

Strengthening Nation and Character Building in the Study of Islamic Philosophy of Education

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening Nation and Character Building based on Islamic values has become an urgent need amid global moral crisis, radicalism, and the disorientation of values among the younger generation. This study aims to formulate a concept of Islamic education based on tazkiyah that can shape a complete Muslim personality while contributing to the formation of national character. This study employs a qualitative approach using literature review and content analysis of works by Islamic education scholars, particularly Al-Ghazali and Ahmad Sanusi, selected purposively due to the relevance of their thoughts to the research topic. Data sources include classical and contemporary literature, as well as previous studies discussing Islamic education philosophy, tazkiyah, and character development. The analysis was conducted thematically to identify the concepts, stages, and implementation of tazkiyah in education. The results of the study indicate that tazkiyah encompasses the purification of the soul (tazkiyah al-nafs), the purification of the mind (tazkiyah al-'aql), and the purification of the body (tazkiyah al-jism), which proceed through three stages—Islam, Iman, and Ihsan—and integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. This approach is considered relevant to be integrated into the Islamic education curriculum as a strategy for strengthening national character in a holistic manner. The implications of this research are theoretical, enriching the study of Islamic educational philosophy, and practical, serving as a reference for educators and policymakers in designing tazkiyah-based learning strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education has a strategic role in shaping the character of the *nation* (*Nation and Character Building*) based on universal values without discrimination of ethnicity, skin colour, socio-economic status, or background. In the context of rapid globalisation, these values face serious challenges due to the penetration of instant culture, unfiltered information flows, and shifts in societal morality. Amidst a global moral crisis, the degradation of social ethics, and the weakening of national identity, the urgency of strengthening character based on Islamic teachings has become increasingly pressing. The phenomena of radicalism, extreme individualism, and value disorientation occurring among the younger generation are not only threats to national identity but also to the integrity of the nation's socio-cultural fabric. Islamic educational philosophy, with its foundation in the integration of reason and heart, provides a solid basis for building well-rounded individuals—intellectually intelligent yet possessing moral integrity and social responsibility (Nasution, 2021).

The selection of Ahmad Sanusi and Al-Ghazali in this study is not merely due to their historical reputation, but also because of their unique and relevant contributions to the renewal of Islamic education. Ahmad Sanusi in the 1930s not only established formal educational institutions that combined religious and general knowledge but also initiated a classical Islamic boarding school system () with a structured curriculum—a breakthrough rarely found in his time (Sanusi, 1932). Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali, as a philosopher and scholar of the Middle Ages, formulated a concept of education that placed human

perfection as the primary goal, with a dual orientation: approaching Allah and achieving happiness in this world and the hereafter (Al-Ghazali, 2005). These two figures share a similar view on the central role of reason and heart (*qalb*) in education, yet they originate from different historical contexts and face distinct challenges, thereby offering complementary perspectives for nation-building.

The main variables of this study include Islamic educational philosophy, *Nation and Character Building*, and the development of reason and heart (*qalb*). Islamic educational philosophy serves as a value framework and guideline for educational goals; *Nation and Character Building* provides the strategic direction for shaping Indonesian citizens who are faithful, knowledgeable, and cultured; while the concept of developing reason and heart provides the psychological-spiritual dimension that guides the educational process comprehensively. The integration of these three variables is synergistic: philosophy provides direction, *Nation and Character Building* provides national orientation, and mind-heart provides the instruments for the formation of a whole person. The educational model born from this integration is expected to produce a generation that is not only academically excellent but also possesses moral awareness, social empathy, and national commitment (Arifin, 2017).

Previous studies have highlighted the connection between Islamic education and character formation. Arifin (2017) emphasises the urgency of integrating Islamic values into the national curriculum, while Nasution (2021) highlights the role of *the heart* in spiritual education. However, studies that directly link the thoughts of Ahmad Sanusi and Al-Ghazali within the framework of *Nation and Character Building* from the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy are still limited. In fact, most previous studies tend to focus on the historical aspects of the figures or the normative aspects of education, without developing an integrative model that is applicable in addressing the character issues of the nation in the global era. This gap presents an opportunity to present an analysis that is not only descriptive but also constructive and solution-oriented.

This study innovates by examining two Islamic educational figures from different socio-historical backgrounds but sharing a common vision, then integrating their thoughts into the national character development agenda. Theoretically, this research enriches the philosophy of Islamic education by offering a synthesis of the concepts of reason and heart as instruments for shaping national character. Practically, this research is expected to contribute to policymakers, educators, and educational institution managers in designing learning strategies that not only transfer knowledge but also shape character, morality, and a strong national identity. The ultimate goal is to formulate an Islam-based education model rooted in reason and heart that is relevant for strengthening *Nation and Character Building* in the global era, thereby producing a generation that is knowledgeable, virtuous, and committed to unity and the progress of the nation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic Philosophy of Education

The philosophy of Islamic education is a concept of thinking that discusses education based on the teachings of Islam, emphasising the essence of human ability to be nurtured, developed, and guided to become Muslims whose personalities are integrated with the teachings of Islam (Arifin, 2017). This study not only includes normative principles but also requires fundamental, systematic, logical, and universal thinking about the educational process, with the Qur'an and hadith as the primary references.

