



# Classical Ethical Values for Modern Challenges: Al-Ghazali's Bidayatul Hidayah and Its Relevance to National Character Education

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## Abstract

This research is motivated by the moral crisis among Indonesian youth, characterized by high rates of violence, bullying, and value degradation within educational environments. While moral education in Islam is central to forming a complete human being, its implementation faces significant contemporary challenges. This study aims to analyze the moral education values from Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective in the book Bidayatul Hidayah and determine their relevance to national character education in Indonesia. The research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, utilizing Bidayatul Hidayah as the primary data and relevant literature as secondary sources, and analyzing them through descriptive-analytical techniques. The results indicate that Bidayatul Hidayah contains fundamental moral values covering relations with God (habl min Allah), oneself, and society (habl min al-nas), emphasizing the process of tazkiyatun nafs (soul purification) by integrating knowledge and practice. Furthermore, these values demonstrate strong conceptual, methodological, and socio-cultural relevance to Indonesia's national character education. The study concludes that Al-Ghazali's moral values can serve as practical and conceptual reinforcement for national character education, and recommends their integration to foster students with noble character and spiritual maturity.

**Keywords:** Moral Education, Imam Al-Ghazali, Bidayatul Hidayah, Tazkiyatun Nafs, Character Education.

*Penelitian ini dimotivasi oleh krisis moral di kalangan pemuda Indonesia, yang ditandai dengan tingginya angka kekerasan, perundungan, dan degradasi nilai dalam lingkungan pendidikan. Meskipun pendidikan moral dalam Islam sangat penting untuk membentuk manusia seutuhnya, implementasinya menghadapi tantangan kontemporer yang signifikan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis nilai-nilai pendidikan moral dari perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali dalam kitab Bidayatul Hidayah dan menentukan relevansinya terhadap pendidikan karakter nasional di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan penelitian kepustakaan, memanfaatkan Bidayatul Hidayah sebagai data primer dan literatur terkait sebagai sumber sekunder, dianalisis melalui teknik deskriptif-analitis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Bidayatul Hidayah memuat nilai-nilai moral fundamental yang meliputi hubungan dengan Tuhan (habl min Allah), diri sendiri, dan masyarakat (habl min al-nas), menekankan proses tazkiyatun nafs (penyucian jiwa) dengan mengintegrasikan pengetahuan dan praktik. Lebih lanjut, nilai-nilai ini menunjukkan relevansi konseptual, metodologis, dan sosio-kultural yang kuat terhadap pendidikan karakter nasional Indonesia. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa nilai-nilai moral Al-Ghazali dapat berfungsi sebagai penguatan praktis dan konseptual bagi pendidikan karakter nasional, dan merekomendasikan integrasinya untuk membina siswa dengan karakter mulia dan kematangan spiritual.*

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**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Moral, Imam Al-Ghazali, Bidayatul Hidayah, Tazkiyatun Nafs, Pendidikan Karakter.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the current global era, character education has emerged as a critical imperative for nations navigating the complexities of the 21st century. The rapid integration of digital technology and global cultural exchange has placed immense pressure on traditional moral frameworks, necessitating a robust educational response to maintain societal cohesion (Zheng et al., 2026; Syukri et al., 2025). Globally, the focus of education has shifted from purely academic achievement to the holistic development of an individual's ethical and social dimensions, which are seen as essential for sustainable development and global citizenship. In the Indonesian context, character education is not merely a pedagogical goal but a national strategic priority aimed at cultivating the "Golden Generation" who are not only intellectually competent but also possess integrity and noble ethics (Suarningsih et al., 2024; Sukitman, 2016). The significance of this study lies in its attempt to bridge classical Islamic ethical wisdom with these modern educational imperatives, providing a culturally rooted solution to contemporary moral dilemmas.

The primary challenges facing modern education in Indonesia are the rising incidents of moral degradation among the youth, including systemic bullying, physical violence, and the erosion of traditional respect. These issues are exacerbated by the unregulated influence of social media and the lack of spiritual depth in modern pedagogical approaches, which often prioritize cognitive skills over emotional and spiritual intelligence (Haberlin, 2022; Engert et al., 2023). Educational institutions frequently struggle to implement effective character programs, resulting in a disconnect between theoretical moral instruction and actual behavioral change among students. This moral crisis manifests as a "character deficit," in which students may excel in examinations but fail in social empathy and personal discipline. Addressing these challenges requires a transformative approach that moves beyond superficial curriculum changes to address the root of moral formation through deep spiritual and ethical integration (Stewart et al., 2023; Tull, 2018).

