

The Epistemology of Islamic Education in Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's Thought and Its Relevance to Islamic Education in the Digital Era

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Abstract: The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed Islamic education while creating epistemic challenges, including information overload, fragmented religious authority, and the spread of unverified knowledge. This study aims to reconstruct the epistemology of Islamic education in the thought of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and examine its relevance to the digital era. Using a qualitative library research approach, the study analyzes Shaykh Nawawi's major works through a hermeneutic framework inspired by Hans-Georg Gadamer. The findings show that Shaykh Nawawi's educational epistemology is grounded in the integration of revelation (*naql*), reason (*'aql*), and spiritual experience (*kashf*) as complementary sources of knowledge. The study also reveals that *adab* functions as an epistemological foundation for acquiring knowledge, while *sanad* serves as a mechanism for ensuring the credibility of knowledge transmission. Furthermore, knowledge is understood not merely as cognitive attainment but as a transformative process that integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. These findings suggest that Shaykh Nawawi's epistemology provides a relevant framework for strengthening digital literacy and developing a critical, ethical, and spiritually grounded model of Islamic education in the digital era.

Keywords: Islamic Epistemology; Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani; Islamic Education; Digital Era; Knowledge Integration

Artikel Info

Received:

10 July 2026

Revised:

13 August 2026

Accepted:

20 September 2026

Published:

10 October 2026

Abstrak: Perkembangan teknologi digital yang pesat telah mengubah pendidikan Islam sekaligus melahirkan berbagai tantangan epistemik, seperti banjir informasi, fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan, dan penyebaran pengetahuan yang tidak

terverifikasi. Kondisi ini menunjukkan pentingnya kerangka epistemologis yang mampu mengarahkan proses pemerolehan, validasi, dan penerapan pengetahuan dalam pendidikan Islam kontemporer. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi epistemologi pendidikan Islam dalam pemikiran Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani serta mengkaji relevansinya terhadap tantangan era digital. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan melalui analisis karya-karya utama Syekh Nawawi menggunakan kerangka hermeneutika Hans-Georg Gadamer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa epistemologi pendidikan Syekh Nawawi berlandaskan integrasi wahyu (*naql*), akal (*'aql*), dan pengalaman spiritual (*kashf*) sebagai sumber pengetahuan yang saling melengkapi. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa adab berfungsi sebagai landasan epistemologis dalam memperoleh ilmu, sedangkan sanad berperan sebagai mekanisme untuk menjamin kredibilitas transmisi pengetahuan. Selain itu, ilmu dipahami tidak sekadar sebagai capaian kognitif, tetapi sebagai proses transformasi yang mengintegrasikan perkembangan intelektual, moral, dan spiritual. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa epistemologi Syekh Nawawi menawarkan kerangka yang relevan untuk memperkuat literasi digital serta mengembangkan model pendidikan Islam yang kritis, etis, dan berlandaskan nilai-nilai spiritual di era digital.

Kata Kunci: Epistemologi Islam; Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani; Pendidikan Islam; Era Digital; Integrasi Ilmu

A. Introduction

The wave of digital transformation has swept through nearly every aspect of human life, including the world of education. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as various initiatives for the digitalization of madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools, reflect an institutional awareness of the urgency of adapting to changing times (Wasehudin, et al., 2023).

However, behind the euphoria of this digital transformation lies a more fundamental and often overlooked epistemological problem, namely how Islamic education can build an epistemic foundation capable of guiding the processes of

selection, verification, evaluation, and internalization of knowledge amid the massive, dynamic flow of digital information whose validity is not entirely guaranteed (Siregar et al., 2025). This situation becomes increasingly complex when some of the information circulating in the digital space often carries values, perspectives, and orientations that are not aligned with the normative principles of Islamic education (Lutfi & Suhermanto Ja'far, 2023).

