

Character Building Based on *Tazkiyatun Nafs*: A Conceptual Study on the Development of Moral Education Materials

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ABSTRACT

Moral education within the Islamic education system today remains predominantly cognitive and normative, thus failing to deeply address the affective and spiritual dimensions of learners. In fact, holistic character formation requires the integration of value knowledge, inner awareness, and practical application in everyday life. This study aims to develop a conceptual framework for moral education materials based on *tazkiyatun nafs* integrated with a character-building approach. Its main focus is to respond to the need for a reflective, transformative, and applicable model of moral education. The research employs a critical literature review with narrative synthesis and thematic analysis. The sources include classical works such as *Ihya' Ulumuddin* and *Madarijus Salikin*, as well as contemporary books and journals published between 2019 and 2025. The findings reveal that integrating *tazkiyatun nafs* into the character-building model enables the development of moral learning materials that encompass three dimensions of personality: cognitive (*moral knowing*), affective (*moral feeling*), and psychomotor-spiritual (*moral action*). The stages of *takhalli-tahalli-tajalli* and the mapping of *nafs* levels (*ammarah*, *lawwamah*, and *mutmainnah*) serve as foundational elements for designing gradual moral learning suited to learners' psychological development. This study formulates an integrative model grounded in Islamic spirituality that remains underexplored in conventional character education. Furthermore, the study identifies the teacher's role as a spiritual facilitator and moral reflection guide as crucial to successful value internalization. These findings highlight the need for curriculum reconstruction and the development of moral education materials that are spiritually grounded, applicable, and centered on strengthening the teacher's role as a moral educator. The implementation of this model has the potential to produce learners who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and spiritually mature in facing contemporary challenges.

Keywords: Moral Education Materials, Character Building, *Tazkiyatun Nafs*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of today's global dynamics, strengthening holistic character education has become increasingly necessary to cultivate students' morality. Therefore, it is crucial to systematically internalize noble moral values in education through character building approaches that engage affective and spiritual dimensions (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Strong character is not only shaped by cognitive knowledge but also through integral approaches encompassing affective and spiritual dimensions capable of embodying noble values (Tarigan et al., 2024). Through character building, Islamic education ideally functions as a medium for moral empowerment aligned with divine principles.

In Islam, the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* possesses strong theological and epistemological foundations as a mechanism of soul purification for the deep internalization of praiseworthy morals. *Tazkiyatun nafs* is not merely a theoretical moral approach, but rather a spiritual practice that is reflective, introspective, and transformative, shaping the psycho-spiritual dimension (Bayhaqi & Masnawati, 2024). From this perspective, moral education cannot be limited to normative or formalistic aspects, but must touch upon inner cultivation through purification (*tazkiyah*), which constitutes the essence of moral transformation.

This condition creates an urgency to integrate psycho-spiritual approaches based on *tazkiyatun nafs* into the systematic development of character building materials as part of modern moral education reform. Although various models of character building have been widely developed in education, most have not yet explored the spiritual dimension. A review of the literature reveals a lack of academic studies that explicitly combine modern conceptual frameworks of character education with the structured and applicable spiritual heritage of Islam, particularly the core concepts of *tazkiyatun nafs* (Utami, 2024).

Character building literature generally stems from developmental psychology and Western pedagogy, emphasizing behavioral modification techniques and habituation of moral values through curricular interventions. However, there has not yet been a synthesis of modern psycho-pedagogical theories with psycho-spiritual foundations (*tazkiyatun nafs*) in a holistic and applicable moral education framework (Karim, 2021). Therefore, a more integrative conceptual framework based on Islamic spiritual values needs to be formulated to bridge this gap. This study aims to fill this void through a conceptual approach to developing character building materials grounded in *tazkiyatun nafs* (Hasan et al., 2024).

Based on the empirical and theoretical realities above, the conceptual framework of character building materials based on *tazkiyatun nafs* focuses on: (1) describing the principles of *tazkiyatun nafs* and their relevance in modern moral education through character building; (2) identifying indicators of moral competence at each *nafs* level (*ammarah*, *lawwamah*, *mutmainnah*); and (3) formulating strategies and implementations for the design of moral education materials in character building based on *tazkiyatun nafs* systematically and applicably.

