



Tarbiyah Qalbiyah and the Reconstruction of Moral Education: The Perspective of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah

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Abstract

This study reconstructs the concept of *tarbiyah qalbiyah* in the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah and positions it as a foundational framework for contemporary character education. Employing a qualitative library-based approach, the research applies content analysis to classical Islamic texts alongside recent scholarship in moral and character education. The study argues that prevailing approaches to character education remain overly centered on cognitive transmission, thereby neglecting the inner dimension of moral formation. It demonstrates that moral failure among students is less a deficit of knowledge than a failure of internalization. Within this framework, the heart (*qalb*) is conceptualized as the core locus of moral consciousness, integrating cognition, emotion, and spiritual orientation into a unified structure of ethical agency. Building on this analysis, the study proposes the Integrative Model of Tarbiyah Qalbiyah (MITQ), operationalizing moral formation through purification (*tazkiyah*), internalization (*tarbiyah*), and habituation (*ta'wid*), mediated by reflective pedagogy and ethical role modeling. Theoretically, this study contributes to bridging classical Islamic moral psychology with contemporary educational theory by introducing *qalb* as an analytical category in moral education. Practically, it advances a shift from instructional to transformational paradigms, emphasizing sustained inner change as the basis of character development.

Kata Kunci: *tarbiyah qalbiyah*; pendidikan karakter; pendidikan Islam; psikologi moral; pembentukan karakter

Abstract

Penelitian ini merekonstruksi konsep *tarbiyah qalbiyah* dalam pemikiran Ibnu Qayyim al-Jawziyyah dan memosisikannya sebagai fondasi konseptual bagi pendidikan karakter kontemporer. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, penelitian ini menerapkan metode *content analysis* terhadap karya-karya klasik Islam serta literatur mutakhir dalam bidang pendidikan moral. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa pendekatan pendidikan karakter yang dominan saat ini masih terlalu berorientasi pada transmisi kognitif, sehingga mengabaikan dimensi batin dalam pembentukan moral. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa krisis moral peserta didik lebih merupakan kegagalan internalisasi nilai daripada sekadar kekurangan pengetahuan. Dalam kerangka ini, hati (*qalb*) dipahami sebagai pusat kesadaran moral yang mengintegrasikan aspek kognitif, emosional, dan spiritual dalam satu struktur kepribadian yang utuh. Berdasarkan analisis tersebut, penelitian ini mengembangkan Model Integratif Tarbiyah Qalbiyah (MITQ) yang mengoperasionalkan proses pembentukan moral melalui tahapan *tazkiyah* (penyucian), *tarbiyah* (internalisasi), dan *ta'wid* (pembiasaan), yang dimediasi oleh pedagogi reflektif dan keteladanan moral. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi menjembatani psikologi moral Islam klasik dengan teori pendidikan modern melalui pengenalan konsep *qalb* sebagai kategori analitik dalam pendidikan moral. Secara praktis, penelitian ini mendorong pergeseran paradigma dari pendekatan instruksional menuju transformasional yang menekankan perubahan batin sebagai fondasi utama pembentukan karakter.

Keywords: *tarbiyah qalbiyah*; character education; Islamic education; moral psychology; character formation

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Introduction

The moral crisis among students is a phenomenal issue that is not merely local in nature, but has also become a global concern in educational studies. Various studies indicate that improvements in academic achievement do not always correlate directly with the quality of students' moral behaviour. This situation suggests an imbalance between the cognitive focus in education and the need for holistic character development.¹

In practice, the modern educational paradigm remains dominated by an approach that places knowledge as the primary instrument of moral formation. This approach is based on the assumption that an understanding of values will automatically result in appropriate behaviour. However, various studies show that morality is not shaped solely by cognitive aspects, but also involves affective dimensions and a moral identity that is internalised within the individual.²

Consequently, an approach that is solely oriented towards the transfer of knowledge tends to be insufficient for bringing about sustainable behavioural change.

In this context, the ideas of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah offer a perspective that places the heart (*qalb*) at the centre of human consciousness. He emphasizes that the heart is the ruler of all the body's parts, and that the body's parts submit to its guidance.³ Furthermore, he states that within the human being there is an inner void that cannot be filled except through spiritual orientation towards God.⁴ This statement indicates that moral problems at the behavioural level are manifestations of a deeper internal condition.

