The Relevance of Islamic Education Models During the Abbasid Era to Islamic Education in The Generation Z Era

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Abstract

Technological advancements in the digital age have shaped Generation Z, endowing them with superior digital literacy but leaving them vulnerable to a crisis of intellectual depth, superficial religious understanding, and mental health issues. This study aims to analyze the essence and relevance of Islamic educational models during the Abbasid Dynasty to efforts to improve and develop the Islamic education system for Generation Z. This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical methods through library research. Data were collected through historical literature and recent studies, which were then analyzed using content analysis and historical-comparative techniques. The results indicate that the intellectual glory of the Abbasid era was underpinned by the integration of religious and rational knowledge, a widespread culture of literacy, and dialogic learning methods. The actualization of these values for Generation Z is formulated through three main pillars: (1) the digital revitalization of the spirit of "Baitul Hikmah" to foster a culture of critical literacy and information verification (tabayyun); (2) the transformation of the halaqah method into a psychological safe space where educators once again assume the role of murabbi (spiritual guide). It can be concluded that the Abbasid educational model offers a new paradigm that is adaptable to today's technological advancements, yet remains firmly rooted in the spiritual depth and intellectual legacy of Islam.

Keywords: Islamic Education, the Abbasid Dynasty, Generation Z.

Introduction

The rapid development of information technology in the digital age has shaped Generation Z (Gen Z) as a demographic group of digital natives. This generation is characterized by high digital literacy, an adaptive mindset, and strong collaborative skills in virtual spaces (Hasibuan, 2017)(Ihsan et al., 2025). However, behind these strengths, Gen Z faces serious challenges regarding moral values and intellectual depth. The instant flow of information and a culture of consuming short-form content often lead to a superficial understanding of religion and a weakening of the internalization of genuine spiritual values and literacy (Devita sari, 2026). Faced with these conditions, today's Islamic education system is called upon to transform—not merely to transfer basic knowledge, but also to instill critical thinking and a resilient spiritual character.

In their quest to find an ideal educational model to address the challenges of the times, Muslims draw upon an extraordinary historical legacy, particularly from the era of the Abbasid Dynasty. This era is globally recognized as the Golden Age of Islam, during which Muslim

civilization and intellectual thought reached their zenith (Haidar Putra Daulay, Zaini Dahlan, 2021). This success was inseparable from the caliphs' strong commitment to education, as evidenced by the establishment of various institutions ranging from kuttabs (elementary schools) and mosques to monumental libraries such as Baitul Hikmah, and even universities like the Nizamiyah Madrasah (Listari & Alimni, 2025). More than just building structures, the Abbasid educational system successfully integrated religious knowledge (naqli) with rational knowledge/science (aqli), and fostered a culture of literacy, research, and open scientific discussion.

This comprehensive educational model from the Abbasid Dynasty actually holds strong historical and pedagogical relevance when applied to the context of Gen Z education in the digital age (Rizky, 2024). The deep-rooted culture of love for knowledge, the tradition of verifying information (tabayyun) in scholarship, and the freedom of expression framed by moral values during the Abbasid era serve as both an antithesis to and an appropriate solution for overcoming the superficial and pragmatic ways of thinking that today's generation is prone to. The dialogic and exploratory learning methods once used in the scholars' halaqah can now be contextualized through digital technology to create a meaningful learning ecosystem for Gen Z.

Therefore, an in-depth examination of the integration of the golden values of the past into the modern education system is crucial. This article aims to analyze the essence and relevance of Islamic educational models during the Abbasid era to efforts to reform and develop the Islamic education system for Generation Z. It is hoped that this study will offer a new paradigm that is adaptable to modern technology while remaining firmly rooted in the tradition of Islamic intellectual excellence.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative, literature-based research method to explore the relevance of Islamic educational models from the Abbasid period to Islamic education in the Generation Z era. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of textual and philosophical dimensions through a review of relevant literature, including books, journal articles, and institutional documents on Islamic education and ecology. As noted by (Sari & Asmendri, 2020), library research is a series of activities related to methods of collecting library data, reading, taking notes, and processing research materials without having to conduct fieldwork. Given that the objects of study are the historical record of past Islamic civilization and the characteristic phenomena of today's Generation Z, the most appropriate research design to use is library research.

The data sources consist of academic publications discussing the history of Islamic education during the Abbasid dynasty, covering the history of educational institutions, intellectual figures, teaching methods, and Generation Z. (Samsu, 2017) explains that purposive sampling in qualitative research allows for the selection of literature most aligned with the research focus and helps build a deeper understanding of interrelated theological and educational ideas. The data were then analyzed using thematic content analysis, focusing on the main themes of the relevance of education during the Abbasid era and for Generation Z, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors related to the Abbasid era and Generation Z.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study was conducted through three interactive stages adapted from the Miles and Huberman model, which involved selecting and summarizing historical literature on the Abbasid era and literature on Generation Z. Next, a descriptive narrative was developed that mapped patterns from the past and compared them with the present. Next, a synthesis was performed to formulate relevance. In this stage, the researcher contextualized historical values within a pedagogical framework for today's Generation Z, thereby identifying a valid conceptual framework (Samsu, 2017).

