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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**THE ROLE OF TEACHINGS ON SPIRITUAL AND MORAL CHARACTER IN THE  
EDUCATION OF MODERN SOCIETY: THE HARMONY OF SECULAR AND  
RELIGIOUS VIEWS****Ulugbek Vakhobov**

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**ABOUT ARTICLE**

**Key words:** spiritual and moral character, education, modern society, secular views, religious values, moral consciousness, social education, enlightenment, youth education, moral immunity.

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the role of teachings on spiritual and moral character in the education of modern society from the perspective of the harmony of secular and religious views. The primary purpose of the study is to reveal the complementary aspects of secular and religious-enlightenment approaches in shaping moral consciousness, social responsibility, the stability of values, and moral immunity in the upbringing of an individual. The article utilizes historical-analytical, comparative analysis, content analysis, axiological, sociocultural, and integrative analysis methods. The results indicate that spiritual and moral character is not merely a criterion of individual behavior, but a complex socio-pedagogical phenomenon that determines the cultural memory of society, civic solidarity, and the effectiveness of educational institutions. While secular education develops legal consciousness, critical thinking, social activeness, and civic responsibility in an individual, religious-moral views strengthen inner motivational qualities such as conscience, honesty, patience, compassion, and responsibility. The article proposes an integrative educational model for the modern education system based on the principle of "value – consciousness – behavior – social practice."

**Introduction.** The issue of spiritual and moral character is one of the central scientific concepts in understanding the relationship between the individual and society. Any society can create its own legal, economic, and political institutions; however, the stable functioning of these institutions is closely intertwined with a person's inner moral criteria, social responsibility, and attitude towards values. Therefore, education is not merely a process of imparting knowledge; it is a complex process that shapes an individual's self-awareness, sense of duty towards others, reliance on moral criteria in their choices, and participation as a responsible subject in social life.

In scientific literature, character education, moral education, civic education, and religious-spiritual education are often interpreted as separate directions. However, their common goal is closely aligned: to shape an individual as a conscious, responsible, honest person ready for social cooperation and not indifferent to values. For example, J. Arthur, based on historical analysis, shows that religious and secular contexts have constantly intersected in the character education movement; their relationship is not a simple opposition but a complex interaction determined by the social needs of a specific period [Arthur, 2018, pp. 60–76]. Thus, associating spiritual and moral character solely with religious or solely with secular sources would be a narrow scientific approach.

Understanding the relationship between secularism and religiosity correctly in the modern education system is of particular importance. Secularism implies that the state and the education system treat all citizens equally, ensuring freedom of belief and the supremacy of legal norms. Religious values, on the other hand, manifest as a factor strengthening a person's inner world, conscience, moral choices, and spiritual responsibility. M.F. Genç, drawing on the experience of Turkey, emphasizes that a sharp division between values education and religious education is not always effective because moral education is not merely theoretical knowledge, but is tied to values turning into life's essence [Genç, 2018, p. 220]. This thought highlights the necessity of studying the harmony of secular and religious views as a conceptual problem of the education system.

The research problem lies in the fact that in modern society, the moral views of young people are shaped under the influence of multiple sources—family, school, peer environment, the internet, social networks, mass culture, religious-enlightenment environments, and legal institutions. Under these conditions, subordinating educational influence to a single center becomes difficult. The digital environment expands the possibilities of accessing information, but at the same time, it increases the risks of consumerism, superficial individualism, aggressive

content, devaluation, and spiritual indifference. E.M. Larson shows through the example of Indonesian youth that smartphones and digital communications manifest dually in the religious upbringing of youth—both as a risk and an opportunity [Larson, 2023, pp. 119–135]. This conclusion holds theoretical significance for societies with a high proportion of youth, such as Uzbekistan.

The purpose of the article is to analyze teachings on spiritual and moral character based on the harmony of secular and religious views and to propose an integrative model for the education of modern society. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are defined: first, to determine the theoretical content of the concept of spiritual and moral character; second, to demonstrate the role of moral qualities in the secular education system; third, to analyze the social function of religious-moral views in individual upbringing; fourth, to develop an educational model based on the harmony of secular and religious values; fifth, to provide theoretical and practical recommendations on forming moral immunity and social responsibility in youth education.

