

## Transforming Character Education through Islamic Philosophy in the Modern Era

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### *Abstract*

This conceptual study examines how Islamic philosophy provides a transformative ethical foundation for moral education by synthesizing the key ideas of classical thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh. In response to the global moral crisis and the limitations of behaviorist approaches in education, the study critically explores four interrelated concepts *'aql* (reason), *tazkiyah* (moral purification), *adab* (refined conduct), and *hikmah* (wisdom) as philosophical frameworks for character formation. Using a qualitative conceptual research design, the study employs library research and thematic content analysis to reinterpret classical Islamic texts and contemporary academic literature. The findings reveal that reason serves as the foundation for ethical judgment and autonomy, moral purification strengthens internal discipline and sincerity, refined conduct represents the external expression of virtue in social life, and wisdom integrates intellectual, ethical, and spiritual maturity. Practically, these principles can guide educators in developing value-based curricula, reflective learning, and ethical role modeling in both Islamic and pluralistic educational contexts. Collectively, the study proposes an Islamic philosophical framework for rehumanizing moral education and bridging the gap between knowledge and virtue in contemporary learning environments.

**Keywords:** *Islamic Philosophy, Character Education, Tazkiyah, Adab, Hikmah*

### *Abstrak*

Kajian konseptual ini menelaah bagaimana filsafat Islam memberikan landasan etis yang transformatif bagi pendidikan moral dengan mensintesis gagasan utama dari para pemikir klasik seperti Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, dan Ibnu Miskawaih. Sebagai respons terhadap krisis moral global dan keterbatasan pendekatan behavioristik dalam pendidikan, kajian ini secara kritis mengeksplorasi empat konsep yang saling berkaitan *'aql* (akal), *tazkiyah* (pemurnian moral), *adab* (perilaku halus), dan *hikmah* (kebijaksanaan) sebagai kerangka filosofis bagi pembentukan karakter. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian konseptual kualitatif, penelitian ini memanfaatkan studi kepustakaan dan analisis konten tematik untuk menafsirkan kembali teks-teks klasik Islam dan literatur akademik kontemporer. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa akal menjadi dasar bagi penilaian dan otonomi etis, pemurnian moral

memperkuat disiplin dan ketulusan batin, adab merepresentasikan ekspresi sosial dari kebajikan, sedangkan hikmah mengintegrasikan kematangan intelektual, etika, dan spiritual. Secara praktis, prinsip-prinsip ini dapat diterapkan dalam pengembangan kurikulum berbasis nilai, pembelajaran reflektif, serta keteladanan etis di lembaga pendidikan Islam maupun pluralistik. Secara keseluruhan, kajian ini menawarkan kerangka filsafat Islam untuk memanusiakan kembali pendidikan moral dan menjembatani kesenjangan antara pengetahuan dan kebajikan dalam konteks pendidikan modern.

*Kata Kunci: Filsafat Islam, Pendidikan Karakter, Tazkiyah, Adab, Hikmah*

## INTRODUCTION

Recent decades, the erosion of moral values among youth has become a major global concern, drawing attention from educators, policymakers, and scholars who describe it as a “moral crisis” in education (Wongkar & Pangkey, 2024; Muttaqin et al., 2023). This crisis reveals a widening gap between intellectual competence and ethical consciousness, resulting in generations that are knowledgeable yet morally disoriented. In Indonesia, studies highlight similar issues, with digital culture, materialism, and individualism contributing to value confusion and diminished ethical reasoning (Lessy et al., 2024; Rusnali, 2020). Although character education is integrated into the national curriculum, its implementation remains largely superficial centered on behavior regulation and moral slogans without philosophical depth (Badriyah, 2025). The marginalization of reflective thought and philosophical inquiry has led to moral education that prioritizes conformity over understanding (Luthfiyah et al., 2020). Consequently, schools fail to cultivate morally grounded, critical individuals capable of addressing the ethical complexities of modern life (Hamdani, 2016).

To address this moral stagnation, education must return to deeper ethical foundations rooted in philosophical and spiritual traditions. Islamic philosophy provides such a framework by integrating reason (*‘aql*), moral purification (*tazkiyah*), refined conduct (*adab*), and wisdom (*hikmah*) into a holistic vision of human development. Classical thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh offered models that unite intellect and virtue, emphasizing that morality arises from the refinement of the soul rather than mechanical obedience (Nasr, 1995; Bakar, 2019). These scholars argued that knowledge should illuminate the heart and guide ethical action, making character formation both an intellectual and spiritual pursuit (Safitri et al., 2023). Tazkiyah fosters internal

discipline and sincerity, while adab embodies ethical awareness in social conduct (Zainuddin, 2021). By revisiting these principles, Islamic philosophy can restore moral education's transformative essence, offering an alternative to the fragmented, behaviorist approaches that dominate contemporary schooling (Hapsari & Rahman, 2022).

