

Internalization Of Imam Al-Ghazali's Moral Values For Strengthening Digital Ethics Of Generation Z In The Era Of Social Media: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and synthesize the literature on the internalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral values in strengthening the digital ethics of Generation Z in the social media era. The study employs a qualitative approach using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method based on the PRISMA framework, involving the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of relevant scholarly articles. The findings indicate that Imam Al-Ghazali's moral concepts, such as tazkiyatun nafs (self-purification), muhasabah (selfreflection), self control, and ethical communication, are highly relevant in shaping responsible digital ethics among Generation Z. Furthermore, the literature reveals that high social media usage intensity contributes to various digital ethical issues, including cyberbullying, hate speech, and low self-regulation. Therefore, the internalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral values can serve as an essential foundation for strengthening Generation Z's digital ethics through Islamic character education in the era of Society 5.0.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has revolutionized the way humans interact, communicate, and construct social identities (Durrani et al., 2014). Generation Z, as a cohort born and raised within a digital ecosystem, demonstrates a high dependency on social media in their daily lives. Social media serves not only as a communication platform but also as a space for shaping values, morality, and self-expression. However, this transformation also presents significant ethical challenges, such as the rise of hate speech, cyberbullying, misinformation, and the degradation of etiquette in digital interactions.

In the context of modern societies characterized by information openness and pluralistic values, digital ethics issues are not merely technical concerns but also involve crises of morality and selfregulation (Cantri Maesak et al., 2024). Many social media users, particularly Generation Z, lack

a solid ethical foundation for responsible engagement in digital spaces. This phenomenon reflects a gap between technological advancement and users' moral development, often turning digital environments into arenas of value conflicts and behavioral deviations.

Previous studies have examined the importance of digital ethics education within the framework of 21st century education. Ribble (2015) emphasizes the concept of digital citizenship as a critical competence in modern educational contexts. Additionally, research in the context of Islamic education highlights that moral values such as manners, honesty, and self-control are highly relevant for character formation in the digital era (Tahir Rohili, 2025). Nonetheless, these studies remain fragmented and have yet to systematically integrate classical Islamic thought with modern digital ethics concepts.

The research gap addressed in this study lies in the absence of a systematic literature review specifically connecting the internalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral values with the formation of digital ethics in Generation Z (Hardi & Rambe, 2025). Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of ethics in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* emphasizes *tazkiyat alnafs* (self-purification), the control of desires, and the cultivation of manners, all of which are highly relevant to contemporary moral challenges in the digital era.

Therefore, a systematic approach is required to integrate the intellectual heritage of classical Islamic thought with the contemporary challenges of digital ethics (Hardi & Rambe, 2025). This study aims to analyze and synthesize the literature on the internalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral values in strengthening Generation Z's digital ethics through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. Theoretically, it is expected to enrich Islamic education by integrating classical and modern values.

Practically, it can serve as a reference for strengthening character education and digital ethics among students (Rosyadi & Kasanah, 2025). The originality of this research lies in the integration of classical Islamic ethical concepts with modern digital ethics tailored to Generation Z within a systematic review framework. In the context of contemporary academia, this study occupies a strategic position in bridging the discourse between classical Islamic education and the challenges of the digital society 5.0 revolution. Thus, this research is not only normative-theological but also empirically relevant in addressing the increasingly complex moral issues faced by the digital generation in the era of social media.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology. The SLR method was chosen because it enables the systematic, transparent, and structured identification, evaluation, and synthesis of various research findings related to the internalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral values in strengthening Generation Z's digital ethics in the era of social media (Abdillah & Putro, 2022). This approach allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the development of studies, theoretical concepts, and the relevance of classical Islamic ethical thought to contemporary digital ethics challenges. The study adopts the stages of Systematic Literature Review as developed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), which include identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of research articles. The use of the PRISMA model aims to ensure that the literature selection process is conducted objectively, systematically, and can be academically justified.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Literature Search Results and Digital Ethics Challenges Among Generation Z

Based on a systematic literature search conducted across the Google Scholar, Scopus, and DOAJ databases using the keywords digital ethics, Islamic character education, Al-Ghazali morality, Generation Z, and social media ethics, a number of studies relevant to the research focus were identified (Masni et al., 2025). The article selection process followed the PRISMA framework, encompassing the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion to ensure that only studies aligned with the research objectives were included.