Extensive research has been conducted on character education and Al-Ghazali's philosophy, including studies by Wartini (2016) on character education in Al-Ghazali's view, Sunarto (2015) on the translation of *Bidayatul Hidayah*, and Syamhudi (2015) on the construction of Islamic ethics. Furthermore, recent studies such as those by Zheng et al. (2026) on clustering educational patterns, Syukri et al. (2025) on reinterpreting justice in political philosophy, Suarningsih et al. (2024) on character perspectives, and various works on inclusive education (Stewart et al., 2023) have explored these domains. However, many of these studies tend to be overly theoretical or focus on general pedagogical frameworks without specific application to the *Bidayatul Hidayah*. For instance, while some analyze the text's literal meaning, they fail to provide a practical roadmap for integrating it into the national curriculum, and others criticize classical texts as too ascetic for modern active lifestyles without offering a balanced reinterpretation (Haberlin, 2022; King, 2018).

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the "practical spirituality" found in *Bidayatul Hidayah* as a direct counter-narrative to modern secular character education. Unlike previous studies that treat Al-Ghazali's work as a purely historical or mystical text, this research frames it as a living ethical manual that is highly compatible with the technical and social demands of the modern era (Syukri et al., 2025; Gooch, 2026). By identifying specific "micro-ethics" within the text—such as the etiquette of digital communication or the discipline of self-monitoring—this study offers a fresh perspective on how

classical wisdom can be operationalized in a high-tech society. This approach moves beyond the "what" of character education to the "how," providing a detailed methodology for internalizing values through the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs*, which has been largely overlooked in standard national character education models (Magee, 2019; Salzberg, 2017).

The research gap identified in this study is the significant disconnect between the rich ethical heritage of Islamic scholarship and the formalized, often sterile, National Character Education (PPK) in Indonesia. While the government emphasizes five main values (religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity), the spiritual mechanism for achieving these—specifically, the process of inner purification—is absent from the implementation guidelines (Zheng et al., 2026; Syukri et al., 2025). Existing literature has not sufficiently addressed how a 12th-century text like *Bidayatul Hidayah* can specifically meet the contemporary Indonesian legal standards for character education, such as the Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. This study fills this void by analyzing the functional alignment between Al-Ghazali's ethical stages and the national goals of character development, offering a bridge between traditional religious authority and modern state policy (Vauclair et al., 2014; Velasquez et al., 2013).

The theoretical framework utilized in this research is grounded in Al-Ghazali's theory of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (Purification of the Soul), which posits that outer behavior reflects the inner heart's condition. This "inside-out" approach serves as the grand theory, suggesting that moral education must begin with spiritual disciplining rather than just cognitive instruction (Tull, 2018; Magee, 2019). This is further supported by the concepts of *Habl min Allah* (relationship with God), *Habl min al-Nafsi* (relationship with the self), and *Habl min al-Nas* (social relations), which together form a comprehensive ethical structure. By integrating this with modern socio-constructivist theories of learning, the research demonstrates how ethical values are not just learned but "practiced" and "embodied" through daily routines and social interactions (Stewart et al., 2023; Wyatt, 2013). This framework allows for a multi-dimensional analysis of ethics that covers the individual's spiritual, personal, and social existence.

The core concepts employed in this study include *Al-Akhlak al-Mahmudah* (praiseworthy character) as the ultimate goal and the *Bidayatul Hidayah* (Beginning of Guidance) as the pedagogical path. The study uses the concept of "relevance" to evaluate how these classical virtues—such as sincerity, patience, and social etiquette—map onto the modern competencies required by the Indonesian Ministry of Education (Suarningsih et al., 2024; Sukitman, 2016). Additionally, the concept of "National Character" is operationalized through the lens of Indonesian cultural values, which traditionally value religious harmony and social politeness. These concepts are synthesized to create a model in which Islamic ethics do not replace but rather deeply inform and strengthen students' national identity in a pluralistic society (Tavani, 2011; Van Manen, 1991).