Existing studies on Islamic moral education, both in Indonesia and internationally, largely emphasize practical or institutional implementation without engaging with the deeper philosophical dimensions of morality. Fatimah and Siswanto (2024) found that Islamic elementary education often lacks reflective depth, while Maksudin (2023) and Annisa et al. (2024) observed that moral education remains descriptive, rarely grounded in classical ethics. Husaeni (2023) critiques the politicization of moral instruction that suppresses intellectual inquiry, and Hamdani (2016) warns that indoctrinative teaching undermines genuine ethical reflection. These works, while valuable, leave a persistent theoretical gap an absence of critical dialogue between Islamic virtue ethics, spiritual pedagogy, and modern educational philosophy. Comparative analyses between Islamic and secular models remain limited, and few studies explore how concepts such as *'aql*, *tazkiyah*, *adab*, and *hikmah* can be applied in contemporary classrooms. Bridging these gaps is essential for building a robust, value-centered approach to moral education rooted in Islamic intellectual heritage.

Reintegrating philosophical inquiry into moral education can revitalize ethical understanding and personal agency. Unlike behaviorist models emphasizing conformity, philosophical reflection nurtures critical moral reasoning and the internalization of values. Annas (2011) in *Virtue Ethics* asserts that moral character develops through conscious deliberation and habituation a principle mirrored in Islamic thought (Simbolon, 2024). Programs like Philosophy for Children (P4C) have demonstrated the benefits of philosophical dialogue for cultivating ethical judgment (Zulkifli & Hashim, 2020). However, such methods remain underutilized in Islamic education, which often prioritizes doctrine over discussion. Scholars such as Darussalam (2016) and Susanti et al. (2025) emphasize that integrating philosophical and reflective elements promotes moral resilience and emotional maturity. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2022) argue that philosophical grounding whether Islamic or civic is crucial for developing ethically responsible citizens. Thus, incorporating Islamic

philosophical ethics into pedagogy can shift moral education from rote instruction to authentic ethical embodiment.

Amidst the ongoing global moral crisis characterized by ethical relativism, digital disinformation, and identity fragmentation, Islamic philosophy offers enduring and cross-cultural insights into moral formation (Nasr, 2020). Its synthesis of reason, purification, and conduct provides an integrated ethical system that transcends religious boundaries (Alziyat & Ahmed, 2018; Qosim et al., 2022). Classical Islamic thinkers, including Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, and Miskawayh, combine rational inquiry with spirituality, offering a humanistic yet faith-rooted approach to character education (Muyassaroh et al., 2020; Sirait, 2023). Their models promote self-awareness, civic virtue, and intellectual balance qualities essential for intercultural harmony in globalized education (Madum & Daimah, 2024). Furthermore, comparative works such as Paul et al. (1994) and Espinosa and González (2023) affirm that classical ethics can sustain moral dialogue across traditions. Thus, Islamic philosophy not only enriches Islamic pedagogy but also contributes to universal ethical discourse relevant to pluralistic societies (Afifuddin & Ishak, 2023).

This conceptual study aims to explore the philosophical foundations and pedagogical implications of Islamic thought in shaping students' moral and ethical development. It seeks to synthesize the four central concepts 'aql, tazkiyah, adab, and hikmah into a theoretical model for rehumanizing moral education. Unlike empirical research, this study offers a conceptual synthesis through library research and thematic analysis to reinterpret classical ethics within modern contexts. Its novelty lies in connecting Islamic philosophical frameworks with contemporary pedagogy, proposing how these concepts can guide reflective learning, curriculum design, and character development. The study also identifies avenues for future empirical exploration, such as testing these principles in modern schools and integrating them into comparative models of moral education. Ultimately, this research contributes to renewing the philosophical foundation of Islamic education and advancing global discussions on ethical pedagogy that unites intellect, virtue, and spirituality.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a conceptual qualitative research design aimed at synthesizing and interpreting philosophical perspectives rather than collecting

empirical data. It emphasizes theoretical exploration to bridge classical Islamic ethical thought with contemporary character education discourse. The primary approach is *library research* (Creswell, 2014), involving critical examination of foundational Islamic philosophical texts particularly the works of Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh together with scholarly literature from Scopus and SINTA-indexed journals. Sources were purposively selected for their conceptual relevance to the four ethical pillars: '*aql* (reason), *tazkiyah* (moral purification), *adab* (refined conduct), and *hikmah* (wisdom). This design aligns with conceptual research principles where empirical observation is secondary, and theoretical abstraction is central (Snyder, 2019; Bowen, 2009). The method thus supports the study's primary objective to construct a coherent philosophical framework for rehumanizing moral education through Islamic thought.

The study integrates both classical and modern sources to ensure diversity and representativeness. Classical texts were chosen for their foundational role in articulating Islamic ethics, while contemporary materials were selected for their contribution to pedagogical and moral philosophy. To interpret and organize the data, the study applies *thematic content analysis* (Guest et al., 2012), a flexible approach suited to identifying recurring ethical categories, philosophical principles, and conceptual interrelations. Rather than simply summarizing ideas, this analysis links classical ethics with present-day educational challenges such as moral relativism and value disintegration. To enhance reliability and reduce interpretive bias, *peer debriefing*, *cross-source triangulation*, and *reflexive journaling* were employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These procedures ensure conceptual coherence and transparency, strengthening the study's methodological rigor while maintaining philosophical depth.