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was employed because it provides a systematic, transparent, and structured synthesis of existing knowledge on a particular research topic. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that digital ethics has emerged as one of the major challenges in the development of contemporary digital society (Wati & Mardiana, 2025). As a generation born and raised in the digital era, Generation Z experiences an exceptionally high intensity of digital interaction, making them particularly vulnerable to various moral challenges associated with social media use.

The literature further demonstrates that the increasing use of social media among Generation Z has contributed to the emergence of numerous digital ethical issues, including cyberbullying, hate speech, the dissemination of misinformation, social media addiction, and declining standards of digital communication etiquette. These findings suggest that rapid technological advancement has not been accompanied by equivalent moral development among digital users.

Recent studies further reveal that intensive social media use is positively associated with increased online aggressive behavior and diminished self-control among adolescents during digital communication. Moreover, social media has fostered an instant communication culture that frequently neglects the values of politeness and moral responsibility (Abdillah & Handoko Putro, 2022). From the perspective of Islamic education, this phenomenon highlights the necessity of integrating moral education (akhlaq) with digital literacy. Educational institutions should therefore not only equip learners with technological competencies but also cultivate ethical awareness and social responsibility in digital environments.

3.2. The Relevance of Imam Al-Ghazali's Moral Philosophy to the Strengthening of Digital Ethics

The findings indicate that Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of akhlaq emphasizes the purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs), the regulation of human desires, and the continuous habituation of virtuous behavior. These moral principles are highly relevant to the development of the digital character of Generation Z, who are confronted with diverse ethical challenges in social media environments (Hasyim, 2022). Within the context of Islamic education, the internalization of akhlaq extends beyond shaping individual behavior to fostering ethical consciousness within digital social life.

Previous studies demonstrate that Islamic value-based character education enhances students' moral awareness, enabling them to utilize digital media wisely and responsibly. Furthermore, other research indicates that self-control, responsibility, and ethical communication (adab) significantly influence adolescents' digital behavior in the social media era (Ariani & Ritonga, 2024). Consequently, Al-Ghazali's moral philosophy provides a robust ethical foundation for developing a humanistic and religiously grounded framework of digital ethics. The synthesis of the reviewed literature further demonstrates the strong relevance of Al-Ghazali's moral values in reinforcing digital ethics among Generation Z.

The concept of muhasabah (self reflection) encourages individuals to critically evaluate their actions before publishing content on social media, whereas the concept of self-discipline (mujahadah al-nafs) assists individuals in avoiding negative behaviors such as hate speech and

cyberbullying. Recent studies on digital character education further reveal that the internalization of moral and spiritual values contributes significantly to improving students' ethical behavior in digital interactions.

In addition, the habituation of moral values through teachers' role modeling and supportive educational environments has been identified as an effective strategy for cultivating a respectful and responsible digital culture (Muhammad Farid Wajdi & Siti Soliyah, 2024). Therefore, integrating classical Islamic moral philosophy with contemporary digital ethics represents an important strategy for addressing the moral challenges of digital society in the Society 5.0 era.

3.3. Implications for Islamic Education in Promoting Digital Ethics

The findings indicate that Islamic educational institutions occupy a strategic position in fostering students' digital ethics. Islamic education should integrate moral values with digital literacy through curriculum development, the cultivation of digital etiquette (*adab*), the reinforcement of religious character, and teachers' exemplary use of social media (Sanuhung et al., 2021). Recent studies demonstrate that strengthening character education grounded in religious values significantly enhances students' ethical awareness in responding to the challenges posed by contemporary digital media.