What makes this research particularly compelling is the enduring psychological depth of Al-Ghazali's work, which remains relevant despite the centuries-long gap. It is fascinating to observe how Al-Ghazali's detailed psychological insights into human vanity, envy, and pride mirror contemporary issues such as online narcissism and social comparison (Haberlin, 2022; Engert et al., 2023). The research explores the irony that while we have advanced technically, our fundamental moral struggles remain the same, making *Bidayatul Hidayah* a "classical solution for modern challenges." This study is important because it validates traditional wisdom through a modern academic lens, proving that the most effective solutions for the future may sometimes lie in the deep-rooted values of the past (Zheng et al., 2026; Syukri et al., 2025). It offers a sense of cultural and spiritual continuity in a world that often feels fragmented and rootless.

The ultimate objective of this research is to analyze the core moral values within the *Bidayatul Hidayah* and demonstrate their specific relevance to the challenges and goals of national character education in Indonesia. By doing so, the study seeks to provide a conceptual and practical framework that educators can use to enhance the spiritual and ethical quality of their character programs (Suarningsih et al., 2024; Stewart et al., 2023). Furthermore, it aims to contribute to the academic discourse on Islamic education by showing that classical texts can be effectively adapted to meet contemporary educational standards without losing their spiritual essence. Finally, the research aims to offer policy recommendations to encourage the integration of these ethical values into the broader educational landscape, fostering a generation that is both spiritually mature and socially responsible (Syukri et al., 2025; Gooch, 2026).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology is structured to provide a rigorous and systematic framework for exploring the ethical dimensions of *Bidayatul Hidayah* and its alignment with modern educational standards. This section outlines the procedural steps taken to ensure the findings are both theoretically sound and practically applicable in the Indonesian context. By employing a qualitative library research design, the study maintains a focus on depth, interpretation, and the nuances of classical Islamic thought. The following diagram illustrates the integrated flow of the research process, starting from problem identification to the final synthesis of relevance.

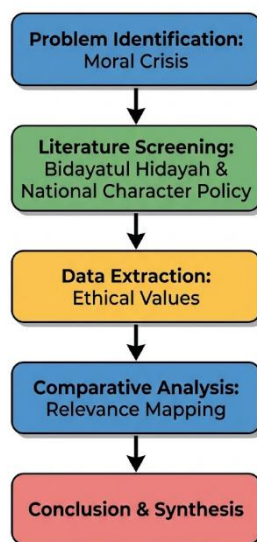


Figure 1. Research Process Flowchart

[Visualization Script: A vertical flowchart starting with 'Problem Identification: Moral Crisis' → 'Literature Screening: Bidayatul Hidayah & National Character Policy' → 'Data Extraction: Ethical Values' → 'Comparative Analysis: Relevance Mapping' → 'Conclusion & Synthesis'].

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the systematic trajectory of this study, emphasizing the logical progression from empirical observation to conceptual resolution. The flowchart underscores the interconnectedness of the phases, ensuring that the analysis of Al-Ghazali's values is grounded in the specific challenges of national character education (Syukri et al., 2025; Zheng et al., 2026). This structured approach minimizes bias and ensures a seamless transition between theoretical exploration and practical recommendations. To further clarify the operational boundaries of this methodology, the subsequent section details the specific research design.

## 2.1 Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative approach with a library research design, which is essential for investigating philosophical texts and policy documents where numerical data cannot capture the essence of ethical values. This design enables a comprehensive hermeneutic analysis, allowing the researcher to uncover the underlying meanings and spiritual significance of Imam Al-Ghazali's instructions (Suarningsih et al., 2024; Stewart et al., 2023). The qualitative paradigm is particularly suited to this research, as it facilitates the exploration of "how" and "why" classical values remain pertinent today, rather than simply "what" they are. To ensure academic rigor, this design is supported by a clear matrix of research questions and analysis types, as presented in the table below.

