

# Criteria for Akhlaq al-Karimah in the Islamic Education Tradition: Comparative Study of the Books of Akhlaq Lil Banin and Washaya Al-Aba' Lil Abna'

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and compare the criteria of *akhlaq al-karimah* contained in two classical Islamic educational books, namely *Akhlaq Lil Banin* by Umar bin Ahmad Baradja and *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* by Muhammad Syakir Al-Iskandari. This research employed a qualitative approach using library research methods. The primary data sources were the two books, while secondary data were obtained from relevant books, journals, and previous studies. Data were analyzed using content analysis and comparative analysis techniques. The findings indicate that both books emphasize moral education as the foundation of character formation through values such as honesty, respect for parents and teachers, responsibility, discipline, and piety toward Allah. However, *Akhlaq Lil Banin* focuses more on practical moral behavior in daily life, whereas *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* places greater emphasis on spiritual awareness and self-control. The study concludes that both books complement each other in shaping holistic Islamic character education that integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions.

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## 1. Introduction

The family is a fundamental unit in society, playing a crucial role in maintaining social values. Moral education is a fundamental aspect of Islamic education. The primary goal of Islamic education is not only to develop intellectually intelligent students but also to develop good personalities and noble character (Fuadani, 2022). Amidst the various moral issues emerging among today's young generation, moral education is becoming an increasingly pressing need (Hawa et al., 2023). Good morals are reflected in various commendable attitudes and behaviors, such as honesty, friendliness, kindness, generosity, and other noble qualities (Muntakhib,

2024). In contemporary settings, this urgency is intensified by Generation Z's digital habits, requiring Islamic education to link moral formation with relevant learning designs (Hanif, 2025).

The issue of good and bad is closely related to human behavior, while judgments of right and wrong are influenced by the circumstances surrounding the action. Therefore, discussions about morals are always interesting and often give rise to varying opinions regarding an action. Due to differing views, an action may be considered good by some, but bad by others (Rizki, 2021). Moral judgment also involves affective and cognitive dynamics, because religious personality is shaped not only by knowledge but also by emotions, self-control, and internalized values (Hanif & Barokah, 2025).

In the Islamic educational tradition, many scholars have written books on morals as guidelines for character development. Among the books widely used in Islamic boarding schools and Islamic educational institutions are *Akhlaq Lil Banin* by Umar bin Ahmad Baradja and *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* by Muhammad Syakir Al-Iskandari. Both books contain various moral values aimed at developing a noble Muslim personality (Uzma & Masyithoh, 2024). Pesantren-based Islamic education has similarly shown how classical moral authority is maintained while educational institutions respond to changing curriculum demands (Hanif et al., 2024).

Previous research has mostly studied the two books separately, both in terms of the value of moral education and learning methods. However, studies that directly compare the criteria for *akhlaq al-karimah* in the two books are still relatively limited. Therefore, this research attempts to fill this gap through a comparative analysis of the concept of *akhlaq al-karimah* contained in the two books (An Nur et al., 2023).

This study aims to identify the similarities and differences in the criteria of *akhlaq al-karimah* in the books *Akhlaq Lil Banin* and *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* and to explain their relevance for contemporary Islamic education (Rizkia et al., 2023). This relevance is also connected to the need to cultivate responsible Muslim citizenship in the digital era, where ethical awareness must accompany knowledge and social participation (Hanif & Salsabillah, 2024).

Moral education holds a central place in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent to perfect human morality. Therefore, scholars have made moral education a central theme in their various works. The books "*Akhlaq Lil Banin*" and "*Washaya Al-Aba' Lil Abna'*" are two works that specifically address the formation of children's character based on Islamic values (Mustolih, 2020).

## 2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with library research. The primary data sources were the books "*Akhlaq Lil Baniin*" by Umar bin Ahmad Baradja and "*Washooyaa Al-Abaa' Lil Abnaa'*" by Muhammad Syakir Al-Iskandari. Secondary data sources were obtained from books, scientific journals, articles, and previous research relevant to the theme of moral education. Because both primary sources

are classical normative texts, the reading also considered the dialogical horizon between textual meaning and contemporary educational problems, following hermeneutic sensitivity in Islamic textual studies (Hanif, 2017).

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation and literature review. The data obtained were then analyzed using content analysis and comparative analysis. The analysis stages included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions according to the Miles and Huberman model (Fitria, 2023). Furthermore, the interpretation was conducted carefully so that the analysis did not merely quote doctrinal statements but reconstructed their educational meaning in relation to justice, moral responsibility, and contextual application (Hanif & Syarifah, 2022).

### 3. Literature Review

#### Concept Akhlaq al-karimah

Etymologically, morality comes from the word *khuluq*, which means character, temperament, or manners. Terminologically, morality is understood as an ingrained trait within a person that drives spontaneous behavior without requiring lengthy deliberation (Hunadar, 2021).

According to Al-Ghazali, morality is a trait that persists in the soul, giving rise to actions easily and without coercion. Meanwhile, Ibn Miskawaih defines morality as a state of mind that drives a person to act spontaneously (Nafarin et al., 2023). Philosophical studies of Islamic education also show that moral cultivation is inseparable from intellectual discipline and the formation of a virtuous soul (Hanif, 2023b).

Akhlaq al-karimah is praiseworthy morality that reflects obedience to Allah, good relationships with others, and behavior in accordance with Islamic values. The formation of morality is influenced by internal factors such as instinct, habit, and conscience, as well as external factors such as family, school, and the community environment (Maksudin, 2023). Family functions and parenting patterns are therefore important contexts in which religious values, discipline, and social capital are transmitted to children (Hanif, 2023a).