The issue is essentially not merely related to technical pedagogical aspects, but also touches upon a more fundamental epistemological dimension, namely the nature, sources, validity, and limits of knowledge in Islamic education (Fauzi & Chirzin, 2023). In the context of the digital era, the epistemic crisis of Islamic education is at least evident in three main dimensions. First, there is a fragmentation of religious authority as a result of the democratization of access to digital information, which enables every individual to produce and disseminate religious discourse without adequately verified scholarly authority, methodological competence, or intellectual lineage (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026).

Second, the reduction of knowledge into an instant commodity consumed pragmatically, causing it to lose the formative and transformative dimensions that should serve as the primary orientation of Islamic education (Komljenovic, 2021). Third, the weakening of the culture of manners and scholarly ethics among students due to patterns of digital content consumption that prioritize speed, simplification, and sensationalism over depth of reflection and carefulness in the process of seeking knowledge (Sabrina et al., 2025).

Amid this epistemic crisis, the intellectual heritage of Nusantara scholars, particularly Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, contains a rich epistemological construction that has not yet been fully explored academically in relation to the challenges of contemporary Islamic education. Shaykh Muhammad Nawawi bin Umar al-Bantani al-Jawi (1813–1897) was one of the most influential scholars of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago whose intellectual contributions were not only recognized in Indonesia, but also had a wide-reaching influence within Islamic scholarly networks in the Middle East, particularly in Mecca (Azra, 2004; Imawan et al, 2024). His intellectual

productivity is reflected in the large number of written works covering various disciplines of Islamic scholarship, such as Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sufism (*tasawuf*), ethics (*akhlak*), and education (Muhammad et al., 2023). These works continue to serve as important references in the learning traditions of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) throughout the Indonesian archipelago and have played a significant role in shaping the epistemological character of traditional Islamic education in Indonesia (Zahid & Maksum, 2024).

Although the thought of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani has been widely studied in various research works, most studies still focus on aspects of moral education, exegesis (*tafsir*), ethics (*akhlaq*), and Islamic thought in general. Meanwhile, studies that specifically reconstruct the epistemological dimensions of his educational thought and examine their relevance to the challenges of contemporary Islamic education remain relatively limited.

The study by (Muhammad et al., 2023) in their article “Islamic Educational Thought of Shaykh Nawawi Al-Bantani: A Multidimensional Teaching Paradigm” highlights Shaykh Nawawi’s educational paradigm, which emphasizes the integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects in the learning process. The research demonstrates that Shaykh Nawawi’s educational thought remains relevant to the challenges of modern education, particularly in developing an educational model that is not only oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also toward the formation of students’ character and proper conduct (*adab*). Nevertheless, the study places greater emphasis on the pedagogical dimension and has not specifically elaborated on the construction of his educational epistemology in the context of the knowledge crisis in the digital era.

Another study was conducted by (Pransiska, 2018) through the article “Transformative Islamic Education of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani: Efforts to Realize a Religious-Scientific Generation.” This study emphasizes that, according to Shaykh Nawawi, education cannot be separated from character formation, the integration of religious knowledge and science, and the strengthening of students’ spirituality. The research successfully demonstrates the relevance of Shaykh Nawawi’s thought to the

transformation of modern Islamic education; however, it has not examined in depth the dimension of educational epistemology and the problem of knowledge validity in the digital era.

Meanwhile (Santosa & Aiman, 2022), in a study entitled “The Thought of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani on Islamic Education and Its Relevance to the Industrial Revolution 4.0,” highlighted the importance of moral values, religiosity, and character education in addressing social changes resulting from the development of digital technology. The study placed greater emphasis on the practical relevance of Shaykh Nawawi’s ideas to modern education and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, but it did not yet undertake a systematic reconstruction of his educational epistemological framework as a conceptual foundation for Islamic education in the digital era.

Based on the literature review, this study occupies a distinct position because it seeks to systematically reconstruct the epistemological framework of education developed by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani from his major works, and then contextualize it within contemporary Islamic educational issues, particularly the epistemic crisis, the fragmentation of knowledge authority, and the degradation of *adab* (proper conduct) in the digital sphere.