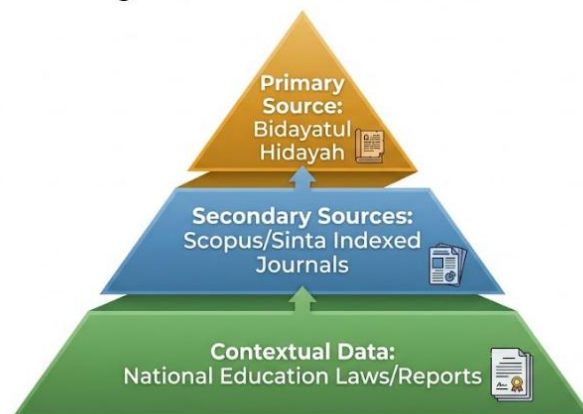
**Table 1. Research Questions and Types of Analysis**

Research Question (RQ)	Research Question Detail	Types of Analysis
RQ1	What are the core moral values in <i>Bidayatul Hidayah</i> ?	Content Analysis & Hermeneutics
RQ2	What are the current challenges of national character education?	Policy Review & Critical Discourse
RQ3	How do Al-Ghazali's values align with national education goals?	Comparative & Relevance Analysis

Table 1 serves as a guide for the analytical focus of each stage of the research, ensuring that every finding directly addresses the stated problems. By categorizing the types of analysis, the study maintains methodological consistency, bridging the gap between historical text and modern policy (Haberlin, 2022; Engert et al., 2023). This analytical structure provides the necessary foundation for the data collection process, which involves a deep dive into both primary and secondary sources.

## 2.2 Data Collection

Data collection is conducted through a meticulous documentation technique, focusing on the primary text *Bidayatul Hidayah* and secondary sources including scholarly journals, books, and government regulations published between 2020 and 2025. This process involves the selection, classification, and critical reading of literature that discusses Al-Ghazali's ethics, character education theories, and Indonesian educational challenges (Syukri et al., 2025; Suarningsih et al., 2024). The researcher employs a systematic coding system to extract relevant themes, such as *tazkiyatun nafs*, *habl min Allah*, and social etiquette, ensuring that no critical information is overlooked. This rigorous collection phase is visualized in the following diagram to show the layering of data sources.



**Figure 2. Data Stratification Model**

Figure 2 illustrates the hierarchy of information used in this study, where the foundational national data and recent empirical research provide the context for interpreting the primary classical text. This stratification ensures that the study remains contemporary and highly relevant to the Indonesian academic landscape (Stewart et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2026). Once the data is sufficiently gathered and stratified, the next step involves the application of specialized instruments to ensure the precision of the analysis.

### 2.3 Research Instruments

In library research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument, supported by secondary instruments such as data collection matrices and observation checklists for text analysis. These tools are designed to identify indicators of moral values and their potential integration into character education frameworks (Magee, 2019; Tull, 2018). The instrument's primary function is to provide a lens through which the complex spiritual narratives of *Bidayatul Hidayah* can be translated into measurable educational components. The following table details the indicators used to categorize the findings.

**Table 2. Instrument Indicators and Item Distribution**

Variable	Sub-Indicator	Number of Items/Focus Points
Islamic Ethics	Habl min Allah, Habl min al-Nas	15 Points
National Character	Integrity, Religiosity, Nationalism	10 Points
Implementation	Pedagogy, School Culture	5 Points

Table 2 outlines the specific metrics used to evaluate the data, ensuring that the analysis covers all necessary dimensions of both Islamic ethics and national character goals. This systematic breakdown enables high transparency into how conclusions are drawn from the literature (Haberlin, 2022; Engert et al., 2023). This leads to the data analysis phase, where these indicators are utilized to synthesize final meanings.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The data is analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques and content analysis to interpret the text's relevance to the modern educational era. This process involves reducing the data to core themes, presenting them in structured formats, and drawing conclusions through constant comparison between classical theory and modern reality (Suarningsih et al., 2024; Syukri et al., 2025). The analysis seeks not only to describe the values but to critically evaluate their functional role in mitigating modern moral crises like bullying and digital decadence. By integrating Al-Ghazali's psychological insights with current pedagogical theories, the study produces a comprehensive model of relevance.