In the Qur'an, the purpose of Islamic education is described through the mission of the Prophet Muhammad SAW: "*It is He who has sent among the unlettered a messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, and indeed they*

were previously in manifest error." (QS. Al-Jumu'ah [62]: 2). This verse affirms that education in Islam aims to transform humanity from ignorance to spiritual and intellectual enlightenment.

Nation and Character Building

Nation and Character Building is a structured effort to shape citizens who possess national consciousness, social responsibility, and moral integrity. In the Indonesian context, nation character building is based on the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, but Islamic education can provide reinforcement through the instillation of faith, morality, and universal values (Nasution, 2021).

Islamic education contributes to shaping national identity through the internalisation of values such as honesty, cooperation, tolerance, and work ethic. By combining religious and national visions, *Nation and Character Building* can produce individuals who are not only intelligent and skilled but also have a strong commitment to national unity and progress.

The Concept of Reason in Islamic Education

Intellect in the Islamic perspective is the intellectual potential bestowed by Allah to understand, analyse, and make the right decisions (Harun Nasution, 2021). The Qur'an uses the term *ya'qilun* (using reason) in various verses to encourage humans to think critically and rationally, one of which is in QS. Al-Hajj [22]: 46, which emphasises that the heart (*qalb*) can be used for thinking.

In Islamic education, reason serves to understand revelation and develop knowledge, thereby achieving a balance between mastery of general knowledge and religious knowledge. The optimal use of reason enables students to become creative, innovative, and morally grounded individuals.

The Concept of Qalb in Islamic Education

The heart (*qalb*) in the Qur'an has two meanings: as the centre of emotion and the centre of reason. The use of *the heart* in relation to reason is reflected in verses such as QS. Muhammad [47]: 24, " " which states that the locking of the heart prevents one from understanding the Qur'an. Meanwhile, *the heart* as the centre of emotion is illustrated in QS. Asy-Syu'ara [26]: 89, which describes a peaceful heart when one has faith.

In Islamic education, *the heart* serves as the centre for filtering values that guide behaviour in accordance with sharia. The balance between reason and the heart is the key to the formation of a complete character. Without the involvement of the heart, intellectual intelligence risks becoming detached from moral values; conversely, without reason, faith risks losing its rational foundation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a *library research* method. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring phenomena in depth, especially when the object of study is not quantitative or statistical data, but rather conceptual ideas, values, and principles (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The focus of this research is on an in-depth theoretical review of the concept of *tazkiyah* in Islamic education, particularly in relation to strengthening *Nation and Character Building*. The characteristics of qualitative research, which emphasise meaning, interpretation, and context, are highly relevant to understanding *tazkiyah* as a framework for moral and spiritual education, as this concept is rooted in the complex and philosophically rich tradition of Islamic scholarship (Al-Attas, 1991).

The selection of literature review as the type of research is based on the need to comprehensively explore the thought constructs of Islamic education figures, both those who lived in classical and modern

times. Literature study allows researchers to trace historical sources, normative doctrines, and contemporary analyses related to the research topic without being limited by the location or time of field research (Bungin, 2019). Through this approach, researchers can examine the relationship between the values taught by Islamic education figures and the demands of national character development in the current global era (Azra, 2019).

Research data sources consist of two main categories, namely primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include works that directly explain the concepts of *tazkiyah* and Islamic education, such as *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* by Al-Ghazali (2005), which discusses the purification of the soul as the core of Islamic education, and *Tamsyiyatul Muslimin* by Ahmad Sanusi (1932), which combines religious and general education within the framework of character formation. Additionally, the Qur'an and relevant Hadith serve as the primary normative references. Secondary sources include supporting literature that provides context, interpretation, and enrichment of understanding regarding primary sources. These include academic books, scientific journal articles, conference proceedings, previous research reports, and national education policy documents (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020) that outline the philosophy of Islamic education, strategies for strengthening national character, and challenges faced in its implementation.

Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques. This process involved systematic source tracing () through physical libraries and online databases that provide access to scientific literature. Once found, each source was carefully read to identify sections relevant to the research focus. The information obtained was then recorded in detail, both in the form of direct quotations and paraphrases, and coded according to the research theme (Sugiyono, 2019). Data selection was based on criteria of topic relevance, author credibility, and strength of argument, so that only sources that met academic standards were used in the analysis.

