

Sufi Spiritual Values in the Qur'an: A Thematic Exploration of Tazkiyah al-Nafs

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Abstract: This article explores the Qur'anic concept of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul) through the lens of Sufi values, emphasizing key spiritual principles such as muraqabah (self-awareness), jihad al-nafs (striving against the ego), ikhlas (sincerity), taqwa (piety), and sabr (patience). By employing a thematic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses, the study examines how these values serve as foundational components of Sufi education, with a particular focus on their ethical and moral dimensions. The findings highlight that these values, derived directly from the Qur'an, are essential for the cultivation of a spiritually and ethically aware individual. The study further argues that integrating these Sufi principles into contemporary Islamic educational frameworks can play a crucial role in addressing the growing moral and spiritual crises in modern education systems. This integration could help foster not only intellectual growth but also the development of a balanced and virtuous character, aligning education with Islamic ethical teachings. In conclusion, the study presents tazkiyah al-nafs as a transformative model for ethical and spiritual education, offering practical implications for revitalizing Islamic education in the modern world.

Keywords: Tazkiyah al-nafs, Sufi education, Qur'an, Islamic education, spiritual values

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji konsep tazkiyah al-nafs (pembersihan jiwa) dalam Al-Qur'an melalui perspektif nilai-nilai Sufi, dengan menekankan prinsip-prinsip spiritual utama seperti muraqabah (kesadaran diri), jihad al-nafs (perjuangan melawan ego), ikhlas (kejujuran), taqwa (ketakwaan), dan sabr (kesabaran). Dengan menggunakan analisis tematik terhadap ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an yang terpilih, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana nilai-nilai tersebut berfungsi sebagai komponen dasar pendidikan Sufi, dengan fokus khusus pada dimensi etis dan moralnya. Temuan penelitian menyoroti bahwa nilai-nilai ini, yang berasal langsung dari Al-Qur'an, esensial untuk pembentukan individu yang sadar secara spiritual dan etis. Penelitian ini juga berargumen bahwa integrasi prinsip-prinsip Sufi ke dalam kerangka pendidikan Islam kontemporer dapat memainkan peran krusial dalam mengatasi krisis moral dan spiritual yang semakin meningkat dalam sistem pendidikan modern. Integrasi ini dapat membantu memupuk tidak hanya

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pertumbuhan intelektual tetapi juga pengembangan karakter yang seimbang dan berbudi luhur, sejalan dengan ajaran etika Islam. Sebagai kesimpulan, studi ini memaparkan tazkiyah al-nafs sebagai model transformatif untuk pendidikan etika dan spiritual, menawarkan implikasi praktis untuk menghidupkan kembali pendidikan Islam di dunia modern.

Kata Kunci: *Tazkiyah al-nafs, pendidikan Sufi, Al-Qur'an, pendidikan Islam, nilai-nilai spiritual*

Introduction

Modern Islamic education continues to face significant challenges, particularly in addressing the moral and spiritual crises among Muslim youth. The dominance of materialistic paradigms, academic pragmatism, and the weakening of ethical foundations in educational systems have led to a serious imbalance in the development of the human personality (*nafs*). In this context, there is a pressing need to restore the soul of education through spiritual values deeply rooted in the Qur'an and the Islamic tradition of Sufism.

Among the Qur'anic paradigms that offer a holistic framework for spiritual education is the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs*—the purification and nurturing of the soul toward its original state of *fitrah*. *Tazkiyah* is not merely an abstract mystical ideal; it is a comprehensive process that includes ethical cultivation, inner discipline, and divine consciousness (*taqwa*), all of which are integral to the formation of *insān kāmil*, the ideal human being (Iqbal et al., 2024).

Previous studies have explored *tazkiyah al-nafs* from various angles—psychological, theological, and pedagogical. Some have emphasized its role in Islamic psychotherapy and mental health (Mohamad et al., 2017), while others have examined the classical Sufi methodologies proposed by al-Ghazali and al-Muhasibi (Picken, 2005). However, few have undertaken a systematic thematic (*mawḍū'ī*) analysis of Qur'anic verses specifically in relation to the values of Sufi education derived from *tazkiyah al-nafs*.

Despite the growing body of work exploring *tazkiyah al-nafs* from various perspectives, there remains a gap in the literature regarding thematic Qur'anic analysis specifically addressing the Sufi educational values derived from this concept. While

prior research has focused on the psychological and theological aspects of *tazkiyah*, the systematic application of these principles to Islamic education—particularly how specific Qur’anic verses support core spiritual values like *muraqabah* (self-awareness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *jihad al-nafs* (struggling against the ego)—remains underexplored

This paper seeks to address this gap by providing a thematic Qur’anic analysis of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, identifying key values of Sufi education that can be applied in contemporary Islamic pedagogy. Unlike previous conceptual or historical studies, this research emphasizes the educational relevance of these values, demonstrating how they can serve as foundational principles for holistic human development in Islamic school.

