

# Reconstructing Spiritual Education: A Classical and Contemporary Response to the Mental Health Crisis Among Generation Z from an Islamic Educational Perspective

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## Abstract

Generation Z's mental health crisis presents a pressing challenge for Islamic education. Classical Muslim scholars developed frameworks of *tarbiyah rūḥiyyah* (spiritual nurturing) centred on *tazkiyat al-nafs*, the strengthening of faith, character formation, and *ihsān*, yet applying these frameworks to contemporary mental health challenges requires reconstruction rather than mere restatement. This article reconstructs *tarbiyah rūḥiyyah* by integrating classical literature (al-Ghazālī, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, al-Nadwī) with contemporary empirical studies on Islamic spirituality and mental health. The study uses an integrative literature review and hermeneutic engagement with classical texts, synthesizing Scopus- and Sinta 1–2-indexed sources published between 2019 and 2026. Three findings are reported. *First*, classical Islamic constructs *tawakkal*, *ṣabr*, *dhikr*, and *muhāsabah* align closely with empirically documented psychological coping mechanisms. *Second*, this convergence is not automatic: spiritual education shows statistically non-significant effects on educational quality without adequate pedagogical mediation, and misdirected religiosity can manifest as negative religious coping with pathological consequences. Third, the reconstructed model articulates three interrelated pillars: transcendental-mediated, psychological-hybridized, and ecological-relational, operationalized through five educational implications. The model connects Islamic education with applied Islamic psychology, offering a framework suited to Generation Z's psychosocial profile.

**Keywords:** *tarbiyah rūḥiyyah*; Islamic education; Generation Z; mental health; religious coping

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## Introduction

Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, is *the first* generation to undergo its entire psychosocial development within a persistent, hyperconnected, and algorithm-mediated digital ecosystem.<sup>1</sup> This environment generates mental health challenges that exceed the adaptive capacity of conventional education: unfiltered information exposure, social comparison pressure, and identity fragmentation occur simultaneously and continuously. Fadillah and Long document that this combination positions education as one of the most strategic arenas for intervention, yet also the slowest to adapt.<sup>2</sup> A study of 398 Generation Z students in Indonesia identified a moderate prevalence of quarter-life crisis, with transitional anxiety, identity confusion, and loss of meaning as the dominant presenting symptoms.<sup>3</sup> Purba and Metia found that fear of missing out (FOMO) and social media use are positively and significantly associated with lower self-esteem and reduced mental resilience among adolescents.<sup>4</sup> Siahaan et al. added an employment dimension: the alignment among work styles, work preferences, and mental health in Generation Z exhibits a structurally distinct pattern from that of previous generations.<sup>5</sup> Taken together, these findings suggest that the crisis facing Generation Z is not a typical adolescent developmental issue, but a form of systemic existential fragility that demands simultaneous pedagogical and spiritual responses.

Islam views human beings as multi-dimensional entities: body, mind, spirit, and heart, whose development cannot be reduced to any single dimension.<sup>6</sup> The concept of “*’āfiyah*” comprehensive well-being, as elaborated in the contemporary Islamic educational tradition, positions the integration of spiritual, mental, and physical aspects

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins,” *Pew Research Center* 17, no. 1 (2019): 1–7.

<sup>2</sup> Dani Fadillah and Bai Long, “Empowering Gen Z’s Mental Health in a Hyperconnected World,” *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, November 3, 2025, 00207640251384510, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207640251384510>.

<sup>3</sup> S Z Soraya and R N Puspitasari, “Islamic Coping Stress and Quarter-Life Crisis among Generation Z College Students,” *Journal of Education and Learning* 19, no. 1 (2025): 287–93, <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v19i1.21382>.

<sup>4</sup> P A Purba and C Metia, “FOMO in the Digital Age: A Study of Self-Esteem and Social Media Effects on North Sumatran Youth,” *Ascarya: Journal of Islamic Science, Culture and Social Studies* 5, no. 1 (2025): 117–28, <https://doi.org/10.53754/iscs.v5i1.764>.

<sup>5</sup> E Siahaan et al., “Harmony between Culture, Work Style, Work Preferences, Mental Health, and Performance of Generation Z,” *Problems and Perspectives in Management* 24, no. 1 (2026): 791–805.

<sup>6</sup> J M Halstead, “An Islamic Concept of Education,” *Comparative Education* 40, no. 4 (2004): 517–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305006042000284510>.

as a prerequisite for the holistic development of students.<sup>7</sup> However, contemporary Islamic educational practice reveals a persistent disconnect between the prevailing cognitive-doctrinal orientation and the need for spiritual-affective nurturing. Jenuri et al. refer to this phenomenon as “spiritual emptiness,” which paradoxically intensifies as academic achievement rises, even as students’ spiritual depth diminishes.<sup>8</sup> Subiyantoro et al. confirm a similar pattern in senior high madrasahs in Yogyakarta: without explicit integration between the religious dimension and a humanistic approach, the curriculum risks reproducing the very moral degradation it is meant to prevent.<sup>9</sup>

Classical Islamic discourse offers a relevant conceptual framework for addressing this crisis. Al-Ghazālī, in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, identifies *tazkiyat al-naḥs* (purification of the soul) as the primary prerequisite for acquiring beneficial knowledge and true happiness.<sup>10</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, maps the stages of spiritual character formation through *muḥāsabah*, *murāqabah*, and *mujāhadah* as a systematic inner discipline.<sup>11</sup> Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī formulates *tarbiyah rūḥiyyah* as the core of the formation of *the insān rabbānī*, that is, a human being who embodies the dimension of *iḥsān* throughout his or her life.<sup>12</sup> Though rooted in distinct intellectual traditions, all three converge on a single fundamental thesis: spiritual health is the foundation that supports psychological stability and social civility.

