

# Bridging Tradition and Modernity: The Dynamics of Classical and Contemporary Literature for Students

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history

Received April 27, 2026

Revised May 13, 2026

Accepted June 8, 2026

**Keywords:** *Adab*, Islamic Education; Tradition And Modernity; Character Education; Students; Value Integration

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of adab from both classical and contemporary perspectives and to formulate an integrative model capable of bridging tradition and modernity within the context of student education. The study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design combined with conceptual analysis. Data were obtained from various relevant primary and secondary literature sources and analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis through stages of reduction, categorization, comparison, and synthesis. The findings indicate that, from a classical perspective, adab serves as the primary foundation of education, integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions in a holistic manner. However, in contemporary contexts, there has been a shift in educational orientation that tends to prioritize cognitive aspects and technical competencies, resulting in the reduction of adab to merely formal ethics. In addition, the development of digital technology has influenced the dynamics of adab value internalization among students. In response to these conditions, this study proposes an integrative model of adab that emphasizes value reintegration, contextualization within modern life, a student-centered learning approach, and pedagogical transformation based on role modeling and reflection. This model is expected to serve as a conceptual foundation for developing education that is not only oriented toward intellectual competence but also toward the formation of students' character and moral integrity. This study contributes theoretically to the development of a more contextual and integrative concept of adab, as well as practically to strengthening character education in the modern era.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of education in the 21st century presents increasingly complex dynamics as a consequence of globalization, technological revolution, and the transformation toward a knowledge-based society. In this context, education no longer functions merely as a process of knowledge transmission, but also as a means of shaping students' character and identity. However, the dominance of cognitive and technocratic approaches in modern education systems often marginalizes ethical and moral dimensions. This condition creates an imbalance between intellectual intelligence and character maturity, which ultimately contributes to the emergence of various moral problems among students (Nucci et al., 2021; Kristjánsson, 2022). In the tradition of Islamic education, the concept of adab holds a highly fundamental position as the core of the entire educational process. Adab is not merely understood as etiquette or manners, but also as a system of values encompassing spiritual awareness, moral responsibility, and order in the relationship between humans, knowledge, and God. Classical thought places adab as the primary goal of education, namely the formation of a civilized human being (*insān ādabī*) who is capable of placing things proportionally within the order of life (Al-Attas, 2020). Thus, education from this perspective is a process of holistic and transformative value internalization that simultaneously integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. A number of contemporary studies indicate

that the concept of adab remains relevant in addressing the challenges of modern education. Idris et al. (2025) assert that adab plays a strategic role in maintaining a balance between technological advancement and moral integrity in the era of Society 5.0. Without the internalization of adab values, technological development has the potential to weaken students' ethical structures. This is in line with the findings of Berkowitz and Bier (2022), who state that effective character education must be integrated into the entire learning process, rather than merely being an incidental supplementary program. In traditional educational practices, such as in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), adab is internalized through role modeling, habituation, and intensive interaction between teachers and students. This approach has proven effective in shaping students' character holistically due to the integration of values, practices, and institutional culture (Huda, 2025). However, in modern education systems, there has been a significant shift in orientation toward academic achievement, technical competencies, and labor market demands. Lickona (2021) criticizes that the implementation of character education in modern systems is often unsystematic and fails to deeply engage students' internal dimensions, resulting in superficial moral internalization.