Moreover, while several contemporary works have discussed the integration of *tazkiyah* with character education and moral development in schools (Mulyadi, 2021), they often lack direct Qur’anic grounding or fail to demonstrate how specific verses embody and support core spiritual values such as *muraqabah* (self-awareness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *jihad al-nafs* (struggle against the ego). This leaves a gap between Qur’anic ethics and pedagogical applications in Islamic educational contexts.

This paper attempts to address that gap by providing a thematic Qur’anic analysis of *tazkiyah al-nafs* and extracting from it the key values that form the basis of Sufi education. Unlike previous conceptual or historical studies (Miswar, 2014), this research emphasizes the educational relevance and applicability of these values in shaping holistic human development, particularly within Islamic schooling systems (Mursalin, 2018).

Additionally, *tazkiyah al-nafs* is framed not only as a mystical or individualistic journey but as a structured pedagogical model in accordance with *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* (objectives of Islamic law), particularly the aim of preserving and nurturing the soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) (Mohamad et al., 2017).

Furthermore, contemporary efforts by scholars such as Sa'id Hawwa and Abu Hasan al-Nadwi have shown that Qur’anic-based *tazkiyah* remains deeply relevant in modern education, particularly in countering moral and spiritual decay (Zainol, 2019); (Mulyadi, 2021).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the educational values embedded in Qur'anic verses related to *tazkiyah al-nafs*, and to analyze their relevance as foundational principles of Sufi education, aiming to offer a spiritual framework for contemporary Islamic pedagogy. Contemporary efforts by scholars such as Sa'id Hawwa and Abu Hasan al-Nadwi have shown that Qur'anic-based *tazkiyah* remains deeply relevant in modern education, particularly in countering moral and spiritual decay (Zainol, 2019); (Mulyadi, 2021). This study thus aims to build upon these efforts, contributing to the ongoing discourse on integrating **Sufi educational values** into modern **Islamic pedagogy**

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design, grounded in the thematic method (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) of Qur'anic interpretation. This method involves collecting and analyzing verses related to a particular topic across the Qur'an and synthesizing them into a unified conceptual framework. The thematic approach is especially suitable for examining abstract spiritual concepts such as *tazkiyah al-nafs*, which appear in multiple chapters of the Qur'an with various contextual nuances (al-Zarkasyi, 2004; al-Farmawi, 1996; Hidayat, 2009). This method involves collecting and analyzing verses related to a particular topic across the Qur'an and synthesizing them into a unified conceptual framework, as recommended by scholars like al-Zarkasyi (2004), al-Farmawi (1996), and Yusuf (2018). The choice of this method aligns with the aim of exploring educational values rooted in divine revelation, as recommended by scholars of Qur'anic studies who emphasize thematic coherence in deriving applied Islamic principles (Yusuf, 2018; Amin, 2021).

Primary data sources consist of Qur'anic verses that address the idea of self-purification, including QS al-Shams [91]:7-10, al-Baqarah [2]:129, al-Baqarah [2]:151, al-Jumu'ah [62]:2, and al-A'lā [87]:14-15. These verses were selected based on guidance from both classical and modern tafsir works, including *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Tafsir al-Mishbah* by Quraish Shihab, and *al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr* by Sa'īd Ḥawwā. To interpret the values embedded in these verses, the study also draws upon classical works in Sufi education such as al-Ghazali's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, as well as relevant

academic research on Islamic educational thought and spirituality (Iqbal et al., 2024); (Mulyadi, 2021).

The data analysis follows three steps. First, the verses are analyzed in terms of their linguistic and contextual meaning, drawing on classical and modern exegetical insights to identify recurring spiritual and ethical themes. (al-Suyuti, 2003; Arkoun, 2006). Second, these themes are classified into educational values often emphasized in Sufi discourse—such as *muraqabah* (self-awareness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *jihad al-nafs* (spiritual striving). Finally, the extracted values are synthesized to form a pedagogical framework for Islamic education, aimed at fostering moral and spiritual growth among students. This framework will be tested against current educational practices to assess its potential in addressing contemporary challenges in character development (Azra, 2019; Hidayatullah, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The Definition and Urgency of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs*

The concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* occupies a foundational role in Islamic epistemology, particularly within the disciplines of ethics (*akhlaq*), spirituality (*tasawwuf*), and Islamic education. Etymologically, *tazkiyah* derives from the Arabic root *zakā*, meaning “to purify” and “to grow.” Thus, it carries dual meanings: cleansing the self of spiritual impurities and simultaneously fostering moral and spiritual development. Qur’anic usage reinforces this interpretation, notably in Surah al-Shams [91]:9–10, which proclaims, “He has succeeded who purifies it (*zakkāhā*), and he has failed who corrupts it.” According to al-Marāghī (2001), this verse establishes *tazkiyah* not as an ideal, but as a prerequisite for spiritual success and salvation.