### 2.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the study employs source triangulation and theoretical triangulation, comparing Al-Ghazali's work with various contemporary ethical perspectives and official educational documents. This approach minimizes subjectivity and ensures that the findings are robust and defensible within the academic community (Zheng et al., 2026; Stewart et al., 2023). Furthermore, the use of up-to-date empirical data from 2020-2025 provides a high level of temporal reliability, ensuring that the relevance discussed is not merely historical but currently applicable.

## 2.6 Subject and Location of Research

The "subjects" of this research are the ethical concepts within *Bidayatul Hidayah* and the policy frameworks of the Indonesian National Character Education (PPK), while the "location" is the digital and physical archives of these scholarly works. Although the study is conducted via library research, its context is firmly rooted in the Indonesian education system, specifically looking at schools and universities facing moral challenges (Sukitman, 2016; Suarningsih et al., 2024). This focus ensures that the results have a clear target audience and a specific geographic and cultural application, making it a valuable contribution to national policy discourse.

## 3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings of this research are categorized into a hierarchical structure that directly addresses the moral crisis in modern education by mapping classical ethical values onto national character goals. This systematic progression begins with identifying the ontological roots of ethics in the book *Bidayatul Hidayah*, moves through the methodological discipline of daily life, and concludes with an analysis of contextual relevance for the Indonesian education system. The following diagram illustrates the integrated flow of these thematic findings.



Figure 3. Hierarchical Flow of Research Findings

Figure 3 illustrates the logical progression of the study's outcomes, emphasizing that character formation is not a fragmented set of rules but a continuous, cyclical process of internal purification manifesting as external social integrity (Suarningsih et al., 2024; Syukri et al., 2025). The detailed explanation of each stage is presented below.

### 3.1 Identification of Core Ethical Values in *Bidayatul Hidayah*

The first thematic finding demonstrates that *Bidayatul Hidayah* serves as a comprehensive manual for *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (soul purification), categorizing ethics into three vital dimensions. Micro-analysis of the text indicates that Al-Ghazali views the "heart" (*qalb*) as the primary governance center of a human being. He argues that the physical limbs are merely "soldiers" that obey the commands of the heart. Therefore, if the heart is disciplined through sincerity (*ikhlas*), constant awareness of God (*Muraqabah*), and repentance (*Tawbah*), then moral behavior—such as honesty and kindness—will follow automatically as a natural fruit of a stable internal state.

This "inside-out" approach provides a sharp contrast to modern behavioral models that often prioritize administrative compliance, surveillance, or external image over deep conviction (Haberlin, 2022; Engert et al., 2023). In many contemporary schools, "good character" is often reduced to following school rules to avoid punishment. In contrast, Al-Ghazali asserts that without a strong spiritual foundation, an individual's character will easily falter when facing social pressure, digital anonymity, or material temptation. Consequently, character education must not stop at teaching social norms but must touch the realm of internal consciousness transformation, fostering a "God-fearing" conscience that acts rightly even when no teacher is watching.

**Table 3. Classification of Ethical Values in *Bidayatul Hidayah***

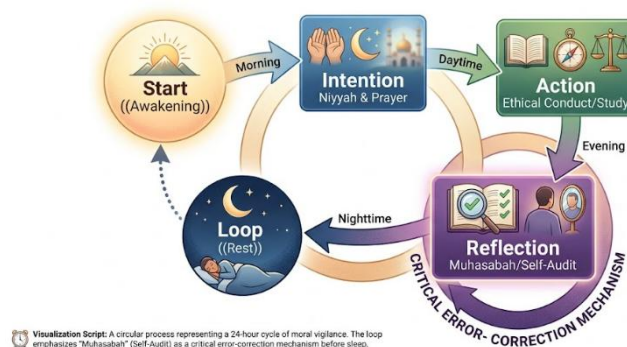
Ethical Dimension	Key Indicators in Text	Target Behavioral Output
Habl min Allah	Ikhlas, Muraqabah, Consistent Prayer	Spiritual Integrity & Moral Resilience
Personal Ethics	Time Management, Controlling Desires	Self-Discipline, Focus, & Independence
Social Ethics	Forgiveness, Avoiding Envy/Ghibah	Empathy, Social Harmony, & Peace

Table 3 summarizes the primary data points extracted from Al-Ghazali's work. By categorizing these points, the study highlights a critical "error" in current character education which often neglects the spiritual foundation (*Habl min Allah*). Consequently, character development remains shallow and merely performative (Zheng et al., 2026; Stewart et al., 2023). This systemic weakness explains why many character programs fail to create long-term behavioral changes in students outside the school environment. When the "spiritual battery" is empty, moral actions become a heavy burden rather than a spontaneous expression of the self.