This condition indicates the existence of a research gap in the discourse of contemporary Islamic education, particularly regarding how the epistemological legacy of Nusantara scholars can be reactualized as a conceptual foundation for responding to the knowledge crisis and information disruption in the digital era. Therefore, this study is directed toward bridging this gap through an analysis of the construction of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani’s educational epistemology and its relevance to the development of contemporary Islamic education.

Based on the background above, this study aims to: (1) systematically reconstruct the epistemological framework of Islamic education according to Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani from his major works; (2) critically analyze these epistemological pillars from the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy; and (3) elaborate the relevance and contribution of Shyakh Nawawi al-Bantani’s epistemology to the development of Islamic education that is responsive to the challenges of the digital era. Thus, this study

is not merely historical-descriptive in nature, but also critical-constructive in offering a conceptual framework that can be operationalized in contemporary Islamic educational practice.

B. Research Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach using the library research method, characterized by a critical-analytical orientation. This method was selected because the primary objects of study are intellectual texts, including the primary works of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and secondary literature in the form of previous academic studies, all of which require in-depth analysis and contextual interpretation rather than the collection of empirical data from the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The primary data sources in this study are the major works of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani that are directly relevant to the themes of epistemology and education, including: *Marah Labid li Kashf Ma'na al-Qur'an al-Majid*, to identify Shaykh Nawawi's conception of revelation-based sources of knowledge, *Marāqī al-'Ubūdiyyah*, as the pedagogical and ethical foundation of Shaykh Nawawi's epistemology, *Nihayat al-Zain fi Irshad al-Mubtadi'in* (Islamic jurisprudence of worship), to examine the methodology of reasoning and the hierarchy of legal evidences, and *Qami' al-Tughyan* (ethics), to understand the moral-spiritual dimension of Shaykh Nawawi's epistemology. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources include relevant academic journals and scholarly books.

The data analysis technique in this study uses a hermeneutic triangulation approach, namely the process of reading the thought texts of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani through three layers of interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, a literal reading (*qirā'ah mubāsyirah*) aimed at understanding the textual meaning and conceptual structure explicitly stated in Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's works. Second, contextual reading (*qirā'ah siyāqīyyah*), which places the text within the historical, social, intellectual, and scholarly tradition context during the lifetime of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani. Third, a projective reading (*qirā'ah maqāṣidiyyah*) aimed at contextualizing Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's epistemological ideas within the problems of

contemporary Islamic education, particularly those related to the epistemic crisis and information disruption in the digital era. This approach adopts Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical framework, which views interpretation as a dialogical process within the "hermeneutic circle" between the text, historical context, and the interpreter's horizon of understanding. Accordingly, the meaning of a text is not understood statically but continuously undergoes reproduction in accordance with the development of the context in which it is read (Gadamer, 2004).

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, this study applies several validity procedures: cross-confirmation among various works of Nawawi al-Bantani to verify the consistency of his epistemology, comparison with the thought of contemporary scholars and relevant schools of thought, as well as consultation with trustworthy academic studies as comparative perspectives. The analysis is presented in a narrative-analytical manner, avoiding reductionism that oversimplifies complex ideas into formulas that lose their nuances (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

C. Results and Discussion

The Epistemological Framework of Islamic Education According to Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani.

The research results show that Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's educational epistemology was not formulated in the form of a systematic philosophical theory as found in the classical Islamic philosophical tradition, but is instead dispersed across various works on Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sufism (*tasawuf*), and ethics (*akhlaq*) (Muhammad et al., 2023). Nevertheless, there is a consistent epistemological pattern, namely that knowledge is understood as an integrative process that connects revelation, reason, learning experiences, and the purification of the soul. Such a characteristic is in line with the practical tradition of pesantren epistemology, in which knowledge is not only understood as a theoretical construct, but is embodied in scholarly habitus and everyday life practices (Intania et al., 2025).