In the classical exegetical tradition, *tazkiyah* has been viewed as central to the Qur’anic vision of human flourishing. Al-Ghazālī, for instance, defines *tazkiyah* as the process of eradicating the diseases of the heart—such as *riyā’* (showing off), *ḥasad* (envy), and *kibr* (arrogance)—and replacing them with virtues like *taqwā* (piety), *ṣabr* (patience), and *ikhhlās* (sincerity) (Arifin et al., 2022). In *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, he contends that outward religious observance is meaningless without inward purification. Similarly, Sa’id Ḥawwā in *al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr* emphasizes that the Prophet’s mission was

primarily to purify hearts (*yuzakkīhim*) before delivering knowledge, suggesting a pedagogical order that modern education often overlooks.

Contemporary scholars have echoed these classical positions, highlighting the multidimensional relevance of *tazkiyah*. Mohamad et al. (2017) position *tazkiyah* within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly under *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of the soul), asserting its centrality in both spiritual development and mental well-being. Masyhuri (2012) links *tazkiyah al-nafs* with mental health, suggesting that spiritual cleansing is vital for psychological resilience. Such perspectives reflect a growing recognition of *tazkiyah* as an essential paradigm for integrating emotional, spiritual, and moral education within Islamic schooling.

Despite its foundational importance, *tazkiyah al-nafs* remains underrepresented in many formal educational systems, which tend to prioritize cognitive development over spiritual growth. Mulyadi (2021) critiques the lack of moral depth in character education initiatives, arguing that without an anchoring in *tazkiyah*, these programs often lead to superficial behavioral compliance rather than authentic moral transformation. He proposes integrating *tazkiyah al-nafs* into character curricula, using the framework of Abu Hasan al-Nadwī, which links *fiqh ṣāḥir* (external law) with *fiqh bāṭin* (inner ethics).

Philosophically, *tazkiyah* can be viewed as the Islamic equivalent of 'self-actualization' in humanistic psychology, but with a theocentric foundation. Unlike Maslow's model, which culminates in self-sufficiency, the Qur'anic model aims for closeness to God through *tazkiyah*. This highlights the spiritual purpose of Islamic education, which seeks to cultivate moral citizens who are 'abd Allāh (servants of God) (Hapsari & Rahman, 2022). This orientation has significant implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and educational evaluation in Islamic institutions.

Research in applied Islamic education increasingly supports this view. In a study on pesantren-based character education, Solichin (2009) shows that programs structured around *tazkiyah al-nafs* yield stronger student engagement, discipline, and ethical awareness. Similarly, Jusoh et al. (2020) tested a *Tazkiyah Module* among university students and found improvements in emotional regulation, empathy, and

moral decision-making. These results suggest that *tazkiyah* offers not only theological but pedagogical value, applicable across age groups and educational settings.

Tafsir experts also point to the frequency and context of the root *zakā* in the Qur'an as evidence of its educational centrality. In al-Baqarah [2]:129, the Prophet Ibrāhīm prays, "Our Lord, send among them a messenger... to recite to them Your verses, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them (*yuzakkīhim*).” Al-Sya'rāwī interprets this as a divine syllabus, where *tazkiyah* precedes instruction. This order, he argues, reflects the Qur'anic logic that a clean heart is a prerequisite for receptive learning, a view supported by current neuroscience linking emotional safety with cognitive receptivity.

Yet, despite its significance, many Islamic schools lack structured approaches to implement *tazkiyah*-based pedagogy. Hapsari & Rahman (2022) observed that elderly students in *tazkiyah*-focused Islamic boarding schools reported higher levels of peace (*nafs muṭma'innah*) and learning retention compared to conventional models. The implication is clear: *tazkiyah* is not only relevant for children or mystics, but for all learners across the lifespan, reinforcing its universality as an educational principle.