The scientific novelty of the article is that it interprets spiritual and moral character not as limited to "religious affiliation" or "civic conduct," but as an integrative phenomenon consisting of the unity of a person's value consciousness, moral choice, social responsibility, and cultural identification. Secular and religious views are substantiated not as two competing systems, but as complementary axiological sources performing different tasks in the educational process.

**Methodology.** The research is of a theoretical-analytical nature, in which several scientific methods were harmoniously applied. The historical-analytical method allowed for the study of the formation and transformation of spiritual and moral education ideas across different eras. For instance, the history of the character education movement studied by J. Arthur shows that religious and secular values have intersected in various forms during the educational process [Arthur, 2018, pp. 60–76]. Through this method, it was substantiated that moral education is not a modern invention but a pedagogical need formed during the historical development of society.

The comparative analysis method served to compare approaches found in Uzbek, English, Russian, and international scientific literature. In English literature, the concepts of "character education," "moral education," and "civic education" are more often associated with citizenship, democratic values, and personal responsibility [MacMullen, 2018, pp. 141–161]. In literature from the Islamic scientific environment, moral education is often explained through spiritual perfection, conscience, honesty, and responsibility before Allah [Eka, 2017, pp. 1–33].

In Russian and post-Soviet scientific literature, the concept of "spiritual and moral education" is interpreted in relation to social stability, cultural heritage, and social unity [Lutovinova, Zolotareva, Tchinaryan, 2021, p. e1196].

The content analysis method was directed at determining the semantic field of core concepts used in scientific articles, such as "value," "conscience," "citizenship," "religious education," "character," "spirituality," and "social responsibility." This method revealed that identical moral qualities are explained on different grounds in religious and secular sources. For example, honesty is explained in religious interpretation as a spiritual-conscientious duty, whereas in secular interpretation, it is a condition for social trust and legal culture.

The axiological approach formed the methodological core of the article. This is because spiritual and moral character cannot be understood without a system of values. An individual's moral character is manifested through what they value, what they reject, what criteria they base their choices on, and how they treat others. Y.Z. Ogretici demonstrates that under the conditions of modern subjective spirituality, values are intricately linked with personal choices, spiritual quests, and moral self-awareness [Ogretici, 2018, p. 212]. This approach allowed for the analysis of spiritual and moral character not merely as external behavioral norms, but as an internal value orientation.

The sociocultural approach served to study education in the context of social institutions, cultural environment, family traditions, the education system, and digital communications. Individual morality is formed not in abstract isolation, but within a specific cultural environment. Therefore, in the issue of spiritual and moral education, the joint influence of family, school, neighborhood (mahalla), religious-educational institutions, mass media, and digital platforms must be taken into account.

The integrative analysis method allowed for the study of secular and religious views not as opposing poles, but as two value sources with distinct tasks in the educational process. While secularism ensures legal equality, scientific thinking, civic responsibility, and social order, religious-moral views strengthen an individual's internal control, conscientious responsibility, and moral motivation. Analyzing the issue of freedom of conscience in the context of Uzbekistan, A.M. Mirzakhmedov, K. Mirzakhmedov, and Sh. Aminov note that religious organizations play a specific social role in spiritual and educational processes [Mirzakhmedov, Mirzakhmedov, Aminov, 2023, p. 08002].

**Results.** Analyses showed that the concept of spiritual and moral character must be understood in at least four dimensions. The first dimension is value consciousness. This is an individual's ability to distinguish between good and evil, justice and injustice, honesty and self-

interest, responsibility and negligence. If value consciousness is not formed, knowledge does not provide moral direction; it remains only at the level of a technical skill. Therefore, in the education system, along with imparting knowledge, the purpose for which the knowledge is used also takes on an educational essence.

The second dimension is moral choice. Spiritual and moral character is seen not in a person's theoretical views, but in their choices in real-life situations. For example, talking about justice is one thing; making a fair decision in a situation of conflict of interest is another. Studies on character education also emphasize that moral qualities are consolidated not just as concepts, but through practical habits, behavior, and social action [Pike, 2010, pp. 311–321].

The third dimension is social responsibility. A person's spiritual and moral character is manifested in their attitude toward other people in society, family, profession, Motherland, nature, and future generations. In this respect, civic education can be viewed as the secular form of moral education. I. MacMullen, analyzing the relationship between religious schools and civic education, shows that the main criterion of education in a multi-confessional society is to transform an individual into a responsible citizen in social life [MacMullen, 2018, pp. 141–161].

