

## Al-Ghazali's Concept Of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* As A Method In Moral Education

**Muhammad Hafidz Khusnadin**

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Metro, Indonesia

[munawiral76@gmail.com](mailto:munawiral76@gmail.com)

**Muhammad Fahmi Shihab**

Al-Azhar University Cairo, Egypt

[muhhammadfahmishihab.99@gmail.com](mailto:muhhammadfahmishihab.99@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*This research aims to examine the implementation of Al-Ghazali's concept of tazkiyatun nafs as a method in moral education. The method in this research is descriptive qualitative method in which the author collects data by literature study (literature review) from various sources such as books, articles, and the internet related to the research theme. The results of this study indicate that the concept of tazkiyatun nafs Al-Ghazali can be implemented as moral education because it basically leads to the process of purifying the soul by eliminating various despicable traits, accustoming praiseworthy behavior and getting closer to Allah. With these stages, it can form the personality of students who are more noble. The conclusion of this research is that the concept of tazkiyatun nafs if implemented in the field of education can be a method of moral education can be done by strengthening the role of the teacher as a teacher of the concept of tazkiyatun nafs and a role model for students, integrating the concept of tazkiyatun nafs as part of the school education curriculum in various subjects, and adopting a learning model that is able to support students through the stages of takhali, tahalli, and tajali in order to form students who have intellectual, moral and spiritual intelligence. It is expected for teachers and schools to be able to support character and moral education programs among students based on the concept of tazkiyatun nafs Al-Ghazali.*

**Keywords:** Al-Ghazali, Morality, Moral Education, Tazkiyatun nafs

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi konsep tazkiyatun nafs Al-Ghazali sebagai metode dalam pendidikan akhlak. Adapun metode dalam penelitian ini yaitu metode kualitatif deskriptif dimana penulis mengumpulkan data dengan studi kepustakaan (literatur review) dari berbagai sumber seperti buku, artikel, dan internet yang berkenaan dengan tema penelitian. Hasil*

*penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa konsep tazkiyatun nafs Al-Ghazali dapat diimplementasikan sebagai pendidikan akhlak karena pada dasarnya mengarah pada proses penyucian jiwa dengan menghilangkan berbagai sifat tercela, membiasakan perilaku terpuji dan mendekatkan diri kepada Allah. Dengan tahapan tersebut, maka dapat terbentuk kepribadian peserta didik yang lebih berakhlak mulia. Adapun kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah konsep tazkiyatun nafs jika diimplematisasikan dalam bidang pendidikan dapat sebagai metode pendidikan akhlak dapat dilakukan dengan menguatkan peran guru sebagai pengajar konsep tazkiyatun nafs dan teladan bagi siswa, mengintegrasikan konsep tazkiyatun nafs sebagai bagian kurikulum pendidikan sekolah pada berbagai mata pelajaran, dan mengadopsi model pembelajaran yang mampu mendukung siswa melewati tahapan takhali, tahalli, dan tajali agar terbentuk peserta didik yang memiliki kecerdasan intelektual, moral dan spiritual. Diharapkan bagi guru maupun sekolah untuk dapat mendukung program pendidikan karakter dan akhlak di kalangan siswa dengan berpedoman pada konsep tazkiyatun nafs Al-Ghazali*

**Kata Kunci:** *Al-Ghazali, Moral, Pendidikan Akhlak, Tazkiyatun nafs*

## Introduction

Moral degradation or decline has become a deeply concerning phenomenon in today's society (Anindyawati, 2022). Moral degradation, or the decline in a person's ethical quality, is influenced by several factors, particularly environmental influences and the rapid advancement of time. In the field of education, many students engage in behaviors that indicate moral deviations, highlighting the alarming state of moral values among the younger generation (Hubby, 2022). Various reports indicate that juvenile delinquency manifests in different categories: common misconduct such as fighting, skipping school, wandering aimlessly, and running away from home; offenses and crimes such as theft and bullying; and more severe cases including drug abuse, promiscuity, and premarital sex. These forms of juvenile delinquency, frequently observed in society, suggest a downward trend in the moral character of the younger generation (Alfani & Mukhsin, 2024; Rinaldi et al., 2024).