Moreover, the concept of *tazkiyah* bridges vertical and horizontal axes of Islamic ethics: the vertical relationship with Allah (*ḥabl min Allāh*) and the horizontal relationship with others (*ḥabl min al-nās*). As Abidin & Kamarudin (2011) demonstrate, characters rooted in *tazkiyah* demonstrate greater social empathy, respect, and sincerity. This integrative nature strengthens the case for its inclusion in both civic and religious education, particularly in plural societies where spiritual and social tensions coexist.

In conclusion, *tazkiyah al-nafs* is not merely a theological ideal but a Qur'anically rooted educational necessity. It offers a comprehensive model for spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation grounded in divine purpose. As this paper argues, centering *tazkiyah* in Islamic education reforms not only individual hearts but entire learning ecosystems. Any educational paradigm seeking to produce *insān kāmil*—the holistic human—must begin with the soul.

Qur'anic Verses on *Tazkiyah al-Nafs*

The Qur'an presents *tazkiyah al-nafs* as a recurring and central theme in the moral-spiritual development of humanity. Its semantic significance is underscored by

the repeated use of the root *z-k-y* in over 50 verses, often tied directly to prophetic missions and human accountability. This frequency is not merely linguistic but pedagogical; it reveals an underlying educational model embedded within divine revelation. According to al-Farmawī (1996), these verses collectively offer a blueprint for inner reform, designed to shape a spiritually coherent individual and a morally upright community.

Among the most explicit verses is Surah al-Shams [91]:7–10: *“Wa nafsīn wa mā sawwāhā, fa-alhamahā fujūrahā wa taqwāhā. Qad aflahā man zakkāhā, wa qad khāba man dassāhā.”* This passage places *tazkiyah* in the realm of cosmic oaths, where Allah swears by the soul and its innate moral compass. As Picken (2005) notes, the verse emphasizes that success (*falāḥ*) is reserved for those who engage in active purification, while failure is the outcome of spiritual neglect. The Qur’an thus equates the process of *tazkiyah* with both theological salvation and ethical success.

Another foundational verse is al-Baqarah [2]:129, in which Prophet Ibrāhīm ‘alayhi al-salām prays: *“Rabbānā wa ba’ath fihim rasūlan minhum yatlū ‘alayhim āyātika wa yu’allimuhumu al-kitāba wa al-ḥikmata wa yuzakkīhim.”* Notably, *tazkiyah* is positioned after revelation but before wisdom—indicating that purification is a necessary condition for understanding divine knowledge. This ordering has been interpreted by al-Sya’rāwī (2004) as a pedagogical sequence: the heart must be cleansed before the intellect can be enlightened. It mirrors educational psychology’s insight that moral readiness enhances cognitive reception.

A similar structure appears in Surah al-Jumu’ah [62]:2, where Allah describes the Prophet ﷺ as *“one who recites His verses, purifies them (yuzakkīhim), and teaches them the Book and wisdom.”* Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ (Shihab, 2002) explains that the process of *tazkiyah* involves not only ethical instruction but also emotional transformation—preparing learners to internalize divine values. Thus, *tazkiyah* is not a passive outcome but an active pedagogical goal embedded in the Prophetic mission.

In al-Baqarah [2]:151, the same sequence is repeated almost verbatim: *“As We have sent among you a Messenger... who purifies you (yuzakkikum) and teaches you the Book and wisdom.”* The redundancy of this structure across multiple verses signals divine emphasis. According to Yusuf (2018), it demonstrates that *tazkiyah* is not ancillary to

education but its very foundation. This harmonizes with Sa'īd Ḥawwā's reading in *al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr*, where *tazkiyah* is portrayed as the spiritual infrastructure upon which all learning is built.

Surah al-A'lā [87]:14–15 offers a more ritualistic dimension: "*Qad aflaḥa man tazakkā, wa dhakara asma rabbihi faṣallā.*" Here, *tazkiyah* is connected to *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and *ṣalāh* (prayer), suggesting that spiritual purification manifests in devotional acts. This linkage echoes al-Ghazālī's view that rituals are not merely formal obligations but instruments of soul refinement (Arifin et al., 2022). It also supports the pedagogical idea that repeated practice fosters internalization of values.

In QS al-Nisā' [4]:49, Allah critiques self-righteousness: "*Alam tara ilā alladhīna yuzakkūna anfusahum? Balillāhu yuzakkī man yashā'.*" The verse warns against self-declared piety and emphasizes that true *tazkiyah* is granted by God. This has important educational implications. While learners may pursue moral growth, ultimate validation lies with Allah—a humbling reminder that *tazkiyah* requires both effort and divine acceptance.