In contrast to the modern educational paradigm that tends to separate cognitive and moral aspects, Shaykh Nawawi viewed knowledge as an instrument of self-transformation that leads humanity toward the happiness of the hereafter and closeness to God (Abitolkha, 2022). In *Marāqī al-'Ubūdiyyah*, he explains that a person who seeks knowledge in order to make it 'إِلْأَمْعَادِ زَادَة' (provisions for the journey to the afterlife) and seeks only the pleasure of Allah is among those who are fortunate. Furthermore, he emphasized that the main purpose of mastering knowledge is to attain the happiness of the hereafter (الْأَخْرَة سَعَادَة نَيْن) (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.). Thus, the validity of knowledge in Shaykh Nawawi's perspective is not only determined by rational and cognitive aspects, but also by an ethical-spiritual orientation that directs human beings toward God and salvation in the hereafter.

These findings reveal that Shaykh Nawawi's epistemology is closer to the classical Islamic educational paradigm, which views knowledge as an instrument for forming a pious individual, rather than merely a tool for producing skills. In the context of contemporary education, this perspective offers a critique of the instrumentalist tendencies in education that often measure learning success solely through academic achievement and technical competence (Zahid & Maksum, 2024).

The Tripartition of Sources of Knowledge: *Naql*, '*Aql*, and *Kashf*

An analysis of the works of Shaykh Nawawi reveals the integration of three primary sources of knowledge, namely revelation (*naql*), reason ('*aql*), and spiritual experience (*kashf*) (Rokhim et al, 2025). In *Marah Labid*, Shaykh Nawawi simultaneously combines the *bi al-ma'tsur* approach, the *bi al-ra'y* approach, and the *isyari* Sufi pattern (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.). This shows that knowledge in the scholarly tradition of Shaykh Nawawi is not reduced to rationality alone, but also involves the authority of revelation and spiritual purification as a path to understanding truth.

In *Maraqī al-'Ubūdiyyah*, Shaykh Nawawi explains that a person cannot attain the true essence of worship without being preceded by correct knowledge. He affirms that sharia, tariqa, and haqiqa constitute a single unity that cannot be separated. According to him, “sharia without haqiqa is empty, while haqiqa without sharia is invalid”

(Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.). The statement indicates that the sources of knowledge in Islam do not stop at normative texts alone. Revelation serves as the primary foundation, but understanding it requires the work of reason and spiritual deepening (Harto et al., 2026). In his explanation of the relationship between sharia, tariqa, and haqiqa, Shaykh Nawawi explains that haqiqa is a profound understanding bestowed by Allah upon those who consistently practice their knowledge (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.).

The reinforcement of the position of revelation as the foundation of knowledge is also evident in the *muqaddimah* of *Nihāyat al-Zain*. Shaykh Nawawi opens his book with the statement:

الحنيفية الملة فروع بأحكامه وصحح الشريعة، أركان دينه بدلائل قوى الذي لله الحمد

"All praise be to Allah who strengthens the pillars of sharia with the proofs of His religion and straightens the branches of the upright faith with His laws" (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.).

The statement indicates that Islamic law (*sharia*) is built upon evidential proofs (*dalā'il*) that function as the basis for the validation of knowledge. This suggests that the Islamic scholarly tradition does not rest on dogmatic acceptance, but on argumentation that possesses religious legitimacy. In the context of Islamic education in the digital era, this principle is relevant as a foundation for digital literacy that emphasizes source verification, critical thinking, and intellectual responsibility in managing information (Putra & Ayyaisy, 2025).

Ahmad Wahyu Hidayat and Muhammad Iqbal Fasa explain that the purpose of education according to Shaykh Nawawi is not limited to the mastery of knowledge, but is also directed toward achieving the pleasure of Allah, the formation of moral character, and the strengthening of the spiritual dimension of learners (Hidayat & Fasa, 2019). This view indicates that knowledge in the perspective of Shaykh Nawawi is not positioned as an autonomous intellectual activity, but as part of the process of forming a religious personality that integrates cognitive, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Thus, knowledge acquires its meaning when it contributes to servitude to Allah and the formation of good character.