As a conceptual inquiry, this research does not include empirical testing or classroom-based validation, which limits its generalizability. Nonetheless, the synthesized framework provides a solid foundation for future empirical studies exploring how Islamic philosophical principles are implemented in educational practice. Subsequent research could involve qualitative interviews, case studies, or mixed-methods approaches with teachers and students to examine the resonance of '*aql*, *tazkiyah*, *adab*, and *hikmah* in real contexts. Including perspectives from diverse Islamic schools of thought and comparative analyses with secular moral education models would further enrich applicability. Despite its non-empirical scope, the current method offers a rigorous and reflective

foundation for theoretical innovation, contributing to the advancement of Islamic educational philosophy and providing a roadmap for integrating ethical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions into contemporary moral pedagogy.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This conceptual study draws upon classical Islamic philosophy to explore four interrelated pillars of moral formation '*aql* (reason), *tazkiyah* (moral purification), *adab* (refined conduct), and *hikmah* (wisdom). Rooted in the works of Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh, these concepts form a coherent ethical system that integrates intellect, spirituality, and behavior as the foundation of character development. Beyond metaphysical reflection, they offer pedagogically relevant insights that can be applied to curriculum design, classroom ethics, and reflective learning practices. For instance, '*aql* aligns with inquiry-based pedagogy and critical dialogue, while *tazkiyah* supports moral reflection and emotional regulation. Together, these values address the weaknesses of behaviorist and secular moral education by emphasizing inner transformation and ethical autonomy. This section analyzes each concept in turn, demonstrating how classical Islamic philosophy can inform teachers, learners, and policymakers in building morally grounded, culturally responsive, and spiritually conscious educational practices.

### **'Aql (Reason) as the Foundation of Ethical Judgment**

The analysis of classical Islamic texts reveals that '*aql* (reason) functions not only as a cognitive faculty but also as the central moral compass guiding the development of virtuous character. Within Islamic philosophical traditions, '*aql* enables individuals to discern right from wrong, regulate emotion, and align action with moral and spiritual ideals. This view stands in contrast to contemporary education models that often rely on behavioral reinforcement rather than ethical reflection. The Islamic conception of '*aql* places emphasis on inner reasoning and autonomy, nurturing the learner's ability to act ethically by choice, not coercion. This resonates with Simbolon's (2024) critique that modern moral education frequently cultivates passive moral conformity rather than active ethical agency. The works of Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh, therefore, provide valuable insight into how reason when educated and

disciplined becomes the foundation of both moral development and the broader purpose of education.

Al-Farabi (2001), in *The Attainment of Happiness*, presents a philosophical system where reason is the highest human faculty and the key to spiritual and moral perfection. "The perfection of the human soul is attained when it grasps the intelligibles through reason, and this is the true happiness" (p. 39). For Al-Farabi, happiness (*sa'ādah*) cannot be derived from material prosperity or social recognition, but from the rational pursuit of truth. Education, therefore, must facilitate the actualization of '*aql*' through inquiry, dialogue, and contemplation. This aligns with Muhammad et al. (2022), who emphasize metacognitive strategies and reflective thinking in fostering moral self-regulation. In practical terms, classroom practices such as Socratic questioning, problem-based learning, and ethical debate reflect Al-Farabi's principle that character grows from intellectual engagement. Moral understanding, in this sense, becomes an outcome of rational inquiry and civic participation, echoing both classical Islamic and modern humanist ideals.

Al-Ghazali (2011), in *The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya')*, broadens the notion of '*aql*' by integrating it with faith and moral introspection. He cautions that pure rationality without spiritual anchoring may produce arrogance and moral decay. "Knowledge without action is madness, and action without knowledge is futile," he warns, underscoring the harmony between cognition and devotion. '*Aql*' thus acts as an inner evaluator, enabling individuals to examine intention, manage desire, and foresee ethical consequences. This view complements Badriyah's (2025) argument that moral education should be personalized and reflective rather than governed by fixed codes or external sanctions. In classroom contexts, this perspective implies fostering spiritual self-awareness through reflective journaling, moral dialogue, and service learning. Al-Ghazali's framework unites intellect and spirituality, showing that education grounded in '*aql*' can nurture both moral reasoning and emotional intelligence skills essential for navigating moral uncertainty in modern digital cultures.