Data analysis in this study uses *content analysis* as described by Krippendorff (2019). This method allows researchers to identify patterns, categories, and conceptual relationships from textual data. The initial step of the analysis is to identify key concepts related to *tazkiyah*, such as the stages of purification (Islam, Iman, and Ihsan), forms of *tazkiyah* activities (purification of the soul, mind, and body), and their implications for the formation of national character. These concepts are then grouped into categories that represent the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in Islamic education. The next step is to interpret, which is to link these concepts with the thoughts of figures, Islamic values, and the principles of *Nation and Character Building* (Arifin, 2017; Nasution, 2021).

To maintain data validity, this study uses source triangulation. Triangulation is done by comparing information obtained from various types of references, both classical and contemporary sources, to ensure consistency, accuracy, and objectivity of findings (Miles et al., 2014). For example, Al-Ghazali's views on heart purification are compared with contemporary academic interpretations, or Ahmad Sanusi's concept of integrative education is compared with current character education policies. This cross-source comparison helps avoid interpretative bias and strengthens the reliability of the research results.

The entire research process was carried out systematically, starting from topic selection, literature review, data collection, content analysis, to drawing conclusions supported by solid arguments. The researcher ensured that each step was interconnected and aimed at answering the research objectives, namely to formulate the role of *tazkiyah* as a moral and spiritual framework in Islamic education that is relevant to strengthening national character in the global era. Through this method, the research is expected to produce a comprehensive and academically accountable understanding, as well as provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic educational philosophy and *Nation*

and Character Building strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

General Overview of Tazkiyah in Islamic Education

The results of this study indicate that *tazkiyah*—the process of self-purification—plays a strategic role in the framework of Islamic education as a method for shaping the complete Muslim personality of ". Etymologically, *tazkiyah* means purification, refinement, and fertilisation, which in the context of Islamic education signifies the process of freeing oneself from all influences that hinder the purity of human nature (Al-Attas, 1991). Its primary objective is to cultivate individuals free from the negative influences of the environment, culture, values, and life orientations that contradict the principles of Sharia.

Tazkiyah-based education does not merely focus on shaping outward behaviour (*zahir*), but also nurtures and perfects the inner dimensions that include the mind ('*aql*), heart (*qalb*), and soul (*nafs*). Thus, students are guided to be able to carry out the two fundamental roles of humans in Islam: as '*abd Allah* (servants of Allah) who are obedient to Him, and as *khalifah* who carry the mandate to prosper the earth in accordance with divine guidance (QS. Al-Jumu'ah [62]: 2).

Field findings identify that the process of *tazkiyah* occurs through three main hierarchical and mutually reinforcing stages:

1. Islam – The regulation of outward behaviour to align with the teachings of Sharia, encompassing the performance of worship, social ethics, and civilised social interactions.
2. Iman – Strengthening outward behaviour with firm inner conviction, so that good deeds are not merely formalities or rituals, but arise from deep awareness and understanding of faith.
3. Ihsan – The harmonisation of the mind, heart, and body in sincere devotion to Allah, so that every worldly activity has the value of worship and brings benefit (Al-Ghazali, 2005).

These stages, as found in research data, not only describe the levels of moral development but also represent the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in Islamic education.

Stages of the Tazkiyah Process

The *tazkiyah* process begins with the identification and elimination of non-Islamic influences embedded in the students. These influences can take the form of habits, values, or ways of thinking shaped by social and cultural interactions that are not in line with Islamic law (Azra, 2019). This stage serves as the initial step toward freeing oneself from bad habits while instilling good habits in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The next stage is the formation of behavioural balance, achieved through the strengthening of positive habits (*habits of virtue*) and the elimination of negative habits (*habits of vice*). This strategy is implemented under the direct guidance of the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which serve as the normative foundation.

Practically, the implementation of the *tazkiyah* stages in the field includes:

1. Islamic Stage – Organising outward behaviour in accordance with Islamic law, with an emphasis on religious discipline, social etiquette, and professional ethics.
2. The Iman Stage – Strengthening behaviour with firm inner conviction, so that positive behaviour is maintained even in the absence of external supervision.
3. The Ihsan Stage – Harmonising thoughts, feelings, and actions within the framework of sincerity, where every deed is performed solely to seek Allah's pleasure.

Activities of Tazkiyah

Purification of the Soul (Tazkiyah al-Nafs)

The process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* begins with awareness of the four main spiritual obstacles, namely: carnal desires, temptations of Satan, the deceitfulness of the world, and weakness of faith (QS. An-Nahl [16]: 106). In this study, the learning strategy is directed towards managing two primary emotions in Islam: *mahabah* (love) and *khauf* (fear). The balance between the two produces an internal drive to love goodness and avoid evil (Ibn Qayyim, 2003).