### 3.2 Methodological Findings: The Process of Etiquette and Obedience

The second major finding reveals Al-Ghazali's "Automated Character Methodology." The research finds that *Bidayatul Hidayah* provides a rigorous, minute-by-minute guide—from waking up before dawn to returning to sleep at night—designed to turn ethical intentions into subconscious habits (*habitus*). This finding is significant because it addresses the "implementation gap" in Indonesian schools, where students often learn *about* character as a cognitive theory or a memorized subject but do not *practice* it as a lived, real-life routine (Sukitman, 2016; Suarningsih et al., 2024).

Al-Ghazali's methodology emphasizes that morality is not just a series of occasional heroic acts, but an accumulation of small, disciplined actions performed consistently. By regulating patterns of sleep (discipline), eating (moderation), and interaction (etiquette), Al-Ghazali creates a controlled environment for the soul to grow without damaging distractions. For instance, the instruction to start the day with gratitude and a clear "intention" (*niyyah*) prepares the student's psychological state to handle the day's stresses with patience and integrity.



**Figure 4. Al-Ghazali's Character Internalization Cycle**

Figure 4 highlights the role of *Muhasabah* as a unique pedagogical tool for identifying personal moral failures. This finding provides a strong contrast to contemporary educational trends that prioritize external metrics, such as standardized test scores and academic grades, over internal self-evaluation (Magee, 2019; Tull, 2018). Without *muhasabah*, a student might continue to repeat the same moral mistakes—such as lying or bullying—without ever realizing the internal damage these actions cause. Therefore, Al-Ghazali offers a "spiritual audit" technique that allows individuals to become their own moral supervisors. This internal accountability is the pinnacle of character independence, ensuring that values are preserved even in the absence of external authority.

### 3.3 Socio-Cultural Relevance to Indonesian National Character Education

The third finding establishes a high degree of synergy between Al-Ghazali's ethics and the five pillars of the Strengthening of Character Education (PPK) in Indonesia: Religiosity, Nationalism, Independence, Mutual Cooperation, and Integrity. The analysis proves that Al-Ghazali's "Adab al-Suhbah" (Etiquette of Companionship) provides the spiritual "battery" and the theological justification needed for values such as "Mutual Cooperation" (*Gotong Royong*) and "Integrity."

Often, these national values are difficult to implement effectively because they are perceived by students and teachers as a top-down administrative burden or a civic duty without a soul. However, through Al-Ghazali's perspective, these values are transformed into deep religious obligations. For example, "Nationalism" can be interpreted as a form of gratitude for the land that allows for the practice of faith, and "Mutual Cooperation" becomes an act of *Ithar* (preferring others over oneself). This suggests that the current moral crisis, including the rise of digital bullying and social intolerance in schools, stems from treating these values merely as political slogans rather than sacred spiritual duties (Syukri et al., 2025; Zheng et al., 2026).

**Table 4. Mapping Relevance: Bidayatul Hidayah vs. National Character Goals**

National Value Pillar	Al-Ghazali's Counterpart	Nature of Relevance
Religiosity	Adab al-Ta'at (Ritual Discipline)	Methodological Core
Integrity	Ikhlas (Internal Consistency)	Philosophical Root
Mutual Cooperation	Ithar (Selflessness in Society)	Socio-Cultural Support
Independence	Qana'ah & Zuhd (Mental Autonomy)	Character Resilience

Table 4 clarifies how classical Islamic thought serves as a functional foundation for modern state policy. This finding is crucial for integrating religious education with civic duty, ensuring they are seen as a unified effort toward forming a "Manusia Paripurna" (complete human being). This integration also has the potential to minimize the historical dichotomy between "general" and "religious" education in Indonesia, creating a more holistic curriculum that nurtures both the intellect and the soul (Stewart et al., 2023; Suarningsih et al., 2024).