METHOD

This study employs a critical literature review approach to examine the development of moral education based on *tazkiyatun nafs*. Beyond collecting information, this approach evaluates and synthesizes literature in depth through thematic and intertextual readings of both classical and contemporary sources. Classical sources include works of scholars such as al-Ghazali (*Ihya' Ulumuddin*) and Ibnul Qayyim al-Jauziyah (*Madarijus Salikin*), while contemporary sources comprise scholarly journals, dissertations, and Islamic education books published between 2019–2025. Source selection was based on scholarly credibility, thematic relevance, and publication recency, ensuring that this study remains contextual and relevant in addressing the challenges of moral education in the modern era.

Data collection was carried out systematically in three stages: (1) identification based on keywords in academic databases, (2) selection according to topic relevance, academic quality, and source currency, and (3) categorization of literature into major themes such as the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* and moral indicators. Analysis was conducted using narrative synthesis and comparative matrix techniques to evaluate similarities, differences, and applicability across the reviewed literature. This approach enables the construction of a conceptual synthesis that is descriptive, reflective, and contributive to the development of contemporary Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Moral education materials in conventional Islamic education today still predominantly adopt a cognitive approach, emphasizing the mastery of knowledge about moral values textually without adequate reinforcement of affective and psychomotor aspects (Arlinda, 2024). This imbalance indicates a pedagogical gap between the ideal objectives of holistic moral education and the instructional approaches practiced in classrooms. In practice, moral education is often confined to one-way lectures, memorization of scriptural texts, and written tests that measure only students' cognitive ability to recall Islamic ethical concepts (Siddiqui & Habib, 2022).

The limitations of this method hinder the deep internalization of values, as it fails to engage students' emotions and lived experiences in practicing the moral values taught. Moreover, conventional moral education also provides little space for reflective and personal spirituality, which is essentially the core of Islamic moral education—not only teaching what is right but also why it is right and how to embody this truth within oneself (Zahira et al., 2024). Moral education loses its essence as soul cultivation when positioned merely as the transmission of information, rather than as the transformation of personality.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to transform approaches in moral education that not only focus on the *knowing* aspect but also internalize *feeling* and direct students toward *action*. Without comprehensive paradigm reform, conventional moral education risks becoming normative discourse that fails to substantively and sustainably shape learners' character. Moral competence in Islamic education should be oriented toward social norms as reflections of spiritual attainment and personality integrity. The deep internalization of moral values becomes the primary indicator of forming noble behavior embodied in concrete actions. These indicators of morality can be measured through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions integrated into learning activities and social interactions (Ahdianti, 2023). Yet, without approaches addressing the spiritual aspect, such indicators tend to remain formalistic.

In practice, however, moral education in many educational institutions is still confined to the cognitive aspect, or *moral knowing*—merely conveying information about moral values and Islamic ethical teachings (Alimron et al., 2023). Consequently, the understanding of values is not followed by the development of attitudes and moral behaviors in daily life (Nazifah Fitri Annisa et al., 2024). This imbalance demonstrates a gap between the ideal concept and the reality of moral education implementation, which should be integral and applicable.

To address these shortcomings in moral education, an approach that integrates the three domains of education simultaneously is needed. Learning must not only be designed to transmit value information but also create space for students to reflect and embody it in real actions, both in school and in society (Dwiyani et al., 2023). As a strategic solution, the concept of character building becomes highly relevant since it has a structure that balances the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Islamic-based character building seeks to form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually and emotionally mature, thus capable of facing modern moral challenges (Sodik et al., 2024). This approach facilitates the development of students' identity aligned with religious, social, and local cultural values.

Thomas Lickona defines character education as a deliberate effort to cultivate virtues that are good for individuals and society. He emphasizes the importance of integrating three moral domains: (1) *Moral Knowing*: understanding ethical concepts and the ability to critically distinguish right from wrong; (2) *Moral Feeling*: developing moral affections such as empathy, appreciation of justice, and emotional commitment to values; and (3) *Moral Action*: opportunities to practice moral behavior through reflection and action. This model fosters learning structures that stimulate students to think (knowing), feel (feeling), and act (action) consistently in school activities (Lickona, 1991). However, classical moral education is often trapped within the cognitive domain of *moral knowing*.

