in the context of contemporary Islamic schools (*madrasahs*).

Abu Darda's contributions extended beyond formal religious knowledge. He prioritized applied knowledge over theoretical discourse, as reflected in his famous saying: "I prefer one applied piece of knowledge over a thousand that are merely conveyed" (Ibn 'Asakir, 1995). This view represents a critique of educational formalism and resonates with the analysis by Wahidi and Syahidin (2024), who argue that Islamic education should emphasize the internalization of values through exemplary conduct rather than merely mastering content.

Abu Darda' was also known as a spiritual mentor (*murabbī*) who educated through the practices of *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *qiyām al-layl* (night prayers), and fasting. His instruction was not limited to verbal teaching but involved nurturing his students' spiritual awareness. This aligns with the findings of Nasr (1987) and is reinforced by Rifa'i (2021), who asserts that the ideal Islamic educator is a transformative figure who combines spirituality, ethics, and moral leadership.

In the classical tradition of Islamic education, Abu Darda' is regarded as an exemplary *murabbī rabbānī*, as depicted in Qur'an Surah Āli 'Imrān (3):79. He developed an education model based on *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) through a holistic approach: modeling good behavior, habituating worship practices, and cultivating self-control. This concept has been widely discussed by scholars such as al-Ghazali (1998) and continues to be a foundational reference in the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) today (Sulaiman et al., 2018).

As noted by Salleh (2019), Abu Darda's approach integrates cognitive, spiritual, and social education into a unified process of forming the *insān kāmil* (complete human being). He exemplified the role of the teacher as a nurturer of the soul, not merely a technical instructor. This is further supported by Munandi Saleh et al. (2024), who observed that the character of the Prophet's Companions remains a powerful pedagogical reference in traditional local Islamic education.

Thus, Abu Darda's educational model can be viewed as an integrative-existential approach to Islamic education, bridging the classical heritage and the needs of the modern age. His role affirms that education is not merely about transmission, but about formation.

2. Abu Darda's Moral and Spiritual Education Model

a. Principles: Exemplarity, Balance, and Tazkiyah

Abu Darda's educational model is built upon three main pillars: exemplarity, balance in life, and *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul). *Exemplarity* is the most fundamental educational method implemented by Abu Darda', aligning with the approach of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who served as the best role model (*uswah ḥasanah*) for the ummah. A teacher's example is not only crucial from an ethical perspective but also psychologically effective in shaping the behavior of students (Wahidi & Syahidin, 2024).

Abu Darda' also exemplified the principle of *tawāzun* (balance) between worldly and spiritual life, as reflected in his saying: *"I love to sleep at night so I may have strength to rise for prayer, and I love to fast so I may guard my tongue"* (Ibn Sa'd, 2000). This principle is highly relevant today, where education often emphasizes cognitive development while neglecting spiritual and physical dimensions. Moral education in Islam requires harmony between the spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects of a person (Salleh, 2019).

The third principle, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, forms the core of Abu Darda's moral education. In Islamic pedagogy, *tazkiyah* is the process of cleansing the heart from spiritual ailments and adorning it with noble character, as emphasized in QS al-Shams [91]: 9–10. This principle is also stressed by Hasanah et al. (2025), who assert that spiritual education grounded in *tazkiyah* is more impactful in shaping holistic character.

b. Strategies: Worship Habituation, Desire Control, and Dhikr

Abu Darda' nurtured his students through the habituation of worship practices such as *qiyam al-lail* (night prayer), voluntary fasting, and frequent *dhikr* (remembrance of God). Worship was not merely ritualistic, but a consistent method of spiritual development (Nasr, 1987). Rifa'i (2021) emphasizes that consistent discipline in worship positively influences the formation of students' religious character.

He also instilled the importance of controlling one's desires, as reflected in his statement: *"Knowledge that does not prevent one from sin is a deceptive calamity."* This implies that education must foster self-control, not merely the transmission of knowledge. This aligns with the findings of Sulaiman et al. (2018), who argue that *self-*

regulation is central to moral education in modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).