In the context of the digital era, this concept holds highly strong relevance. The information crisis today is not caused by a lack of access to knowledge, but rather by the weakness of the ability to verify and interpret information. The integration of revelation, reason, and spirituality can serve as an epistemological framework for building digital literacy that is not only intellectually critical but also morally responsible (Sarmin & Dewi, 2026).

Adab as the Foundation of the Epistemology of Education

The second finding shows that in the thought of Shaykh Nawawi, *adab* (proper conduct/etiquette) is not merely the result of education, but rather a prerequisite for the birth of true knowledge.

In *Qāmi' al-Ṭughyān*, Shaykh Nawawi affirms that the activity of seeking knowledge must be directed toward obtaining the pleasure of Allah, eliminating ignorance, reviving religion, and being grateful for the blessings of intellect and health. Conversely, he rejects the orientation of seeking knowledge driven by the desire to obtain social status, popularity, or material gain (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.). This concept demonstrates that Shaykh Nawawi's epistemology does not separate the cognitive dimension from the ethical-spiritual dimension, because the value of knowledge is determined not only by the truth of the knowledge acquired, but also by the orientation of the intention that underlies the process of seeking it.

The idea is reinforced in *Maraqī al-'Ubudiyyah*. Shaykh Nawawi quotes the warning of Imam al-Ghazali that a person who seeks knowledge for the sake of competition, pride, and the pursuit of social status is in truth destroying his own religion (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.). It is apparent here that Shaykh Nawawi views the question of intention as an epistemological matter, not merely a moral one. Intention determines the direction in which knowledge is used, while the direction of knowledge use determines the quality of the knowledge produced. In other words, knowledge born from egoistic motivation risks losing its transformative function (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.).

Recent research on character education in the thought of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani shows that the educational process must be directed toward the formation of

moral character and the purification of the soul before the mere development of intellectual aspects. The emphasis on *tazkiyat al-nafs* indicates that knowledge is not understood as an accumulation of cognitive information, but rather as a means of character formation and individual piety (Yusutria et al., 2023). This perspective reveals that the educational epistemology of Shaykh Nawawi is built upon the integration of knowledge, *adab* (moral conduct), and spirituality, so that educational success is measured not only by intellectual intelligence, but also by the moral quality and religious depth of the learners.

This finding is in line with the research (Muhammad et al., 2023) which shows that the educational thought of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani is oriented toward the holistic development of human beings through the integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions. In that perspective, the educational process is not only directed toward the mastery of knowledge (transfer of knowledge), but also toward the formation of moral character and the strengthening of students' religious awareness (Purwaningsih, 2024). Therefore, knowledge is understood as an instrument of personality development that connects the cognitive aspect with ethical and spiritual responsibility in human life.

The relevance of this perspective becomes increasingly evident in the digital era, where the rapid flow of information requires not only intellectual ability but also moral discernment in the use of knowledge. The phenomenon of hoax dissemination, hate speech, and information manipulation on social media reflects the vulnerability of the contemporary digital public sphere (Kumar & Maurya, 2024). This reality demonstrates that the primary challenge of education today is no longer merely providing access to knowledge, but ensuring that knowledge is used responsibly and ethically (Marín et al., 2025). Therefore, the revitalization of Shaykh Nawawi's concept of *adab* can serve as an ethical foundation for the development of Islamic digital literacy, fostering responsible digital engagement, critical thinking, and moral accountability in navigating contemporary information ecosystems.

Sanad and Scholarly Authority as a Knowledge Validation Mechanism

The third finding indicates that Shaykh Nawawi emphasized the importance of acquiring knowledge through authoritative scholarly guidance and proper educational

processes. In *Qami' al-Tughyan*, it is explained that knowledge is acquired through two paths, namely *kasbiy* (the effort of learning directly) and *sama'iy* (listening to the explanations of Islamic scholars). Both forms require the presence of a teacher as a mediator of knowledge (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.).