The character education model developed by Thomas Lickona encompasses a triadic approach consisting of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action* (Arif et al., 2023). These three components are integrated and inseparable in effective character education. Within this framework, knowledge of moral values forms the basis for developing moral awareness, which is reinforced by affective aspects such as empathy, conscience, and care for goodness (Asnawan, 2020). Subsequently, moral feelings are internalized into concrete actions, making character manifest in daily behavior (Soheh & Kulsum, 2021). This triadic model contributes significantly to comprehensive character development because it simultaneously encompasses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

In the ideal concept of moral education, integration between cognitive (*moral knowing*), affective (*moral feeling*), and psychomotor (*moral action*) aspects is essential for forming a complete personality in students (Arif et al., 2023). These three form a unified process of character education that is interrelated and inseparable. The introduction of values must be accompanied by emotional appreciation and demonstrated through real actions in daily behavior (Dwiyani et al., 2023). Without the integration of these domains, moral education risks becoming partial and failing to generate transformative impact on students (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024).

Character building development is supported by various educational and social psychology theories such as Kohlberg's and Gilligan's moral development theories, Bandura's social learning theory of self-efficacy, and the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework in social-emotional education (Hayati & Idin, 2024). Self-efficacy theory highlights the importance of individuals' beliefs in their

ability to accomplish moral tasks, while CASEL provides an implementation framework for social-emotional character education in school curricula (Warsah et al., 2024). Integrating these theories strengthens the effectiveness of character building programs applied in educational institutions.

The integration of character building and moral education based on *tazkiyatun nafs* produces a model of moral learning that focuses not only on outward behavior but also on learners' inner spirituality. *Tazkiyatun nafs* or soul purification becomes a transformative approach instilling self-awareness, emotional control, and a strong spiritual connection with God, thus reinforcing the moral foundation for consistent Islamic behavior (Ma'muroh et al., 2024). Accordingly, this approach not only educates moral behavior but also nurtures spiritual awareness as a solid foundation in character building.

The approach of *tazkiyatun nafs* serves as a strategic instrument for holistically internalizing moral values, where soul purification through awareness, contemplation, and self-control is applied to shape virtuous personality. The integration of *tazkiyah* into the educational process provides space for substantial moral formation. Moral values are not only studied theoretically but also practiced through spiritual understanding and experience, serving as a medium to cultivate learners who are intellectually intelligent and also emotionally and spiritually mature (Harahap, 2023).

The manifestation of *tazkiyatun nafs* in education can be seen through learning approaches that emphasize contemplation, introspection, and spiritual reinforcement. This can be applied through methods such as *muhasabah* (self-reflection), *tadabbur* (deep reflection on scripture), *dzikr* (remembrance of God), and nurturing righteous deeds in both curricular and extracurricular activities. An educational process that emphasizes only cognitive and technical aspects loses its spirit when not accompanied by the spiritual dimension shaping learners' personalities as a whole.

Tazkiyatun nafs is a concept of soul purification derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, forming a spiritual foundation in Islam. QS. Asy-Syams [91]: 9–10 states, "Indeed, successful is the one who purifies the soul, and indeed, failed is the one who corrupts it." Essentially, the concept of *tazkiyah* aims to preserve and awaken the innate potential of the *nafs* (Quthb, 2001). *Tazkiyatun nafs* emphasizes the purification of the heart from spiritual diseases such as arrogance, envy, and ostentation, to attain purity of soul and closeness to Allah. However, its integration into formal education systems remains underdeveloped.

Within Islamic psychology, the concept of *nafs* plays a central role in *tazkiyatun nafs*, where *nafs* is understood as the human soul existing at various moral and spiritual levels (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). The essence of *nafs* encompasses the complex psycho-spiritual structure of humans, categorized into three levels: *nafs ammarah* (the soul inclined toward evil), *nafs lawwamah* (the self-reproaching soul), and *nafs mutmainnah* (the tranquil soul). Understanding this categorization is essential in designing moral education strategies tailored to learners' inner states.

The concept of three levels of *nafs* provides a framework for gradually measuring and nurturing morality. These levels become indicators of a person's spirituality in the process of character education. Each level—*ammarah*, *lawwamah*, and *mutmainnah*—represents stages of spiritual development in managing inner impulses toward moral perfection (Maududin et al., 2021). *Nafs ammarah* tends toward destructive desires and impulses, *nafs lawwamah* reflects moral awareness and self-evaluation, while *nafs mutmainnah* illustrates a soul that is calm, stable, and oriented toward divine values.