Furthermore, the development of digital technology has introduced new dimensions to the dynamics of education and adab. The transformation of social interactions from physical to virtual spaces presents increasingly complex ethical challenges. Twenge (2023) shows that the digital generation experiences significant changes in behavioral patterns, including increasing individualism and declining social empathy. This phenomenon indicates that modernity, while bringing progress, also has the potential to erode moral values if not balanced with a strong ethical foundation. In this context, adab needs to be reconstructed to remain relevant to digital realities and to serve as a guide for modern social interactions. On the other hand, various studies reveal that modern education tends to experience fragmentation between cognitive and affective dimensions. Nucci et al. (2021) emphasize that this separation leads to imbalances in student development, where intellectual intelligence is not always accompanied by moral maturity. Kristjánsson (2022) further adds that education that neglects emotional and moral dimensions will produce individuals who lack integrity in decision-making. Therefore, a more holistic and integrative educational approach is required. Although studies on adab have developed, the literature review shows that significant gaps still exist. Most research tends to be dichotomous, separating classical normative approaches from modern pragmatic ones without offering a comprehensive synthesis. In addition, existing studies generally remain at a conceptual and descriptive level, thus failing to produce applicable operational models for educational practice. Moreover, research has largely focused on institutions, curricula, or scholarly thought, while students as the primary subjects in the internalization of adab have received relatively little attention. Based on these gaps, this study offers a novel contribution in the form of an integrative approach that bridges classical adab values with the demands of modern education. This study does not merely position adab as a normative concept, but also as a dynamic practice embedded in students' lived experiences. The novelty of this research lies in three main aspects: (1) a conceptual synthesis between classical adab, grounded in philosophical and spiritual values, and contemporary adab, which is adaptive to social and technological changes; (2) a student-centered approach that emphasizes the process of value internalization and negotiation in everyday life; and (3) the formulation of a conceptual model that is not only theoretical but also practically oriented toward developing adab-based learning strategies in the modern era.

The research entitled "Bridging Tradition and Modernity: The Dynamics of Classical and Contemporary Literature for Students" focuses on how classical and contemporary literature can be interconnected within the learning process of students in the modern era. This study examines the dynamics between the traditional values embedded in classical literary works and the developments

in culture, technology, and modern ways of thinking reflected in contemporary literature. In the context of education, classical literature is often regarded as possessing significant moral, historical, and philosophical values. However, students frequently encounter difficulties in understanding the language, cultural context, and relevance of such works to contemporary life. In contrast, contemporary literature is considered more relatable to modern students' social realities because it addresses current issues and employs language styles that are easier to understand. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how these two forms of literature can complement one another, making literary learning more engaging, relevant, and effective in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Several previous studies have demonstrated that the relationship between classical and modern literature has become an important concern in literary education. Research conducted by Silvia Rosa et al. (2023) revealed that students experience difficulties in understanding the language style used in classical literary works, resulting in low interest in reading classical literature. Linguistic complexity and cultural distance were identified as the main factors causing students to feel disconnected from classical texts. Another study by Choi Hongwon (2024) explained that classical literature needs to be developed through digital media approaches and modern content in order to remain relevant amidst technological advancements. The findings indicated that integrating classical literature with contemporary media can help increase students' interest in older literary works. Furthermore, research by Liu Tingting (2024) found that the use of technology in modern and contemporary literature learning can enhance student participation through digital and interactive learning methods. Research conducted by Noble Lo and Huiwen Shi (2024) also showed that students are more interested in reading contemporary literature because its themes are more closely related to their life experiences. In addition, studies on the use of young adult literature as a bridge to classical works suggest that modern literary texts can help students understand the universal values found in classical literature through more familiar and contextual approaches.

Nevertheless, previous studies still have several limitations. Most of the existing research has primarily focused on students' difficulties in understanding classical literature, the use of technology in modern literary learning, or students' preferences for contemporary literary works. Few studies have explored how classical and contemporary literature can be integrated in a balanced manner within literary education as an effort to bridge tradition and modernity. Moreover, limited research has examined how students interpret the relationship between the traditional values found in classical literature and the modern issues presented in contemporary literature. In fact, the integration of these two forms of literature has the potential to enhance cultural appreciation, critical thinking skills, and students' literacy in the digital era. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the dynamics between classical and contemporary literature from students' perspectives and by exploring more relevant, interactive, and contextual literary learning models for modern generations. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of *adab* from both classical and contemporary perspectives, as well as to formulate an integrative model relevant to students in the modern era. This research is important due to the backdrop of moral crises among students, the need for education that is not only cognitively oriented but also character-driven, and the urgency of revitalizing traditional values to remain relevant in facing the challenges of modernity and the digital age. Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of the concept of *adab* and practically to strengthening adaptive, holistic, and sustainable character education.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design combined with conceptual analysis. A qualitative approach is chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth

understanding of the concept of adab from both classical and contemporary perspectives, as well as to construct a synthesis of ideas relevant to the context of modern education. Qualitative research enables the exploration of phenomena holistically and interpretatively, emphasizing meaning, context, and evolving conceptual dynamics (Lim, 2025). In this context, library research serves as the primary strategy, as the object of study consists of ideas, concepts, and theories derived from scholarly literature. The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data include major works discussing the concept of adab, from both classical and contemporary perspectives, including books, reputable journal articles, and recent scholarly publications in the fields of Islamic education, character education, and education in the digital era. Meanwhile, secondary data consist of supporting literature such as conference proceedings, educational policy documents, and other references relevant to the theme of integrating tradition and modernity. Data sources are selected carefully by considering relevance, credibility, and recency (particularly within the last five to ten years), ensuring a strong theoretical foundation.

Data collection is conducted through documentation study, involving the systematic identification, exploration, and review of relevant literature. This process includes searching academic databases, selecting literature based on inclusion criteria, and organizing data into key themes such as classical adab, contemporary adab, character education, and the challenges of education in the digital era. In qualitative research, documentation study functions as a rich data source for understanding phenomena in depth through available texts and documents (Agusven et al., 2023). Data analysis in this study employs content analysis and thematic analysis. The analytical process is carried out in stages, including data reduction, categorization, comparison, and conceptual synthesis. Data reduction involves selecting information relevant to the research focus, followed by grouping the data into thematic categories. A comparative analysis is then conducted to identify similarities and differences between classical and contemporary concepts of adab. The final stage is conceptual synthesis, which integrates the findings into a comprehensive and relevant conceptual framework. Qualitative data analysis is essentially an interpretative process aimed at identifying patterns, themes, and meaningful relationships within the data (Neraca, 2023). To ensure data validity, this study applies source triangulation and an audit trail. Triangulation is conducted by comparing various literature sources to obtain a more comprehensive understanding and to minimize research bias. This technique enhances the credibility and validity of findings by incorporating multiple perspectives and data sources (Zia Ul Haq et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the audit trail is maintained by systematically documenting the entire research process, from data collection to analysis, allowing the study to be traced and evaluated transparently (Given, 2023). These techniques are essential in ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research, particularly in terms of credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lim, 2025). Through this approach, the study not only produces a conceptual description but also formulates an integrative synthesis of ideas that bridges tradition and modernity in the context of adab, thereby offering a strong theoretical contribution while remaining relevant to the needs of contemporary education.