In addition, *dhikr* and *muhasabah* (self-reflection) served as internalization strategies. *Dhikr* trains the heart's presence and sharpens spiritual awareness in daily life. This strategy corresponds with the spiritual–affective approach in today's Islamic education (Salleh, 2019).

c. Methods: Integrative Qur'anic Teaching (Knowledge–Practice–Spirituality)

Abu Darda's educational methods were integrative in nature. He did not separate knowledge, practice, and spirituality. The Qur'an was the center of education—not merely as a text to be memorized, but as a guide to life. He taught his students to understand the meanings of the verses, connect them to real-life contexts, and apply them in practice. This aligns with the Qur'anic view that knowledge without practice becomes a burden (QS al-Jumu'ah [62]:5).

In his teaching circles, Abu Darda' educated through open discussions, personal example, and communal worship practices. This reflects a *spiritual pedagogy* approach, emphasizing the transformation of attitude and life orientation (Hasanah et al., 2025).

He also stressed the importance of *self-evaluation* (*muhasabah*) as part of the learning process. Each student was encouraged to measure personal growth, not merely test scores. In his view, education was a journey toward God, and every step required consciousness, action, and spiritual strengthening.

Munandi Saleh et al. (2024) note that the integration of spirituality in learning is a distinguishing feature of Islamic education when compared to secular models. Abu Darda' practiced this in reality—teaching the Qur'an, enlivening *dhikr*, and nurturing *taqwa* within a social and communal framework.

Preliminary Conclusion

The moral and spiritual education model developed by Abu Darda' stands as a concrete example of a holistic Qur'anic educational system. It integrates knowledge, practice, and spirituality into an inseparable unity. With principles of exemplarity, *tazkiyah*-based strategies, and a living method of Qur'anic instruction, Abu Darda' demonstrated that true education is the formation of the soul—not merely the filling of the mind. The values he left behind remain relevant today as a solution to the spiritual and moral crises facing contemporary Islamic education.

3. The Qur'anic Foundation of Abu Darda's Model

Abu Darda's raḍiyallāhu 'anhu educational model is deeply rooted in the Qur'an. Foundational principles such as *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), role modeling, applied knowledge, and character formation are direct manifestations of the prophetic mission of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, as outlined in several key verses:

a. *QS. al-Jumu'ah [62]:2* – The Prophetic Mission of Education

Allah Subḥānahu wa Ta'ālā says:

"It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and Wisdom…" (QS. al-Jumu'ah [62]:2)

This verse highlights three core aspects of prophethood: *tilāwah* (recitation), *tazkiyah* (purification), and *ta'līm* (instruction). These are not mere logical sequences but signify the Qur'anic educational stages: engaging with revelation, spiritual purification, and the dissemination of knowledge. Abu Darda' adopted this structure in his educational practice—emphasizing Qur'anic recitation and comprehension, spiritual training through remembrance (*dhikr*) and purification, and teaching actionable knowledge (Qardhawi, 2018).

This model contrasts with modern educational approaches that often prioritize cognitive development over spiritual grounding. Abu Darda' revived the function of *tazkiyah* as a bridge between *tilāwah* and *ta'līm*, positioning education as a holistic spiritual process, not merely a transmission of information. This aligns with the findings of Wahidi and Syahidin (2024), who argue that pedagogy based on exemplarity and spiritual cultivation yields deeper impacts than purely instructional methods. Hence, Islamic education should not merely focus on content delivery but also engage in soul purification and integral character building.

b. *QS. al-Shams [91]:9–10* – Tazkiyah al-Nafs (Purification of the Soul)

"Indeed, he succeeds who purifies it, and he fails who corrupts it." (QS. al-Shams [91]:9–10)

This verse provides the theological and epistemological foundation for the entire process of *tazkiyah* in Islamic education. According to Ibn Qayyim, *tazkiyah* involves two essential dimensions: removing blameworthy traits and adorning the soul with praiseworthy ones (Ibn Qayyim, 2011). Abu Darda' implemented this

practically by discouraging traits like ostentation, envy, and anger, while nurturing patience, sincerity, and humility (al-Ghazali, 1998).

