

Reconstruction of the Concept of Islamic Personality Al-Ghazali's Perspective as the Foundation for Spiritual, Moral, and Social Character Development

Neni Hariyani Hairunnisa¹, Dayu Sumantoro², Siti Maryam³, Benny Prasetya⁴

¹Pascasarjana Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo; khairunnisanenihariyani@gmail.com

²Pascasarjana Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo; dayusumantoro@gmail.com

³Pascasarjana Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo; malangjoyo45@gmail.com

⁴Pascasarjana Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo; prasetyabenny@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The development of globalization and digital technology has generated significant challenges for character formation, including weakened spirituality, declining moral sensitivity, and reduced social responsibility. This condition indicates the need for a holistic character development framework that integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. This study aims to reconstruct the concept of Islamic personality from Al-Ghazali's perspective as a foundation for developing spiritual, moral, and social character. This research employed a qualitative approach using library research. The data were collected from Al-Ghazali's primary works and relevant contemporary scholarly literature on Islamic education, character education, spirituality, morality, and social development. The data were analyzed through content analysis, interpretation, comparison, and conceptual reconstruction. The findings reveal that Al-Ghazali views Islamic personality as an integrated unity of the heart (qalb), intellect ('aql), soul (nafs), spirit (ruh), and observable behavior. Personality formation is carried out through tazkiyat al-nafs, including self-awareness, self-control, spiritual discipline, moral habituation, and social actualization. This study reconstructs Al-Ghazali's concept into a holistic model consisting of three interconnected dimensions: spiritual character as the foundation of divine awareness and self-reflection; moral character as the process of self-control and the habituation of virtuous conduct; and social character as the actualization of empathy, justice, tolerance, and social responsibility. The study concludes that Al-Ghazali's thought remains relevant to contemporary Islamic education, particularly in responding to moral crises, digital ethical challenges, individualism, and the imbalance between academic achievement and character development.

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Corresponding Author:

Neni Hariyani Hairunnisa

Pascasarjana Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo; khairunnisanenihariyani@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization and the digital revolution has brought significant changes in various aspects of human life, including in the patterns of thinking, behavior, and the formation of

individual character. The advancement of information technology that provides easy access to various sources of knowledge also presents new challenges in the form of weakening spiritual values, declining moral sensitivity, and reduced social concern in society. This phenomenon can be seen from the increase in individualism, low ethics in digital interactions, and the tendency of the younger generation to prioritize material aspects over moral and religious values. This condition shows that technological development is not always directly proportional to the development of human character. In this context, Islamic education has a strategic role in building social cohesion and strengthening human values in the digital era (Arar, Sawalhi, & Dahouk, 2022). In addition, the integration of religious education with technological developments is an important need to ensure the formation of students' character that remains based on Islamic values (Araniri & Nahriyah, 2025).

The problems that arise today are not only related to moral crises, but also concern the imbalance between the development of intellectual aspects and the formation of students' personalities. The modern education system tends to emphasize academic achievement and cognitive competence more than the development of spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. As a result, many individuals have high intellectual ability but have not demonstrated adequate moral qualities and social responsibility. This phenomenon is increasingly seen in the educational environment that faces the challenge of using digital technology massively. The use of technology in Islamic education still faces various challenges related to the internalization of values and character formation. Digitization of education has not been able to fully replace the role of humanistic and exemplary-based character education (Uswatun & Sukri, 2023).

The urgency of research on the concept of Islamic personality is becoming increasingly important because modern society needs a character formation model that is not only oriented towards academic success, but also capable of producing human beings who have spiritual, moral, and social balance. Comprehensive character education is needed to build a generation that is able to face the challenges of the times without losing their identity and Islamic values. Character education that is systematically designed is able to significantly increase the character growth of students (Mucinskas, Clark, Barendsen, & Gardner, 2025). Meanwhile, character strengthening remains a basic need even though education has undergone a transformation based on technology and artificial intelligence. Therefore, a strong conceptual foundation is needed to develop character models that are in accordance with Islamic values and relevant to the needs of contemporary society (Warlim, 2025).

