

RECONSTRUCTING THE CONCEPT OF MORAL EDUCATION IN IMAM AL-GHAZALI'S *IHYA' ULUM AL-DIN*: Its Implications for Strengthening Moral Education

Syahrial Fadhly, Mesran, Putri Syahri

Universitas Alwashliyah Medan

Jl. Sisingamangaraja Km. 5,5 Harjosari I, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara

Email: syahrialfadhly2016@gmail.com, mesranmpdi556@gmail.com, putrisyahri428@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to reconstruct Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* and examine its relevance to strengthening moral education at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan. A descriptive qualitative approach integrating library and field research was employed. Data were collected through textual analysis, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using qualitative content analysis and the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings indicate that Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education is founded upon tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul), value habituation, teacher exemplarity, and a moral-based school culture as the core elements of character formation. However, the implementation of moral education in the madrasah remains predominantly cognitive, limiting the effective internalization of moral values. This study proposes a pedagogical model integrating spiritual purification, value habituation, teacher exemplarity, and a moral-based school culture. The model contributes theoretically to the development of Islamic education and offers practical recommendations for curriculum enhancement, instructional strategies, and character education to better address students' moral challenges in the digital era.

Keywords: Moral Education, Imam Al-Ghazali, Madrasah

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi konsep pendidikan akhlak Imam Al-Ghazali dalam *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* serta mengkaji relevansinya bagi penguatan pendidikan akhlak di Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif yang mengintegrasikan studi kepustakaan dan penelitian lapangan. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis teks, wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi kualitatif serta model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep pendidikan akhlak Al-Ghazali bertumpu pada tazkiyat al-nafs, pembiasaan nilai, keteladanan guru, dan budaya madrasah sebagai fondasi pembentukan karakter. Namun, implementasi pendidikan akhlak di madrasah masih didominasi pendekatan kognitif sehingga belum optimal dalam menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai moral. Penelitian ini menghasilkan model pedagogik yang mengintegrasikan penyucian jiwa, habituasi nilai, keteladanan pendidik, dan budaya madrasah berbasis akhlak. Model tersebut memberikan kontribusi teoretis bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam sekaligus menawarkan rekomendasi praktis bagi penguatan kurikulum, strategi pembelajaran, dan pembinaan karakter peserta didik agar lebih adaptif terhadap tantangan moral di era digital.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Akhlak, Imam Al-Ghazali, Madrasah

INTRODUCTION

Moral education constitutes a fundamental dimension of Islamic education because it seeks to develop individuals whose intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions are integrated harmoniously. The objective of Islamic education is therefore not limited to the acquisition of knowledge but extends to the formation of individuals who are able to embody Islamic values in their attitudes and behavior. In this framework, *akhlāq* represents an essential component of human development because moral qualities must be reflected in everyday conduct. Al-Ghazali's educational thought emphasizes that education should address the development of the whole person, including the purification of the soul, the cultivation of virtues, and the formation of consistent moral behavior (Al-Ghazali, 2011; Suban, 2020). Consequently, moral education should not be understood merely as the transmission of information concerning good and bad behavior but as a continuous process of character formation through spiritual cultivation, habituation, exemplary conduct, and moral practice (Irfan et al., 2024; Hidayati et al., 2025).

Despite its central position, the implementation of moral education in formal Islamic educational institutions continues to encounter substantial challenges. Moral instruction is frequently dominated by the delivery of normative and conceptual knowledge, while opportunities for students to internalize and practice moral values are comparatively limited. The existence of *Aqidah Akhlak* as a subject does

not automatically guarantee the formation of desirable behavior because the effectiveness of moral education depends on how values are translated into daily educational practices. Akhmad et al. (2021) emphasize that the perspective of Al-Ghazali places moral education within a broader process of developing religious beliefs and moral dispositions. Similarly, Apriyani et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of teachers' strategies in cultivating *akhlakul karimah* through learning activities. These perspectives indicate that moral education requires an educational environment that consistently connects knowledge, habituation, and behavioral practice.