Tazkiyah became the primary measure of educational success in Abu Darda's view. He believed that knowledge without *tazkiyah* leads to intellectual arrogance, while *tazkiyah* without knowledge risks misguidance in religious understanding and practice. Thus, both must coexist in harmony. This interpretation aligns with the verse's emphasis on the success of the purified soul. From Abu Darda's perspective, *tazkiyah al-nafs* is central to character development (Salleh, 2019). In the context of contemporary Islamic education, the values of *tazkiyah* can be operationalized through habitual worship, reflective practices (*muhāsabah*), and systematic integration of self-control exercises into the curriculum (Rifa'i, 2021).

c. *QS. al-Qalam [68]:4* – The Noble Character of the Prophet as a Model

"And indeed, you (O Muhammad) are of a great moral character." (QS. al-Qalam [68]:4)

Abu Darda' took the Prophet's character as the foundation of all his educational endeavors. For him, character was not a supplementary element of education—it was its very essence. He taught with compassion, gentleness, and served as a living example for his students. This exemplifies education based on *uswah ḥasanah* (noble role modeling), where the teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge, but a spiritual guide.

According to al-Attas (1999), the goal of Islamic education is to produce the "good man," not merely an intelligent one. This ideal is vividly reflected in Abu Darda's model, in which moral integrity takes precedence over intellectual display. The Prophet's character is the supreme model in Islam, and Abu Darda' applied a method of *tarbiyah* (nurturing) grounded in this model. He shaped his students not just through words, but through a Qur'anic way of life (Sulaiman et al., 2018). This underscores that in education, character formation is more effectively achieved through role modeling than through verbal instruction alone.

d. *QS al-Mujādalah [58]:11* – Knowledge and Action as an Integrated Unity

"Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees..." (QS. al-Mujādalah [58]:11)

Abu Darda' understood that knowledge without action does not elevate a person; in fact, it can backfire and bring harm. For this reason, he guided his students

not only to comprehend the Qur'anic verses textually but also to practice them in real life. Abu Darda' firmly criticized educators who merely transmitted knowledge without embodying it in their behavior. This verse underscores the importance of integrating faith and knowledge, as education that separates the two results in personality imbalance: cognitively intelligent yet morally and spiritually weak. In Abu Darda's view, unpracticed knowledge becomes a source of ruin rather than honor. Therefore, the ideal form of learning, according to him, is the development of a conscious sense of responsibility for the knowledge acquired (Hasanah et al., 2025), where knowledge is not just to be known, but to be internalized and translated into real action (Munandi Saleh et al.).

e. *QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13* – Education for Equality and God-Consciousness *(Taqwa)*

"Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you..." (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13)

This verse provides a strong foundation for inclusive and egalitarian Islamic education, where a person's worth is not measured by social status, wealth, or academic ability, but by their level of taqwa (God-consciousness). This principle was explicitly taught by Abu Darda', who believed that anyone could attain nobility through good character and the process of self-purification (tazkiyah). The educational model he implemented was open to all social classes, allowing everyone to grow spiritually without discrimination. Thus, education becomes a pathway toward creating a just and God-conscious society. Abu Darda' openly welcomed anyone to his study circles, emphasizing equality in education. This aligns with the spirit of inclusive and transformative Islamic education, as stated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022), which emphasizes that every individual has the right to education that fosters noble character and taqwa as its ultimate goals.

4. The Relevance of Abu Darda's Educational Model for Contemporary Islamic Education

The moral and spiritual educational model formulated by Abu Darda' offers both practical and theoretical solutions to the challenges of contemporary Islamic education. In the context of moral crisis, ethical decline, and the dominance of technical-formal approaches in educational curricula, Abu Darda's approach remains highly relevant for contextual implementation.

a. Strengthening the Spiritual–Moral Curriculum

Modern Islamic education curricula tend to be fragmented, separating religious sciences from character-building and tazkiyah. Many Islamic educational institutions continue to struggle with balancing cognitive achievement and moral development due to curriculum fragmentation and the lack of value-based teacher training (Loka & Rahman, 2024). In contrast, research by Saepudin (2024) reveals that an integrative Islamic curriculum—combining religious and general subjects into a unified value framework—significantly enhances students' spiritual and moral development more effectively than segmented curricular approaches.

Every subject, including tafsir, hadith, and fiqh, should be taught in a reflective and spiritual atmosphere, not merely normatively or textually. Likewise, general subjects such as mathematics, science, and language must be designed with embedded moral values and a focus on taqwa. This is in line with the recommendations from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022), which emphasize the importance of embedding Islamic character education across all curricula, ensuring that learning is value-laden and serves as a means of nurturing righteous individuals.