Moral education among students is considered a primary effort to address the ongoing moral crisis (Fahuzi & Alfani, 2022). Moral education aims to nurture students into mature individuals with independence and responsibility toward themselves, others, and their surroundings. Instilling moral education from an early age through adulthood plays a crucial role in shaping character and personal identity, especially for younger generations (Khaidir et al., 2021). Amid rapid globalization and modernization, many young individuals are easily influenced by negative behaviors (Alfani et al., 2024). Islamic values-based moral education is highly relevant in the current educational context. This form of education can be applied in both formal and informal settings,

drawing from Islamic teachings based on the Quran and Hadith while remaining open to local wisdom and evolving societal norms (Rahman, 2024).

One significant concept within moral education rooted in Islamic tradition is *Tazkiyatun nafs*, which literally means "purification of the soul." This concept was first introduced by the great scholar Imam Al-Ghazali in his seminal work *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. Al-Ghazali emphasized that achieving true happiness and closeness to Allah (SWT) requires individuals to purify their hearts and souls, eliminating reprehensible traits and inclining toward goodness. Essentially, *Tazkiyatun nafs* refers to a lifelong process of refining one's character, ensuring mental well-being, and fostering a sense of fulfillment both in this world and the hereafter. This concept extends beyond heart purification; it also encompasses self-discipline and the pursuit of high moral and spiritual values (Harahap et al., 2023).

Based on this interpretation, implementing *Tazkiyatun nafs* in moral education can help individuals, especially the younger generation, develop virtuous character. The field of education plays a crucial role in addressing societal issues by addressing students' need for self-purification (*Tazkiyatun nafs*), which is reflected in their daily moral conduct (Prasetio, 2017). The educational response to the current moral crisis involves revisiting moral education frameworks, emphasizing the process and concept of *Tazkiyatun nafs*. Strengthening moral values through education is highly relevant in tackling moral crises within society (Alfani et al., 2024). This concept serves as a theoretical and practical foundation for educating the younger generation to cultivate noble character traits such as patience, honesty, compassion, and humility. This approach to moral education not only teaches moral rules but also fosters spiritual awareness, enabling individuals to internalize these values in their daily lives (Aslami, 2016).

Research on the implementation of Al-Ghazali's *Tazkiyatun nafs* concept in education remains limited. Previous studies have examined its application in Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic creed and morality) education at the elementary school level. These studies revealed that *Tazkiyatun nafs*, according to Al-Ghazali, comprises three stages: *Takhalli* (cleansing oneself from negative traits), *Tahalli* (adopting commendable virtues), and *Tajalli* (achieving spiritual enlightenment). However, existing studies primarily focus on its application in specific subjects rather than exploring its broader implementation as a method of moral education. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by further investigating the application of *Tazkiyatun nafs* as a method in moral education (Harahap et al., 2023). Then, research conducted by Hayu Aslami concluded that in general *tazkiyatun nafs* is the process of purifying the soul from sins, as well as the process of forming *akhlakul karimah* (noble behavior) in self and human life. The relevance of the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* to moral education is to form a noble Muslim personality. The purpose of this education is to achieve human perfection in terms of getting closer to Allah, and achieving happiness in this world and the hereafter. While the difference lies in moral education which is often only given in theory without any guidance and guidance in the implementation of the morals or worship taught. Therefore,

moral education today should begin with the purification of the soul first so that the worship performed can make an impression on the human heart and behavior. With the methods of takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli, it is hoped that it can help improve and provide solutions for current moral development (Aslami, 2016). Then, research conducted by Mutmainah. Her research concluded that Sufistic psychology studies human behavior spiritually based on the teachings of the Qur'an and al-Hadith with a Sufism approach. The muhasabah method, which includes six stages according to al-Ghazali, aims to encourage love for Allah and improve oneself. This method plays a role in spiritual education to achieve *Insanul Kamil* through self-cleansing and praiseworthy behavior, with the stages of takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli to produce positive changes in speech, attitude, and behavior (Mutmainah, 2021b).