### 3.4 Synthesis of Results: Mitigating the Modern Moral Crisis

The final synthesis of the findings indicates that Al-Ghazali's focus on "Vices of the Heart" (*Ma'asi al-Qalb*)—specifically hidden spiritual diseases such as pride (*kibr*), envy (*hasad*), and hypocrisy (*riya*)—is the missing link in modern character education. While national programs tend to focus on developing "Positive Traits" through posters and lectures, Al-Ghazali emphasizes "Diagnostic Reform." This method teaches students how to actively identify and neutralize negative impulses before they manifest as outward violence, bullying, or corruption (Syukri et al., 2025; Gooch, 2026).

The consequence of this finding is the urgent need for a paradigm shift in classroom management and teacher training. Teachers should not just act as academic instructors or disciplinarians, but also as "spiritual physicians" who are sensitive to their students' mental and ethical conditions. By using Al-Ghazali's diagnostic techniques, educators can detect the seeds of social conflict—such as growing resentment or arrogance—early on. This result provides a targeted, multi-dimensional strategy for educators to move from superficial behavior management toward deep, sustainable ethical transformation. This transformation will ultimately create a safer, more inclusive, and dignified educational environment that honors both the tradition of the past and the challenges of the future.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The core dialectic of this research centers on the transformative potential of Al-Ghazali's *tazkiyatun nafs* framework as a sophisticated corrective to the predominantly cognitive and secularized models of character education currently implemented in Indonesia. While contemporary national policies, such as the *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK), focus extensively on observable behavioral outcomes and civic compliance, the findings in *Bidayatul Hidayah* reveal that such external changes are inherently fragile if not anchored in the internal purification of the soul. This study posits that the "inside-out" methodology of Al-Ghazali—moving from sincere intention (*niyyah*) to constant self-vigilance (*muraqabah*)—addresses the "spiritual deficit" that causes modern students to falter under social pressure, such as in cases of bullying or digital narcissism. Unlike the research by Zheng et al. (2026), which utilizes high-level data clustering to understand educational patterns but remains detached from the metaphysical roots of behavior, this study argues that character is not a statistical emergent property but a deliberate spiritual construct. By confronting the data with the reality of Indonesian youth crises, it becomes evident that the "Religiosity" pillar of national education must evolve from mere ritualistic instruction into a deep-seated psychological discipline of the heart, as Al-Ghazali prescribed.

In a critical comparison with existing literature, the findings here extend the work of Wartini (2016) and Sunarto (2015) by shifting the discourse from a historical appreciation of Al-Ghazali to an operational integration into modern pedagogy. Where Syamhudi (2015) constructs a theoretical pyramid of Islamic ethics, this research identifies an anomaly: the practical asceticism (*zuhd*) in *Bidayatul Hidayah* is often misinterpreted as passive withdrawal, whereas it actually functions as a robust "emotional regulation" tool necessary for the high-stress environment of 21st-century schooling. This contradicts the prevailing assumption that classical texts are too archaic for the digital age. In fact, Al-Ghazali's detailed warnings against *ghibah* (backbiting) and *ujub* (vanity) provide a more precise ethical framework for digital citizenship than modern social media guidelines. The work of Haberlin (2022) regarding meditation in classrooms supports the secular effectiveness of "focus tools," yet this research argues that Al-Ghazali's *muhasabah* (self-reflection) offers a superior moral dimension that secular mindfulness lacks, as it binds personal growth to divine accountability (*Habl min Allah*), thereby creating a more durable ethical shield against corruption and moral decay.