Research by Hasanah et al. (2025) also affirms that spiritually grounded and exemplary-based learning is more effective in fostering students' discipline and responsibility than purely cognitive approaches. In this context, Abu Darda's educational legacy is profoundly relevant and worthy of being a source of inspiration for a holistic and transformative reform of contemporary Islamic education.

b. The Role of the Teacher as *Murabbi* and Moral Role Model

In Abu Darda's educational model, the role of the teacher is not limited to transmitting knowledge, but extends to being a *murabbi*—a nurturer of the soul, spiritual mentor, and life role model—who guides students not only intellectually, but also spiritually and morally. This role is crucial amid the current crisis of role models in modern education, where teachers are often reduced to administrative instructors lacking in character-building dimensions (Istiqomah & Rifai, 2025; Badrasawi et al., 2018). Abu Darda' emphasized that the true power of education lies in personal example, not merely in methodological competence: teachers should not only talk about values but embody them in their everyday lives (Istiqomah & Rifai, 2025). This aligns with findings that Islamic education is effective when teachers position

themselves as moral and spiritual figures (*murabbi*), not just content deliverers (Badrasawi et al., 2018).

This emphasis on exemplary conduct is further supported by Wahidi and Syahidin (2024), who state that Islamic education is only effective when teachers fulfill their function as moral exemplars. Sulaiman et al. (2018) also demonstrate that the success of character education in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) heavily depends on teachers who instill values through their daily behavior and attitude. Therefore, contemporary teachers need to be trained not only in pedagogical competence, but also in aspects of *adab* (Islamic etiquette), *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification), and spiritual leadership.

Islamic educational institutions should facilitate *rūḥāniyyah* (spiritual) training, not merely focus on technical or methodological certification. Spiritual development and teacher retreats should be part of ongoing professional development programs, as teachers with a *murabbi* spirit are key to meaningful and transformative education (Rifa'i, 2021).

c. Antithesis to the Secularization and Instrumentalization of Education

Abu Darda's educational model explicitly rejects secular and instrumental approaches that tend to separate knowledge from spiritual values. For Abu Darda', education is not merely a cognitive process or a means of social mobility, but a vehicle for drawing closer to Allah and shaping a *muttaqī* (God-conscious) individual. This view stands in stark contrast to the utilitarian paradigm that sees education only as a path to employment or worldly status. In today's global context, this model offers a critical stance toward educational systems that have lost their spiritual essence and value orientation. Islamic education should not imitate the materialistic Western system, but rather build its own identity based on Qur'anic values and the exemplary practices of the early pious generations (*salaf*) (Salleh, 2019).

Abu Darda's educational model can be seen as a form of resistance to the secularization of education, where learning is reduced to a tool for workforce production and academic certification, without nurturing the holistic human being (*insān kāmil*). He asserts that the true goal of education is *taqarrub ilallāh* (closeness to God), not merely mastery of subject matter or social prestige. This critique aligns with Salleh (2019), who argues that secularism in Islamic education has stripped away its spiritual dimension and severed the link between knowledge and action. In the

context of globalization and capitalist pressure, Islamic education must return to the Qur'anic and prophetic model exemplified by Abu Darda'.

Furthermore, Munandi Saleh et al. (2024) stress that when Islamic education becomes overly immersed in Western thought frameworks, it risks losing its transformative spirit. Therefore, there is a pressing need to redesign Islamic education systems—not merely to chase efficiency or market relevance—but to prioritize character development, spiritual deepening, and *tazkiyah* training as the core of the educational process, as envisioned by Abu Darda'.

5. Challenges and Strategies for Implementing Abu Darda's Educational Model

a. Contextual Challenges

1) Globalization and the Value Crisis

The main challenge in implementing a spiritual education model is the powerful current of globalization, which brings with it values such as individualism, materialism, and moral relativism. These values often contradict the principles of Islamic education, which emphasize *tazkiyah*, submission to Allah, and collective ethics. Globalization also fosters an instant culture, incompatible with the gradual and contemplative process of spiritual development (Rahman, 1982).

Globalization has significantly influenced the mindsets and cultural patterns of Muslim youth. The penetration of secular, liberal, and hedonistic values frequently opposes Islamic spiritual values, leading to identity crises and moral degradation (Hefner, 2019). Abu Darda's educational model, which emphasizes spiritual formation and moral integrity through circles of knowledge (*majelis 'ilm*), faces great challenges in an increasingly materialistic and relativistic environment.