Based on the background and problems that have been discussed, this article aims to examine Al-Ghazali's concept of *Tazkiyatun nafs* as a method in moral education. then this research will also try to deteriorate the effectiveness of the method. This article will explore how Al-Ghazali's concept is applied in moral education in educational institutions, in accordance with Islamic teachings. The findings of this research are expected to provide recommendations to various stakeholders in integrating moral education effectively. This contribution is very important in character building efforts and becomes a solution to overcome moral problems in the world of education.

## Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method (Moelong, 2010). It adopts a literature review approach to analyze the implementation of Al-Ghazali's *Tazkiyatun nafs* concept as a method in moral education (Sugiyono, 2022). This approach is chosen as it enables researchers to gather information from various existing sources, allowing for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the topic. The data sources for this research include academic journals, books, research articles, and other credible references that provide valuable insights and support the research findings. The initial step involves selecting relevant literature from academic journals that align with the study's focus. The collected data is then analyzed descriptively to identify key aspects related to the implementation of Al-Ghazali's *Tazkiyatun nafs* concept in moral education. Through this methodology, the study aims to provide an in-depth exploration of the implementation of *Tazkiyatun nafs* as a method in moral education and offer valuable insights for educational practitioners and policymakers (Aslami, 2016).

## Result and Discussion

### *Tazkiyatun nafs* According to Imam Al-Ghazali

In principle, *tazkiyatun nafs*, or purification of the soul, is an essential aspect of human life. Imam Al-Ghazali, in his monumental work *Ihya Ulumuddin*, explains that the process of purifying the soul from reprehensible traits involves adorning it with various commendable qualities. This process includes aspects such as controlling desires,

developing noble character, and enhancing spiritual awareness (Hasyim, 2024). According to Al-Ghazali, there are six fundamental concepts in *tazkiyatun nafs* that must be applied: (1) maintaining the purity of the soul, (2) seeking knowledge, (3) avoiding arrogance, (4) respecting others, (5) preserving knowledge, and (6) possessing noble character (Yosa, 2023).

Al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* is a process of purifying the soul aimed at achieving noble character, which has been eroded by the changing times and modern life. According to him, this purification consists of three stages: *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*. These three stages form a holistic process of soul purification and moral formation (Badri et al., 2024). In the context of moral education, understanding and implementing these three stages can help individuals develop not only intellectual intelligence but also moral and spiritual intelligence. These stages contribute to building good character, rooted in noble values according to Islamic teachings. Below is an explanation of each stage (M Zakaria, 2023).

*Takhalli* (Self-Purification Stage). *Takhalli* is the first stage, focusing on self-purification from reprehensible traits and immoral behaviors. At this stage, individuals are expected to avoid negative attitudes such as envy, jealousy, arrogance, greed, and others. *Takhalli* is crucial because, before one can attain goodness and perfection within oneself, they must first cleanse themselves of the various evils that taint the heart. This process can be carried out through self-discipline, such as fasting, guarding one's speech, and avoiding sinful behaviors that could defile the soul (Hasan, 2014). According to Al-Ghazali (1996), *takhalli* is a process of purifying oneself from despicable actions, allowing individuals to rid themselves of various spiritual diseases and heart-related sins (Mutmainah, 2021a).

*Tahalli* (Self-Adornment Stage). Once individuals have succeeded in ridding themselves of negative traits through *takhalli*, the next stage is *tahalli*, or self-adornment with noble morals and positive qualities. In this stage, a person must cultivate positive attributes and behaviors such as honesty, patience, humility, compassion, and peace-loving attitudes (Husnaini, 2016). This self-adornment process aims to replace discarded vices with virtues that serve as a foundation for interacting with others and navigating daily life. In this second stage, individuals develop commendable and righteous behaviors, ultimately forming a noble character (Mutmainah, 2021a).