This view is reinforced in *Marāqī al-'Ubūdiyyah*, Shaykh Nawawi explains that a correct understanding of religion will eliminate the doubts and confusion that arise from ignorance of the paths of Islamic law. This condition can only be achieved through a proper learning process and adequate guidance (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.). Therefore, the blessing of knowledge is not only determined by the amount of knowledge acquired, but also by the quality of the learning process that connects students with scholarly authority capable of guiding them toward correct understanding (Didin et al., 2026). This shows that in the educational epistemology of Shaykh Nawawi, the transmission of knowledge through a teacher plays an important role in maintaining the validity of knowledge and protecting students from misunderstanding religious teachings.

This finding is consistent with Siregar et al.'s study on the transformation of Islamic scholarly authority, which shows that sanad functions as an epistemic legitimation mechanism in the process of knowledge transmission. In the Islamic scholarly tradition, the validity of knowledge is not only determined by the content of the information conveyed, but also by the credibility of the source and the continuity of the scholarly authority that transmits it (Siregar et al., 2025). This perspective shows that the process of acquiring knowledge requires verification through a trusted scholarly network so that the truth of knowledge can be scientifically and religiously accounted for.

The concept of sanad holds relevance in the digital era because it offers a mechanism for verifying knowledge through the credibility of sources and scholarly authority. Amid the proliferation of information circulating without adequate validation processes, sanad functions as an instrument of epistemological legitimacy that helps distinguish accountable knowledge from information that merely gains popularity through digital algorithms (Hidayatulloh, 2026; Siregar et al., 2025).

In that context, the concept of sanad can be reconstructed into a principle of information source verification. If in classical tradition sanad was used to trace the chain of knowledge transmission, then in the digital space the same principle can be applied through checking source credibility, author authority, the methodology of information compilation, and the validity of the references used.

Transformational Orientation of Knowledge: From Knowing to Being

The next finding shows that Shaykh Nawawi did not view knowledge as an end in itself. Knowledge must give birth to practice, and practice must produce a transformation of character (Haki & Hazarika, 2024). In *Maraqī al-'Ubudiyyah*, it is explained that knowledge without practice holds no value. Shaykh Nawawi even cites a number of narrations affirming that a learned person who does not act upon his knowledge will bear a greater accountability than one who is not learned (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.).

This view shows that the success of education is not measured by the amount of information mastered by learners, but rather by the character changes produced through the learning process. Character education aims to cultivate moral virtues, integrity, self-discipline, and responsible behavior, indicating that educational outcomes should be assessed through the transformation of learners' character rather than solely through cognitive achievement (Jeynes, 2019; Seider et al, 2013). Thus, according to Shaykh Nawawi, education has a transformational orientation, namely changing a person's way of thinking, way of behaving, and way of living.

This educational orientation remains highly relevant in the contemporary digital era, where the expansion of information access often exceeds the development of moral awareness and character formation. Although digital technology provides extensive opportunities for learning and knowledge acquisition, excessive digital exposure may contribute to moral degradation and declining social awareness when not accompanied by effective value internalization processes (Hidayah et al., 2026). Therefore, educational practices need to integrate moral guidance and character education to ensure that knowledge development is aligned with ethical responsibility and social awareness (Jeynes, 2019). In this regard, Shaykh Nawawi's emphasis on character transformation

offers an important educational framework for addressing the moral challenges emerging in the digital age (Muhammad et al., 2023).

Shaykh Nawawi's epistemology offers a solution through the integration of knowledge, practice, and *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul). Within this paradigm, the educational process does not stop at the transfer of information, rather, it is directed toward the formation of individuals who are knowledgeable, morally upright, and responsible in the use of their knowledge (Abitolkha, 2022).

The Relevance of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's Epistemology for Islamic Education in the Digital Era.