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the discussion of human personality has a very important position because it is related to the main goal of education, which is to form human beings who have faith, knowledge, and noble character. One of the Muslim figures who paid great attention to personality formation was Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali. According to Al-Ghazali, humans are creatures that have physical and spiritual dimensions that must be developed in a balanced manner. The formation of personality is not only carried out through the mastery of science, but also through the process of purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), the control of lust, the habituation of noble morals, and the strengthening of social relationships based on religious values. The concept shows that spirituality is the main foundation that gives birth to morality and ultimately forms good social behavior. This view is in line with the concept of *ta'dib* in Islamic education which places the formation of adab as the core of the educational process (Rahmat & Suharto, 2021).

Studies on Islamic character development and education have been widely carried out in recent years. Arar et al. (2022) examined the role of Islamic education in strengthening social cohesion in the digital era and found that religious values have an important contribution in building a harmonious social life. Nguyen et al. (2023) through a systematic study, it was found that student leadership development is closely related to character formation, social competence, and a supportive educational environment. Research by Araniri and Nahriyah (2025) shows that the integration of Islamic religious education and digital technology plays a role in shaping the character of faith and piety of students. Furthermore, Mucinskas et al. (2025) proves that character education is able to improve the overall character development of students. These various studies show that spiritual, moral, and social character is an important element in the formation of quality human beings.

However, previous research still has some limitations. Most of the research focuses on character education in a digital context, student leadership development, or the integration of technology in

Islamic education. Other research places more emphasis on moral or social aspects separately without examining the relationship between the spiritual, moral, and social dimensions as a whole. In addition, the study of Al-Ghazali's thought related to personality formation still tends to be descriptive and has not been directed much at conceptual reconstruction efforts that can be used as a basis for character development in the context of contemporary Islamic education. Thus, there is still research space that needs to be filled to present a more comprehensive and relevant model of Islamic personality to the needs of the times.

Based on the research gap, this research is focused on the reconstruction of the concept of Islamic personality from the perspective of Al-Ghazali by integrating spiritual, moral, and social dimensions as an interrelated unit. This research seeks to examine in depth Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the soul, morals, education, and social relations in order to produce a more systematic conceptual framework. The reconstruction is expected to explain how the spiritual dimension becomes the foundation of moral formation and how this morality is then manifested in constructive social behavior. Thus, this study not only examines Al-Ghazali's thought historically, but also seeks to actualize its relevance in character development in the modern era (Yahya, 2025).

This research aims to reconstruct the concept of Islamic personality from the perspective of Al-Ghazali as the foundation for the development of spiritual, moral, and social character. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the treasures of Islamic educational philosophy, Islamic psychology, and the study of classical Muslim thought on the formation of human personality (Mahbubi, 2026). Practically, the results of this research are expected to be a reference for educators, Islamic educational institutions, and policy makers in designing character education models that are more holistic, integrative, and in accordance with the challenges of contemporary society. In addition, this research is expected to be able to make a conceptual contribution in the form of a holistic Islamic personality model that places spiritual, moral, and social dimensions as the main pillars of the formation of an ideal Muslim character.

2. METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a type of library *research* that aims to reconstruct the concept of Islamic personality from the perspective of Al-Ghazali as the foundation for the development of spiritual, moral, and social character. The primary data source in this study comes from Al-Ghazali's works that discuss the concepts of soul, morality, education, and personality formation, especially *Ihya' Ullum al-Din*, *Ayyuha al-Walad*, and other relevant works. The secondary data sources were obtained from scientific journal articles, books, proceedings, and previous research results published in the 2021–2026 period and related to Islamic personality, character education, spirituality, morality, and Al-Ghazali's thought. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation and systematic literature search using credible academic databases. The collected data was analyzed using content analysis with the stages of identification, classification, interpretation, and synthesis of concepts to find the connection between the spiritual, moral, and social dimensions in Al-Ghazali's thought. Furthermore, the results of the analysis were used to reconstruct a holistic and relevant conceptual framework of Islamic personality as a foundation for character development in the context of contemporary Islamic education (Creswell & Poth, 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Essence and Structure of Islamic Personality Al-Ghazali's Perspective