Table 1. Matrix outlines moral competence indicators based on *nafs* levels:

Level of Nafs	Psycho-spiritual Traits	Moral Indicators
<i>Nafs Ammarah</i>	Dominated by desires, lack of self-control	Frequent lying, temperamental, selfish, manipulative
<i>Nafs Lawwamah</i>	Moral awareness, regret after wrongdoing	Repentance after sin, self-reflection, sense of responsibility
<i>Nafs Mutmainnah</i>	Tranquil and stable soul, self-preservation in piety	Honesty, patience, trustworthiness, empathy, consistency in worship and social conduct

This matrix is useful as both a diagnostic tool for moral conditions and a guide for interventions in character education across levels. However, its application must be adapted to learners' psychological readiness and context to avoid coercion or judgment over deeply personal spiritual processes.

Conceptually, *tazkiyatun nafs* is understood as a process of cleansing the soul from vices and cultivating oneself with virtues guided by divine instruction. This notion is supported by classical scholars such as al-Ghazali, Ibnul Qayyim al-Jauziyah, and Said Hawwa, who explained that the *nafs* has levels (*maqamat*)—*ammarah*, *lawwamah*, and *mutmainnah*—reflecting human psychological conditions in the journey toward moral perfection (Bayhaqi & Masnawati, 2024). The core principles of *tazkiyatun nafs* encompass three spiritual stages: *mujahadah* (striving against desires), *muraqabah* (self-awareness of God's presence), and *muhasabah* (continuous self-reflection), all directed toward fostering piety and deep moral awareness (Al-Jauziyah, 1998). Success in *tazkiyah* is determined by self-mastery, consistency in worship, and remembrance of God as awareness of His presence in every human activity (Al-Ghazali, 1964).

Al-Ghazali developed a widely known method of *tazkiyatun nafs* in classical Sufi thought through three main stages: *takhalli* (emptying oneself of vices), *tahalli* (adorning oneself with virtues), and *tajalli* (experiencing divine presence within the soul). This comprehensive model does not only emphasize spirituality but also deeply engages moral development through ongoing contemplation and spiritual exercises (Al-Ghazali, 1964). Its implementation in moral education is highly relevant to character formation rooted in Islamic spirituality.

Meanwhile, Ibnul Qayyim al-Jauziyah proposed a more structured approach to soul purification through five principles: belief that every spiritual disease has its cure, the Qur'an as the primary therapy, prayer as a spiritual weapon, balance between love, fear, and hope in God, and avoidance of sin (Al-Jauziyah, 1998). His approach is systematic and theological, framing *tazkiyah* as a form of spiritual therapy in education.

In *Madarijus Salikin*, Ibnul Qayyim elaborates *tazkiyatun nafs* as a spiritual journey composed of *maqamat* (stations) and *ahwal* (states of the soul). He explains that purification not only entails rejecting vices such as ostentation, envy, and arrogance but also cultivating virtues such as humility, sincerity, and patience. The essence of *tazkiyah* is *muraqabah* (awareness of God's constant supervision), which functions as an inner regulator of intentions and actions. Ibnul Qayyim stressed that this process is gradual, demanding sacrifice, and requires credible spiritual guidance (Al-Jauziyah, 1998).

The internalization of moral values in Islamic education occurs through *ta'lim* (knowledge transmission), *tadrib* (practice), *ta'dib* (cultivation of adab), and *tazkiyah* (purification). This process encompasses not only teaching but also habituation and holistic personality formation. To support this, learners' moral indicators can be developed into evaluative frameworks aligned with *nafs* levels and *tazkiyah* stages.

Table 2. Stages of Tazkiyah through 3 levels of Nafs

Level Nafs	Stages of tazkiyah
<i>Nafs Ammarah</i>	Muhasabah
<i>Nafs Lawwamah</i>	Mujahadah (Takhalli & Tahalli)
<i>Nafs Mutmainnah</i>	Muraqabah (Tajalli)

This approach provides a perspective and can serve as a foundation for designing a character education model based on *tazkiyatun nafs*. The combination of spiritual-theological and philosophical dimensions opens space for the practice of moral education that is both applicable and reflective. However, the practical integration into formal curricula still requires a contextual and flexible pedagogical system to be effectively adopted across different levels of education.

The synthesis of character building and *tazkiyatun nafs* offers a comprehensive approach to moral education because it develops not only external morality but also learners' internal spirituality. This synergy creates character transformation not merely based on social norms but also internalized as faith and devotion. Its implementation requires the integration of habituation, spiritual reflection, value learning, and teacher role modeling in consistently demonstrating noble character.