This classical thesis is now finding increasingly robust empirical support, as demonstrated by Rothman et al., who show that classical Muslim thinkers developed frameworks of character formation that resonate closely with contemporary mental health concepts.<sup>13</sup> Aycan developed an Islamically-integrated psychological well-being model

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<sup>7</sup> Abdallah Rothman, Zeynep Betül Yücesoy, and Esra Yalçın, “Early Muslim Scholars’ Conceptions of Character Development and Contemporary Applications in Mental Health and Well-Being,” 2024, <https://doi.org/10.3998/jmmh.6027>.

<sup>8</sup> Jenuri et al., “Overcoming the Spiritual Emptiness of Students in the Modern Era through the Integration of Al-Ghazali’s Human Concepts in the Islamic Religious Education Learning Model,” *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (December 31, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2497147>.

<sup>9</sup> S Subiyantoro, Z V Rohmadani, and M W Achadi, “Integrating Religious Dimensions and Humanistic Education to Enhance Student Personality: A Case Study in Indonesian Madrasahs,” *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 8 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2026208>.

<sup>10</sup> A H M Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, vol. 1–4 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> M ibn A B Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij Al-Sālikīn Bayn Manāzil Iyyāka Na’budu Wa Iyyāka Nasta’in*, vol. 1–3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, أهمية نظام التربية والتعليم في الأقطار (المجمع الإسلامي العلمي الهند)، n.d., [www.abulhasanalnadwi.org](http://www.abulhasanalnadwi.org).

<sup>13</sup> Rothman, Yücesoy, and Yalçın, “Early Muslim Scholars’ Conceptions of Character Development and Contemporary Applications in Mental Health and Well-Being.”

that places the vertical relationship with God at the centre of psychological well-being.<sup>14</sup> A systematic review by Suhertina found that Islamic counseling approaches consistently reduce anxiety among Muslim students.<sup>15</sup> Applebaum describes *dhikr* as a form of meditative remembrance that is ontologically distinct from Buddhist mindfulness, yet empirically produces equivalent self-regulatory effects.<sup>16</sup> A quasi-experimental study by Hayat et al. documented a significant reduction in anxiety among *dhikr* practitioners in Aceh. At the same time, Syekh's review concluded that theological constructs such as *tawakkal*, *ṣabr*, *ṣalāt*, and *dhikr* function as adaptive coping mechanisms across Muslim cultural contexts.<sup>17</sup>

However, the claim that spiritual values automatically have a positive impact on mental health warrants critical scrutiny. A structural study by Badrudin, Juhji, and Kurni on madrasah education in Indonesia found that *spiritual education* had no significant effect on the quality of education ( $\beta = 0.008$ ). In contrast, teacher professionalism ( $\beta = 0.318$ ) and the school environment ( $\beta = 0.568$ ) were far more influential.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, a multinational study by Eskin et al., involving 7,427 young Muslim adults across eleven countries, found that while religiosity is negatively associated with suicidal ideation, negative religious coping, perceiving God as a punishing figure, or feeling divinely abandoned, actually increases the likelihood of suicide attempts.<sup>19</sup> The character of one's religiosity does not produce uniform effects; it can be either protective or pathogenic, depending on how it is internally formed.<sup>20</sup> This reality demands a re-examination of the normative assumptions that have long underpinned the literature *on tarbīyah rūḥiyyah*.

<sup>14</sup> S Aycan, "Construction of an Islamically-Integrated Psychological Well-Being Model," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 18, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3998/jmmh.6026>.

<sup>15</sup> S Suhertina, "Islamic-Based Counseling Approaches for Student Mental Well-Being: A Systematic Literature Review," *Madania: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 15, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.24014/jiik.v15i2.37785>.

<sup>16</sup> M Applebaum, "Dhikr as Mindfulness: Meditative Remembrance in Sufism," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 65, no. 2 (2025): 409–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678231206901>.

<sup>17</sup> D N Shaik, "Integrating Islamic Theology and Psychology: A Systematic Narrative Review of Religious Coping," *Pastoral Psychology*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-025-01298-0>.

<sup>18</sup> B Badrudin, J Juhji, and D K Kurni, "Spiritual Education as a Catalyst for Quality Learning: Empirical Evidence from Madrasahs," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 3 (2025): 699–713.

<sup>19</sup> M Eskin et al., "Associations of Religiosity, Attitudes towards Suicide and Religious Coping with Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts in 11 Muslim Countries," *Social Science & Medicine* 265 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113390>.