2) The Wave of Digitalization and Technological Distraction

The digitalization of education presents both opportunities and threats. On one hand, technology facilitates access to sources of knowledge. On the other hand, social media and digital entertainment trigger acute distractions and erode the depth of learning and spiritual contemplation among students (Yusof et al., 2021). Both learners and educators are often trapped in fast-paced information consumption patterns without internalizing values. This hinders the implementation of an education model rooted in *dhikr* (remembrance), reflection, and inner awareness (Nasr, 1987). The educational approach of Abu Darda', which emphasizes deep contemplation,

consultation, and in-depth learning, is difficult to integrate if students remain distracted by a shallow digital ecosystem.

3) The Crisis of the Teacher as Murabbi

One of the strengths of Abu Darda's educational model is the role of the teacher as a *murabbi*—not merely a transmitter of knowledge, but a spiritual guide and moral exemplar. Unfortunately, today we are witnessing a crisis in the role of educators; many teachers are not equipped to serve as character builders or moral leaders (Azra, 2012). The lack of exemplary behavior among teachers and the rigid relationships between teachers and students further alienate education from the spirit of *tarbiyah* as exemplified by Abu Darda'. As a result, education becomes a routine activity rather than a transformative spiritual journey (Salleh, 2019).

b. Implementation Strategies

1) Teacher Training Based on Spirituality and Exemplary Character

The primary strategy to revitalize Abu Darda's educational model is to prepare teachers as spiritual and ethical figures, not merely as teaching technicians. Islamic educational institutions need to conduct teacher training programs that emphasize not only pedagogy and methodology, but also spiritual recollection, moral training, and the strengthening of Islamic manners (*adab*). Capacity-building programs for teachers must be based on the formation of true *murabbi*, not just conventional instructors (Rahman, 2020).

Such training can be conducted in stages, beginning with basic training for teacher candidates, followed by spiritual leadership programs for senior teachers. The training curriculum should include modules on *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification), *fiqh al-akhlaq* (ethics jurisprudence), and character education methods based on prophetic modeling (Rifa'i, 2021).

2) Value-Oriented Integration of Technology

Rather than avoiding technology, Islamic education should integrate it in a value-oriented manner. Juwairiyah & Fanani (2025) argue that digital platforms—such as learning apps, prayer reminders, and spiritual reflection modules—can effectively strengthen students' religious character and spirituality, provided they are developed upon Islamic values. In line with this, Ismail et al. (2024) show that technologies such as learning management systems, virtual classrooms, and digital libraries can enhance

student engagement in religious education without compromising spiritual integrity—so long as Islamic ethical elements are properly internalized.

Thus, digital platforms should not be seen as a threat to spirituality but rather as strategic media for disseminating spiritual content—such as interactive *dhikr*, inspirational videos, thematic *tafsir* classes, *muhasabah* journals, and stories of exemplary companions like Abu Darda'—that reinforce students' faith and morality.

3) Contextual and Adaptive Approaches

Implementing Abu Darda's model must take into account local realities, institutional culture, and students' psychological contexts. Not all spiritual principles can be directly applied without adaptation. Therefore, a contextual approach is essential: building a character-based curriculum that responds to the challenges of the digital generation, and using a teaching style that guides rather than lectures. This approach aligns with Syukron (2017), who emphasizes the need to reconstruct Islamic education in line with informational realities and local cultural transformations. Additionally, Afiyah and Yenuri (2025) affirm that contextual learning models—those that adapt methods, materials, and values to the local context—are proven effective in fostering religious moderation and the practical relevance of Islamic education in a globalized era.

For instance, the principle of *tazkiyah* can be contextualized in the form of self-awareness programs, spiritual journaling, or Qur'an-based peer mentoring. Students' spiritual experiences do not need to be formalistic, but can be cultivated through habituation activities, *adab* simulations, and post-lesson reflections (Sulaiman et al., 2018). This aims to ensure that spirituality does not remain in sermons alone, but becomes an actual lived experience.

4) The Urgency of Islamic Curriculum Reform

Ultimately, implementing the Abu Darda' model requires structural curriculum reform. The Islamic education curriculum must transform from a normative-doctrinal approach into an integrative and value-oriented framework. Every subject should serve as a platform for nurturing character and *tazkiyah*, not merely for memorization or academic achievement (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2022). Subjects such as *Aqidah Akhlaq*, *Fiqh*, and *Tafsir* should not be taught merely as academic disciplines, but as spiritual formation arenas and spaces for value internalization.