The pedagogical implications of Al-Ghazali's "Etiquette of Daily Routine" suggest a radical departure from current teacher-student dynamics in Indonesia. Research by Suarningsih et al. (2024) emphasizes the role of perspective in character education, yet often overlooks the "spiritual authority" and "relational holiness" that Al-Ghazali demands from educators. This study highlights that the teacher must be a *murabbi* (spiritual guide) who exemplifies *tazkiyatun nafs* themselves, rather than just a facilitator of curriculum content. This finding challenges the structural constraints of the modern Indonesian

education system, which prioritizes administrative certification over spiritual maturity in teachers. This systemic friction explains why many character programs fail; as the work of Stewart et al. (2023) on inclusive education suggests, a supportive environment is key, but Al-Ghazali adds the necessity of "sacred sincerity" (*ikhlas*) in the teaching act itself. By reflecting on these tensions, we see that Al-Ghazali's relevance lies in his ability to "re-enchant" the educational process, making it a journey of light (*hidayah*) rather than a mere pursuit of socio-economic status.

Furthermore, the social ethics found in the *Adab al-Suhbah* section provide a critical critique of the hyper-competitive nature of modern schooling, which often inadvertently fosters envy and social friction. While national character education promotes *Gotong Royong* (Mutual Cooperation), Al-Ghazali's concept of "preferring others over oneself" (*ithar*) offers a much deeper philosophical foundation for this value. The research by Syukri et al. (2025) on reinterpreting justice in political philosophy aligns with the need for fairness, but Al-Ghazali's micro-ethics of companionship provide the "spiritual glue" that makes social justice a lived experience in the classroom. This is particularly vital in mitigating the "bullying culture" prevalent in Indonesian schools. The analysis suggests that when students view their peers through the lens of *Habl min al-Nas* (humanity as a divine trust), the structural causes of violence—such as ego-based dominance—are naturally dissolved. This represents a theoretical contribution that bridges classical Sufi psychology with contemporary social-emotional learning (SEL), providing a uniquely Indonesian-Islamic solution to a global educational problem.

Ultimately, the long-term impact of integrating *Bidayatul Hidayah* into the national character framework lies in its ability to produce "Individuals of Integrity" who possess both global competence and deep spiritual roots. The dialectical synthesis between Al-Ghazali's ethics and national goals reveals that the future of Indonesian education must be one of "holistic balance" where technical proficiency is guided by the light of guidance. This study rejects the binary between "modernity" and "tradition," arguing instead that classical wisdom is the most modern tool we have to fight the rootless nihilism of the 21st century. As suggested by Gooch (2026) regarding Christian pedagogy, the injection of deep-rooted theological values into higher education stimulates connection and meaning; similarly, Al-Ghazali's *Bidayatul Hidayah* transforms the "National Character" from a state-mandated slogan into a personal spiritual quest. This research calls for a policy shift that values "heart-cultivation" (*riyadhatun nafs*) as a measurable educational outcome, ensuring that the next generation of Indonesians are not only skilled workers but also guardians of moral light in an increasingly complex world.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

1. The book *Bidayatul Hidayah* by Imam Al-Ghazali provides a comprehensive framework for moral education that transcends temporal boundaries, offering a "practical spirituality" centered on the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and the integration of knowledge with consistent ethical practice.
2. The core moral values identified—encompassing spiritual devotion (*habl min Allah*), personal discipline, and social etiquette (*habl min al-nas*)—provide a detailed psychological and behavioral roadmap that addresses the root causes of moral degradation rather than merely treating its outward symptoms.

3. There is a profound conceptual and methodological relevance between Al-Ghazali's classical ethics and Indonesia's National Character Education goals, particularly in strengthening integrity, religiosity, and mutual cooperation through disciplined daily routines and self-reflection (*muhasabah*).
4. The integration of these classical values offers a resilient solution to modern challenges such as bullying, digital narcissism, and social friction by providing students with an internal spiritual compass and a deep sense of moral accountability that is often missing in secularized pedagogical models.

## **Recommendations**

Educational policymakers and institutions in Indonesia should move beyond superficial character curriculum by integrating the spiritual-psychological methodologies of *Bidayatul Hidayah*, such as structured reflection and the cultivation of sincere intention, into the daily school culture to foster genuine behavioral transformation. Teachers should be empowered as spiritual mentors who embody these values, ensuring that moral education is caught through example rather than just taught through textbooks. Future research should expand on these findings by conducting field experiments or case studies to measure the empirical impact of implementing Al-Ghazali's "Inside-Out" ethical model within diverse modern classroom settings to further validate its practical efficacy in reducing social violence and enhancing student integrity.

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