When compared with Kohlberg's moral development theory, which focuses on cognitive reasoning, and Gilligan's ethics of care, which emphasizes relational ethics, the approach of *tazkiyatun nafs* provides an integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. Unlike external moral reasoning or relational care, *tazkiyatun nafs* prioritizes inner spiritual drive (*inner moral drive*) as the foundation of morality.

Table 3. Comparison of the Tazkiyatun Nafs approach with Kollberg's Theory and Gilligan's Theory

Aspect	Kohlberg	Gilligan	Tazkiyatun Nafs
Focus	Moral reasoning	Kepedulian dan relasi	Purification of the soul and spiritual awareness
Approach	Logical-cognitive	Affective-interpersonal	Spiritual-transcendental
Objective	Justice and autonomy	Relationships and responsibilities	Servitude and moral purity
Stages	6 stages of moral reasoning	3 levels of moral care	3 levels of nafs in the Qur'an

This integration lays the groundwork for a structured character education curriculum based on *nafs* levels. At the *ammarah* stage, learning emphasizes self-control and discipline; at the *lawwamah* stage, focus shifts to moral reflection and ethical awareness; while the *mutmainnah* stage emphasizes deepened spiritual commitment and social contribution rooted in divine values (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Through such an approach, character education becomes a gradual and continuous process tailored to learners' psycho-spiritual conditions.

Table 4. The relationship between Moral Development (Kollberg's theory) and Ethic of Care (Gilligan's theory) on the level of Nafs

Level Nafs	Moral Development (Kohlberg) (Kohlberg, 1981)	Ethic of Care (Carol Gilligan) (Gilligan, 1993)
Nafs Ammarah	Level 1 : Pre Conventional Stage 1 : Avoiding punishment Stage 2 : Self-interest (Egoism)	Orientation on to individual survival
Nafs Lawwamah	Level 2 : Conventional Stage 3 : Good orientation Stage 4: Law and Order Orientation	Goodness as self-sacrifice
Nafs Mutmainnah	Level 3 : Post Conventional Stage 5 : Social Orientation Stage 6 : Universal Principle Ethic	Morality of nonviolent responsibility

Implementation of character education based on *tazkiyatun nafs* is further reinforced by self-efficacy approaches—students' belief in their ability to act according to moral values. Albert Bandura (1997) conceptualized self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capacity to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired goals. Its four sources—mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological-emotional states (Bandura, 1977)—can be integrated with spiritual practices to strengthen learners' confidence in moral actions.

Additionally, the CASEL framework identifies five interrelated competencies—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—that reinforce emotional and social intelligence (Domitrovich, 2015). Integrating these with *tazkiyatun nafs* enriches moral education with a holistic framework that addresses cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) identifies five interrelated core competencies for developing students' emotional and social intelligence (Domitrovich, 2015)(Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2020)

Table 5. Core competencies based on CASEL

Competency	Brief Description
1. Self-Awareness	The ability to recognize one's emotions, values, strengths, and limitations. For example, students are aware of when they feel angry or anxious.
2. Self-Management	The capacity to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, including self-control, stress management, and goal setting.
3. Social Awareness	The ability to understand others' perspectives, appreciate diversity, and empathize with people from different backgrounds.
4. Relationship Skills	Building and maintaining healthy relationships, communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and giving/receiving help.
5. Responsible Decision-Making	The ability to make ethical decisions, considering personal and others' well-being, as well as the long-term consequences of actions.

Implications for Classical Learning

The integration of character building and *tazkiyatun nafs* carries significant implications for classical learning practices. Teachers are required not only to serve as instructors but also as spiritual role models capable of guiding students through personal example and inner development. Classical learning should include moments of reflection, value-based dialogue, and activities that actively and participatively cultivate students' moral and spiritual awareness. This enhances teacher–student relationships and strengthens the internalization of values more effectively and sustainably.

The implementation of moral education based on *tazkiyatun nafs* integrated with character building constitutes a strategic step to reinforce students' moral and spiritual dimensions in the face of contemporary challenges. *Tazkiyatun nafs*, as a process of soul purification in Islamic tradition, emphasizes the cultivation of inner awareness, self-control, and habituation of righteous deeds grounded in sincere intention. Meanwhile, character building focuses on the formation of personality through the internalization of core values such as responsibility, honesty, discipline, and empathy.

Integrating these two concepts in learning requires a paradigm shift from mere knowledge transmission (cognitive-based) to transformative and reflective learning. Learning should not only focus on content mastery but also on the formation of attitudes and character arising from a deep understanding of values.