*Tajalli* (Divine Illumination Stage). The final stage of *tazkiyatun nafs* is *tajalli*, which involves unveiling divine light or attaining spiritual enlightenment from Allah. At this stage, individuals who have undergone self-purification and adorned themselves with virtuous morals can experience a deep understanding and spiritual experience. Their hearts become open to receiving divine guidance and revelations, making it easier for them to draw closer to Allah. *Tajalli* can be practiced through deep trust in God (tawakkul), sincerity in performing good deeds, and experiencing inner peace when facing life's trials. This stage brings individuals closer to Allah SWT, removing the veil

of human nature (*basyariyyah*) and unveiling the divine light (*ghayb ilahi*) (Rohman et al., 2022).

### **Application of *Tazkiyatun nafs* in Moral Education**

The integration of *tazkiyatun nafs* into moral education is highly relevant in the educational context. Various studies have supported the idea that the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* can help students develop noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*), possess a strong conscience, and return to their natural disposition (*fitrah*) (Wandira et al., 2023). Research also reveals that implementing Al-Ghazali's *tazkiyatun nafs* concept is an effective method for moral education in academic settings. This concept aligns with the educational goal of shaping students' ethical behavior (Islami et al., 2023).

The implementation of *tazkiyatun nafs* as a moral education method is a response from the educational sector to the moral crisis in society. Studies indicate that one of the pressing societal issues requiring educational intervention is the need for *tazkiyatun nafs* in students, which is reflected in daily virtuous behavior. The educational sector must redefine moral education by prioritizing the principles of *tazkiyatun nafs*. Strengthening moral values through relevant educational processes is essential to address the ongoing moral crisis in society. There is an undeniable and concerning moral decline among the younger generation, as evidenced by increasing violence among children and teenagers, engagement in premarital sexual relations, pornography consumption, peer-related crimes, theft, drug abuse, and vandalism—issues that persist unresolved in society (Harahap et al., 2023).

These crises highlight the urgent need for moral education that strengthens the ethics and character of today's youth. A holistic approach to moral and character education in schools aims to develop well-rounded students who possess not only knowledge and skills but also strong moral values and the ability to integrate these values into their daily lives (Dzikrillah Alfani & Duwi Putri, 2024). In this context, the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs*, as taught by Al-Ghazali—a prominent Muslim scholar and philosopher—provides a relevant framework for holistic character development. *Tazkiyatun nafs* emphasizes the importance of self-development in spiritual, moral, and ethical aspects while maintaining a balance between emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. The values embedded in *tazkiyatun nafs*, such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and social responsibility, serve as essential reinforcements for individual morality and ethics (Hasyim, 2024).

The application of Al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* in schools is implemented as a learning approach that emphasizes religious knowledge. This concept is applied to bring students closer to Allah SWT as a method of moral education. The moral education strategies include teaching Islamic creed and ethics based on the principle of soul purification. Research has demonstrated that these strategies involve avoiding negative behaviors, fostering commendable conduct, and promoting an understanding of Allah SWT (M Zakaria, 2023). These strategies contribute to shaping students into individuals with strong religious understanding, high morality, and

alignment with Al-Ghazali's ethical teachings. Additionally, moral education based on *tazkiyatun nafs* can be implemented through methods such as mujahadah (spiritual struggle), riyadhah (spiritual training), habitual practice, exemplary teaching, storytelling, and providing advice. The implementation of moral education can be supported by religious practices such as prayer, monotheism, charity, fasting, contemplation, Quranic recitation, remembering death, repentance, self-reflection (muhasabah), and spiritual asceticism (zuhd) (Khusnadi et al., 2022).

The implementation of the *tazkiyatun nafs* (soul purification) concept as moral education is based on its relevance to character education, which is emphasized in the school curriculum. Through this concept, students with noble character and broad insight can be cultivated. In this regard, the implementation of *tazkiyatun nafs* as moral education in educational institutions can be carried out through several models of moral education development as follows:

#### 1. Strengthening the Role of Teachers in Teaching the Concept of *Tazkiyatun nafs*

Teachers play a crucial role in supporting the internalization of the soul purification concept among students, aiming to shape noble character in their daily lives (Mukit et al., 2022). To achieve this, educators must have a mindset capable of fostering spiritual values through various forms of worship, cultivating a humane character, and purifying the soul from animalistic and satanic instincts. Thus, the *tazkiyatun nafs* concept in character education requires teachers who can guide students to develop positive behavioral values, leading to improvements in both personal and social life (Sayfudin, 2018). Teachers are expected to possess strong pedagogical and professional competencies to integrate *tazkiyatun nafs* values into the learning process. Additionally, for effective teaching, teachers must also serve as role models by applying *tazkiyatun nafs* values in their daily lives. Teachers with noble character—who demonstrate honesty, integrity, compassion, and responsibility—can serve as exemplary figures for students (Hasanah, 2023).