Results

The findings of this study indicate that the relevance of Islamic educational models from the Abbasid period to Islamic education in the Generation Z era can be divided into two main areas of focus: (1) the fundamental characteristics of Islamic education during the Abbasid period, and (2) the relevance and application of historical values to the challenges of education today.

Fundamental Characteristics of Education During the Abbasid Period: The peak of intellectual achievement during the Abbasid era did not occur by chance, but was engineered through a holistic and structured educational system. There were three main pillars that supported education during the Abbasid era: (1) Integration of Knowledge: There was no rigid dichotomy (separation) between religious knowledge (naqli) and rational knowledge/science (aqli). The structure of education during the Abbasid era ultimately gave rise to several great figures such as Al-Kindi, Al-Khawarizmi, and Ibn Sina—scholars who were masters of exegesis and jurisprudence, as well as experts in mathematics, medicine, and philosophy (Haidar Putra Daulay, Zaini Dahlan, 2021). (2) A Culture of Literacy and Extensive Research: The existence of the House of Wisdom (Bait al-Hikmah), founded by Caliph Harun al-Rashid and expanded by al-Ma'mun, made it the world's largest center for translation, an observatory, and a library at that time. Consequently, the state bestowed the highest honors upon written works and translations (Haidar Putra Daulay, Zaini Dahlan, 2021). (3) Dialogic Learning Methods (Halaqah and Munazarah): The transmission of knowledge is not a one-way process. The halaqah (circular discussion) and munazarah (scholarly debate) methods foster free thinking, the maturity to accept differing opinions, and a clear scholarly chain of transmission (sanad) between teacher and student (Wahyuningsih, 2014) .

The Relevance and Actualization of the Abbasid Educational Model in the Gen Z Era: Comparing past glories with today's realities yields an educational framework that is highly relevant for application. The contextualization of the Abbasid educational model for Gen Z can be actualized through the following three approaches: (1) Revitalization of the Digital "Baitul Hikmah" (Culture of Critical Literacy). The spirit of Baitul Hikmah must be incorporated into the modern curriculum—no longer merely as a physical library, but as a digital literacy ecosystem. Islamic education for Gen Z must shift its focus from "memorizing information" to "verifying information" (tabayyun). Schools and Islamic boarding schools must facilitate collaborative research and produce authoritative Islamic digital content that is presented in an engaging manner tailored to Gen Z's language style, thereby counterbalancing the flood of superficial information (Listari & Alimni, 2025). (2) Eliminating the Dichotomy of Knowledge (Holistic Integration): Just as Abbasid scholars viewed science as a means of knowing God, education for Gen Z must integrate artificial intelligence (AI), coding, and green technology with the values of tawhid. Gen Z, which is deeply concerned with logical and global issues

(such as climate change), will more readily accept Islamic teachings if they are conveyed through a scientific and rational approach that leads to spiritual awareness—just like the integrated curriculum at the Nizamiyah Madrasah (Listari & Alimni, 2025). (3) The Transformation of the Halaqah into a Psychologically Safe Space; The halaqah method during the Abbasid era was not merely a transfer of knowledge, but rather a process of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul) achieved through the emotional closeness between teacher and student. In an era when Gen Z is experiencing a mental health crisis, Islamic educators must once again take on the role of murabbi (spiritual guide), not merely that of an academic facilitator. The modern halaqah must be revitalized as a safe space for dialogue, where Gen Z can explore their theological and existential anxieties without immediate judgment, blending human connection with the flexibility of technology (Listari & Alimni, 2025).

Discussion

Based on the results of the literature review, the reconstruction of the intellectual history of Islam during the Abbasid Dynasty offers an epistemological and pedagogical foundation that provides highly effective solutions to the problems facing contemporary Islamic education, particularly in addressing the characteristics and challenges of Generation Z (Gen Z). This discussion is divided into two main sub-focuses: the deconstruction of the fundamental characteristics of Abbasid education and its application in the digital age.

1. Fundamental Characteristics of Islamic Education During the Abbasid Period

The intellectual flourishing of the Abbasid Dynasty did not emerge overnight but was underpinned by a comprehensively structured civilizational ecosystem. This fundamental characteristic served as the driving force behind the emergence of multidisciplinary Muslim scientists (Muslih & Hidayat, 2022).

First, the Integration of Knowledge (Non-Dichotomous). During the Abbasid period, there was no rigid divide between religious sciences (ulum naqliyah) and rational sciences (ulum ‘aqliyah). Great scholars such as Al-Kindi, Al-Khawarizmi, and Ibn Sina demonstrated that a deep understanding of theology and Islamic jurisprudence went hand in hand with mastery of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine (Zulfahmi et al., 2023). This integration is rooted in the monotheistic view that the universe consists of the organized signs of God, making the study of science a manifestation of worship.