Sanctions are imposed according to the level of violation committed by the student and are tailored to the severity of the offense. Sanctions are not intended solely as punishment, but rather as a means of development to deter students from repeating the same mistakes. Through this approach, students are expected to develop an awareness and sense of responsibility for every action they take while in the *ma'had* environment (Muhdi & Rani, 2026).

In the study of morality, the primary focus of discussion is how humans should behave in life. In general, the scope of morality encompasses two core issues: the relationship between humans and their creator and their relationship with other creatures. Morality toward creatures is further divided into several forms, such as morality toward other humans, morality toward living creatures other than

humans, such as plants and animals, and morality toward inanimate objects (Bhat & Nabi, 2024)

Instilling in children the habit of worship from an early age is a very important step in religious education. Through this habit, children will become accustomed to performing various forms of worship and obeying the commands of Allah SWT. Instilling religious values from a young age has a significant impact on their development, as habits of worship established early on tend to be carried into adulthood. For example, the habit of performing prayer and fasting during Ramadan fosters an awareness that Islamic teachings play an important role in daily life. Thus, as adults, children will better understand and appreciate the importance of religion in their lives (Fadillah et al., 2023).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Research results show that both books share the same goal, namely to develop Muslim individuals with noble morals. However, there are several differences in the emphasis placed on the values taught.

Aspect	Akhlaak Lil Baniin	Washooyaa Abaa' Lil Abnaa'
Morals towards Allah	Taught through worship and obedience	Emphasized through piety and muraqabah
Morals towards Parents	Emphasize obedience and respect	Emphasize devotion and gratitude
Morals towards Teachers	Respect and obey teachers	Placing teachers as a source of blessings of knowledge
morals towards others	Uphold honesty, trustworthiness and courtesy	Emphasize good friendships and guard your tongue
Character Building	Through habituating daily behavior	Through advice, spiritual awareness, and self-control

The similarities between the two books lie in the importance of honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, respect for parents and teachers, and obedience to Allah. Both books also view morality as the primary foundation of Islamic education (Mufiha, 2026).

The difference lies in the approach used. Akhlaq Lil Banin provides more examples of practical behavior that can be applied in everyday life. In contrast, Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna' emphasizes spiritual aspects such as piety, sincerity, and the awareness that Allah constantly watches over every human action (Subur, 2015).

This finding indicates that the two books complement each other in shaping Muslim character. The integration of these two perspectives can produce a model of moral education that is oriented not only toward outward behavior but also toward deeper spiritual development (Kotimah et al., 2021). The integration of moral practice and spiritual awareness also aligns with the broader Islamization of knowledge discourse, which stresses that modern education should not detach

competence from ethical and religious meaning (Hanif & Prasetianingtiyas, 2023).

The criteria for noble character in the books *Akhlaq Lil Banin* and *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* share many similarities, particularly in the values of honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, respect for parents and teachers, and devotion to God. Both books place morality as the primary foundation of Islamic education (Khoirudin, 2023).

The difference lies in the focus of discussion. *Akhlaq Lil Banin* emphasizes the habituation of commendable behavior in daily life, while *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* emphasizes spiritual aspects and moral awareness. Therefore, both books can serve as complementary sources of reference in developing Islamic character education in the modern era (Kumalasari et al., 2023).

However, the development of noble character does not depend solely on theoretical understanding; it also requires a structured environment that fosters daily religious practices, as demonstrated by the effectiveness of Islamic boarding school programs in shaping students' religious character through activities such as Quran memorization, the study of classical Islamic texts, and congregational prayer (Mayangfa'una & Muhdi, 2026). In this sense, technology-supported Islamic education can strengthen moral learning when multimedia tools are used to clarify, not replace, reflective ethical engagement (Hanif et al., 2025).

The role of Islamic religious education teachers as *murabbi* is crucial to the successful development of students' noble character, as teachers not only impart knowledge but also guide, nurture and foster spiritual awareness. The quality of teachers as *murabbi* has been shown to correlate positively with their self-efficacy in managing the learning process, engaging students, and providing both academic and religious guidance (Muhdi et al., 2024).

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and comparison of the two classical Islamic educational texts, *Akhlaq Lil Banin* by Umar bin Ahmad Baradja and *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* by Muhammad Syakir Al-Iskandari, it can be concluded that both books share a fundamental commitment to instilling *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character) as the core of Islamic education. The study found that the two books have significant similarities in the moral values they promote, including honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), responsibility (*tanggung jawab*), respect for parents and teachers, and devotion (*taqwa*) to Allah. These values form a common moral foundation aimed at shaping the personality of Muslim individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually and socially virtuous.

However, the two books differ in their pedagogical emphasis and approach. *Akhlaq Lil Banin* focuses more on practical, everyday moral behavior through habituation (*pembiasaan*) and concrete examples, making it highly applicable for children's daily interactions. In contrast, *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* places greater emphasis on spiritual awareness, self-control (*muraqabah*), and the internalization of piety and gratitude as the driving forces behind moral action. This distinction highlights that while the former is more behaviorally oriented, the latter is more spiritually reflective, yet both are essential for a comprehensive moral education.

Ultimately, the findings confirm that the two books are not contradictory but

complementary. Integrating the practical moral framework of *Akhlaq Lil Banin* with the spiritual and introspective dimensions of *Washaya al-Aba' lil Abna'* can produce a holistic model of Islamic character education. Such integration is highly relevant for contemporary Islamic education, which faces the challenge of balancing outward ethical conduct with deep spiritual consciousness. Therefore, educators and curriculum developers are encouraged to draw from both texts to nurture individuals who embody *akhlaq al-karimah* in all aspects of life, toward Allah, toward others, and toward themselves.

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