#### 2. Integrating *Tazkiyatun nafs* Values into the School Curriculum

In implementing *tazkiyatun nafs* as moral education, schools that prioritize character education must integrate *tazkiyatun nafs* values across all subjects, not only within Islamic Religious Education. The school curriculum should emphasize various values relevant to *tazkiyatun nafs*, such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility, as part of instructional materials, assignments, and assessments for students (Taja et al., 2020).

#### 3. Developing Innovative Learning Methods to Foster Noble Character in Line with *Tazkiyatun nafs*

Schools can implement the *tazkiyatun nafs* concept and its associated values through learning methods that are student-centered, participatory, and contextual. Students should be given opportunities to apply *tazkiyatun nafs* values in real-life situations, using active learning approaches such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and community-based learning (Istianah, n.d.). These methods can be designed to enable students to internalize *tazkiyatun nafs* values effectively, following the

stages of *takhalli* (self-purification), *tahalli* (adornment with virtues), and *tajalli* (spiritual enlightenment). In school learning, particularly in Islamic religious education that emphasizes moral development, students should be guided to cleanse themselves of negative behaviors, cultivate virtuous habits, and strive for a closer relationship with Allah. By employing a holistic learning approach that aims not only for academic achievement but also for moral development, students can grow into individuals who are intellectually capable and morally upright (Fithriyyah, 2023).

The success of education based on the *tazkiyatun nafs* concept in shaping noble character can be identified through several indicators: (1) Change in Behavior – This is reflected in students' changes in attitude and inner peace. Students demonstrate self-control against worldly luxuries, do not easily succumb to emotions, and exhibit calmness during the learning process; (2) Increased Devotion in Worship – Students become more obedient in worship, with improvements in both the quality and quantity of their religious practices (Mukhsin & Alfani, 2024). They perform obligatory prayers punctually and strive to maintain both obligatory and recommended religious practices; (3) Emergence of Noble Traits – Students develop qualities such as honesty in speech, politeness, humility (*zuhud*), modesty (*tawadhu*), contentment (*qana'ah*), and other commendable traits. This success is achievable for all students due to several influencing factors, including their understanding of theoretical concepts, experience in practicing religious rituals, and most importantly, the purity of their hearts (Alwi, 2022).

#### **The Effectiveness of Moral Education Based on *Tazkiyatun nafs***

Moral education based on the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* is known to be able to effectively become a teaching method in developing commendable morals for students. There are various points that explain the effectiveness of applying the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* as moral education. This concept is able to equip the younger generation to understand commendable moral values and fortify themselves from negative actions that deviate from Islamic teachings (Islami et al., 2023). In (Harahap et al., 2023) states that *tazkiyatun nafs* becomes an effort in the formation of a perfect person which is realized through obedience and good deeds where there is a vision and mission of the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* in balancing the totality of human life by being born from a pure personality. This is very suitable for the vision and mission of Islamic educational institutions in general so that *tazkiyatun nafs*-based moral education becomes a relevant educational method to strengthen positive morals and morals among students. Teachers or educators can change individual characters by cleansing the heart and soul and instilling noble values such as patience, honesty, justice, humility, Amanah, and others. This effort is able to form individuals who have noble morals .