This perspective has strong relevance to recent developments in moral education. The virtue ethics approach emphasises that character formation is not merely about compliance with norms, but also about the development of stable internal dispositions.⁵ Research in moral psychology also indicates that moral development involves a complex interplay between cognition, emotion, and social experience that shapes an individual's moral identity.⁶ This suggests that a heart-centred approach aligns with modern educational theory, whilst offering a deeper dimension through the integration of spiritual aspects.

However, most contemporary approaches to character education still tend to treat the spiritual dimension as a supplementary aspect rather than the core of the character-building process.⁷ On the other hand, studies of Ibn Qayyim's thought remain predominantly descriptive and have not yet been developed into an operational educational model. This situation highlights the gap between the wealth of concepts within the Islamic scholarly tradition and the need for an applicable pedagogical framework.

This research occupies a position between two main currents: classical Islamic moral psychology, which is rich in substance but has not yet been operationalised, and modern character education theory,

¹ Keith Johnson et al., "A Meta-Analysis of the What Works in Character Education Research," *Journal of Character Education* 18, no. 1 (2022): 87–112.

² Meng Wang et al., "An Integrative Head–Heart–Hands Model of Moral Education: Evidence from Chinese Higher Education," *Frontiers in Psychology* 17 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1762483>.

³ Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyah, *Ighatsat al-Lahfan min Masayid asy-Syaitan* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2008), 45.

⁴ Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyah, *Madarij as-Salikin bayna Manazil Iyyaka Na'budu wa Iyyaka Nasta'in* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 2003), 1:67.

⁵ Kristján Kristjánsson, *Virtuous Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198809678.001.0001>.

⁶ T Malti, Emma Galarneau, and Joanna Peplak, "Moral Development in Adolescence," *Journal of Research on Adolescence: The Official Journal of the Society for Research on Adolescence* 31 4 (2021): 1097–1113, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12639>.

⁷ Hyemin Han et al., "Exploring the Association between Character Strengths and Moral Functioning," *Ethics and Behavior* 33, no. 4 (2023): 286–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2022.2066787>.

which is empirical but often neglects the spiritual dimension. By drawing upon Iskandar Nazari within the framework of Ruhiology,⁸ Al-Ghazali in *Ihya Ulumuddin*, and the contributions of Abdullah Gymnastiar and Ari Ginanjar, this research strengthens the interdisciplinary foundation of the model developed.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyse the concept of *tarbiyah qalbiyah* in the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, (2) integrate it with contemporary character education theory, and (3) develop a conceptual model as an operational framework for moral education.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach based on library research, using content analysis to reconstruct the concept of *tarbiyah qalbiyah* in the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah and to integrate it into a contemporary character education framework. This approach was chosen because the research is not oriented to statistical hypothesis testing, but rather to the development of an analytical and interpretative conceptual framework.

Primary data sources were drawn from the major works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, particularly *Madarij as-Salikin* and *Ighatsat al-Lahfan*, as both contain in-depth discussions on the concept of the heart (*qalb*), the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah*), and the moral dynamics of humanity. The references are supplemented by Al-Ghazali (*Ihya Ulumuddin*), Iskandar Nazari (*Ruhiologi*), and the works of Abdullah Gymnastiar and Ari Ginanjar as representations of spiritual-based character education discourse within the Indonesian context.

Secondary data is drawn from up-to-date academic literature, including journals on character education, moral psychology literature, studies on virtue ethics, and research (2018–2024) related to moral education, which serves to integrate classical concepts with modern theoretical developments.

Data analysis was conducted in four stages: (1) selection and screening of relevant concepts; (2) classification of concepts into main themes, namely the heart (*qalb*), morality, and education; (3) interpretation of the meaning of concepts within the context of Ibn Qayyim's thought, taking into account his theological and philosophical background; and (4) synthesis of the conceptual framework into the Integrative Model of *Tarbiyah Qalbiyah* (MITQ). Data validation utilised the technique of theoretical triangulation, namely comparing concepts from classical sources with contemporary moral education theories.