The challenge becomes more significant in the context of contemporary moral development, in which students encounter increasingly complex social and technological environments. Character education must therefore respond not only to conventional forms of misconduct but also to behavioral challenges associated with changing patterns of communication and interaction. Rahayu et al. (2023) argue that character education in Islamic education needs to be strengthened and implemented appropriately in the digital age. This condition indicates that moral education cannot rely solely on classroom instruction but must be integrated into school culture, teacher-student relationships, religious activities, and students' everyday experiences. The implementation of habituation programs can become an important mechanism for translating moral values into concrete

behavior, particularly when such programs are carried out consistently within the educational environment (Al-Ghozali et al., 2025).

Within the Islamic educational tradition, the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali provides an important conceptual foundation for addressing these challenges. His educational philosophy views moral formation as closely related to the condition of the human soul. Education should therefore facilitate the transformation of undesirable traits into commendable virtues through continuous discipline and practice. The purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and cultivation of virtuous character are central to this process because external behavioral change should be supported by internal transformation (Al-Ghazali, 2011; Silahuddin, 2016). Al-Ghazali's conception also places strong emphasis on habituation and the role of the educational environment in shaping character. Setiawan (2017) explains that moral education from Al-Ghazali's perspective emphasizes the formation of children's character through educational processes that cultivate moral dispositions. Likewise, Suryadarma and Haq (2015) demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's conception of moral education integrates knowledge, practice, and the cultivation of virtuous behavior.

The relevance of Al-Ghazali's thought has also been demonstrated by contemporary studies. Kurniawati et al. (2023) highlight the relationship between Al-Ghazali's philosophy of Islamic education and character formation, while Madhar

(2024) emphasizes its continuing relevance to contemporary Islamic education. Mukarromah and Rohman (2022) further position Al-Ghazali's character education as a potential response to moral degradation, demonstrating that classical Islamic educational thought remains relevant to current educational challenges. More recent research also shows that Al-Ghazali's principles can be connected to concrete character education practices. Lhegina et al. (2025), for example, examine the internalization of character education values through the perspective of Al-Ghazali's educational thought. Fathoni et al. (2026) likewise reconstruct Al-Ghazali's character education within a contemporary framework, indicating the possibility of translating his philosophical principles into broader educational models. These studies strengthen the argument that Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy should not remain confined to theoretical discussion but should be contextualized within actual educational practices.

Nevertheless, existing scholarship still leaves room for further investigation concerning the operationalization of Al-Ghazali's moral education principles within formal madrasah settings. Much of the literature discusses Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy conceptually, while fewer studies examine how principles such as *tazkiyat al-nafs*, habituation, exemplary conduct, and moral practice can be integrated into systematic pedagogical processes. Haq et al. (2026) emphasize the relevance of Al-Ghazali's thought to student character formation, while Hidayati et al.

(2025) position moral education as the core of Islamic education. These studies suggest the need for further empirical examination of how classical principles can be translated into contextual educational strategies.

Against this background, the present study seeks to reconstruct the concept of moral education in *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin* into a systematic and contextual pedagogical framework applicable to contemporary madrasahs. The study focuses on moral development practices at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan and examines the integration of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, value habituation, and teacher exemplarity as interconnected principles of moral education. The novelty of the study lies in connecting Al-Ghazali's classical conception of moral formation with empirical educational practices in a contemporary madrasah context. Through this approach, the study is expected to contribute theoretically to Islamic educational scholarship and practically to the development of more transformative moral education capable of strengthening students' character in the contemporary era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a descriptive qualitative approach that integrated two complementary modes of inquiry: library research and field research. Library research was conducted to reconstruct the concept of moral education presented in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* by Imam Al-Ghazali, while field research was undertaken to

examine the relevance and practical implications of the reconstructed framework within the educational context of Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan. The integration of these two approaches was considered appropriate because the research object encompasses both a classical Islamic text requiring conceptual interpretation and a contemporary educational setting demanding contextual understanding. Epistemologically, the study is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, which assumes that knowledge is generated through the interpretation of texts and social realities. Accordingly, the research adopts an interpretive perspective to explore the meanings, structures, and objectives of Al-Ghazali's moral education while simultaneously employing a contextual approach to examine its applicability to the moral development of students in contemporary madrasahs.