The effectiveness of *tazkiyatun nafs*-based moral education is indicated by various significant results from the application of the *tazkiyatun nafs* method in educational institutions. As in the Daarul Mukhtarin Islamic Boarding School, learning with the *tazkiyatun nafs* method in the form of memorizing the Koran, dhikr, and reading the book is known to play a significant role in improving the morals of students and

contributing positively to the character building of students (Istianah, n.d.). In (Syifa & Ridwan, 2024), it is revealed that the challenge in the digital era is the change in social and cultural values, which requires an effective way to build Islamic character and instill positive values among the younger generation. One of these effective ways can be by applying the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* as a concept in moral education and student character to maintain environmental changes that are difficult to predict and full of challenges. Islamic character education based on Al-Ghazali's thoughts is known to be very relevant in the context of modern Islamic education which is able to become a moral fortress for the younger generation by encouraging the human soul to actively do good. This effort can be emphasized with the habituation model as an adaptive method that is proven to provide positive results for the development of students' noble character in the digital era. These findings show that Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* is effective in supporting character and morals among students in the scope of education (Fithriyyah, 2023).

Moral education with the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* is the answer in improving the phenomenon of moral decline that occurs in the current era. In this era of disruption, character education that is applied in supporting the formation of character and morals of students must be based on relevant guidelines and concepts. States that one of the holistic character education models that answers the challenges of the times, the needs of students, and is known to be effective to implement is tazkiyatun nafs-based education. This concept becomes a holistic approach because *tazkiyatun nafs*-based moral education is not only focused on the intellectual aspects of students but also encourages the development of emotional and spiritual aspects. Through a holistic approach as part of learning, it has the potential to encourage self-awareness, improve the quality of social interactions, and strengthen spiritual relationships with God. Thus, this moral education can realize individuals with a balance of the world and the hereafter with integrity (Hasyim, 2024) .

Moral education really needs a *tazkiyatun nafs* process because this concept is able to open the readiness of the hearts of students to accept the various benefits and virtues of the knowledge that will be learned while at school. It is also able to instill praiseworthy traits in moral education that will take root in the hearts of students so that in their behavior and actions they can always be positive (Islami et al., 2023). For this reason, the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* is an effective guideline in character education efforts for students. In addition to contributing to the improvement of human morals, *tazkiyatun nafs*-based moral education is also known to contribute to overcoming various social problems and morality that are so complex. By equipping the younger generation through this concept of purification of the soul, it is hoped that the current generation can live life meaningfully and with integrity so that they can contribute positively to the life of the nation and state (M Zakaria, 2023; NULHAKIM, 2019).

## conclusion

The concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* from Al-Ghazali's perspective is a soul purification approach that is considered relevant for application as a moral education method in the educational context. According to Al-Ghazali, various values are taught in his monumental work *Ihya Ulumuddin*, including self-control over desires, the development of noble character, and the enhancement of spiritual awareness. The implementation of *tazkiyatun nafs* can be integrated into moral education in schools through several approaches, such as: strengthening the role of teachers in teaching the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* and serving as role models; integrating *tazkiyatun nafs* into the school curriculum across various subjects; and adopting Teaching methods that facilitate the stages of *takhalli* (purification from bad traits), *tahalli* (adornment with noble values), and *tajalli* (spiritual enlightenment) as part of the learning process. By implementing these strategies, the younger generation will be able to understand and internalize noble moral values, protecting themselves from negative behaviors that deviate from Islamic teachings. This approach is highly effective in moral education, helping to address the issue of moral degradation by shaping a generation with strong moral integrity and noble character. Thus, it is expected that schools will intensify the implementation of *tazkiyatun nafs* as a moral education method and an integral part of character education within the school system.

This study has a scope limitation focusing only on the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* as proposed by Al-Ghazali and aims to assess the application of this concept in the context of moral education in schools. Additionally, this research concentrates solely on one of Al-Ghazali's conceptual ideas. As a result, the findings may not fully represent all the ethical or moral concepts relevant to moral education in schools. Therefore, future research could consider exploring other moral concepts in Al-Ghazali's thought or the ideas of other figures within the Islamic tradition. Moreover, this study is also limited to the implementation of the *tazkiyatun nafs* concept within the school environment, which may have specific social and cultural contexts. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to include various types of schools with different backgrounds, such as between private and public schools or schools with differing curricula.

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