<sup>20</sup> H Abu-Raiya et al., "A Psychological Measure of Islamic Religiousness: Development and Evidence for Reliability and Validity," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 18, no. 4 (2008): 291–315.

A review of the literature on Islamic education reveals two gaps. *First*, the discourse on Islamic education tends to treat *tarbiyah rūhiyyah* as a normative concept that is *taken for granted*, without engaging in critical dialogue with contemporary mental health theories. This is a philosophical shortcoming Sahin identified long ago.<sup>21</sup> *Second*, empirical research in Islamic psychology is still rarely systematically linked to the classical Islamic educational tradition; existing integrations tend to stop at conceptual enrichment rather than proceeding to genuine framework reconstruction. Consequently, two mutually dependent discourses, classical Islamic pedagogy and empirical Islamic psychology, operate along separate epistemological trajectories, even as Generation Z faces a crisis that demands precisely their synthesis.

This article examines a conceptual reconstruction of *tarbiyah rūhiyyah* that explicitly engages classical literature with contemporary empirical evidence, including counterevidence. Three objectives are formulated: (1) to synthesize formulations of *tarbiyah rūhiyyah* from the works of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Qayyim, and al-Nadwī with contemporary empirical findings on the relationship between spirituality and mental health; (2) to identify the limitations of reductionist *spiritual education* practices by considering the distinction between positive and negative religious coping; and (3) to formulate an integrative conceptual framework for spiritual education that is responsive to the psychosocial characteristics of Generation Z. The main contribution of this article lies in its effort to bring together two discourses that have rarely been brought into simultaneous operational engagement: classical Islamic education and applied Islamic psychology, in light of the real crises faced by contemporary students.

### Research Methodology

This study employs an integrative literature review design combined with hermeneutic engagement with classical Islamic texts. Torraco defines an integrative review as a review that enables researchers to synthesize literature across traditions and methodologies to generate new conceptual perspectives.<sup>22</sup> Snyder notes that this approach is especially appropriate when the research aim is to critique, reconceptualize, or expand

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<sup>21</sup> A Sahin, "Critical Issues in Islamic Education Studies: Rethinking the Philosophical Foundations of Islamic Education," *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9110335>.

<sup>22</sup> R J Torraco, "Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Using the Past and Present to Explore the Future," *Human Resource Development Review* 15, no. 4 (2016): 404–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484316671606>.

a field's theoretical foundations.<sup>23</sup> Hermeneutic engagement was chosen as a complementary approach because the core of this research is not data aggregation, but rather an interpretive-iterative reading of classical texts. Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic explain that a hermeneutic approach to literature review presupposes the existence of a hermeneutic circle in which the understanding of parts and the whole of the text mutually correct each other.<sup>24</sup> The combination of these two approaches aligns with Jaakkola's conceptual theory of synthesis.<sup>25</sup> The author's epistemic position is one of declared openness: following Gadamer, every reading of a classical text proceeds from a horizon of understanding shaped by the reader's tradition, language, and interests.<sup>26</sup> Awareness of this *horizon* is a prerequisite for honest interpretation, not a threat to it.

Data sources are divided into two types. *First*, conceptual primary sources from the classical works of Islamic thinkers: *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by al-Ghazālī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1982), *Madārij al-Sālikīn* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1996), and *Islam and the World* by al-Nadwī (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2005). Al-Nadwī's thought on *the insān rabbānī* is also analyzed through secondary studies by Kamil et al. *Second*, empirical and theoretical secondary sources in the form of Scopus-indexed journal articles (Q1–Q4) and Sinta 1–2 articles published between 2019 and 2026 on the topics of Generation Z mental health, Islamic psychology, *religious coping*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and holistic Islamic education. The search was conducted systematically on Scopus, Web of Science, and SINTA, with complementary searches on Google Scholar and DOAJ. The keyword combinations included "*tarbiyah rūḥiyyah*," "*tazkiyat al-nafs*," "*Islamic spirituality*" AND "*mental health*," "*religious coping*" AND "*Muslim*," and "*Generation Z*" AND "*Islam*." The search was conducted between January and March 2026.

Inclusion criteria: (a) articles must be from *peer-reviewed* journals indexed in Scopus or Sinta 1–2; (b) publication year: 2019–2026; (c) discusses the relationship between Islamic spirituality and mental health, Islamic educational practices with

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<sup>23</sup> Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104 (2019): 333–39.

<sup>24</sup> S K Boell and D Cecez-Kecmanovic, "A Hermeneutic Approach for Conducting Literature Reviews and Literature Searches," *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* 34 (2014): 257–86.

<sup>25</sup> E Jaakkola, "Designing Conceptual Articles: Four Approaches," *AMS Review* 10 (2020): 18–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0>.

<sup>26</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Truth and Method (London)," *Continuum* 42 (2004).

spiritual-affective dimensions, or the psychosocial characteristics of Generation Z; (d) is in English, Indonesian, or Arabic; (e) has an abstract and full text available. Exclusion criteria: (a) opinion pieces without clear conceptual contributions; (b) non-academic sources; (c) conceptual duplication; (d) studies that use the construct of “spirituality” generically without explicit reference to Islamic tradition; (e) articles that have been retracted or published in predatory journals.