Ibn Miskawayh (1968), in *The Refinement of Character*, presents a moral-psychological model where '*aql*' governs the soul's appetitive (desire) and irascible (anger) forces. Virtue, he argues, arises when reason harmonizes these impulses, leading to balance and justice. Reason, therefore, is the soul's governor, cultivating courage, moderation, and wisdom. This anticipates contemporary

research on executive functioning in moral behavior, which links cognitive control to ethical judgment. Badriyah (2025) similarly emphasizes cognitive regulation as key to moral responsibility and self-restraint among students. In educational practice, this insight encourages teachers to design reflective decision-making exercises and collaborative ethical problem-solving. Through guided reasoning and moral reflection, learners internalize virtue rather than merely imitating it. Miskawayh's thought thus bridges philosophy and psychology, positioning *'aql* as a trainable faculty central to character education and emotional stability.

Contemporary scholars like Zainuddin (2021) argue that nurturing *'aql* means engaging students in ethical reasoning rather than simply exposing them to moral precepts. This developmental view sees reasoning as dynamic and educable—shaped through dialogue, mentoring, and experiential learning. Espinosa and González (2023) further note that effective moral education requires critical inquiry, dialogical engagement, and intellectual humility all principles embedded in Islamic philosophy. In comparison, secular humanist approaches, while emphasizing autonomy and critical thinking, often overlook the spiritual and communal aspects of moral reasoning that Islam integrates. Hence, Islamic philosophy complements and extends these frameworks by situating reason within a metaphysical and ethical vision of human flourishing. Practically, integrating *'aql* into curricula could involve debate-based instruction, interdisciplinary ethics modules, and reflective tutorials that promote ethical agency and accountability.

Nasr (2020) connects *'aql* to self-regulated learning (SRL), emphasizing metacognition, goal setting, and self-monitoring as parallel processes in academic and moral growth. In SRL, learners are active agents who plan, evaluate, and adjust their actions an educational embodiment of *'aql* in practice. Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Miskawayh all envisioned similar self-directive capacities as essential for ethical autonomy. Teachers, therefore, serve not as moral enforcers but as facilitators of rational-spiritual growth, guiding students through questioning, reflection, and moral dialogue. Integrating *'aql* into pedagogy encourages a move away from indoctrination toward critical participation. It reframes moral education as a synthesis of intellect and virtue a process that shapes the learner's will, empathy, and discernment. In an age of moral relativism, digital overload, and identity fragmentation, cultivating *'aql* equips

learners with the intellectual and spiritual resilience to navigate ethical complexity.

In conclusion, '*aql*' emerges from classical Islamic philosophy as both a rational faculty and a moral imperative. Al-Farabi envisions it as the means to true happiness and civic virtue; Al-Ghazali infuses it with spiritual conscience; and Ibn Miskawayh refines it as the regulator of human impulses. Collectively, they construct a holistic model of ethical education grounded in reason, reflection, and balance. When integrated with modern educational theories such as metacognition, SRL, and virtue ethics this vision offers a transformative framework for character education. It calls for curriculum models that empower learners to think ethically, act justly, and reflect deeply. Thus, '*aql*' provides not only an intellectual foundation for moral education but also a practical and culturally adaptable framework for cultivating ethical agency in 21st-century classrooms.

### ***Tazkiyah (Moral Purification) as Inner Ethical Discipline***

*Tazkiyah*, or purification of the soul, is central to Islamic moral philosophy and provides a transformative model of inner discipline. Unlike behaviorist approaches that stress conformity and visible behavior, *tazkiyah* begins with moral awareness, intention (*niyyah*), and control of desire (*nafs*). It nurtures sincerity and reflection as foundations for ethical action. In pluralistic, digital societies, students often experience moral confusion and identity disintegration. The Islamic view of *tazkiyah* responds by emphasizing introspection, emotional regulation, and moral autonomy. It aligns with reflective, identity-based education (Zulkifli & Hashim, 2020; Fatimah & Siswanto, 2024), which values self-understanding over external reward. Thus, *tazkiyah* re-centers moral education on the inner life training learners to act consciously and purposefully. This philosophical orientation provides educators with a framework for cultivating conscience and sincerity through pedagogy that unites reflection, emotion, and ethical reasoning.

Among classical scholars, Al-Ghazali gives the most comprehensive exposition of *tazkiyah*. In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, he writes, "He who knows his soul knows his Lord" (Al-Ghazali, 2011), affirming the unity of self-knowledge and divine awareness. He portrays *tazkiyah* as continuous purification through repentance, sincerity, and spiritual discipline. Educators, therefore, must act as

guides who lead learners on an inward moral journey. In practical terms, Al-Ghazali's pedagogy can be enacted through reflective journaling, guided meditation, and ethical dialogue helping students examine motives and refine intentions. This approach situates learning within a metaphysical framework aimed at nearness to God through integrity and awareness. Al-Ghazali's vision resonates with modern calls for value-based, reflective education (Fatimah & Siswanto, 2024) that moves beyond rule-following toward personal transformation and ethical mindfulness, establishing a bridge between classical spirituality and contemporary pedagogy.