The research was designed as a qualitative case study focusing on Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan as the primary research site. A case study design was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of moral education practices, instructional processes, school culture, teachers' exemplary roles, and the contemporary moral challenges experienced within a naturally occurring educational environment. The investigation was conducted through three interconnected stages. The first stage involved textual analysis of *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* to identify and reconstruct Al-Ghazali's concepts of moral education,

including educational objectives, learning content, pedagogical methods, the role of teachers, and the educational environment, into a systematic pedagogical framework. The second stage consisted of contextual field investigation to examine existing moral education programs, school habituation practices, students' moral issues, and stakeholders' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of character development initiatives. The final stage compared the conceptual reconstruction with empirical findings to evaluate their relevance and formulate an applicable pedagogical model for the selected madrasah.

The study utilized two categories of data. Conceptual data were derived from *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* and supporting scholarly literature on Islamic moral education, Sufi pedagogy, Islamic character education, and moral development in madrasahs. Empirical data were collected from educational practices implemented at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan, including classroom activities, school culture, habituation programs, and participants' experiences and perspectives. Primary data sources consisted of relevant sections of *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* alongside key informants, including the principal, vice principal, teachers of *Aqidah Akhlak* and Islamic Religious Education, guidance counselors or homeroom teachers where available, and students selected according to the research objectives. Parents or school committee members were involved when necessary to strengthen data

triangulation. Secondary data included institutional documents such as school vision and mission statements, disciplinary regulations, character education programs, religious activity schedules, instructional modules, disciplinary records, meeting minutes, and other relevant documentation, as well as scholarly publications published within the last five years. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed substantial knowledge and direct involvement in moral education practices. Snowball sampling was subsequently employed when additional information was required until data saturation was achieved.

Data were collected through four complementary techniques: library research, semi-structured in-depth interviews, limited participant and non-participant observations, and document analysis. Library research facilitated the identification of Al-Ghazali's educational concepts and the mapping of previous studies and research gaps. Semi-structured interviews generated rich contextual information concerning school policies, instructional strategies, teachers' exemplary conduct, school culture, students' moral challenges, and perceptions regarding the potential implementation of an Al-Ghazali-based pedagogical model. Observations focused on students' behavior, classroom interaction, learning activities, school culture, and the broader educational climate, while documentary evidence was

used to corroborate findings obtained through interviews and observations. The combination of these techniques enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process using an interactive qualitative approach. Textual data from *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* were analyzed through qualitative content analysis and conceptual interpretation by identifying relevant themes, categorizing educational components, interpreting their philosophical meanings, and reconstructing them into an operational pedagogical framework. Field data were analyzed following the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing with continuous verification. Subsequently, the reconstructed framework was systematically compared with empirical findings to assess conceptual relevance, identify contextual gaps, and refine the proposed pedagogical model for contemporary madrasah education. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, credibility was established through source and methodological triangulation, member checking with key informants, peer debriefing, and the maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail documenting each stage of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Moral Education in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*

The findings indicate that Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education, as articulated in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, presents a comprehensive educational framework encompassing educational objectives, instructional content, pedagogical methods, and the role of educators. Rather than focusing solely on outward behavioral conformity, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the cultivation of the inner self through spiritual purification as the foundation of moral conduct. His educational philosophy places moral formation within an integrated process involving the purification of the soul, cultivation of virtues, and development of consistent ethical behavior (Al-Ghazali, 2011; Suban, 2020). The analysis of *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, supported by field interviews and observations at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan, demonstrates that these dimensions are interdependent and collectively constitute a holistic model of Islamic moral education.

The study found that the primary objective of moral education according to Al-Ghazali is not merely to regulate interpersonal relationships but to nurture individuals who possess spiritual maturity, purity of heart, and closeness to Allah. Moral excellence originates from inward transformation rather than external compliance, making *tazkiyat al-nafs* the central orientation of education. This philosophical orientation was reflected in the empirical findings. Interviews with teachers revealed that genuine moral development occurs when students

develop internal moral awareness rather than merely complying with school regulations. Classroom and school observations further indicated that students who consistently participated in congregational prayers and religious habituation activities demonstrated greater emotional stability, discipline, and self-control than those whose participation remained superficial. This finding corresponds with the view that moral education should address the inner formation of learners rather than merely regulate their observable conduct (Irfan et al., 2024; Hidayati et al., 2025).