The selection flow and analysis procedures followed the PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines as a framework for transparency, even though this study is not *a systematic review* in the strict sense<sup>27</sup> The selection flow is reported in four stages: identification yielded 412 records; deduplication left 287 unique records; title and abstract screening excluded 184 records, leaving 103 for full-text reading; full-text reading excluded 65 records for documented reasons. Final results: 38 secondary sources were included in the in-depth analysis, along with three classic primary sources and seven supporting theoretical sources.

The analysis was conducted in three stages. The *first* stage involved a thematic mapping of the concept of *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* in classical literature through an iterative reading of primary texts (a part-to-whole hermeneutic cycle), with the codification of the key principles of *tazkiyat al-naḥs*, *muḥāsabah*, *murāqabah*, strengthening of faith, and *iḥsān*. The *Second* Stage involved synthesizing contemporary empirical findings by applying Braun and Clarke’s six-step thematic analysis procedure,<sup>28</sup> with particular attention to religious distinctions and positive and negative aspects. The *Third* Stage is conceptual integration (conceptual theory synthesis), which formulates an integrative *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* framework through three analytical steps: identification of classical implicit assumptions, mapping of empirical counterevidence, and formulation of three conceptual pillars. The logic of synthesis is abductive: the final framework is chosen because it best explains the patterns of convergence and divergence found.

Credibility in the study is maintained through four mechanisms in accordance with Lincoln and Guba’s criteria:<sup>29</sup> (a) An audit trail for every analytical decision; (b) triangulation of sources with authoritative secondary literature; (c) *peer debriefing* with

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<sup>27</sup> M J Page et al., “The PRISMA 2020 Statement: An Updated Guideline for Reporting Systematic Reviews,” *BMJ* 372 (2021): n71, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>.

<sup>28</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

<sup>29</sup> Yvonna Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage publications, 1985).

colleagues with backgrounds in Islamic education, Muslim clinical psychology, and youth studies; and (d) explicit reflexivity regarding bias; the decision to include the studies by Badrudin et al. and Eskin et al. in the analysis is a direct consequence of this commitment. Three limitations must be acknowledged. *First*, as a conceptual study, this research does not make causal claims regarding the effectiveness of the proposed model; empirical validation requires further research with quantitative or intervention designs. *Second*, access to classical works was conducted through published critical editions, not direct manuscript review; the editorial-interpretive layer cannot be fully eliminated. *Third*, this study uses the PRISMA reporting framework as a guide to transparency but does not fully implement systematic review procedures (lacking dual independent screening and formal risk-of-bias assessment); the results should be read as a testable conceptual framework, not as proven empirical findings.

## **Results and Discussion**

An integrative analysis of 38 secondary sources and 3 classical primary sources produced four distinct strands of findings. The *first* section maps the classical orientation of *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* as a holistic pedagogical framework. The *second* section examines the convergences and divergences between these classical constructs and contemporary empirical evidence from Islamic psychology. The *third* section identifies three classical assumptions that need to be reconstructed. The *fourth* section offers an integrative model with three pillars and five operational pedagogical implications.

### **The Classical Orientation of *Tarbīyah Rūḥiyyah* in a Contemporary Reading *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as a Psychospiritual Mechanism**

In classical Islamic educational epistemology, *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* is understood as the process of nurturing the inner dimension of the human being so that it develops in balance with the intellectual, physical, and social dimensions, with the cultivation of the religious dimension serving as the integrating force. The concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is at its core. In *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī identifies the purification of the soul as the primary condition for human salvation, since the heart (*qalb*) is the center of orientation for deeds, intentions, and moral character. The soul must be purified of *riyā'*, *ḥasad*,

*takabbur*, and uncontrolled *desires* through worship, *mujāhadah*, *muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, and *tawbah*, unfolding across three phases: *takhallī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī*.<sup>30</sup>

In a contemporary study, Hanin Hamjah et al. demonstrated that the *tazkiyat al-nafs* approach in counseling yields positive effects: clients become calmer. They are better able to think positively when facing life's pressures.<sup>31</sup> Suhertina's systematic review positions *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the most frequently used approach in Islamic counseling, alongside Sufi psychotherapy and I-CBT, with consistent effectiveness in reducing anxiety among Muslim students. Akmansyah et al. demonstrate that a competent *mursyid* in *tazkiyat al-nafs* plays a central role in maintaining spiritual integrity (*hiḥfẓ al-nafs*) and doctrinal adherence (*hiḥfẓ al-dīn*).<sup>32</sup> *Tazkiyat al-nafs*, therefore, functions as both a preventive and curative mechanism that can be implemented in clinical and educational practice.