Beyond that, spiritual dimensions and *adab* formation must be present across all subjects—including science, mathematics, and technology—so that students experience unity between knowledge and faith. This reform must go beyond content to include evaluation methods, teacher–student interaction patterns, and the overall culture of educational institutions (Al-Attas, 1999).

Preliminary Conclusion

The challenges of globalization, digitalization, and the crisis of exemplary educators are realities that must be addressed in implementing Abu Darda's educational model. However, with the right strategies—including spiritual teacher training, value-based technological integration, and contextual pedagogical approaches—spiritual education remains attainable. In fact, amid the crisis of modern education, this model becomes increasingly urgent as a pathway to nurture Qur'anic generations who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and God-conscious.

D. CONCLUSION

The educational model developed by Abu Darda' (raḍiyallāhu 'anhu) represents an integrative Islamic education system—combining knowledge, practice, and spirituality into a holistic and reinforcing unity. This finding answers the main research question regarding how a Qur'an-based Islamic education can nurture students' moral and spiritual development in a profound and sustainable manner. Abu Darda' did not merely teach knowledge textually, but also guided his students to internalize Qur'anic values through exemplary conduct, worship, and self-purification (*tazkiyah*). The implications of this study highlight the urgency of reforming Islamic educational curricula to prioritize spiritual and moral dimensions as the core of learning. Future studies may explore the application of this model within the context of pesantren, *madrasah*, or modern Islamic schools as a practical form of spiritual education rooted in the legacy of the Companions.

In the context of the modern education crisis—marked by curriculum formalism, value secularization, and a decline in spirituality—Abu Darda's model proves highly relevant. Islamic education must go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and serve as a space for character formation, spiritual awareness, and ethical transformation.

However, to be widely implemented, this model requires a process of adaptive and systemic actualization. Adaptive in the *sense* of adjusting to the needs and

characteristics of the times, and systemic in the sense of integrating into education policy frameworks, teacher development programs, and national curriculum design. Without such systemic efforts, Abu Darda's model of moral and spiritual education risks remaining a normative ideal, distant from the realities of everyday educational practice.

The educational model of Abu Darda' carries several concrete implications for contemporary Islamic education stakeholders:

For Teachers :Teachers need to be repositioned as *murabbī* and *qudwah ḥasanah* (righteous role models), not merely classroom instructors. This calls for teacher training that integrates spiritual dimensions, *adab* (ethics), and exemplary teaching methods, as practiced by Abu Darda' (Rifa'i, 2021).

For Curriculum Design: Islamic learning design must begin to integrate cognitive and affective domains—bridging knowledge with the cultivation of ethical character. Values such as *tazkiyah* (self-purification), sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), patience (*ṣabr*), and God-consciousness (*murāqabah*) should become key indicators in learning assessments, not just academic achievement metrics.

For Policymakers: There is a need for educational policy reform that creates space for Qur'anic approaches within the national curriculum. This includes the development of spiritual competency indicators, character assessment models, and the allocation of time and space for spiritual development in formal education processes.

Without serious involvement from policymakers, moral and spiritual education reform will be difficult to implement systematically. Hence, synergy between practitioners, academics, and the government is crucial to realize this model.

This study is an initial step toward reconstructing Abu Darda's educational model from a Qur'anic and contemporary relevance perspective. However, to further develop and operationalize these findings, several suggestions for future research are offered:

Comparative Study among Companions: It is recommended to conduct comparative studies between Abu Darda' and other Companions known for their educational models, such as Mu'adh ibn Jabal in teaching *fiqh* and *tawḥīd*, or Ibn Mas'ūd in deepening Qur'anic understanding and *adab*. Such studies would enrich the classical Islamic pedagogical tradition and enable the construction of diverse thematic educational models.

Applied Study in Educational Institutions: To evaluate the effectiveness of Abu Darda's model in practice, implementation research is needed in schools or *madrasahs*. This can include curriculum experiments, teacher training programs, or ethnographic studies on the integration of *tazkiyah* and ethics into learning activities. In this way, theory does not remain at the level of ideals, but can inspire real change within the education system.

Closing Remarks Abu Darda's educational model proves that spirituality and ethics are not merely supplementary components of Islamic education, but its irreplaceable foundation. Not just part of history, but a source of inspiration for a more humane, holistic, and Qur'an-centered future for Islamic education.

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