Regarding instructional content, the research demonstrates that Al-Ghazali organizes moral education around two complementary dimensions: eliminating reprehensible character traits (*akhlāq mazmūmah*) and cultivating praiseworthy virtues (*akhlāq maḥmūdah*). Negative traits such as arrogance, envy, excessive anger, hypocrisy, dishonesty, and negligence are understood as dispositions that must be gradually overcome, while honesty, trustworthiness, humility, patience, gratitude, and respect for parents and teachers should be systematically cultivated. The findings indicate that these values have been incorporated into Islamic Religious Education subjects at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan. However, observations and interviews revealed that classroom instruction remains predominantly theoretical, with greater emphasis on conceptual understanding than on internalizing moral values.

Teachers acknowledged that although students generally understand moral concepts, their daily behavior is not always consistent. Similarly, students were able to explain ethical principles but continued to experience difficulties controlling emotions and applying these principles during interpersonal conflicts. This finding reinforces the argument that moral knowledge must be accompanied by continuous practice and character formation (Akhmad et al., 2021; Suryadarma & Haq, 2015).

The findings also demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's pedagogical methods remain applicable within contemporary Islamic education. Among the approaches reflected in *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, habituation (*ta'wīd*), exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), moral advice (*naṣīḥah*), self-reflection (*muḥāsabah*), and continuous guidance constitute an integrated process of gradual behavioral transformation. Field observations revealed that practices such as greeting teachers, reciting prayers before lessons, performing congregational prayers, and maintaining school cleanliness have become routine activities within the madrasah and contribute positively to students' discipline. Likewise, students consistently acknowledged the influential role of teachers' exemplary conduct, indicating that respectful, disciplined, and courteous teachers inspire similar attitudes among learners. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing teacher strategies, habituation, and exemplary conduct as important mechanisms for

cultivating *akhlakul karimah* (Apriyani et al., 2025; Al-Ghozali et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, one notable finding is that structured *muḥāsabah* activities remain relatively underdeveloped despite their importance within Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy. Opportunities for systematic self-reflection are still limited, reducing students' ability to evaluate their own moral development independently. This indicates that contemporary madrasahs could strengthen moral education by institutionalizing reflective practices alongside existing religious routines. Such an approach is consistent with the broader conception of character education that emphasizes not only behavioral discipline but also internalization and personal awareness (Lhegina et al., 2025; Mukarromah & Rohman, 2022).

Another significant finding concerns the educational role assigned to teachers. Consistent with Al-Ghazali's philosophy, the study confirms that teachers function not merely as transmitters of knowledge but also as educators, mentors, moral exemplars, and spiritual guides. Interviews with teachers emphasized that students observe teachers' daily conduct as closely as they attend to classroom instruction. Observational evidence likewise showed that teachers who consistently demonstrated discipline, sincerity, and respectful communication earned greater trust and moral authority among students. Consequently, the effectiveness of moral education depends not only on curriculum

content but also on the authenticity with which educators embody the values they seek to cultivate. This finding reinforces the importance of teacher exemplarity in character formation (Setiawan, 2017; Wartini, 2016).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education offers a coherent framework linking spiritual purification, moral cultivation, psychological development, and social responsibility. Unlike approaches that primarily emphasize cognitive achievement, this framework seeks to transform the learner's inner disposition through continuous habituation, exemplary guidance, and spiritual discipline. The empirical evidence from Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan supports the continuing relevance of this educational philosophy by demonstrating that students' moral development is more effectively strengthened through sustained character formation than through theoretical instruction alone. Thus, the first research question confirms that Al-Ghazali's conception of moral education possesses substantial theoretical depth and practical relevance for addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic educational institutions (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Madhar, 2024).

Reconstructing Concepts into Pedagogical Models

The findings demonstrate that although Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education remains highly relevant to

contemporary Islamic education, its classical formulation requires systematic reconstruction to become operational within modern madrasahs. Analysis of *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, supported by interviews, observations, and documentary evidence from Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan, reveals that the fundamental principles proposed by Al-Ghazali continue to address students' moral challenges. However, changing patterns of social interaction, rapid technological development, and increasingly complex character problems require these principles to be reformulated into a pedagogical framework that is structured and adaptable to contemporary educational needs. Accordingly, this study reconstructs Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy into four interconnected components: *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the spiritual foundation, value habituation as the mechanism of character internalization, teacher exemplarity as the center of moral transformation, and moral-based madrasah culture as the collective support system.