The results of the study show that Al-Ghazali views humans as beings who not only have a physical dimension, but also a spiritual dimension that determines the direction of their behavior. A person's personality is not solely shaped by intellectual intelligence, social status, or academic ability, but rather by the mental conditions that direct the way we think, choose, and act. In this framework, the heart (*qalb*), intellect (*'aql*), soul or self-drive (*nafs*), and spirit are understood as elements that need to be developed in a balanced manner. An imbalance of one of these elements has the potential to give birth to uncontrollable behaviors, such as arrogance, materialism, anger, excessive desire, and weak social responsibility. The Jenuri et al. study (2025) shows that the concept of the human Al-Ghazali is relevant to respond to the problem of spiritual emptiness of modern students. Meanwhile, Indana and Mustofa

(2024) emphasized that education according to Al-Ghazali does not stop at the transfer of knowledge, but is directed at the formation of knowledgeable, faithful, and moral human beings.

In Al-Ghazali's reading, the heart occupies an important position because it is the center of human moral and spiritual consciousness. The heart is not only a place of feelings, but also a space for intention, self-awareness, sincerity, and divine orientation. Reason functions to distinguish between good and bad, while *nafs* is a source of encouragement that must be directed so as not to dominate humans. Therefore, the ideal Islamic personality is not a personality that rejects self-drive totally, but a personality that is able to control and direct it towards the right goal. Murdani and Fauzi (2024) explained that Al-Ghazali's moral education emphasizes the importance of character development through controlling negative tendencies and habituating praiseworthy traits. The findings were reinforced by Jenuri et al. (2025) which shows that strengthening the spiritual dimension needs to be placed as part of the educational process to build students' self-balance.

According to Al-Ghazali, Islamic personality also shows a close relationship between knowledge and charity. Knowledge is not seen as the final goal if it does not give birth to a change in behavior and closeness to Allah SWT. In this perspective, a person can have extensive knowledge, but not necessarily have a good personality if his knowledge is not followed by self-control, sincerity, and social responsibility. Kirabaev (2023) explains that the relationship between knowledge and action is one of the important points in Al-Ghazali's thought. Therefore, character formation is not enough to be done through providing material about good values, but must be directed to internalize values until they become inherent habits. Indana and Mustofa (2024) also emphasized that Islamic education in Al-Ghazali's view must form harmony between knowledge, morals, and the purpose of human life.

Based on these results, it can be understood that the Islamic personality structure of Al-Ghazali's perspective is holistic. Personality is not only manifested through social behavior, but departs from inner qualities that are then manifested in real actions. This understanding is in line with the study of Sulphrey (2023) who describes that Islamic character can be understood through the connection between spirituality, ethics, and submission to divine values. In the contemporary context, Ali et al. (2025) also emphasizes that Islamic ethics do not simply stop at outward rules, but need to be built through intention, trust, justice, and spiritual responsibility. Thus, Al-Ghazali's concept of personality provides the basis that character formation must begin with inner formation, not just from supervision of external behavior.

3.2. Tazkiyat al-Nafs as a Process of Personality Formation

The second finding shows that the formation of Islamic personality in the perspective of Al-Ghazali takes place through the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* or purification of the soul. This process leads to an effort to cleanse the soul of reprehensible traits, such as *riya*, *hasad*, arrogance, excessive anger, love of the world, and uncontrollable impulses. Purification of the soul is not a momentary activity, but a continuous process carried out through self-awareness, self-supervision, self-evaluation, and the habit of doing good. Mulyadi (2021) explained that the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* can provide technical direction for character education because it not only talks about ideal values, but also the process of planting and appreciating values in daily life. Ghufroon et al. (2026) added that Al-Ghazali's thought-based psychology education can be contextually reconstructed to build students' self-resilience in facing digital challenges.

In this study, *tazkiyat al-nafs* is reconstructed as a process consisting of four main stages. The first stage is self-awareness of weaknesses, negative tendencies, and behaviors that need to be improved. The second stage is self-control through *mujahadah* or the struggle against impulses that are not in accordance with Islamic values. The third stage is the cultivation of commendable qualities through habituation, example, worship, and moral training. The fourth stage is the actualization of values in social relationships. These stages are not intended as separate divisions, but as interrelated coaching flows. Harahap et al. (2024) shows that the internalization of *mujahadah al-nafs* can strengthen students' morals through the practice of introspection, prayer, fasting, worship, and self-control. Murdani and Fauzi (2024) also show that the formation of noble morals in the perspective of Al-Ghazali requires repeated practice so that good behavior is not only theoretical.