### ***Strengthening Faith, Character Development, and the Dimension of Iḥsān***

Spiritual education cannot be substantive without a foundation of authentic faith and sound creed. Shaik's study identifies theological constructs such as *tawakkal*, *ṣabr*, *ṣalāt*, *du'ā'*, *dhikr*, *raḥā'*, and *'afw* as adaptive coping mechanisms that transcend various Muslim cultural contexts. Studies by Hafizah, Suroso, and Yustisia indicate that Islamic coping is negatively correlated with difficulties in emotional regulation among adolescents, a finding relevant to Generation Z, who spend the majority of their time in digital spaces.<sup>33</sup> Strengthening faith thus carries concrete psychological implications, providing an inner anchor amidst digital relativism, hedonism, and nihilism.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, views spiritual education as a path to comprehensive character development and the cultivation of *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*. Crucially, Ibn Qayyim emphasizes exemplary conduct (*qudwah*) as the most effective means of integrating the social-relational dimension into moral education as an intrinsic part.<sup>34</sup> This principle finds cross-contextual empirical confirmation: Osman demonstrates

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<sup>30</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

<sup>31</sup> S Hanin Hamjah et al., "Islamic Spiritual Approach in Developing a Positive Mindset," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 10, no. 10 (2020): 644–65.

<sup>32</sup> M Akmansyah et al., "The Essence of Mursyid Teachers in Sufism Spiritual Education in the Framework of Maqāṣid Al-Syarī'ah: The Perspectives of Indonesian Scholars," *El-Usrah* 8, no. 1 (2025): 50–71, <https://doi.org/10.22373/6m127a63>.

<sup>33</sup> N Hafizah, S Suroso, and W Yustisia, "Examining How Islamic Coping Reduces Internet Misuse: The Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation Difficulties," *Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 8, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.21580/pjpp.v8i2.4310>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij Al-Sālikīn Bayn Manāzil Iyyāka Na'budu Wa Iyyāka Nasta'in*.

the effectiveness of role modeling in character education in Saudi Arabia; Mulyana et al. document the role of the kyai as a spiritual mentor in West Java; Mansoor et al. demonstrate that Prophetic Pedagogy is effective across subject areas in Pakistan, including English language instruction.<sup>35</sup> Karwadi et al. *found* that integrating critical pedagogy with teacher authority in Islamic education increases critical thinking skills by up to 89% and enhances student engagement, without compromising the retention of Islamic knowledge.<sup>36</sup>

Al-Nadwī places spiritual education within a broader context: the formation of a *rabbānī* individual who embodies *ihsān* in all aspects of life. The dimension of *ihsān* is closely linked to *fiqh al-bāṭin*, that is, a cultivated understanding of the inner dimension of the Sharī‘ah: ṣalāt goes beyond the physical dimension; fasting goes beyond merely abstaining from food; dhikr goes beyond verbal recitation, all of which are directed toward fostering a sense of presence (*murāqabah*) in the presence of Allah.<sup>37</sup> Hardaker and Sabki confirm this embodied dimension: Islamic pedagogy operates through the teacher’s posture, gestures, voice, and gaze, not merely through verbal transmission.<sup>38</sup> For contemporary Islamic education, the crisis of Generation Z is not principally a lack of ritual discipline but a void of meaning and a felt disconnect between religion and inner experience; this is where *fiqh al-bāṭin* gains its pedagogical urgency.

### Functional Convergence and Ontological Divergence

A review of 38 secondary sources revealed a substantial convergence between classical constructs and empirically supported psychological mechanisms. Applebaum describes *dhikr* as a form of Sufi meditative remembrance that, while ontologically distinct from Buddhist mindfulness, exhibits empirically equivalent self-regulatory effects. The quasi-experimental study by Hayat et al. documented a significant reduction in anxiety following a structured *dhikr* intervention. In contrast, Latif and Bhatti

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<sup>35</sup> H S Mansoor et al., “Prophetic Pedagogy in English Language Teaching in Pakistani Universities,” *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 7, no. 5 (2025): 33–44, <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i5.9345>.

<sup>36</sup> A R Bin Zakaria, A Setiyawan, and M Ferdi Hasan, “Integration of Critical Pedagogy in Islamic Education: A Case Study of Pre-Service Teacher Training,” *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2025.2560905>.

<sup>37</sup> I Kamil et al., “Konsep Tarbiyyah Ruhiyah Abu Al-Hasan Ali Al-Nadwi,” *Ta’dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (2021): 272–89.

<sup>38</sup> G Hardaker and A A Sabki, “Islamic Pedagogy and Embodiment: An Anthropological Study of a British Madrasah,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 28, no. 8 (2015): 873–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.974718>.

documented the impact of Quranic recitation on physiological and psychological parameters, including significant reductions in anxiety, stress, and depression.<sup>39</sup> Table 1 presents a systematic mapping of this convergence.