The first component positions *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the spiritual foundation of moral education. According to Al-Ghazali, moral excellence cannot develop consistently unless the heart is purified from destructive dispositions. Education should therefore strengthen students' spiritual awareness before emphasizing observable behavior. The empirical findings indicate that Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan has implemented congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and collective supplication before learning. Nevertheless,

observations revealed that some students still perceive these activities primarily as institutional routines rather than opportunities for personal spiritual growth. Teachers similarly acknowledged that although students actively participate in religious practices, not all fully understand their significance as instruments of self-purification and character development. Students who demonstrated deeper spiritual engagement tended to exhibit stronger emotional regulation, discipline, and responsibility. These findings support the reconstruction of *tazkiyat al-nafs* into practical educational strategies involving strengthened learning intentions, daily *muhāsabah*, regular spiritual development, Qur'anic recitation, moral reflection, and emotional self-control. Such reconstruction transforms spiritual formation from an abstract theological concept into a practical pedagogical foundation (Al-Ghazali, 2011; Silahuddin, 2016).

The second component emphasizes value habituation as the primary mechanism through which moral values become internalized. Al-Ghazali's educational thought indicates that virtuous character develops through continuous practice rather than instantaneous instruction. This principle was strongly supported by the field findings. Existing habituation practices, including greeting teachers respectfully, reciting prayers, maintaining appropriate dress, preserving cleanliness, and demonstrating punctuality, have contributed positively to students' everyday conduct. Teachers observed that repeated practice gradually transforms

externally imposed rules into personal habits. This finding corresponds with research showing that habituation programs can support students' character formation when implemented consistently within the school environment (Al-Ghozali et al., 2025; Apriyani et al., 2025).

However, habituation has not yet been systematically integrated into every aspect of school life and remains largely concentrated on conventional religious activities. Accordingly, the reconstructed model broadens habituation into four interconnected dimensions: daily habits emphasizing greetings, courteous communication, discipline, and respect; weekly activities involving religious lectures, character evaluation, and community service; social habituation promoting empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect; and digital habituation encouraging ethical behavior on social media platforms. Interviews with students indicated that face-to-face etiquette receives considerable attention, whereas digital ethics remains relatively neglected. This finding demonstrates the importance of contextualizing classical principles within contemporary educational realities. The broader character education literature likewise emphasizes the need to strengthen Islamic character education in response to the changing social and technological environment (Rahayu et al., 2023).

The third component identifies teacher exemplarity as the central mechanism of moral transformation. In Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, teachers possess authority not merely because of

their intellectual knowledge but also because of their personal integrity and exemplary conduct. This principle was consistently confirmed by the empirical evidence. Observations showed that teachers who arrived punctually, communicated respectfully, and consistently practiced the values they taught commanded greater respect and exerted stronger moral influence. Students acknowledged that they were more inclined to imitate teachers who modeled ethical behavior than those who relied solely on verbal instruction. Consequently, the reconstructed pedagogical model expands teacher exemplarity beyond classroom instruction to include disciplined professional conduct, ethical communication, sincere religious practice, and responsible use of digital technology. This orientation is consistent with studies emphasizing the significance of exemplary educators in the development of students' moral character (Setiawan, 2017; Wartini, 2016).

The fourth component emphasizes the development of a moral-based madrasah culture as the collective environment supporting character formation. The field study confirms that the religious culture at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan positively influences students' attitudes and behavior. Nevertheless, the research identified the need for a more systematic institutional culture capable of reinforcing moral values consistently across all school activities. The reconstructed model therefore proposes value-oriented school regulations,

supportive peer interactions, collaborative partnerships between teachers and parents, and strategic use of religious symbols, visual reminders, and collective worship activities. This approach is consistent with the view that character education must be supported through institutional practices rather than isolated classroom instruction (Mukarromah & Rohman, 2022; Lhegina et al., 2025).