Surah al-Nūr [24]:21 also highlights moral agency: "*Lawlā faḍlu Allāhi 'alaykum wa raḥmatuhu mā zakkā minkum min aḥadin abadan.*" No one can achieve *tazkiyah* without God's grace. Yet, the conditional phrasing implies human initiative. Mulyadi (2021) argues that this verse balances agency and dependence, urging educators to cultivate both effort and reliance on divine guidance in their pedagogy.

From a psychological lens, these verses offer a sophisticated theory of moral cognition. Al-Shams [91] introduces the *nafs* as having both *fujūr* (wickedness) and *taqwā* (piety), suggesting an internal duality. Karzon (2005) interprets this as a call to *jihād al-nafs*—the struggle to prioritize higher inclinations over base desires. Islamic education, therefore, must account for this moral dialectic, structuring curricula that engage both reason and emotion in the pursuit of virtue.

Interestingly, the Qur'an categorizes the *nafs* into three developmental types: *nafs ammārah* (commanding evil), *nafs lawwāmah* (self-reproaching), and *nafs muṭma'innah* (tranquil soul). Though not all terms appear in the same verse, they reflect a taxonomy

of moral growth. Picken (2005) and Zainol (2019) suggest that these categories can inform differentiated spiritual instruction, where students are guided based on their ethical maturity. This allows for personalized *tazkiyah* pathways in education.

The recurring role of the Prophet ﷺ as *muzakkī* (purifier) further solidifies *tazkiyah* as a prophetic pedagogical mandate. His task was not only to teach but to transform – an educational model that moves beyond content delivery toward soul cultivation. Fuad (2014) notes that this prophetic methodology is absent in many modern Islamic schools, which often reduce Islam to rule memorization, devoid of internal change.

Additionally, the Qur'an's repeated use of *yuzakkīhim* underscores the communal nature of *tazkiyah*. It is not a solitary quest but a socially transmitted process. As Miswar (2014) points out, communal rituals, group *dhikr*, and mentorship all play crucial roles in actualizing Qur'anic *tazkiyah*. Educators, therefore, must function not only as information providers but as spiritual mentors, modeling the very virtues they aim to instill.

Many verses also reflect the protective function of *tazkiyah*. In QS al-Nūr [24]:30–31, injunctions on modesty are not merely social laws but serve the purpose of purifying vision and intention. Similarly, QS al-Tawbah [9]:103 commands the Prophet to take alms “to purify them (*tuṭahhiruhum*) and bless them.” Here, charity is an instrument of *tazkiyah*, suggesting a curriculum that includes both internal disciplines and social responsibility.

Educational theorists like Mursalin (2018) advocate for a holistic curriculum that maps these Qur'anic injunctions into learning outcomes. For example, *ṣalāh* as a tool of discipline, *ṣadaqah* as social ethics, and *dhikr* as emotional regulation. This framework links ritual, behavior, and cognition under the umbrella of *tazkiyah*, providing a unified model for moral education.

In summary, the Qur'an presents *tazkiyah al-naḥs* not as a peripheral concept but as a comprehensive system of spiritual formation. Through a network of verses, it outlines both the inner mechanics and outer expressions of purification. These verses provide a textual foundation for designing education that is simultaneously spiritual,

ethical, and transformative. They make clear that *tazkiyah* is not just theology—it is pedagogy.

Sufi Educational Values and Their Qur'anic Roots

The educational model embedded within *tazkiyah al-nafs* is best understood through the lens of Sufi values, which operationalize purification of the soul into pedagogical practice. Classical Sufi scholars—such as al-Ghazālī, al-Muḥāsibī, and Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh—did not view *tazkiyah* as an abstract metaphysical process, but as a structured, stage-based moral curriculum (*manāzil al-sālikīn*) intended to shape character and align the soul with divine will (Khan, 2020). These values are not static virtues but dynamic learning outcomes that manifest through guided spiritual education.

The first core value, *muraqabah*—awareness of Allah's constant observation—shapes ethical decision-making. Derived from *al-Ra'd* [13]:11 and supported by psychological studies, *muraqabah* encourages internalized discipline over external monitoring (Yusof & Yusof, 2017). It fosters reflective habits, such as checking one's intentions before acting, and forms the foundation of academic integrity in Islamic education. As al-Ghazālī emphasizes, *muraqabah* is a prerequisite for sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), as actions cannot be purified without perceiving divine scrutiny (Shihab, 2002).

The second value, *jihād al-nafs*, or the struggle against the lower self, is frequently mentioned in the Qur'an (e.g., *al-Shams* [91]:9–10) and in hadith, where the Prophet ﷺ called it “the greater jihad.” In the educational context, this represents the internal process of resisting ego-driven behaviors such as cheating, arrogance, and complacency. Picken (2005) notes that *jihād al-nafs* is not self-denial, but self-elevation. It encourages perseverance in learning, emotional resilience, and ethical resistance against internal laziness and spiritual apathy.