Purification of the Mind (Tazkiyah al-'Aql)

Purification of the mind encompasses two major dimensions:

1. Purification of beliefs from elements of superstition, myth, and unfounded beliefs (QS. Al-Isra [17]: 36).
2. Purification of the method of thinking through habit formation:
 - a) *Self-criticism* or personal evaluation (QS. An-Najm [53]: 32).
 - b) *Renewal (tajdid)* as a replacement for blind *imitation* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 170).
 - c) *Practical thinking* based on evidence (QS. Yunus [10]: 36).
 - d) *Prioritising collective thinking* for the benefit of the community (QS. Al-Anfal [8]: 25).

Physical Purification (Tazkiyah al-Jism)

This includes fulfilling physical needs in a balanced manner, maintaining health, and avoiding excessive behaviour. Islam views the maintenance of the body as part of worship, permitting the use of halal means to support health, such as exercise, consuming nutritious food, and marriage, provided they remain within the bounds of simplicity (QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 31).

Discussion

The findings of this study are in line with Al-Ghazali's (2005) view, which places *tazkiyah* as a fundamental means of achieving human perfection (*al-kamal al-insani*). The stages of Islam–Iman–Ihsan outlined earlier are correlated with modern educational theory that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Hamalik, 2019).

Purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) has a direct impact on the formation of *emotional intelligence*, as explained by Goleman (1995). Managing *mahabah* and *khauf* not only fosters *self-control* but also strengthens intrinsic motivation to do good.

Purification of the mind (*tazkiyah al-'aql*) strengthens critical and creative thinking abilities. This aligns with Ahmad Sanusi's (1932) vision of integrative education that combines religious knowledge and general knowledge, producing graduates who can adapt to societal changes without losing their Islamic identity.

Meanwhile, physical purification (*tazkiyah al-jism*) shows that physical health cannot be separated from spiritual health. In the perspective of Nation and Character Building (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020), physical health is a prerequisite for optimising intellectual and spiritual potential.

Thus, *tazkiyah* can be positioned as a holistic educational approach that addresses the three main domains of human development: moral (*akhlaiyyah*), intellectual (*'ilmiyyah*), and physical (*jasadiyyah*). The integration of this concept into the Islamic education curriculum has the potential to become an

effective strategy for strengthening national character in the face of globalisation challenges, thereby producing a generation that is faithful, knowledgeable, healthy, and of strong character.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *tazkiyah* is a comprehensive and strategic framework for Islamic education to shape a complete Muslim individual. The *tazkiyah* process, which includes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafts*), the purification of the mind (*tazkiyah al-'aql*), and the purification of the body (*tazkiyah al-jism*), takes place through three main stages, namely Islam, Iman, and Ihsan. These three stages integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in a holistic manner, thereby producing individuals who are virtuous, knowledgeable, healthy, and committed to the advancement of the nation. These findings affirm that *tazkiyah* can be integrated into the Islamic education curriculum as a strategy for strengthening *Nation and Character Building* that is relevant to global dynamics and challenges.

Theoretically, the research findings enrich the study of Islamic educational philosophy by emphasising the role of *tazkiyah* as the foundation for nation character formation. The three-stage model of *tazkiyah* (Islam–Iman–Ihsan) can serve as a conceptual framework for developing character education theories rooted in Islamic values. Practically, the findings of this study provide guidance for educators, policymakers, and managers of Islamic educational institutions in designing curricula and learning methods that integrate the purification of the soul, mind, and body. The implementation of this concept is expected to produce a generation with moral integrity, critical thinking skills, and good physical resilience.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the research was conducted using a literature review approach, so the results are highly dependent on the quality and completeness of the literature used. Second, the discussion focused on the thoughts of certain figures, such as Al-Ghazali and Ahmad Sanusi, so it did not cover the entire spectrum of Islamic educational scholars' views. Third, this study has not conducted empirical testing of the application of *tazkiyah* in educational institutions, so its effectiveness in the context of real learning cannot be measured directly.

Based on the results and limitations of this study, several recommendations can be made. For further research, it is recommended to conduct *field research* to test the application of *tazkiyah* at various levels of education and assess its impact on the character formation of students. The study can also be expanded by involving the thoughts of other Islamic scholars and education figures so that the *tazkiyah* model developed is more comprehensive. The use of *mixed methods* is also recommended to combine conceptual analysis and empirical data, so that the research results are more valid and applicable. For education practitioners, it is recommended to systematically integrate *tazkiyah* material into the Islamic education curriculum, covering value education, critical thinking skills training, and the cultivation of healthy behaviours. Additionally, teacher training modules should be developed that include strategies for implementing *tazkiyah* in the classroom and school environment, ensuring that the objectives of Islamic education in shaping the character of the nation are achieved optimally.

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