By integrating these four components into a single pedagogical framework, the study formulates a comprehensive model in which *tazkiyat al-nafs* serves as the spiritual foundation, value habituation facilitates character internalization, teacher exemplarity reinforces behavioral consistency, and school culture provides institutional support for sustainable moral development. The resulting model simultaneously addresses students' spiritual, psychological, moral, and social development while remaining responsive to contemporary Islamic education and digital-era challenges (Fathoni et al., 2026; Haq et al., 2026).

The Relevance and Implications of the Model for Fostering Students' Moral Character

The findings demonstrate that the reconstructed moral education model derived from Imam Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin* possesses substantial theoretical and practical relevance for strengthening character development at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan. The analysis of textual sources, field observations, interviews, and institutional documents consistently indicates that the

principal challenge confronting moral education is not the absence of ethical knowledge but the limited internalization of moral values into students' daily behavior. While students generally understand concepts such as honesty, discipline, respect, and responsibility, they frequently experience difficulties translating these values into consistent practice. Observational data identified recurring issues including tardiness, inconsistent discipline, inappropriate communication, emotional instability, and excessive dependence on digital media. These findings correspond with Al-Ghazali's position that moral behavior is closely related to the condition of the inner self and therefore requires continuous spiritual cultivation (Al-Ghazali, 2011; Hidayati et al., 2025).

The effectiveness of value habituation constitutes another significant finding. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on repeated practice was strongly confirmed by empirical evidence from the madrasah. Daily routines such as greeting teachers respectfully, participating in congregational prayers, maintaining cleanliness, and demonstrating punctuality contributed positively to students' moral development by establishing consistent behavioral patterns. Teachers reported that repeated exposure to these practices gradually transformed externally imposed obligations into personally accepted habits. Nevertheless, the study also revealed that existing habituation programs remain largely confined to face-to-face interactions and have not adequately addressed

students' ethical conduct in digital environments. Students acknowledged receiving regular guidance concerning politeness within school but indicated that ethical behavior on social media receives comparatively little attention. This finding highlights the need to contextualize Al-Ghazali's principle of habituation within contemporary digital life. The expansion of habituation into digital citizenship is therefore necessary to encourage self-restraint, respectful communication, and responsible engagement on online platforms (Rahayu et al., 2023; Fathoni et al., 2026).

The research further confirms that teacher exemplarity remains one of the most influential factors in students' moral formation. Participants regarded teachers' personal conduct as more persuasive than verbal instruction alone. Students reported greater willingness to follow school rules when teachers consistently modeled discipline, kindness, sincerity, and respectful communication. Guidance counselors similarly observed that students tend to imitate behavioral examples more readily than respond to formal lectures on morality. These findings reinforce the Islamic educational understanding that effective moral education depends fundamentally on the integrity of educators whose actions reflect the ethical principles they teach. Within the contemporary educational environment, the teacher's role as a trustworthy moral reference becomes increasingly significant. Consequently, the reconstructed model extends teacher exemplarity beyond classroom instruction

to include ethical digital communication, responsible technology use, and sustained interpersonal engagement (Akhmad et al., 2021; Setiawan, 2017).

The study also demonstrates the importance of institutional culture as a collective mechanism supporting sustainable character formation. Field observations revealed that the religious atmosphere cultivated within Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan—including congregational worship, respectful interaction with teachers, Islamic dress practices, and regular religious activities—contributes positively to students' moral awareness. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that this culture requires greater consistency across all educational stakeholders. Several students displayed different behavioral patterns outside direct teacher supervision, suggesting that institutional values have not yet been fully internalized. Accordingly, the reconstructed model recommends strengthening value-based school regulations, fostering collaboration between teachers and parents, promoting positive peer interaction, and creating a comprehensive moral climate in which ethical behavior becomes a shared institutional responsibility. Such an approach is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of habituation, institutional culture, and collective educational responsibility in character formation (Al-Ghozali et al., 2025; Lhegina et al., 2025).

The broader implications of this study extend to curriculum development, instructional practice, teacher

professionalism, school management, and educational responses to digital-era challenges. The findings suggest that the *Aqidah Akhlak* curriculum should move beyond theoretical mastery by integrating spiritual reflection, value habituation, and contextual learning experiences into everyday educational practice. Instructional strategies should become increasingly experiential and reflective, enabling students to connect moral principles with personal experiences and contemporary social realities. Teachers should be prepared not only as subject specialists but also as moral mentors capable of guiding students' emotional and spiritual development. At the institutional level, moral education should become a shared commitment involving the entire school community. This orientation is supported by studies that position moral education as a central element of Islamic education and emphasize the continuing relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy in contemporary contexts (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Madhar, 2024; Ni'amah, 2021).