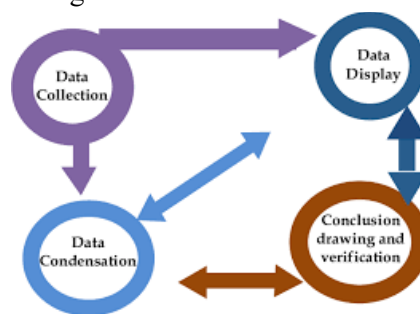


Figure 1. Research Procedure Flowchart

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that the dynamics of adab in education have undergone a significant transformation from classical perspectives to contemporary contexts. This transformation is not linear; rather, it reflects both tensions and opportunities for integration between traditional values and the demands of modernity. Based on the literature analysis, the findings can be classified into three main aspects: (1) the characteristics of adab from a classical perspective, (2) the shifts and challenges of adab in contemporary contexts, and (3) the formulation of an integrative model of adab as a bridge between tradition and modernity. First, from a classical perspective, adab is positioned as the fundamental foundation of the educational process. It is not merely related to behavioral ethics but also encompasses ontological and epistemological awareness in the relationship between humans, knowledge, and God. Classical literature indicates that the success of education is not solely measured by the mastery of knowledge, but by the extent to which knowledge shapes individual character and morality. Within this framework, the relationship between teacher and student is hierarchical yet grounded in deep respect, where the teacher serves as both a moral exemplar and a source of intellectual authority. The internalization of adab is achieved through role modeling, habituation, and direct interaction, resulting in holistic and sustainable character formation. Second, in the contemporary context, this study finds a significant shift in the meaning and practice of adab. The modernization of education marked by rationalization, standardization, and a strong orientation toward academic achievement has led to the reduction of adab into a form of formal, instrumental ethics. Moreover, the development of digital technology has accelerated changes in students' patterns of social interaction, shifting from direct, face-to-face relationships to virtual interactions that often lack social control. This shift has weakened the internalization of values such as respect for teachers, moral responsibility, and self-discipline. These findings suggest that the primary challenge of contemporary adab lies not only in conceptual issues but also in rapidly changing social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, this study identifies a fragmentation between cognitive and affective dimensions within modern education systems. Education tends to emphasize the acquisition of knowledge and technical skills, while character formation is often treated as a secondary concern. This condition reinforces the gap between the ideal of value-based education and the practice of outcome-based education. As a result, students may possess high levels of intellectual competence without corresponding levels of moral and spiritual maturity. Third, in response to these dynamics, this study formulates an integrative model of adab that functions as a bridge between tradition and modernity. This model is constructed through a synthesis of classical adab values and contemporary educational needs, placing students as the central subjects in the process of value internalization. The integrative model is characterized by several key elements. First, value reintegration, which seeks to restore adab as the foundational principle of education by integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in a balanced manner. Second, value contextualization, which involves adapting the concept of adab to the realities of modern life, including digital technology and virtual social interactions. Third, a student-centered approach, emphasizing the active role of learners in internalizing and practicing adab in their daily lives. Fourth, pedagogical transformation, which focuses on developing learning strategies grounded in role modeling, reflection, and experiential learning.

In addition, the model highlights the crucial role of teachers as both facilitators and moral exemplars in modern education. Teachers are no longer merely transmitters of information, but also mentors who guide students in the process of character formation. In this context, technological integration is not rejected but directed toward supporting the internalization of adab values, for

instance through ethically grounded and responsibility-oriented digital learning. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that adab has not lost its relevance in the modern era; rather, it has undergone a transformation that requires reinterpretation and reconstruction. The integration of classical values with modern approaches becomes essential in building an educational system that not only produces intellectually capable students but also individuals with strong character and integrity. Therefore, the integrative model of adab proposed in this study can serve as a conceptual foundation for developing a more holistic, adaptive, and human-centered educational paradigm.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that adab in education has undergone a significant transformation from classical perspectives to contemporary contexts, marked by tensions between traditional values and the demands of modernity. These findings reinforce the argument that the current crisis in education is not merely a crisis of knowledge, but a crisis of values and moral orientation. From a theoretical perspective, this condition aligns with the view of Nucci et al. (2021), who argue that modern education experiences fragmentation between cognitive and moral domains, resulting in imbalances in student development. Therefore, the presence of adab as an integrative concept becomes crucial in restoring this balance. In the context of classical adab, the findings confirm that adab serves as both an ontological and epistemological foundation in education. This is consistent with the thought of Al-Attas (2020), who positions adab as the core of Islamic education, where the ultimate goal is to cultivate individuals capable of placing things appropriately within the order of existence. This concept also resonates with contemporary virtue ethics theory, which emphasizes the importance of character formation through the habituation of virtuous values (Kristjánsson, 2022). Thus, adab is not only relevant in traditional contexts but also possesses a strong philosophical foundation within global educational discourse. However, within contemporary educational contexts, the study reveals a reduction of adab to merely formal and instrumental ethics. This phenomenon can be explained through theories of educational modernization, which emphasize rationality, efficiency, and standardization as primary indicators of success (Fullan et al., 2022). Within this framework, moral values are often marginalized, as they are perceived to have no direct contribution to academic achievement or economic productivity. Lickona (2021) criticizes modern education for its failure to effectively build character due to the lack of systematic integration of values within the learning process. Furthermore, the findings regarding the impact of digital technology on the dynamics of adab suggest that social transformation is not only structural but also cultural. Twenge (2023) argues that the digital generation has experienced significant shifts in social interaction patterns, including increased individualism and decreased social empathy. This is further supported by Carr (2020), who demonstrates that intensive use of technology can influence cognitive processes and individual behavior, including moral and ethical dimensions. In this context, adab faces new challenges, particularly in maintaining moral values within increasingly fragmented and digitally mediated environments.