Result and Discussion

The Essence of *Tarbiyah Qalbiyah* in the Thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah

The concept of *tarbiyah qalbiyah* in Ibn Qayyim's thought places the heart (*qalb*) at the centre of human moral consciousness. The heart is not understood merely as a biological organ, but as a spiritual-psychological entity that serves as the source of human intentions, orientation and behaviour. Within this framework, the quality of external behaviour is largely determined by the internal condition of the heart.

Ibn Qayyim classifies the heart into three main categories: *qalb salim* (the healthy heart), *qalb maridh* (the sick heart), and *qalb mayyit* (the dead heart).⁹ This classification indicates that human morality is not static, but rather undergoes a process of change that depends on one's inner state. This view aligns with Al-Ghazali's ideas in *Ihya Ulumuddin* regarding the diseases of the heart and the urgency of *tazkiyatun nafs* as a prerequisite for authentic moral development.¹⁰

⁸ Iskandar Iskandar, "Pendidikan Ruhani Berbasis Kecerdasan Ruhiologi," *El-Ghiroh* 20, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.37092/el-ghiroh.v20i01.366>.

⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighatsat Al-Lahfan Min Masayid Asy-Syaitan* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2008).

¹⁰ Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulumuddin*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2011).

Moreover, Ibn Qayyim emphasises that kindness of heart depends on knowledge of and love for God. This statement indicates that moral development cannot be separated from the spiritual dimension. Moral education that neglects the inner dimension therefore risks producing only superficial changes. This dimension is reinforced by Iskandar Nazari's study within the framework of Ruhiology, which states that the spiritual aspect of human beings is a fundamental dimension that determines psychological and moral balance.¹¹ From this perspective, educational interventions that do not address the spiritual dimension tend to be unable to bring about fundamental and sustainable changes in character.

Integration with Contemporary Moral Education Theory

The concept of *tarbiyah qalbiyah* is strongly relevant to modern theories of moral education. The virtue ethics approach emphasises that character is formed through the development of stable internal dispositions, rather than mere compliance with external rules.¹² In this regard, the concept of *qalb salim* as the ideal state of the heart corresponds to the idea of virtue as a deeply ingrained character quality. In addition, research in moral psychology indicates that moral development involves an interaction between cognition, emotion, and social experience.¹³ In this context, the heart (*qalb*) can be understood as the centre of integration for these three dimensions—an idea that transcends the cognitive-affective dichotomy in moral education.

Moreover, the concept of moral identity explains that moral behaviour emerges when values have become part of an individual's self-identity.¹⁴ This aligns with the concept of *tarbiyah qalbiyah*, which emphasises the internalisation of values at a spiritual level. In the Indonesian context, the contributions of Abdullah Gymnastiar and Ari Ginanjar to the development of spiritually-based character education provide practical evidence that an approach integrating the dimension of the heart resonates strongly within the local socio-cultural context.¹⁵

Thus, the integration of the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah and modern theory is not merely complementary; it also broadens the scope of moral education analysis by incorporating the spiritual dimension as a key element that has hitherto been absent from mainstream character education discourse.

The Integrative Model of *Tarbiyah Qalbiyah* (MITQ)

Based on the conceptual synthesis carried out, this study has developed the Integrative Model of *Tarbiyah Qalbiyah* (MITQ) as an operational framework for heart-based moral education. This model is built upon three main components that are organically interrelated.

Input: Learners' Initial Conditions

The input component refers to the initial conditions of learners experiencing a moral crisis, such as low value awareness and weak self-control. These conditions indicate that a stable moral identity has

¹¹ Iskandar, "Pendidikan Ruhani Berbasis Kecerdasan Ruhiologi."

¹² Kristjánsson, *Virtuous Emotions*.

¹³ Malti, Galarneau, and Peplak, "Moral Development in Adolescence."

¹⁴ Johnson et al., "A Meta-Analysis of the What Works in Character Education Research."