Second, a Culture of Literacy and Extensive Research. Scientific transformation was fully supported by the state and society through monumental research institutions and libraries, such as Baitul Hikmah, which was established during the reigns of Harun al-Rashid through Al-Ma’mun (Fauzi & Rahman, 2021). This place served not only as a repository for manuscripts but also as an international translation center, an astronomical observatory, and a hub for scientific discourse. A deep appreciation for the tradition of writing spurred the creation of millions of scientific works that revolutionized world civilization (Supriyadi, 2021).

Third, the Dialogic Learning Method (Halaqah and Munazarah). The process of knowledge transmission during that era was not one-sided (doctrinal) but rather utilized the halaqah method (circular discussion) and munazarah (constructive academic debate). These methods stimulated critical thinking, fostered maturity in responding to

differing viewpoints, and preserved the integrity of the scholarly chain of transmission, which directly linked students to the scholarly authority of their teachers (Hidayat & Amin, 2023).

2. The Relevance and Application of the Abbasid Educational Model to Generation Z in the Digital Age

Generation Z, having grown up as digital natives, possesses the advantage of high technological adaptability; however, they are also vulnerable to a crisis of moral depth, spiritual disorientation, and exposure to shallow, instant information (shallow thinking) (Putri & Wibowo, 2023). Therefore, contextualizing the Abbasid educational model is relevant and should be implemented through the following three transformative approaches:

First, the Revitalization of the Digital "Baitul Hikmah" and a Culture of Critical Literacy (Tabayyun). Amid a flood of misinformation and short-form social media content that erodes Gen Z's ability to concentrate, the spirit of Baitul Hikmah must be transformed into the digital realm. The modern Islamic education curriculum must no longer be oriented solely toward rote memorization but must shift toward strengthening the ability to verify information, or tabayyun (Hakim & Nurdin, 2022). Islamic educational institutions and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) need to facilitate digital-based collaborative research and produce authoritative Islamic content that is creatively packaged and contextualized to suit Gen Z's communication mediums (Kurniawan et al., 2024).

Second, Eliminating the Scientific Dichotomy through Holistic Integration Rooted in Tawhid. Just as the Abbasid scientific tradition viewed science as an instrument for the pursuit of divine truth, Islamic education for Gen Z must embrace cutting-edge technological developments—such as artificial intelligence (AI) and coding—as well as global issues like environmental sustainability (green technology) (Rahmawati & Latif, 2023). Gen Z tends to have a strong interest in rational and logical issues. When Islamic values are holistically integrated with modern science—as exemplified by the historical legacy of the Nizamiyah Madrasah curriculum—Islamic teachings will be more readily accepted as rational solutions that lead to spiritual awareness (Ma'arif & Setiawan, 2022).

Third, the Transformation of the Halaqah into a Psychological Safe Space. In the modern era, where many Gen Z adolescents experience psychological stress and mental health crises due to virtual alienation, the classical halaqah method can be revitalized as a space for the purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs) (Wahyuni et al., 2023). Islamic educators today are called upon to reclaim their fundamental role as murabbi (holistic mentors), not merely as academic instructors. Both digital and in-person halaqahs must be managed as safe spaces for dialogue, where students can openly explore their theological and existential anxieties without fear of judgment, thereby creating harmony between human emotional closeness and the flexibility of technological advancement (Fadli & Zulkarnain, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the Islamic educational model during the heyday of the Abbasid Dynasty holds strong epistemological and pedagogical relevance as a solution to the educational challenges facing Generation Z in the

digital age. The intellectual glory of the Abbasid Dynasty was supported by three main pillars, namely: (1) the integration of knowledge without a dichotomy between religious knowledge (naqli) and rational science (‘aqli); (2) A culture of widespread literacy and research through the strengthening of research institutions such as Baitul Hikmah; and (3) Dialogic learning methods through halaqah and munazarah that foster critical reasoning and intellectual maturity.

The revitalization of these golden values of the past within the contemporary Islamic education system for Gen Z can be achieved through three transformative approaches:

1. Revitalizing the Digital Baitul Hikmah, shifting the learning paradigm from mere mechanical memorization toward a culture of critical literacy and information verification (tabayyun) amid the tide of digital disruption.
2. Eliminating the Scientific Dichotomy, integrating modern science, artificial intelligence (AI), coding, and green technology with the values of tawhid to foster rational spiritual awareness.
3. Transforming the Halaqah into a Psychological Safe Space, restoring the role of Islamic educators as murabbi (spiritual guides) who combine a humanistic approach of emotional closeness (tazkiyatun nafs) with the flexibility of technology to address Gen Z’s mental health crises and existential anxieties.

Thus, the integration of the Abbasid educational model into the digital ecosystem can give rise to a new paradigm of Islamic education that is adaptive to modern technological advancements without losing its traditional roots and the intellectual grandeur of Islam.

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