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that Al-Ghazali's emphasis on *tazkiyat al-nafs* provides a conceptual foundation for developing students' self-regulation, ethical decision-making, and responsible engagement with contemporary technology. The integration of spiritual awareness, habituation, teacher exemplarity, and institutional culture enables moral education to move beyond cognitive achievement toward sustainable character transformation. Overall, the findings confirm that Al-Ghazali's

educational philosophy retains substantial relevance for contemporary Islamic education because it integrates spiritual consciousness, habitual practice, exemplary leadership, and supportive institutional culture into a comprehensive pedagogical model. The reconstruction proposed in this study therefore contributes not only to the theoretical development of Islamic educational thought but also to the formulation of an operational framework for strengthening moral education in contemporary madrasahs (Irfan et al., 2024; Natsir et al., 2026; Haq et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* remains highly relevant to the needs of contemporary Islamic education, particularly in the context of madrasahs. The findings reveal that Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy is founded upon an integrated framework encompassing educational objectives, moral content, pedagogical methods, and the pivotal role of educators, all of which emphasize the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) as the basis for sustainable character formation. Although these principles have been partially implemented at Madrasah Al Washliyah Medan Labuhan, moral education continues to be predominantly cognitive, resulting in a gap between students' moral knowledge and their everyday behavior. To address this limitation, the study reconstructs Al-Ghazali's framework into an operational

pedagogical model consisting of four interconnected components: spiritual purification, value habituation, teacher exemplarity, and a moral-based school culture. The empirical findings confirm that this reconstructed model effectively addresses contemporary moral challenges by strengthening students' spiritual awareness, self-regulation, and character development while responding to the influence of digital technology and changing social environments. Consequently, the study contributes both theoretically and practically by demonstrating that classical Islamic educational thought can be systematically reformulated into an applicable pedagogical framework for modern madrasahs. The proposed model provides strategic guidance for curriculum development, instructional practice, teacher professional development, and institutional culture, thereby offering a comprehensive approach to fostering morally responsible, spiritually conscious, and socially competent students in the contemporary educational landscape.

REFERENCES

- Akhmad, M. C. A., Ichsan, Y., Hendrawan, B. P., Putri, A. K., & Putri, S. M. (2021). Pendidikan Aqidah Akhlak dalam Perspektif Al-Ghazali. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 18(2), 56–69. <https://doi.org/10.34001/tarbawi.v18i2.2098>
- Al-Ghazali. (2011). *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin* (Vols. 1–4). Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Ghozali, M. D. H., Sa'adah, D. M., & Hakim, D. (2025). Implementasi

Program Madrasah Habitiasi sebagai Upaya Membentuk Karakter Siswa. *YASIN: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sosial Budaya*, 5(2), 1078–1090. <https://doi.org/10.58578/yasin.v5i2.5122>

Apriyani, A., Dewi, N. S. D., Ramadhani, A. P., & Farhurohman, O. (2025). Strategi Guru dalam Menanamkan Nilai Akhlakul Karimah melalui Pembelajaran Akidah Akhlak di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *Ebtida': Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Islam*, 5(1), 543–554. <https://ejournal.uniramalang.ac.id/ebtida/article/view/7150>

Fathoni, A. I., Barizi, A., Syam, N., Alhazami, M. G. A. R., & Musthofa, A. (2026). Reconstructing Al-Ghazali's Character Education through a Tri-Center Framework: A Conceptual Response to Contemporary Moral Challenges. *Taqrib: Journal of Islamic Studies and Education*, 4(2), 292–305. <https://doi.org/10.61994/taqrib.v4i2.2253>

Haq, E. D., Adiningsih, S., & Mu'shoda, E. (2026). Islamic Education in the Formation of Students' Character: An Analysis of Imam Al-Ghazali's Thought. *Khazanah: Journal of Islamic Education and Science*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.61815/khazana.v2i1.897>