Table 1.  
Convergence Matrix of Classical Constructs with Empirical Psychological Mechanisms

<b>Classical Constructs</b>	<b>Figure / Primary Source</b>	<b>Empirical Psychological Equivalents</b>	<b>Contemporary Empirical References</b>
<i>Dhikr</i>	Al-Ghazālī (Iḥyā')	Mindfulness; self-regulation	Applebaum 2025; Hayat et al., (2024)
Tazkiyat al-nafs	Al-Ghazālī; Ibn Qayyim	Psychotherapy intervention; anxiety reduction	Suhertina (2025); Hamjah et al. (2020)
<i>Tawakkal &amp; ṣabr</i>	Al-Ghazali; Ibn Qayyim	Positive religious coping; resilience	Shaik (2026); Soraya & Puspitasari (2025)
<i>Self-reflection &amp; self-monitoring</i>	Ibn Qayyim (Madārij)	Self-awareness; emotional regulation	Hafizah et al., (2023)
<i>Iḥsān &amp; fiqh al-bāṭin</i>	Al-Nadwī	Meaning-making; existential well-being	Aycan (2024); Rothman et al. (2024)
Qudwah	Ibn Qayyim	Role-modeling; moral exemplar	Osman (2026); Mulyana et al. (2026)

The matrix in Table 1 demonstrates that the convergence between classical constructs and empirical psychological mechanisms is not merely a metaphorical analogy but a functional alignment amenable to operational verification. This point of functional convergence does not, however, imply ontological identity. Applebaum explicitly warns that ignoring the ontological divergence between Sufi *dhikr* and Buddhist *mindfulness* risks producing a superficial integration at odds with the Muslim client's beliefs.<sup>40</sup>

The claim that Islamic spirituality is uniformly protective cannot be sustained against more nuanced empirical evidence. A multinational study by Eskin et al., involving 7,427 young Muslim adults across eleven countries with substantial statistical power, found that while religiosity was negatively associated with suicidal ideation, negative

<sup>39</sup> M M Latif and A H Bhatti, "Proximate Analysis of Holy Quran Recitations on Physiological, Psychological, and Neural Functioning in Muslims," *International Journal of Islamic Khazanah* 14, no. 1 (2024): 47–63, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijik.v14i1.33615>.

<sup>40</sup> Applebaum, "Dhikr as Mindfulness: Meditative Remembrance in Sufism."

religious coping actually increased the likelihood of suicide attempts.<sup>41</sup> The study by Dehaghi et al. adds a critical dimension: an RCT of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with religious content for religious OCD/scrupulosity in Iran documented that misdirected religiosity can trigger pathological obsessiveness, thus providing evidence that spirituality requires appropriate pedagogical and clinical management.<sup>42</sup> A *third* finding that cannot be ignored: a PLS-SEM study by Badrudin et al. on 312 madrasah teachers found that spiritual education had a statistically insignificant effect ( $\beta = 0.008$ ), whereas teacher professionalism ( $\beta = 0.318$ ) and the school environment ( $\beta = 0.568$ ) were far more influential.<sup>43</sup> This finding confirms that frameworks that assume spiritual content is automatically beneficial without adequate pedagogical and ecological mediation are insufficient to guarantee measurable educational impact. Table 2 maps out this counter-evidence.

Table 2.  
Divergence Matrix: Classical Assumptions and Empirical Counterevidence

Classical Assumptions	Empirical Counterevidence	Key References	Reconstructive Implications
Protective automatic spirituality	Negative religious coping increases the risk of suicide attempts	Eskin et al., (2020); Abu-Raiya et al., (2008)	Explicit formation of positive religious coping
Homogeneous religiosity	Differentiated religiosity: protective & pathogenic dimensions	Abu-Raiya (2008); Dehaghi (2024)	Pedagogical differentiation of divine constructs
Sufficient spiritual component	$\beta = 0.008$ (not significant); ecosystem $\beta = 0.568$	Badrudin et al., (2025)	Pedagogical mediation as a prerequisite
The individual-contemplative approach is adequate	Social-relational is a strong predictor	Mulyana (2026); Osman (2026)	Constitutive social-relational pillar

**Conceptual Reconstruction: Three Revised Assumptions and an Integrative Model**

<sup>41</sup> Eskin et al., “Associations of Religiosity, Attitudes towards Suicide and Religious Coping with Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts in 11 Muslim Countries.”

<sup>42</sup> A A Dehaghi et al., “Evaluation of an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with Religious Content to Control Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Dysfunctional Beliefs, Feeling Guilty, Scrupulosity, and Thought Control among Muslims in Iran,” *Journal of Education and Health Promotion* 13, no. 1 (2024).

<sup>43</sup> Badrudin, Juhji, and Kurni, “Spiritual Education as a Catalyst for Quality Learning: Empirical Evidence from Madrasahs.”

From this mapping, three classic implicit assumptions were identified that need to be reexamined not because of substantive errors, but because they are inadequate when applied to contemporary contexts. *First*, the assumption of spiritual-psychological automatism: the classical formulation assumes that deepening the servant-God relationship automatically yields psychological well-being. Badrudin's findings ( $\beta = 0.008$ ) confirm that the mere presence of spiritual components in the curriculum does not automatically produce impact. Spirituality must therefore be treated as a latent variable requiring deliberate pedagogical mediation. *Second*, the assumption of religiosity homogeneity: classical discourse treats faith as a unitary construct with uniform effects. Contemporary research shows that religiosity can be differentiated into positive and negative coping, and that *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* must consciously foster positive religious coping. *Third*, the assumption of the adequacy of the individual-contemplative approach: classical tradition positions *mujāhadah* and *muḥāsabah* as internal individual practices; for Generation Z, with its void of meaning, FOMO, and social-digital pressures, this approach is inadequate. The social-relational dimension is a constitutive component, not a complement.