Ibn Miskawayh expands *tazkiyah* into a rational-psychological process. In *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (1968), he emphasizes *ta'awwud* (habituation) and *i'tidal* (moderation) as the pathways to virtue, asserting that character matures when the soul repeatedly chooses the good. Moral excellence, he argues, arises from disciplined habit under the guidance of reason. This conception parallels modern character psychology, particularly theories of self-regulation and grit (Hapsari & Rahman, 2022). Educationally, it encourages structured mentoring, behavioral reflection logs, and experiential tasks promoting perseverance and restraint. Teachers function as mentors who cultivate patience and self-control through daily practice rather than coercion. Miskawayh's philosophy, therefore, complements psychological research that frames morality as learned behavior shaped by habit and rational intention. By merging classical ethics with contemporary developmental psychology, *tazkiyah* emerges as a dynamic process that refines both thought and conduct through continuous moral training.

Although Al-Farabi never uses the term *tazkiyah*, his conception of the virtuous soul and *al-madīnah al-fāḍilah* (the virtuous city) reflects its essence. In *The Attainment of Happiness* (2001), he describes ethical perfection as the harmony of the soul under rational governance. The virtuous person acts from understanding, not compulsion, aligning intellect with desire and will. Education, accordingly, must engage reasoning and moral purpose rather than rote compliance. This notion parallels contemporary discourses on learner autonomy and moral agency (Maksudin, 2023). Classroom applications include case-based moral discussions, ethical simulations, and inquiry projects connecting critical reasoning with ethical outcomes. Through such strategies, *tazkiyah* becomes a pedagogical tool promoting insight-driven morality. Al-Farabi's vision anticipates twenty-first-century pedagogy where reflective

judgment, dialogue, and civic responsibility replace obedience-based instruction in nurturing responsible, conscious citizens.

Modern Islamic education theorists reinterpret *tazkiyah* as reflective moral pedagogy suited for today's globalized classrooms. Hapsari and Rahman (2022) highlight how digital consumerism fragments learners' moral focus, making internal discipline essential. They recommend embedding *tazkiyah* through self-assessment journals, moral reflection cycles, and service-learning that connect ethical values with real experience. Muhammad et al. (2022) similarly argue that Islamic education must transcend ritual memorization by fostering sincerity, autonomy, and ethical awareness. In practice, teachers can design student-led ethical projects, peer reflection forums, or "character portfolios" documenting moral growth. These strategies position *tazkiyah* not merely as a religious concept but as a pedagogical philosophy that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual learning. It advances a vision of schooling where moral consciousness is developed through reflection, collaboration, and genuine self-evaluation.

Comparatively, *tazkiyah* diverges from secular moral education that often reduces ethics to civic skills or employability. While humanist education values autonomy, it lacks the transcendent orientation central to Islamic thought. *Tazkiyah* bridges this gap by joining reflection with spiritual accountability. It also parallels global frameworks like Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which link empathy and responsibility to action. Integrating *tazkiyah* into such models deepens the moral dimension ensuring that ethical education engages both the inner conscience and the wider community. In this sense, *tazkiyah* expands moral discourse beyond rationalism or pragmatism, uniting virtue, reason, and faith. Comparative application across disciplines can include interfaith ethics dialogues or reflective civic engagement projects, illustrating how inward purification informs outward social harmony in modern educational contexts.

Finally, *tazkiyah* possesses strong social and civic significance. Al-Ghazali and Al-Farabi link personal purification with justice and collective welfare. In *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali condemns hypocrisy and greed as roots of societal decay, urging moral reform at institutional levels. Al-Farabi envisions a virtuous city where ethical citizens collaborate for the common good. This vision resonates with civic ethics and sustainability education emphasizing social responsibility (Zulkifli & Hashim, 2020). Teachers thus become moral facilitators, embedding

*tazkiyah* into class culture through community service, environmental awareness, and cooperative learning. In conclusion, *tazkiyah* unites intellect, emotion, and spirit as a transformative framework for moral education. It replaces surface morality with sincerity and reflection, enabling learners to become ethically autonomous and socially engaged revitalizing character education for the challenges of the contemporary world.

### ***Adab (Refined Conduct) as the External Expression of Virtue***

The concept of *adab* in Islamic philosophy transcends mere politeness or social etiquette. It represents the refinement of outward behavior as the authentic reflection of inner moral cultivation. In classical Islamic ethics, *adab* harmonizes one's speech, action, and social relations with reason ('*aql*), discipline (*nafs*), and sincerity (*niyyah*). It embodies the external manifestation of a well-formed character (*khuluq*), expressing the unity between moral intention and social responsibility. While modern character education often equates virtue with civic manners or compliance, Islamic thought asserts that ethical action must arise from internal virtue. *Adab* therefore functions as a bridge between private morality and public ethics, linking personal discipline with communal harmony. In today's morally fragmented world, this concept remains pedagogically relevant, offering a holistic framework that integrates emotion, intellect, and social conduct within education turning ethical values into lived, relational practices rather than superficial decorum.