The fourth dimension is moral immunity. This is an individual's ability to maintain internal stability in the face of harmful information, manipulative ideas, extremist calls, consumerist pressures, or moral indifference. In the digital environment, moral immunity is becoming one of the most important outcomes of education. Larson's research shows that smartphones can be simultaneously a dangerous and useful tool for religious and moral education: the problem lies not in the technology itself, but in the culture of its use and moral criteria [Larson, 2023, pp. 119–135].

The role of moral qualities in the secular education system is that it prepares the individual for legal consciousness, civic culture, critical thinking, and social cooperation. Secular education promotes moral criteria common to all citizens—respect for the law, human dignity, tolerance, diligence, responsibility, justice, and social equality. Here, moral education acts as a common value field uniting members of society, regardless of religious belief. M.F. Genç, analyzing the difference between values education and religious education, notes that moral education should not be limited to imparting religious knowledge, but must reveal the function of values in social life [Genç, 2018, p. 220].

The social function of religious-moral views in an individual's upbringing is primarily seen in strengthening the mechanism of internal control. While secular law dictates external order, religious-moral views solidify human conscientious responsibility. Values such as honesty, patience, gratitude, compassion, forgiveness, respect for parents, attention to

neighbors, and helping orphans and the needy strengthen social solidarity. Eka, analyzing character education from an Islamic point of view, shows that moral perfection is linked to religious education, civic education, and the culture of social behavior [Eka, 2017, pp. 1–33].

Based on the research results, the following educational model, relying on the harmony of secular and religious values, is proposed for modern society: "value – consciousness – behavior – social practice." In the first stage, the essence of universal human and national values is explained to the individual. In the second stage, these values turn into a conscious attitude: the student or young person realizes why honesty, justice, tolerance, and responsibility are necessary. In the third stage, values manifest in behavior. In the fourth stage, the individual applies these values in social practice—in the family, education, labor, collective relations, and the digital environment.

In this model, secular and religious views perform different but mutually complementary functions. The secular approach creates a general legal-normative field; the religious-moral approach strengthens inner belief, conscientious control, and spiritual motivation. Therefore, their harmony ensures moral stability, civic solidarity, and consistency in youth education in society.

**Discussion.** A comparative analysis of various scientific literatures shows that there are three main approaches to the issue of spiritual and moral education. The first approach associates character education with general civic virtues. In this approach, respect for the law, social responsibility, democratic culture, and cooperation are demanded from the individual. MacMullen's works on religious schools and civic education are closely aligned with this direction: the author discusses how religious educational institutions can contribute to civic goals in a multicultural society [MacMullen, 2018, pp. 141–161].

The second approach connects moral education with religious-spiritual perfection. In this approach, the main goal of education is interpreted as purifying the person's inner world, awakening their conscience, exercising self-control, and realizing the meaning of life. Pike, analyzing the relationship between Christianity and character education, demonstrates that the relationship between religious belief and core values is complex [Pike, 2010, pp. 311–321]. In Islamic literature as well, character education is associated with human spiritual maturity, being beneficial to society, and moral responsibility [Eka, 2017, pp. 1–33].

The third approach is of an integrative nature. In it, moral education is viewed neither solely as a religious-educational nor solely as a secular-civic sphere, but as a process linked to the entire social existence of an individual. Arthur's historical analysis shows that religious and secular elements in the character education movement are not completely separated from each

other; they have debated in certain eras and united around common moral goals in others [Arthur, 2018, pp. 60–76]. It is exactly this third–integrative–approach that is selected as the primary scientific position in this article.

In the Uzbek scientific-educational environment, spiritual and moral education is often understood in connection with national values, family, mahalla (neighborhood), master-apprentice traditions, enlightenment, and religious tolerance. Exploring freedom of conscience and the role of religious organizations in social life within the context of Uzbekistan, Mirzakhmedov, Mirzakhmedov, and Aminov note that religious organizations directly or indirectly influence the upbringing of the younger generation in the spirit of folk values [Mirzakhmedov, Mirzakhmedov, Aminov, 2023, p. 08002]. However, such influence must be in harmony with secular state principles, and religious values should not negate legal order and civic equality.