### **The Integrative Spiritual Education Model: Three Co-Constitutive Pillars**

The reconstructive model consists of three interrelated pillars and five operational pedagogical implications. "Reconstruction" here means operational actualization, not doctrinal revision. *First Pillar: Transcendental-Mediated.* This pillar is based on the thesis that the psychospiritual potential of worship and *dhikr* is latent and cannot be realized without pedagogical mediation. Drawing on al-Nadwī's *fiqh al-bāṭin*, students are guided to understand the inner meanings: intention, presence of heart, and the transformative power of worship. Most critically, pedagogical mediation must intentionally construct a representation of God as a source of love and hope (*rajā'*), rather than a punitive representation that triggers pathological religious anxiety.

*Second Pillar: Psychological-Hybridization.* This pillar operationalizes the functional convergence between classical Islamic constructs and empirical psychological mechanisms. *Muḥāsabah* and *murāqabah* are synergized with contemporary emotion regulation and self-awareness; *tawakkal* and *ṣabr* are integrated into a framework for measurable, adaptive coping. I-CBT functions as a hybrid instrument with validated

effectiveness. However, the hybridization in question is not arbitrary eclecticism but a disciplined integration that preserves the ontological integrity of each tradition.

*Third Pillar: Ecological-Relational.* This pillar is grounded in Badrudin's findings: the school environment is the strongest predictor of educational quality ( $\beta = 0.568$ ), surpassing the spiritual component. The social-relational ecosystem is not merely the context of *tarbiyah rūhiyyah*, but also one of its constituent elements. This pillar operates through (a) teachers as spiritual mentors who combine exemplary conduct with psychological competence; (b) affective *circles* as stigma-free learning communities; and (c) Islamic digital literacy that operationalizes self-reflection in virtual spaces.

The three pillars form a co-constitutive configuration, each functioning as a prerequisite for the other two: Pillar 1 depends on the mediating presence of the *murabbī rūhiy* provided by Pillar 3; Pillar 2 requires the affective ecosystem established by Pillar 3; and Pillar 3 would lose its animating substance without the transcendental foundation of Pillar 1 and the reflective capacity cultivated by Pillar 2. This model is conceptual-propositional in character; its empirical validity awaits future research.

### **Five Operational Pedagogical Implications**

*First*, a hybrid spirituality–psychology curriculum (Pillars 1 & 2). The curriculum must actively foster emotional literacy, reflective self-awareness, and cognitive construction of the values of *tawakkal*, *ṣabr*, and *shukr*. The practices of *muḥāsabah* and *murāqabah* (Ibn Qayyim) are integrated with modern emotional regulation. Hafizah et al. demonstrate that Islamic coping improves adolescents' emotional regulation; Soraya and Puspitasari demonstrate its effectiveness for Generation Z in navigating the quarter-life crisis.<sup>44</sup> Suhertina proves that the integration of *tazkiyat al-nafs* with I-CBT yields significant counseling outcomes. Badrudin's caveat remains important: teacher professionalism and the quality of pedagogical execution are determining factors.

*Second*, the integration of worship with spiritual psychotherapy (Pillar 1). *Ṣalāt*, *dhikr*, *du'ā'*, and *ṣawm* can serve as learning modalities for managing stress and fostering *tuma'nīnah*. Applebaum asserts that *dhikr* has self-regulatory effects comparable to secular mindfulness, though ontologically distinct; *Hayat* et al. document an anxiety

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<sup>44</sup> M Mulyana et al., "Integration of Islamic and Local Values in Entrepreneurship Education in West Java: An Analysis of Kyai's Role as a Cultural Transmitter," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 15, no. 2 (2026): 382–400, <https://doi.org/10.32350/JITC.152.22>.

reduction; Latif and Bhatti confirm the therapeutic impact of reading the Qur'an. Such integration, however, demands caution: functional convergence does not erase ontological divergence. Dehaghi et al. demonstrate that misguided religiosity can trigger OCD or religious scrupulosity. The integration of worship and therapy requires an understanding of *fiqh al-bāṭin* to prevent students from becoming trapped in formalistic ritualism liable to generate obsessive tendencies.

*Third*, strengthening teachers' role as spiritual mentors (Pillar 3). The principle of *qudwah* has received empirical confirmation across various contexts: Osman in Saudi Arabia (role modeling), Mulyana et al. in West Java (kyai as spiritual mentors), and Mansoor et al. in Pakistan Prophetic Pedagogy across subjects. To address the mental health crisis among Generation Z, the spiritual mentor requires dual competencies: a deep understanding of Islamic religious education and adequate psychological literacy. The policy implication is clear: teacher education programmes for Islamic religious education must incorporate a module in Islamic counseling psychology as a core requirement, not an elective.<sup>45</sup>

*Fourth*, the educational ecosystem as an affective community (Pillar 3). The school environment is the strongest predictor of the quality of madrasah education ( $\beta = 0.568$ ). An affective *Halaqah* can operationalize this concept as a regular forum where students share experiences, vulnerabilities, and spiritual coping strategies under the guidance of a *murabbī rūḥiy*. Hafizah et al. demonstrate that social support strengthens the effect of *Islamic coping* on emotional regulation. Suresman et al., in a systematic literature network analysis of the evolution of pesantren from sorogan to digital learning, show that the strength of pesantren as an educational ecosystem lies in integrating kyai-santri relationships with an intensive learning community.<sup>46</sup> This model, with adaptations, can inspire affective *halaqah* in formal education.