The logical consequence of this integration is the need for curriculum reconstruction, especially in subjects such as moral or character education. Learning materials should no longer be presented merely as collections of norms or moral rules but should be developed as media for value internalization. Each moral topic must stimulate awareness, open spaces for reflection, and allow students to internalize values personally.

For instance, teaching honesty should not be limited to definitions and examples. Teachers should guide students to reflect on personal experiences, consider the social and spiritual impacts of honesty and dishonesty, and design concrete steps to practice honesty in everyday life. In this way, values are experienced rather than memorized.

This model requires teachers to act as facilitators who not only teach but also model and nurture awareness. Learning becomes a process of soul development rather than mere cognitive filling. Values such as sincerity, patience, gratitude, and reliance on God are introduced not as dogmas but as ways of life that can be practiced and experienced. By integrating *tazkiyatun nafs* and character building, moral education becomes more than moral instruction; it becomes a process of purification and holistic personality formation. Learning materials are transformed into instruments of value embodiment, and classrooms become spaces for soul growth. This is not only about strengthening character but also about cultivating the whole human being.

Integration of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* and Character Building in Aqidah–Akhlak Learning

Moral education cannot rely solely on normative lectures or conceptual teaching; it must reach the soul's awareness. Therefore, integrating *tazkiyatun nafs*—spiritual purification and cultivation of the soul—with character building is essential for shaping students into strong and morally upright individuals.

This integration is concretely implemented in Aqidah–Akhlāq lessons by allocating 1–2 special character building sessions per semester. These sessions are not merely supplementary but are designed as reflective and applicative moments to deepen the moral values already studied.

The character building sessions are experience-based and value-oriented, aligned with ongoing moral themes, and presented in more applicative forms, such as:

- Case study discussions: Students analyze real-life moral dilemmas and reflect on them through Islamic moral principles and *tazkiyatun nafs*.
- Self-reflection and journaling: Students write about personal experiences related to values such as patience, honesty, or gratitude, and how they attempt to apply them.
- Simulation and roleplay: Students practice appropriate responses in social situations, such as controlling anger or helping peers, to train moral and emotional sensitivity.
- Sharing sessions or *tadabbur*: Teachers and students share experiences related to values, supported by relevant Qur’anic verses or hadith.

Impacts on Learning and Materials

Because character building sessions are a structured part of the Aqidah–Akhlāq curriculum, learning materials must be designed with both flexibility and depth. It is not enough to explain “what” morality is; learning should also address “how” it is lived in reality. Thus, moral materials must contain two dimensions: (1) the cognitive dimension—understanding the concepts and scriptural foundations of moral values, and (2) the affective–applicative dimension—experiencing and practicing values consciously and systematically.

This model also redefines the role of teachers. They are no longer mere transmitters of content but spiritual guides and facilitators of reflection. Teachers must build close, dialogical relationships with students to ensure authentic value internalization rather than mere formalism.

By allocating special character building sessions within Aqidah–Akhlāq each semester, the integration of *tazkiyatun nafs* and character education becomes tangible in practice. These sessions bridge theory and reality, values and experiences. This represents a form of moral education that is not merely taught but cultivated.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that moral education within the Islamic education system remains largely cognitive and normative, with minimal affective and spiritual approaches addressing learners’ inner dimensions. The concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* (soul purification) offers a more transformative and integrative paradigm, as it simultaneously targets inward spirituality and outward behavior. By integrating spiritual stages such as *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*, along with the mapping of *nafs* (*ammārah*, *lawwamah*, *mutmainnah*), a character building model based on *tazkiyatun nafs* can serve as an applicable, reflective, and contextual medium for internalizing moral values.

This integration helps bridge the gap between *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action* through experiential and reflective learning. Emphasis on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and real-life value practice positions character education not merely as value transmission but as holistic soul cultivation. Within this context, teachers serve as spiritual facilitators and moral role models actively nurturing students’ noble character.

It is therefore necessary to reformulate the moral education curriculum by integrating *tazkiyatun nafs* into practical, experience-based learning models. Islamic educational institutions are encouraged to allocate regular character building sessions, design materials based on *nafs* levels, and prepare teachers as spiritual mentors rather than mere instructors. Implementation should also be supported by holistic evaluation instruments covering cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual dimensions to ensure the comprehensive and authentic formation of learners’ character.

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