Ikhlaṣ (sincerity) is the third value, often described by scholars as the soul of worship and learning. *al-Bayyinah* [98]:5 explicitly commands: “They were not commanded except to worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion.” Educationally, *ikhlaṣ* ensures that acts of learning and teaching are done for divine pleasure rather than status or reward. Sa'īd Ḥawwā warns that without sincerity, religious knowledge

becomes a means of ego enhancement rather than soul purification (Zainol, 2019). This critique is highly relevant in modern Islamic education, where grade obsession can eclipse ethical formation.

Another central virtue is *ṣabr*—patience. The Qur'an repeatedly links patience with success and divine companionship (*al-Baqarah* [2]:153). In pedagogical settings, *ṣabr* manifests as sustained effort, endurance through failure, and the ability to remain ethically consistent in adversity. Huda & Budiman (2022) demonstrated that students who receive targeted training in *ṣabr*-based self-regulation exhibit better conflict resolution and academic performance. *Ṣabr* is not only reactive (enduring suffering) but proactive (delaying gratification), making it essential in moral education.

Taqwā—God-consciousness—is perhaps the umbrella virtue that frames all other *tazkiyah*-based values. Defined as the awareness that every action is subject to divine judgment, *taqwā* drives ethical vigilance in both public and private behavior. According to *al-Baqarah* [2]:2, the Qur'an itself is “a guidance for the *muttaqīn*.” This means that spiritual literacy is conditional upon a certain moral posture. As Yusuf (2018) argues, education without *taqwā* becomes mechanistic; with *taqwā*, it becomes transformative.

Additional Sufi values include *tawbah* (repentance) and *tawakkul* (trust in God). *Tawbah* encourages honest introspection and accountability, which are crucial for adaptive learning. The Qur'an in *al-Tahrīm* [66]:8 commands believers to “turn to Allah in sincere repentance,” a directive that mirrors the educational process of reviewing and correcting mistakes. *Tawakkul*, as described in *Āl 'Imrān* [3]:159, complements effort with submission, teaching students to exert effort while accepting outcomes beyond their control (Mohamad et al., 2017).

The integration of these values into educational frameworks requires more than theoretical endorsement—it demands curricular embodiment. The table (see above) maps each value to its Qur'anic source and pedagogical function. This mapping shows how Qur'anic *tazkiyah* provides the ethical infrastructure for Islamic pedagogy. For example, *muraqabah* supports formative assessment; *jihād al-naḥs* aligns with character education; and *ikhhlāṣ* anchors motivation theory in spiritual consciousness.

Table 1. Core Educational Values of Tazkiyah al-Nafs in Selected Qur'anic Verses

| Qur'anic Verse | Translation (Key Segment) | Spiritual Value | Educational Meaning |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|
| al-Shams [91]:7-10 | "Indeed, he succeeds who purifies it (<i>zakkāhā</i>), and he fails who corrupts it." | <i>Tazkiyah, jihād al-nafs</i> | Success in education depends on self-discipline and moral struggle. |
| al-Baqarah [2]:129 | "...and purify them (<i>yuzakkīhim</i>) and teach them the Book and wisdom..." | <i>Tazkiyah, ta'lim</i> | Purification is the foundation for effective learning. |
| al-Jumu'ah [62]:2 | "...reciting His verses to them and purifying them..." | <i>Tazkiyah, tarbiyah</i> | Pedagogical model that integrates spiritual development with instruction. |
| al-A'lā [87]:14-15 | "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself, and mentions the name of his Lord and prays." | <i>Dhikr, ṣalāh, ikhlāṣ</i> | Ritual practice is a tool for internal purification and character building. |
| al-Baqarah [2]:151 | "...purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you that which you did not know." | <i>Knowledge, tazkiyah</i> | Knowledge and purification are inseparable in Islamic pedagogy. |

These values are not merely abstract ethics but are transformative elements that reshape a learner's disposition, mindset, and behavior. For example, *muraqabah* cultivates awareness of divine oversight, fostering intrinsic motivation and moral accountability in students. *Ikhhlāṣ* eliminates superficiality in learning and service, rooting all action in sincerity and devotion. *Ṣabr* and *taqwā* help learners endure challenges and remain committed to personal growth, while *jihād al-nafs* teaches ongoing self-correction and ethical vigilance.