*Fifth*, digital literacy as a constitutive component the *third* pillar. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z's psychological vulnerability is substantially rooted in digital

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<sup>45</sup> Bin Zakaria, Setiyawan, and Ferdi Hasan, "Integration of Critical Pedagogy in Islamic Education: A Case Study of Pre-Service Teacher Training."

<sup>46</sup> E Suresman, A Faqihuddin, and M Abdullah, "From Sorogan to Digital Learning: A Systematic Literature Network Analysis of Pesantren Learning Models," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2580776>.

life: social media triggers FOMO and undermines self-esteem,<sup>47</sup> Competition in the digital-social sphere exacerbates the pressures of transitioning into adulthood, and the expectations shaped by digital media consumption carry distinct implications for mental health in the workplace.<sup>48</sup> Islamic education cannot content itself with restricting digital use through ritualistic rules. Substantive digital literacy is required instead: (a) critical thinking regarding the pitfalls of social comparison; (b) the practice of *murāqabah* in virtual spaces as an expression of *ihsān* in digital life; (c) grounding personal identity in the values of the *insān rabbānī* rather than in social validation.

### **Integrative Discussion and Contributions**

The foregoing analysis yields three principal theoretical contributions. *First*, this article demonstrates that the classical formulations of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Qayyim, and al-Nadwī retain their conceptual validity only when subjected to critical engagement with contemporary empirical counter-evidence. The taken-for-granted approach criticized by Sahin is replaced by a critical-integration approach that acknowledges the limitations of classical formulations without relativizing their doctrinal substance. *Second*, an explicit framework for distinguishing positive and negative religious coping as pedagogical dimensions reshapes how *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* is formulated: educators are no longer merely instillers of religiosity but rather guides of the quality of religiosity. *Third*, the three-pillar co-constitutive model provides an analytical framework that can be empirically tested in further research, thereby paving the way for testing more complex structural models using PLS-SEM or multilevel analysis.

For applied Islamic psychology, this article provides a more robust theological-pedagogical foundation for developing psychospiritual interventions. Studies on I-CBT, Islamic counseling, and religion-based therapy often rely on fragmented Islamic constructs. The integrative *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* model provides a systemic framework that connects these constructs with the pedagogical traditions from which they emerged. Furthermore, Applebaum’s warning regarding ontological divergence serves as a methodological principle: functional convergence does not justify ontological

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<sup>47</sup> Purba and Metia, “FOMO in the Digital Age: A Study of Self-Esteem and Social Media Effects on North Sumatran Youth.”

<sup>48</sup> Siahaan et al., “Harmony between Culture, Work Style, Work Preferences, Mental Health, and Performance of Generation Z.”

substitution. Hamzah et al., through their Quantum Sufic Learning framework, position the Sufi dimension as the core of learning and a paradigmatic reorientation consistent with the thesis of this article.<sup>49</sup>

Four areas for future research are identified: (1) the development and validation of measurement instruments for the three pillars among the Indonesian Muslim population; (2) a quasi-experimental study of affective *halaqah* interventions among Generation Z college students using multilevel controls; (3) an ethnographic study of the practice of *murabbī rūḥiy* in Islamic boarding schools that have successfully integrated digital literacy; and (4) a cross-national comparative study on the formation of positive religious coping in the curricula of madrasahs/pesantren in Indonesia, Islamic schools in Australia, and madrasahs in the United Kingdom. If implemented in a coordinated manner, these four initiatives will shift spiritual education from normative prescriptions to evidence-based practices that are both theologically authentic and empirically robust.

## Conclusion

The mental health crisis among Generation Z demands a substantive and carefully considered response from Islamic education. This article examines *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* and *tazkiyat al-naḥs* as formative frameworks that intersect with contemporary Islamic psychology. Three main findings: *First*, Islamic theological constructs functionally converge with adaptive coping mechanisms; *Second*, this convergence does not occur automatically; spirituality that is not properly cultivated not only forfeits its protective potential but may actively produce pathogenic effects; *Third*, the assumption of universal spiritual protectiveness must be replaced by a systemic model that explicitly accounts for pedagogical and ecological conditions. Based on these findings, this article proposes an integrative model of *tarbīyah rūḥiyyah* with three pillars: transcendental mediated, psychological hybridized, and ecological-relational, operationalized through five recommendations: a hybrid spirituality-psychology curriculum, the integration of worship with spiritual psychotherapy, the empowerment of teachers as *murabbī rūḥiy*, the development of an affective ecosystem, and *tarbīyah*-based digital literacy. The main contribution of this article lies in its effort to bring together the discourse of classical

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<sup>49</sup> H Hamzah et al., “Quantum Learning in a Sufism Perspective: Integration of Tajalli Concepts and Holistic Learning Theory,” *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (2026): 185–201.

Islamic education and empirical Islamic psychology. These two discourses have rarely been engaged simultaneously in operational terms.

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