Furthermore, digital ethics education based on Islamic values has been recognized as an effective preventive strategy for addressing the moral degradation of younger generations in the age of social media. Therefore, the internalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral philosophy may serve as a relevant model of digital character education for nurturing a Generation Z that is religious, critical, and responsible in utilizing digital technology.

DISCUSSION

Based on a comprehensive literature search conducted across the Google Scholar, Scopus, and DOAJ databases using the keywords digital ethics, Islamic character education, Al-Ghazali morality, Generation Z, and social media ethics, a number of studies relevant to the research objectives were identified. The article selection process followed the PRISMA framework, consisting of the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, thereby ensuring that only studies aligned with the research objectives were retained (Azhari, 2022). A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was adopted because it provides a systematic, transparent, and structured synthesis of existing knowledge on a particular research topic.

The synthesis of the reviewed literature indicates that digital ethics has emerged as one of the central issues in contemporary digital society. This finding is consistent with Floridi's (2013) Information Ethics theory, which argues that digital technological advancement not only transforms patterns of human communication but also creates a moral environment, or *infosphere*, in which every individual bears ethical responsibility for digital interactions. From this perspective, digital media should be understood not merely as a technological instrument but as a social environment that simultaneously shapes and is shaped by individuals' moral behavior (Rosidah et al., 2024). As digital natives, Generation Z engages in digital interactions at a substantially higher intensity than previous generations, thereby encountering increasingly complex ethical challenges within online environments.

This phenomenon can be explained through Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that human behavior is acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social contexts (Muhibah, 2025). Social media provides Generation Z with an extensive environment for observing diverse forms of digital behavior, both constructive and destructive. Consequently, repeated exposure to unethical online practices may gradually establish new social norms unless

balanced by adequate moral education and ethical guidance. The literature further demonstrates that the increasing use of social media has contributed to the emergence of various digital ethical problems, including cyberbullying, hate speech, misinformation dissemination, social media addiction, and declining standards of digital civility.

These findings reveal a substantial gap between the development of digital competence and the moral development of digital users. Within the framework of Kohlberg's (1984) Moral Development Theory, such behaviors reflect insufficient moral reasoning, whereby decisions in digital environments continue to be driven primarily by personal interests, peer pressure, and immediate gratification rather than ethical considerations (Alhaib & Alsandi, 2022). The findings reported by Ramadhan et al. (2023), demonstrating a positive relationship between intensive social media use and aggressive online behavior, further reinforce the argument that technological proficiency alone does not necessarily produce ethically responsible digital behavior.

From the perspective of Islamic education, these findings underscore the necessity of integrating digital literacy with akhlaq (moral) education (Karlina et al., 2024). Educational institutions should therefore move beyond developing students' technological competencies (digital competence) and instead foster moral awareness, social responsibility, and reflective judgment in digital environments. Accordingly, digital ethics should not be viewed solely as a technological concern but fundamentally as an issue of character formation.

The findings indicate that Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of akhlaq emphasizes tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), the regulation of human desires, and the continuous habituation of virtuous conduct. These findings suggest that the development of digital character cannot be achieved merely through external regulations but requires an internal process of moral transformation rooted in self-discipline and spiritual refinement. This perspective closely corresponds with Virtue Ethics, originally developed by Aristotle and later elaborated by MacIntyre (1984), which argues that virtuous character is cultivated through continuous habituation until moral excellence becomes an enduring personal disposition.