Hidayati, A., Purwoko, & Helmawati. (2025). Pendidikan Akhlak sebagai Inti Konsep Pendidikan Islam dalam Pemikiran Al-Ghazali. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat dan Riset Pendidikan*, 4(1), 2606–2616. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v4i1.1764>

Irfan, M., Huda, K., & Abidin, Z. (2024). Pendidikan Akhlak dalam Perspektif Al-Ghazali. *Sumbula: Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya*, 9(1),

- 21-39. <https://doi.org/10.32492/sumbula.v9i1.5682>
- Kurniawati, I., Silvya, W., & Sari, H. P. (2023). Pemikiran Al-Ghazali tentang Filsafat Pendidikan Islam dan Pembentukan Karakter: Relevansinya untuk Masyarakat. *Tawshiyah: Jurnal Sosial Keagamaan dan Pendidikan Islam*, 18(2), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.32923/taw.v18i2.4014>
- Lhegina, A. Q., Achadi, W., & Maulaya, R. D. (2025). Internalization of Character Education Values at the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Yogyakarta Elementary School in the Perspective of Al-Ghazali's Educational Thought. *AL GHAZALI: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam*, 6(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.69900/ag.v6i1.518>
- Madhar, M. (2024). Pemikiran Pendidikan Imam Al-Ghazali dan Relevansinya dalam Sistem Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer. *TARQIYATUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 3(2), 115-126. <https://doi.org/10.36769/tarqiyatuna.v3i2.813>
- Maghfiroh, L. (2024). Pendidikan Akhlak Anak Usia Dini Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali. *MAANA: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 3(1), 53-67. <https://doi.org/10.52166/mjpi.v3i1.7404>
- Mukarromah, R. S., & Rohman, R. (2022). Pendidikan Karakter Perspektif Al-Ghazali: Analisis terhadap Pemikiran Al-Ghazali tentang Pendidikan Karakter sebagai Solusi Problem Dekadensi Moral dan Signifikansinya dalam Pendidikan di Indonesia. *JURNAL TILA: Tarbiyah Islamiyah Lil Athfaal*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.56874/tila.v2i2.1073>
- Natsir, A., Shudur, M., & Harmono, T. (2026). Pendidikan Akhlak Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali. *Sumbula: Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya*, 11(1), 377-391. <https://doi.org/10.32492/sumbula.v11i1.11126>
- Ni'amah, K. (2021). Paradigma Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Al-Ghazali. *Heutagogia: Journal of Islamic Education*, 1(1), 55-65. <https://doi.org/10.14421/hjie.2021.11-05>
- Rahayu, W., Zukri, A., Maimunah, A., Sari, D. M., Jannah, R., & Ikhlās, M. (2023). Character Education in Islamic Education: Strengthening and Implementing in the Digital Age. *At-Tarbawi: Jurnal Kajian Kependidikan Islam*, 8(2), 125-138. <https://doi.org/10.22515/attarbawi.v8i2.7498>
- Sayuti, L., Iswantir, I., Salmiwati, Khamim, S., & Zulfiyāni, M. (2024). Challenges and Strategies: The Implementation of Character Education in Independent Curriculum at Islamic Senior High School. *INTIHA: Islamic Education Journal*, 2(1), 184-190. <https://doi.org/10.58988/intiha.v2i1.322>
- Setiawan, E. (2017). Konsep Pendidikan Akhlak Anak Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali. *Jurnal Kependidikan*, 5(1), 43-54. <https://doi.org/10.24090/jk.v5i1.1252>
- Silahuddin, S. (2016). Pendidikan dan Akhlak: Tinjauan Pemikiran Imam Al-Ghazali. *Jurnal Tarbiyah*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.30829/tar.v23i1.120>
- Suban, A. (2020). Konsep Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Al-Ghazali. *Idaarah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 4(1), 87-99.

<https://doi.org/10.24252/idaarah.v4i1.13760>

- Suryadarma, Y., & Haq, A. H. (2015). Pendidikan Akhlak Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali. *At-Ta'dib*, 10(2), 361–381. <https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/tadib/article/view/460>
- Wartini, A. (2016). Education Character in View of Al-Ghazali and Its Relevance with the Education Character in Indonesia. *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 20(2), 293–310. <https://doi.org/10.19109/td.v20i2.222>