¹⁵ Abdullah Gymnastiar, *Manajemen Qalbu: Membentuk Akhlak Mulai dari Hati* (Bandung: MQ Publishing, 2003), 22–30; Ari Agustian Ginanjar, *Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ): Rahasia Sukses Membangun Kecerdasan Emosi dan Spiritual* (Jakarta: Arga, 2007), 45–52.

not yet been formed and signal the need for pedagogical intervention that is transformative in nature, rather than merely instructive.¹⁶

Core Process: Stages of Inner Transformation

The first stage is *Tazkiyah* (Purification of the Soul), which is the process of cleansing the heart of negative traits such as showing off, envy and arrogance. In the context of education, this stage serves as a process of deconstructing the internal barriers that hinder character development. Al-Ghazali describes this stage as an absolute requirement before moral values can be truly internalised.¹⁷

The second stage is *Tarbiyah* (Internalisation of Values), which is the process of instilling values through continuous and reflective learning. This stage aims to build internal awareness of moral values through in-depth pedagogical dialogue, rather than merely the transmission of information.¹⁸

The third stage is *Ta'wid* (Habituation), namely the process of habituation through the repetition of moral behaviour so that the internalised values become a stable disposition. This corresponds to the Aristotelian concept of the formation of virtue through repeated practice.¹⁹

Mediation System

The success of the core process is influenced by three main mediating factors: (1) the teacher as a moral exemplar, who functions not merely as a transmitter of knowledge but as a living model of the character to be formed; (2) the educational environment as a value ecosystem that consistently shapes moral culture; and (3) reflective methods that help learners integrate moral experiences into their inner consciousness.²⁰

Output: Character Transformation

The outputs of the MITQ model include moral awareness, self-control, and moral character that are deeply internalised. These three aspects demonstrate that moral education must produce sustainable internal transformation, not merely superficial behavioural change.²¹

Limitations and Theoretical-Practical Implications

Although the MITQ model offers a comprehensive integrative framework, there are several limitations that need to be highlighted. Firstly, the inner dimension at the heart of this model is not easily measured quantitatively within the modern education system.²² This requires the development of qualitative assessment tools capable of capturing the dynamics of inner transformation. Secondly, there is a potential epistemological tension between spiritual and empirical approaches in education, which

¹⁶ Fardan Abdul Basith et al., "The Urgency of Character Education Based on Prophetic Pedagogy: An Approach to Overcoming Students' Moral Crisis," *Journal of Education and Social Culture*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.58363/jesc.v1i1.15>.

¹⁷ al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulumuddin*.

¹⁸ Ghiffari Syauqy Said, Muhtadi Ridwan, and Ahmad Sholeh, "Formation of Discipline Character Through Internalization of the Value of Islamic Religious Education in the Students of the Wali Songo Ngabar Islamic Boarding School," *FONDATLA*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.36088/fondatia.v9i2.5752>.

¹⁹ Blaine J Fowers et al., "The Emerging Science of Virtue," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 16, no. 1 (2021): 118–47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620924473>.

²⁰ Hyemin Han and Kelsie J Dawson, "Relatable and Attainable Moral Exemplars as Sources for Moral Elevation and Pleasantness," *Journal of Moral Education* 53, no. 1 (2024): 14–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2023.2173158>.

²¹ Han and Dawson.

²² Han et al., "Exploring the Association between Character Strengths and Moral Functioning."

demands continuous cross-paradigm dialogue.²³ Thirdly, the implementation of the model is highly dependent on the quality of teachers as mediators of values.

Theoretically, this research expands the discourse on moral education by integrating classical Islamic concepts and modern theories within a coherent conceptual framework. The concept of the *qalb* is positioned not merely as a theological idea, but as an analytical category capable of explaining the internal dynamics of character formation. In practical terms, the MITQ model demands a paradigm shift from an instructional approach towards a transformational one that emphasises the formation of inner consciousness.²⁴

Conclusion

This study confirms that the moral crisis in modern education stems from the weak internalisation of values within the inner selves of learners, rather than merely a failure to transfer knowledge. Through the reconstruction of the concept of *tarbiyah qalbiyah* in the thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah and its integration with contemporary moral education theory, this study produces the Integrative Model of *Tarbiyah Qalbiyah* (MITQ), which places the heart (*qalb*) at the centre of the character transformation process through the stages of *tazkiyah*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'wid*, mediated by exemplary role models, a conducive educational environment, and reflective pedagogy.

The main contribution of this research lies in the introduction of the *qalb* as an analytical category that bridges classical Islamic moral psychology with modern educational theory. Unlike conventional instructional approaches, MITQ offers a transformational paradigm that positions inner change as a prerequisite for the formation of authentic and sustainable character. Further research using a mixed-methods approach is recommended to develop evaluation instruments based on inner dimensions and to test the model's applicability in various educational contexts.

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