Within the context of Islamic education, the internalization of akhlaq extends beyond shaping individual conduct to cultivating ethical consciousness within digital society. The findings of Hakim and Rahman (2020) and Nisa and Muhid (2022) demonstrate that responsibility, self-control, and ethical communication (adab) significantly influence adolescents' digital behavior. These findings are consistent with Lickona's (1991) Character Education Theory, which emphasizes that effective character education must integrate three interrelated dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, these dimensions are realized through the purification of the heart, the regulation of desires, and the habituation of righteous deeds, thereby producing consistency between knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

The literature synthesis further indicates that the concept of muhasabah (self-reflection) possesses substantial relevance for cultivating reflective behavior before individuals upload or disseminate content through social media. Likewise, the concept of mujahadah al-nafs (self-discipline against one's desires) functions as an internal mechanism for regulating emotional impulses that frequently underlie hate speech, cyberbullying, and the dissemination of unverified information. These concepts demonstrate that, from Al-Ghazali's moral perspective, digital ethics extends beyond compliance with external norms and regulations by emphasizing the development of internal moral consciousness.

The findings reported by Fitriani et al. (2022) further strengthen this argument by demonstrating that the internalization of moral and spiritual values significantly improves students' ethical behavior during digital interactions. Furthermore, the habituation of moral values through teachers' exemplary conduct and supportive educational environments has been identified as an effective mechanism for cultivating a respectful and responsible digital culture. Consequently,

integrating contemporary character education theories with Al-Ghazali's classical moral philosophy offers a comprehensive framework for digital ethics education that emphasizes not only digital competence but also the cultivation of moral virtues as the ethical foundation of Society 5.0.

The synthesis findings indicate that Islamic educational institutions occupy a strategic position in promoting students' digital ethics (Efendi & Rifauzi, 2025). These findings suggest that strengthening digital ethics cannot be delegated exclusively to families or governmental regulations but instead requires systematic intervention through educational institutions (Safitri, 2020). Islamic education should therefore integrate moral values with digital literacy through curriculum development, the cultivation of digital etiquette (adab), the reinforcement of religious character, and teachers' exemplary use of social media.

These findings are consistent with Lickona's (1991) Character Education Theory, which emphasizes that successful character education depends upon the alignment of curriculum, school culture, and teachers' role modeling (Muhsi & Nadlif, 2021). Within Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, teachers function not merely as transmitters of knowledge (mu'allim) but also as moral educators (murabbi) who guide students through the process of spiritual purification and the habituation of virtuous conduct. Fauzi and Anwar (2024) further demonstrate that character education grounded in religious values significantly enhances students' ethical awareness in responding to the challenges of contemporary digital media.

These findings reinforce the argument that Islamic values-based digital ethics education serves as an effective preventive strategy against the moral degradation of younger generations (Mohammed Hassan Al-Awamreh, 2016). Therefore, the internalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral philosophy can be developed as a conceptual model of digital character education that integrates spiritual, moral, and digital literacy dimensions. Such a model aims not only to develop students who are technologically competent but also to cultivate a Generation Z that is religious, critical, socially responsible, and capable of utilizing digital technology as a means of promoting social welfare (maslahah).

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review demonstrates that digital ethics has become an increasingly significant challenge for Generation Z amid the rapid expansion of digital technologies and social media, where technological advancement has not been accompanied by equivalent moral development. The findings indicate that Imam Al-Ghazali's moral philosophy, particularly the concepts of tazkiyatun nafs, muhasabah, and mujahadah al-nafs, provides a comprehensive ethical framework for strengthening digital character by fostering self-awareness, self-regulation, and moral responsibility in digital interactions. These principles are theoretically consistent with contemporary perspectives on Information Ethics, Virtue Ethics, Character Education, and Moral Development, highlighting their continued relevance in addressing contemporary digital ethical challenges. Consequently, integrating Al-Ghazali's moral values into digital literacy and Islamic education through curriculum development, digital etiquette, character education, and teachers' role modeling represents a strategic approach to cultivating a generation that is not only digitally competent but also ethically responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially accountable. This study contributes to the growing discourse on digital ethics by proposing an integrative conceptual framework that bridges classical Islamic moral philosophy with contemporary digital ethics, thereby providing both theoretical insights and practical implications for the development of digital character education in the Society 5.0 era.

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