In English-language scientific literature, the concepts of "character education" and "civic education" are more commonly used. These approaches emphasize forming social trust, civic engagement, and collective responsibility in individuals. Glanzer, Beaty, and Lyon, analyzing the views of faculty on moral education in religious universities, show that higher education should not merely impart professional knowledge but also impact the moral maturity of the individual [Glanzer, Beaty, Lyon, 2005, pp. 386–403]. This idea substantiates that spiritual and moral education in higher education is not secondary, but an institutional task.

In Russian and post-Soviet literature, the concept of "духовно-нравственное воспитание" (spiritual-moral education) is mostly associated with cultural heritage, social stability, patriotism, and social security. Lutovinova, Zolotareva, and Tchinaryan note that in Russia, spiritual education is seen at the intersection of law, theology, and education [Lutovinova, Zolotareva, Tchinaryan, 2021, p. e1196]. The advantage of this approach is that it links education to societal stability; its limitation, however, is that it may sometimes pay insufficient attention to issues of individual freedom and critical thinking.

Under the conditions of globalization, the tasks of spiritual and moral education become even more complex. On the one hand, young people are becoming acquainted with various cultures, ideas, and lifestyles; on the other hand, this process brings the risk of value instability, loss of identity, consumerism, and making personal interest an absolute value. As Ogretici points out, modern subjective spirituality ties a person's moral decisions more to personal experience and internal feelings rather than traditional institutions [Ogretici, 2018, p. 212]. This situation demands a new approach from education: it is necessary not to give orders to youth, but to provide them with the criteria for making conscious moral choices.

The digital environment makes upbringing even more complicated. The internet allows for the dissemination of moral knowledge, the creation of educational content, and the broadening of young people's worldview. At the same time, it can reinforce superficial popularity, the aestheticization of violence, the promotion of consumerism, the fragmentation of attention, and moral relativism. In Larson's research, the smartphone is evaluated for religious youth as both a "dangerous path" and a "tool leading to the right path" [Larson, 2023, pp. 119–135]. Thus, digital education becomes effective not through technical control, but through the formation of moral consciousness, media literacy, and inner responsibility.

The author's scientific position is that the conflict between secularism and religiosity should not be artificially exacerbated. Conflict usually arises when religious values are turned into tools of political coercion or when secularism is reduced to a cold bureaucratic form devoid of spiritual values. On the contrary, while secularism ensures freedom of belief, legal equality, and scientific thinking, religious-moral views strengthen an individual's conscientious responsibility, compassion, honesty, and culture of self-restraint. When these two layers harmonize, education becomes not only orderly but also meaningful.

**Conclusion.** The research results serve as a basis for putting forward the following scientific conclusions:

Spiritual and moral character is not limited to an individual's external behavior; it is a complex socio-pedagogical phenomenon consisting of the unity of value consciousness, moral choice, social responsibility, and internal conscientious control.

The secular education system shapes legal culture, civic responsibility, critical thinking, social cooperation, and tolerance in an individual. These qualities ensure common social order in a multicultural and multi-confessional society.

Religious-moral views strengthen human internal motivation. Qualities such as conscience, honesty, patience, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, and responsibility become the internal pillars of a person's behavior.

Secularism and religiosity are not mutually exclusive systems in the educational process. They perform different functions: secularism creates a general legal and civic field, while religious values enhance the spiritual-moral stability of the individual.

In the context of modern globalization and the digital environment, moral immunity should be one of the main outcomes of education. Young people are protected from harmful information not by banning it, but through its critical evaluation, filtering based on value criteria, and responsible usage.

In the education system, spiritual and moral upbringing should be organized not as an isolated set of activities, but as a continuous process connected with all subjects, the learning environment, master-apprentice relationships, family collaboration, and social practice.

The proposed "value – consciousness – behavior – social practice" model serves to balance and harmonize secular and religious values in the modern education system.

Theoretically, the article interprets spiritual and moral character as an integrative category. Practically, it substantiates the necessity of an educational system based on cooperation between educational institutions, the family, the mahalla, the religious-educational environment, and digital platforms. In modern education, control, prohibitions, and lectures alone are insufficient when working with youth; it is essential to have dialogues with them about the meaning of values, the consequences of moral choices, civic responsibility, and conscientious accountability. The harmony of secular and religious views creates a rich semantic foundation precisely for this dialogue.

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