Based on all the findings above, it can be understood that the educational epistemology of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani has strong relevance to the challenges of contemporary Islamic education.

First, the integration of revelation, reason, and spirituality provides an epistemic foundation for confronting the flood of digital information that often lacks moral orientation. In the perspective of Islamic epistemology, revelation functions as a source of ethical guidance, reason serves as a critical instrument for evaluating knowledge, and spirituality ensures that the pursuit of knowledge remains directed toward moral and human development. Such an integrative framework is highly relevant for addressing the challenges of misinformation, information overload, and ethical disorientation in the digital era (Alimuddin et al., 2026; Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.).

Second, the concept of *adab* as a prerequisite for knowledge offers a solution to the digital ethics crisis marked by hoaxes, hate speech, and irresponsible communication. In *Maraqi al-'Ubudiyyah*, Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani emphasizes that the pursuit of knowledge must be grounded in moral discipline, self-purification, and proper conduct toward God, teachers, and others. Knowledge is not merely intellectual attainment but a means of cultivating virtuous character and spiritual excellence. This perspective remains highly relevant in the digital era, where abundant information is often accompanied by ethical challenges. Recent research on digital learning in pesantren-based madrasahs shows that *adab* continues to serve as a fundamental ethical framework, guiding learners to engage with digital technologies responsibly. Therefore,

Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's conception of *adab* provides a strong foundation for fostering digital literacy that is both ethically grounded and spiritually oriented (Nawawi al-Bantani, n.d.; Saifudin et al., 2026).

Third, the concept of *sanad* can be reconstructed as a principle of information verification in the digital era. Through the mechanism of examining the credibility of transmitters and the continuity of information chains, learners are trained not to accept and disseminate information without prior verification. This principle is highly relevant to strengthening digital literacy and combating misinformation and fake news in contemporary society (Rodliyana, 2022).

Fourth, a knowledge orientation centered on self-transformation offers an important corrective to the prevailing tendency of digital education to prioritize cognitive achievement and technical proficiency. Transformative learning theory emphasizes that education should foster changes in learners' perspectives, identities, values, and self-understanding, integrating cognitive, emotional, relational, and even spiritual dimensions of human development. Consequently, knowledge is not merely acquired but internalized as a means of personal and social transformation (Wang et al., 2021).

Thus, the relevance of Shaykh Nawawi's epistemology lies not in its romanticism of the past, but rather in its ability to provide a conceptual framework capable of addressing 21st-century epistemic problems. This epistemology can serve as a foundation for the development of digital Islamic education that is integrative, critical, and civilized, and oriented toward the formation of the whole person.

D. Conclusion

This study reveals that Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's educational epistemology is founded upon an integrative conception of knowledge that harmonizes revelation (*naql*), reason (*'aql*), and spiritual experience (*kashf*). Within this framework, knowledge is not merely understood as a cognitive achievement but as a transformative process aimed at cultivating intellectual maturity, moral integrity, and spiritual refinement. Consequently, the validity and value of knowledge are inseparable from ethical orientation, spiritual discipline, and commitment to

authoritative scholarly traditions.

The reconstruction of Shaykh Nawawi's thought further highlights the central role of *adab* and *sanad* as epistemological foundations of Islamic education. *Adab* functions as a prerequisite for the acquisition and proper utilization of knowledge, while *sanad* serves as a mechanism for ensuring the credibility and continuity of knowledge transmission. Together, these principles establish an educational paradigm in which knowledge is directed toward personal transformation rather than the mere accumulation of information.

The relevance of this epistemological framework becomes increasingly apparent in the digital era. Amid the challenges of information overload, fragmented religious authority, and the spread of unverified knowledge, Shaykh Nawawi's thought offers a conceptual foundation for developing Islamic education that is intellectually critical, ethically grounded, and spiritually oriented. Therefore, his educational epistemology remains a significant intellectual resource for strengthening digital literacy, fostering responsible knowledge practices, and promoting the holistic development of learners in contemporary Islamic education.

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