In *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, Ibn Miskawayh (1968) defines *adab* as the behavioral manifestation of virtues such as justice, humility, generosity, and patience. He explains that these traits must be anchored in the equilibrium of the soul's faculties reason moderating desire and anger. *Adab*, therefore, emerges naturally when moral balance is achieved, not from fear or external control. His theory anticipates modern debates on behaviorist education, where compliance often substitutes for moral understanding. As Paul et al. (1994) note, ethical reasoning cannot rely solely on cultural conformity but must be shaped through reflective judgment and universal moral discernment. Pedagogically, Miskawayh's view suggests that teachers should model balanced conduct and foster reflective classroom discussion to connect moral reasoning with daily behavior. Through this, *adab* becomes an educational process one that transforms ethical knowledge

into habitual action through rational guidance, emotional regulation, and social awareness.

Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (2011), elevates *adab* from personal virtue to an intellectual and spiritual discipline. He outlines distinct *adab* for students, teachers, seekers of knowledge, and worshippers each defined by humility, gratitude, respect, and sincerity. For him, *adab* is not performative; it reflects inner harmony between knowledge and devotion. He warns that "external obedience without internal sincerity is hypocrisy," emphasizing authenticity over appearance. This aligns with modern critiques of character education programs that prioritize outward behavior but neglect moral reasoning and emotional maturity (Sirait, 2023). Al-Ghazali's conception promotes reflective learning and moral intentionality where learners act with empathy and purpose. Educationally, this can be implemented through value-based learning, mentorship, and self-reflection sessions that unite intellect and virtue. Thus, *adab* becomes both a personal discipline and a pedagogical philosophy that transforms ethical theory into compassionate action.

Al-Farabi adds a civic and political dimension to *adab*. In *The Attainment of Happiness* (2001), he connects personal virtue to societal harmony, envisioning a community where every citizen's conduct is guided by reason and oriented toward the common good. Within the virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fādilah*), *adab* serves as the moral infrastructure of social justice and cooperation. Individuals contribute ethically not because of laws alone, but from conscious virtue. This anticipates modern civic education frameworks promoting democracy, peace, and shared values. Yet, Al-Farabi insists that civic virtue cannot endure without spiritual grounding a critique relevant to secular models of ethics. Practically, educators can incorporate his insights through project-based civic ethics, collaborative community service, and dialogue on moral responsibility. *Adab*, therefore, nurtures both personal refinement and civic consciousness, preparing learners to contribute ethically to a just and cohesive society.

Contemporary Islamic education research reinforces *adab* as foundational for meaningful learning. Qosim et al. (2022), analyzing *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, show that neglecting *adab* diminishes respect between teachers and students and leads to shallow learning outcomes. Similarly, Safitri et al. (2023) find that embedding Islamic values into English teaching enhances academic success while improving interpersonal ethics. These studies confirm Al-Ghazali's assertion that knowledge

without *adab* is incomplete and echo Ibn Miskawayh's belief that education must shape both intellect and disposition. In practice, schools can integrate *adab* through classroom norms emphasizing respect, collaborative learning, and gratitude toward teachers. Curriculum design may include lessons in dialogue ethics, reflective storytelling, and service-oriented projects. Such applications move beyond discipline management toward cultivating a moral community of learners. When *adab* underlies instruction, education becomes a process of ethical refinement that links learning outcomes with character formation.

Madum and Daimah (2024) argue that strengthening Indonesia's national character requires *adab*-centered Islamic education to address moral confusion among youth shaped by consumerism and digital excess. They contend that *adab* instills responsibility, empathy, and humility qualities essential for national integrity and intercultural harmony. Within diverse classrooms, *adab* fosters tolerance and mutual respect, functioning as a bridge across differences. Its universal principles justice, compassion, modesty, and accountability—align with Paul et al. (1994), who advocate traditional moral frameworks for intercultural understanding. Educationally, *adab* can be integrated into civic and multicultural education through collaborative dialogue, interfaith engagement, and reflective citizenship projects. In this light, *adab* operates not as a nostalgic relic but as a living ethical practice capable of uniting diverse learners under shared human values while grounding them in spiritual and cultural authenticity.

Islamic scholars and educators increasingly identify *adab* as the cornerstone of character education. Sirait (2023) observes that many Islamic schools in Indonesia have adopted *adab*-based curricula linking moral behavior with academic excellence. Yet, implementation often remains superficial or slogan-based due to administrative pressures. This echoes Annas (2011) and Nasr (2020), who stress that virtue must be consciously cultivated through philosophical reflection, not ritual repetition. When detached from its philosophical essence, *adab* risks devolving into formalism present in ceremony but absent in meaning. Therefore, revitalizing *adab* requires critical teacher training, reflective pedagogy, and integration into assessment frameworks. Educators must serve as moral exemplars who embody respect, patience, and sincerity. By doing so, schools transform from disciplinary institutions into

ethical communities spaces where intellect and character co-develop through lived moral practice.