The process of purification of the soul has strong relevance to the problem of character formation in the digital era. Easy access to information, social media, and online communication often presents

room for impulsive behavior, excessive recognition seeking, the spread of false information, and impolite interactions. In this context, *tazkiyat al-nafs* can be translated as a digital awareness exercise, which is the ability to control impulses before sharing information, commenting, or responding to conflicts in digital space. Jenuri et al. (2025) emphasized that the integration of the human concept of Al-Ghazali in Islamic religious education can help overcome the spiritual problems of students in modern life. Indana and Mustofa (2024) also emphasized that Islamic education needs to develop the dimensions of morality and spirituality so that students are not only able to keep up with the times, but also have the right direction of life.

In addition to being individual, *tazkiyat al-nafs* also has a social impact. An educated soul will give birth to more just, empathetic, polite, and respectful behavior. In other words, purification of the soul is not a process that distances individuals from social life, but rather a process that prepares individuals to be able to provide benefits to society. Qasserras (2024) explained that the concepts of *tazkiyah* and *ta'aruf* in Islamic pedagogy have a relationship with the formation of peace, understanding of others, and the development of harmonious social relationships. Karimullah (2023) also found that holistic Islamic education needs to combine religious values, morality, and social concern so that character formation does not stop at a vertical relationship with God, but is also seen in the relationship between humans and families and society.

3.3. Reconstruction of Islamic Personality as an Integration of Spiritual, Moral, and Social Characters

Based on the results of the analysis, this study reconstructs the concept of Islamic personality from the perspective of Al-Ghazali into three main dimensions, namely spiritual, moral, and social. These three dimensions do not stand alone, but form a multi-level relationship that is at the same time reciprocal. The spiritual dimension serves as the foundation that directs the intentions and goals of human life. The moral dimension becomes a process of self-control and habituation of values that transforms spiritual awareness into morality. Furthermore, the social dimension becomes a space for the actualization of spirituality and morality in common life. This reconstruction is supported by Sulphrey (2023) who views Islamic character as a combination of spirituality, ethics, and submission to Allah Swt. Ali et al. (2025) also shows that Islamic ethics places intention, justice, trust, and responsibility towards others as inseparable elements.

The spiritual dimension in this model includes strengthening faith, awareness of the presence of Allah SWT, sincerity, *muraqabah*, *muhasabah*, patience, and *tawakal*. The spiritual dimension serves as a source of internal orientation that helps a person determine the reason and purpose of each of his actions. Spiritual character is not only shown through the intensity of ritual worship, but also through the awareness that all actions must have the value of goodness and accountability before Allah Swt. Jenuri et al. (2025) shows that strengthening the human concept of Al-Ghazali in education can help overcome the spiritual emptiness of students. Mulyadi (2021) also explained that the concept of purification of the soul provides the basis for the formation of religious character that is not only in the form of symbols or formalities, but grows into inner awareness.

The moral dimension includes the ability to control passions, honesty, trust, discipline, responsibility, humility, courage in truth, and justice. In Al-Ghazali's perspective, morality is not a good act that arises by chance, but a condition of the soul that has been formed so that a person can easily do good consciously and consistently. Therefore, moral education must be carried out through practice, habituation, strengthening examples, and reflection on life experiences. Murdani and Fauzi (2024) show that the concept of moral education Al-Ghazali emphasizes the formation of noble traits through a continuous educational process. Harahap et al. (2024) also proves that self-control training through *mujahadah al-nafs* contributes to strengthening students' moral character.

The social dimension includes caring, empathy, tolerance, justice, compassion, cooperation, respect for differences, and responsibility for life together. In this model, social character is not just the ability to get along, but the ability to place oneself ethically in relationships with others. Individuals who have good spirituality and morality should be able to show concern for their social environment. Qasserras (2024) shows that the concept of *tazkiyah* needs to be linked to *ta'aruf* so that Islamic education not only builds personal piety, but also supports peace and constructive social relations. Karimullah (2023) emphasized that holistic character formation needs to integrate religious values, morality, and social concern in the family, education, and community environment.