Educationally, these findings affirm the role of *tazkiyah* as an internal dimension of *tarbiyah*, making it essential for developing emotional intelligence, moral integrity, and social responsibility in learners. In contrast to modern secular education, which often isolates ethical training from intellectual development, the Qur'anic model integrates both into a unified spiritual-intellectual trajectory (Mohamad et al., 2017).

Educators who operationalize these values have seen meaningful outcomes. Jusoh et al. (2020) developed a *Tazkiyah Module* that incorporates *muraqabah*, *ṣabr*, and *tawbah* into reflective journaling exercises, prayer routines, and ethical case studies. The results showed improved empathy, self-regulation, and reduced disciplinary incidents among students. These findings confirm the practical viability of Sufi ethics in formal education when implemented with consistency and sincerity.

Critically, Sufi pedagogy emphasizes modeling. Teachers are expected to embody the values they teach—what al-Ghazālī calls *ta’dīb* (disciplining through example). This contrasts with authoritarian teaching, where morality is imposed rather than lived. In *al-Miṣbāḥ*, Quraish Shihab (2002) elaborates that prophetic education was effective because it combined *qaul* (speech) with *ḥāl* (spiritual state), making the messenger a mirror of divine ethics. This pedagogy remains absent in many contemporary settings, where moral formation is outsourced to religious studies departments.

Furthermore, the dialogic relationship between Qur’anic *tazkiyah* and Sufi ethics helps bridge the divide between ‘text-based’ and ‘experience-based’ education. The Qur’an offers the scriptural foundation, while Sufism provides interpretive and practical scaffolding. Abidin & Kamarudin (2011) argue that this synthesis is essential in post-secular education systems, where spirituality must be anchored in epistemological credibility.

Sufi educational values also align with global frameworks like emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning (SEL), but with a theocentric dimension. While SEL promotes empathy, Sufism roots it in divine mercy (*rahmah*). While SEL encourages mindfulness, *muraqabah* situates mindfulness within theological awareness. This correspondence supports hybrid pedagogies that blend modern insights with classical wisdom (Zohar, 2000).

While these values offer a pedagogical alternative to materialistic and secular approaches, their integration into contemporary educational systems may face several challenges. One significant barrier is the secular nature of many modern educational institutions, which may prioritize intellectual development over spiritual and moral growth. Integrating values such as *muraqabah* (self-awareness) or *ikhlas* (sincerity)

might be seen as incompatible with non-religious educational philosophies. Furthermore, measuring spiritual progress in students presents a significant challenge, as concepts like spiritual striving or self-awareness are inherently difficult to quantify in standardized educational assessments.

Despite these challenges, there are strategies to overcome them. First, teacher training programs could be developed to equip educators with the tools to incorporate spiritual values into their teaching practices, helping them bridge the gap between religious values and modern educational frameworks. Additionally, schools could adopt holistic educational models that include spiritual development as part of character education. By fostering an environment where spiritual and ethical growth is prioritized alongside intellectual achievement, these challenges can be mitigated, making the integration of Sufi values into contemporary education systems more feasible

Relevance of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* in Contemporary Education

In an age dominated by utilitarian approaches to education, the moral-spiritual vision of *tazkiyah al-nafs* offers a much-needed corrective. Contemporary education systems, both in Muslim and secular societies, often emphasize performance, achievement, and standardization, leaving minimal space for ethical development or soul formation. Scholars such as Mohamad et al. (2017) argue that modern educational goals are increasingly detached from human purpose (*maqṣad al-insān*) as envisioned in Islam. Against this backdrop, *tazkiyah* emerges as a prophetic alternative, offering a model that places the inner transformation of learners at the center of the educational process.

Integrating *tazkiyah* into Islamic education is not just a return to tradition but a means of revitalizing it. Mulyadi (2021), in his study of character education in the spirit of Abū Ḥasan al-Nadwī, shows how *tazkiyah* can fill the procedural and ethical vacuum in the Ministry of Education's framework. His model links internal religious disciplines (*fiqh bāṭin*) with civic values like honesty, tolerance, and responsibility, bridging religious pedagogy with national character policy.

Furthermore, *tazkiyah al-nafs* addresses a crucial dimension missing in today's classrooms: the cultivation of inner peace and resilience. Masyhuri (2012) links *tazkiyah* with mental health, positioning it as both a preventive and therapeutic approach to psychological well-being. In a world increasingly affected by anxiety, depression, and moral disorientation, soul purification as a holistic method becomes particularly relevant—not just spiritually, but also psychologically and socially.