Globally, *adab* challenges the instrumentalism dominating modern education, which prioritizes performance, efficiency, and competition over moral purpose. Amid rising individualism and moral relativism, *adab* provides a counterbalance rooted in humility, justice, and compassion. It educates the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—preparing learners to act ethically in both private and public life. In Islamic philosophy, *adab* represents the culmination of moral growth: the public expression of private virtue. Ibn Miskawayh views it as balance achieved through rational conditioning; Al-Ghazali sees it as sincerity manifested through knowledge and devotion; Al-Farabi envisions it as the civic virtue sustaining the virtuous city. Together, these perspectives form an educational paradigm that transcends rule compliance and fosters ethical embodiment. Within Indonesian Islamic education, *adab* is recognized not as nostalgia but as a tool for moral renewal cultivating learners who are intellectually capable, spiritually grounded, and ethically responsible.

### ***Hikmah (Wisdom) as the Culmination of Ethical and Intellectual Maturity***

In Islamic philosophy, *hikmah* often translated as wisdom signifies not mere intellectual knowledge but the ability to apply it ethically and purposefully. It integrates *'aql* (reason), *tazkiyah* (purification), and *adab* (refined conduct) into a unified moral character that reflects both intellect and virtue. For Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh, wisdom represents the highest stage of human development and the ultimate aim of education. While modern schooling often prioritizes technical competence and standardized performance, *hikmah* restores education's deeper purpose: forming individuals who think critically, act ethically, and live meaningfully. Reclaiming *hikmah* in education addresses the crisis of moral disintegration and the loss of philosophical depth in learning. It demands a pedagogical shift from information transfer toward moral understanding, reflection, and ethical application. Thus, *hikmah* embodies a synthesis of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality, offering a humanistic yet transcendent response to fragmented and instrumental models of education prevalent today.

Al-Farabi (2001) situates *hikmah* at the summit of human aspiration. In *The Attainment of Happiness*, he identifies the wise person as one who understands

reality, acts rationally, and serves the common good. The truly wise ruler harmonizes intellect and virtue, embodying justice and compassion. For Al-Farabi, wisdom is not theoretical abstraction but a civic virtue guiding the soul and society toward happiness (*sa'ādah*). Education, therefore, must cultivate both intellect and conscience through philosophical reasoning and moral discipline. This idea critiques the fragmentation of modern curricula that emphasize specialization while neglecting ethical synthesis (Bakar, 2019; Nasr, 2020). Practically, Al-Farabi's model supports inquiry-based and dialogical pedagogy teaching students to question, interpret, and apply ideas ethically. *Hikmah* thus unites personal enlightenment with social responsibility, positioning education as a transformative process that nurtures rational judgment, civic virtue, and spiritual awareness within a coherent moral order.

Al-Ghazali (2011) locates *hikmah* within a holistic spiritual framework where knowledge, faith, and ethics converge. For him, wisdom arises from knowledge applied with sincerity, humility, and divine awareness. It emerges when the heart is purified, the intellect disciplined, and behavior refined. In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, he lists wisdom among the fruits of inner reform, asserting that the wise act for God's sake rather than worldly reward. Al-Ghazali criticizes educational systems that separate ethics from epistemology, treating knowledge as neutral and utilitarian. Instead, he insists that true learning must serve moral and metaphysical purposes, an idea echoed by Fatimah and Siswanto (2024), who advocate reintegrating spirituality and critical reflection into Islamic curricula. Pedagogically, his concept translates into reflective learning, spiritual mentoring, and ethical dialogue methods that promote humility and moral insight. For Al-Ghazali, *hikmah* is both spiritual illumination and intellectual virtue cultivated through disciplined moral practice.

Ibn Miskawayh (1968) regards *hikmah* as one of the four cardinal virtues alongside courage, justice, and temperance and the culmination of moral excellence. Wisdom, for him, governs how knowledge is applied, ensuring actions reflect balance and prudence. It is achieved through the rational regulation of desire (*nafs*) and persistent moral training. His psychological orientation highlights the gradual development of discernment through habit and reflection, linking philosophy with character formation. This anticipates contemporary moral psychology, which values self-regulation and moral reasoning over rule obedience. Miskawayh's approach also contrasts with

utilitarian education focused on efficiency or quantifiable results. As Maksudin (2023) notes, aligning *akhlaq*, morality, and education remains essential to Islamic pedagogy. In the classroom, cultivating *hikmah* can involve ethical case studies, peer discussion, and problem-solving that connect theory to moral decision-making. Thus, *hikmah* emerges as a disciplined integration of intellect, virtue, and emotional maturity.

Modern education often neglects *hikmah*, emphasizing credentials and market-driven skills over moral depth. This instrumental view, while producing competent graduates, leaves many ethically disoriented. Espinosa and González (2023) warn that global virtue education has become shallow reduced to slogans rather than rooted in philosophical understanding. They call for wisdom-based models that harmonize cognitive, ethical, and emotional learning. Similarly, Husaeni (2023) critiques Indonesia's moral education policies for focusing on institutional discipline rather than personal ethical growth. In response, *hikmah* provides a framework for cultivating reflective judgment and moral purpose. Integrating it into education involves encouraging students to deliberate ethically, reflect spiritually, and act compassionately. Such practice restores the moral dimension of knowledge, helping learners connect intellectual pursuit with character formation. Through *hikmah*, education regains its role as a pathway to virtue and human flourishing rather than a tool for economic competition.