3.4. The Relevance of Al-Ghazali Concept Reconstruction to Character Development in the Digital Era

The reconstruction of the concept of Islamic personality from Al-Ghazali's perspective has strong relevance to the condition of the digital society. The main challenge of education today is not only limited access to information, but also the ability of students to manage themselves when faced with information overload, instant culture, social competition, and pressure to gain recognition. In that context, technology does not need to be positioned as a threat to be rejected, but as a new living space that requires ethical and spiritual guidelines. Ali et al. (2025) affirms that technological developments, including artificial intelligence, require ethics that are not only results-oriented, but also on human intentions, trust, justice, and responsibility. Ghufon et al. (2026) also offers a rereading of the concepts of *mujahadah* and *muraqabah* as the foundation for strengthening digital resilience and personal integrity.

At the curriculum level, this Islamic personality model can be integrated into learning without always having to add new subjects. Islamic religious education, civic education, counseling guidance, student organization activities, and project-based learning can be a space to connect spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. Learning needs to start from strengthening intentions, understanding values, analyzing real problems, self-reflection, and measurable social actions. Jenuri et al. (2025) shows the importance of integrating the human concept of Al-Ghazali in the PAI learning model to strengthen the spiritual dimension of students. Indana and Mustofa (2024) also emphasized the relevance of Al-Ghazali education to form a balanced human being between knowledge, morals, and divine orientation. In addition, Mulyadi (2021) explained that *tazkiyah al-nafs-based character education* can provide an implementive direction for the internalization of values.

In learning practice, educators have an important role not only as a material presenter, but also as a moral example and guide to students' reflection. Strategies that can be applied include habituation of prayer and reflection before learning, *muhasabah* journals, digital ethics case studies, social service-based learning, value discussions, strengthening school culture, and evaluation of formative behaviors. Character assessment is not enough to be done through a written test, but it is necessary to look at behavioral consistency, moral decision-making ability, way of interacting, concern for others, and responsibility for completing tasks. Harahap et al. (2024) shows that self-control can be strengthened through spiritual practice and value habituation. Qasserras (2024) emphasized that Islamic character education also needs to be directed to build peaceful and open social relations. Karimullah (2023) added that family and social environment have an important role in maintaining the consistency of the values learned by students at school.

In the end, the reconstruction of the concept of Islamic personality from the Al-Ghazali perspective offers a more in-depth approach to character than a model that is only oriented towards behavioral compliance. This model places character as a result of inner coaching, moral exercise, and social engagement. However, because this study is a literature study, the resulting model is still conceptual and requires further research. The next test can be carried out through expert validation, the development of spiritual-moral-social character instruments, case studies on Islamic educational institutions, as well as experimental research on the application of the *tazkiyat al-nafs-based* learning model. Ali et al. (2025) reminds that Islamic ethics need to be translated into contextual practices when facing technological changes. Ghufon et al. (2026) also shows that classical thinking can be reconstructed into an educational approach that is responsive to digital issues without losing its spiritual and moral foundations.

4. CONCLUSION

The concept of Islamic personality from the perspective of Al-Ghazali is a holistic concept that views human beings as a unity between heart, intellect, soul, spirit, and behavior, so that personality is not only determined by intellectual abilities and outward behavior, but especially by mental qualities that lead humans to the right life goals. Its formation is carried out through *tazkiyat al-nafs*, which is the purification of the soul from reprehensible nature, the control of lust, the habituation of noble morals, and the strengthening of spiritual awareness. The reconstruction results show that the concept can be formulated into three interrelated character dimensions, namely spiritual, moral, and social characters. Spiritual character is the foundation that forms divine awareness, sincerity, patience,

muhasabah, and a good life orientation; moral character acts as self-control through honesty, trust, discipline, justice, responsibility, and the ability to resist negative impulses; Meanwhile, social character is the actualization of spirituality and morality in the form of care, empathy, tolerance, cooperation, respect for differences, and responsibility in life together. The three dimensions are inseparable because strong spirituality gives birth to moral awareness, while the embedded morality will be reflected in constructive social behavior. Thus, character formation in Islamic education needs to be directed in an integrated manner to inner development, moral habituation, and social involvement to respond to contemporary challenges, such as spiritual crises, weakening digital ethics, individualism, and declining social sensitivity.

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