On the other hand, the study also highlights an urgent need to develop an integrative model of adab capable of bridging tradition and modernity. This finding aligns with holistic education approaches that emphasize the integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions within the learning process (Berkowitz & Bier, 2022). From this perspective, education is not solely aimed at producing intellectually competent individuals but also those who possess strong moral integrity and social awareness. The integrative model of adab proposed in this study can also be analyzed through the lens of transformative learning theory developed by Mezirow, in which learning is understood as a transformation of perspectives through critical reflection. In the context of adab, this transformation occurs when learners not only understand values cognitively but also internalize

them into concrete actions. This suggests that the internalization of adab requires pedagogical approaches that go beyond knowledge transmission, incorporating experience and reflective practices. Moreover, the student-centered learning approach embedded in this integrative model is supported by social constructivist theory, particularly the work of Vygotsky, which emphasizes that learning is an active process constructed through social interaction and experience. In this context, learners are not merely objects of education but active subjects who construct meaning and values in their lives. This approach is especially important in addressing the challenges of modernity, where learners are confronted with complex and dynamic value systems. Furthermore, the integration of adab into modern education can also be linked to the framework of global competence as developed by the OECD (2023), which highlights the importance of individuals' ability to understand, appreciate, and engage with diverse cultural perspectives and values. In this regard, adab can function as an ethical foundation that supports learners in developing global competence grounded not only in knowledge but also in values and attitudes. In conclusion, this discussion demonstrates that adab holds strong relevance in addressing the challenges of contemporary education. The transformation observed is not indicative of the decline of adab, but rather a signal for its reinterpretation and reconstruction to remain contextually meaningful. The integration of classical values with modern approaches is essential for building a holistic and sustainable education system. Therefore, the integrative model of adab proposed in this study not only addresses existing gaps in the literature but also offers a new direction for the development of adaptive and context-responsive character education.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that adab constitutes an essential foundation in education that has not lost its relevance amid the dynamics of modernity; rather, it has undergone a transformation that calls for contextual reinterpretation and reconstruction. From a classical perspective, adab functions as an ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundation that integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions in the formation of the whole person. However, within contemporary educational contexts, there has been a shift in orientation that prioritizes cognitive aspects and technical competencies, leading to a reduction of adab into merely formal ethics that are insufficiently internalized by learners. The findings of this study reveal that the primary challenge in developing adab in the modern era lies not only in changes within the educational system but also in broader social and cultural transformations driven by advances in digital technology. This condition reinforces the gap between the ideality of traditional values and the reality of modern educational practices. Therefore, an approach is needed that can bridge these two poles in an integrative and constructive manner. As its main contribution, this study proposes an integrative model of adab that combines the strengths of classical values with contemporary educational approaches. The model emphasizes the reintegration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions; the contextualization of values within modern life; a student-centered learning approach; and the transformation of the teacher's role as both a moral exemplar and a learning facilitator. In this way, adab is positioned not merely as a normative concept, but as a dynamic and lived practice that remains relevant to the needs of learners in the digital era. Theoretically, this study contributes to enriching the body of knowledge in Islamic education by developing an integrative conceptual framework that bridges tradition and modernity. Practically, it offers direction for the development of adab-based learning strategies that are more contextual, holistic, and adaptive to contemporary changes. Accordingly, education grounded in adab is expected to cultivate learners who are not only intellectually competent but also possess strong character, moral integrity, and deep spiritual awareness.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who have contributed to the completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to academic colleagues and reviewers for their valuable insights, constructive feedback, and intellectual support throughout the research process. The author also acknowledges the contribution of various scholars whose works have provided important theoretical foundations for this study. In addition, the author would like to thank the institutional support that facilitated access to relevant academic resources and literature, which significantly enriched the quality of this research. Finally, deep appreciation is conveyed to family and peers for their encouragement and moral support during the completion of this work.

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