Revitalizing *hikmah* within Islamic education can profoundly reshape teaching and learning. Lessy et al. (2024) argue that moral degradation in schools results from a lack of ethical models and wisdom-oriented instruction. Educators must therefore embody *hikmah* teaching not only content but also discernment and empathy. The classical figure of the *hakim* (sage) exemplifies this integration, combining knowledge with moral clarity and compassion. Teacher education should cultivate reflective practitioners who guide students toward ethical independence. Annas (2011) defines wisdom as knowing how to apply moral truth contextually, a quality mirrored in the prophetic model of teaching. In practice, *hikmah*-based pedagogy includes mentorship, ethical dialogue, and value-centered reflection that transform both teacher and student. By nurturing wisdom as a lived virtue, educators become role models of integrity, shaping classrooms as communities of moral inquiry and shared human growth.

From a curricular perspective, *hikmah* requires interdisciplinary integration across subjects, not confinement to religious studies. Philosophical inquiry, ethics-infused discussions, and reflective practices can cultivate wisdom through engagement with real-world dilemmas. When science, humanities, and spirituality intersect, learners develop moral reasoning alongside intellectual competence. This approach aligns with Badriyah (2025), who calls for contextually integrated character education in *madrasah*. Embedding *hikmah* across disciplines encourages critical reflection on values, sustainability, and human responsibility. It challenges the reductionist mindset of standardized testing and nurtures inquiry-driven moral thinking. Practical strategies include ethical debates in language classes, bioethics in science, and civic reflection in social studies. Such design bridges abstract virtue with experiential learning. By situating *hikmah* as the intellectual and ethical core of the curriculum, education fosters wise graduates thinkers who combine analytical precision with spiritual insight and moral imagination.

Ultimately, *hikmah* signifies the culmination of ethical and intellectual maturity. It aspires not to produce skilled workers but reflective, compassionate citizens grounded in moral conviction. Through *hikmah*, education transforms from a mechanical pursuit of grades to a spiritual and ethical journey of self-perfection. Graduates shaped by this philosophy act with justice, empathy, and purpose, embodying the unity of thought and virtue. As Susanti et al. (2025) note, effective character formation transcends discipline management it entails moral cultivation through engagement with ethical principles. The works of Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh offer timeless guidance for this mission. When connected with modern pedagogical innovation and critiques of educational instrumentalism, *hikmah* re-emerges as a transformative goal. It redefines success in education not by material achievement but by the depth of wisdom, integrity, and humanity cultivated within the learner restoring education's sacred purpose as moral enlightenment.

## CONCLUSION

This conceptual study aimed to explore how Islamic philosophy particularly through the key ethical concepts of 'aql (reason), tazkiyah (moral purification), adab (refined conduct), and *hikmah* (wisdom) can inform and enrich contemporary character education. Drawing upon the classical works of

Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Miskawayh, the study sought to develop a theoretical framework for moral development grounded in Islamic metaphysics and virtue ethics. Unlike empirical studies that measure behavior or learning outcomes, this research provides a reflective synthesis of philosophical concepts, using library research and thematic content analysis as the primary methods. The aim was to fill a significant gap in the literature by reconnecting educational practice with spiritual, rational, and ethical traditions rooted in Islamic thought.

The findings indicate that each of the four concepts plays a distinct yet interrelated role in shaping moral character: reason is the foundation of ethical judgment; purification serves as the internal discipline that aligns intention with virtue; refined conduct becomes the external manifestation of internal balance; and wisdom represents the culmination of intellectual, ethical, and spiritual maturity. These insights challenge the dominant behaviorist and utilitarian approaches that prioritize conformity or outcomes over inner transformation. Philosophically informed education, as outlined in this study, has the potential to rehumanize character education, shifting its focus from prescriptive rule-following to ethical embodiment. Moreover, the integration of these principles offers a culturally and spiritually rooted alternative for Muslim-majority contexts, while also contributing to broader intercultural and global educational discourses on moral development.

While the study presents a rich philosophical synthesis, it has limitations. As a conceptual inquiry, it does not include empirical validation or classroom-based implementation data. Future research may build on this foundation by empirically examining how these concepts can be integrated into curricula, teacher training, or school ethos, particularly in Islamic educational institutions. Additionally, the theoretical model proposed here may be further expanded by incorporating voices from female scholars or alternative Islamic philosophical schools. Practically, educators and curriculum designers are encouraged to reflect on the moral foundations of their pedagogy and to explore ways of embedding *'aql*, *tazkiyah*, *adab*, and *hikmah* into teaching strategies, assessments, and student development programs. At the theoretical level, this study advocates for a re-engagement with Islamic philosophy as a living and dialogical resource for moral and educational renewal.

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