Educational studies have empirically tested the impact of *tazkiyah*-oriented programs. For example, Jusoh et al. (2020) designed and applied a modular curriculum rooted in values such as *muraqabah*, *ṣabr*, and *tawbah*, and found measurable improvements in student behavior, discipline, and emotional maturity. Similarly, Hapsari & Rahman (2022) document the effectiveness of *tazkiyah*-based pedagogy in senior Islamic boarding schools, where elderly students reported heightened spiritual tranquility (*nafs muṭma'innah*) and reduced existential anxiety.

Fuad (2014) argues that *tazkiyah al-nafs* also has implications for the spiritual rehabilitation of the teaching profession. In his study, he proposes an integrative framework that restores the sacredness of being a *murabbī*—a teacher as a nurturer of hearts. This reclamation of teaching as a prophetic vocation can inspire more ethical, empathetic, and spiritually grounded educators who model rather than merely instruct.

The potential of *tazkiyah* as a basis for curriculum reform has also been explored. Mursalin (2018) presents a detailed blueprint for embedding *tazkiyah* into junior high school curricula. His approach includes developing goals, content, assessment, and learning strategies informed by Qur'anic ethics and Sufi methodology. Such integration ensures that education is not merely about transferring knowledge, but about guiding students toward becoming *insān kāmil*—the complete human being.

Other works, like that of Saputra (2019), examine the relevance of Ibn Taymiyyah's conception of *tazkiyah* for character education. He finds that Ibn Taymiyyah's integration of *īmān*, *tawḥīd*, and *taqwā* produces a coherent framework that balances theological foundations with actionable educational strategies. This supports the idea that *tazkiyah* is not confined to Sufi traditions, but is a cross-theological imperative in Islam.

On the philosophical level, scholars such as Karzun (2005) and Zohar (2000) point out that *tazkiyah* can interact with global educational paradigms such as emotional intelligence (EQ) and mindfulness—though it brings a transcendent dimension they lack. Whereas EQ trains empathy and self-regulation as social tools, *tazkiyah* roots them in divine accountability, transforming emotional intelligence into spiritual intelligence.

In practical terms, integrating *tazkiyah* into contemporary Islamic education requires strategic steps. Afif et al. (2022) argue for teacher training focused on personality refinement and moral embodiment. They propose that a teacher's competency should not be measured merely by knowledge delivery, but by ethical conduct, sincerity, and consistency in modeling Islamic values—hallmarks of *tazkiyah*-based professionalism.

The implementation is also feasible in non-formal education. Neha (2013) documents how the *Tarekat Qādiriyyah-Naqshabandiyyah* in West Java applies structured *tazkiyah* routines, from daily dhikr to reflective counseling, helping learners—including recovering addicts—experience deep behavioral change. This proves that *tazkiyah* is not abstract or elitist but adaptable and results-driven when properly contextualized.

Dwijayanti (2015), comparing the interpretations of al-Alūsī and Hamka, concludes that *tazkiyah* unites classical orthodoxy and modern reformism. It purifies not only from sin but from ideological confusion, anchoring education in clear spiritual objectives. This supports a paradigm where religious studies, moral philosophy, and civic instruction converge into a unified educational mission.

In addition to youth-focused reform, *tazkiyah* also proves beneficial for aging populations. Chaedar (2021) and Hapsari & Rahman (2022) have shown that *tazkiyah*-based learning for the elderly helps reduce fear of death, increase emotional peace, and strengthen social bonds. Their findings suggest that lifelong learning in Islam must include the spiritual dimension at all life stages.

Finally, the most important argument for reviving *tazkiyah* in education is theological. The Prophet ﷺ was sent, the Qur'an tells us, *li-yuzakkīhim*—to purify them. This divine mandate was not time-bound. As Zainol (2019) states, *tazkiyah* is the soul of

the Prophetic mission and thus must be the soul of any Islamic education reform effort. Its absence is not just an educational gap—it is a betrayal of the Qur'anic spirit.

Conclusion

This study has explored the Qur'anic and pedagogical significance of tazkiyah al-nafs as a central concept in Islamic education, particularly through a thematic analysis of key verses and Sufi educational values. The Qur'an presents tazkiyah not as a peripheral element, but as the foundation of human success and Prophetic pedagogy. Verses like Surah al-Shams [91]:9–10 and al-Baqarah [2]:129 highlight that purification of the soul precedes intellectual enlightenment and behavioral transformation. Through engagement with classical exegesis and modern pedagogical thought, this study demonstrates that tazkiyah encompasses core values such as muraqabah, jihād al-nafs, ikhlās, ṣabr, and taqwā, all of which can be translated into actionable educational goals. These values contribute to character development, emotional regulation, and spiritual formation—areas often neglected in modern, cognitive-centered curricula.

The research also shows that tazkiyah-based education has practical relevance across diverse educational settings: formal schooling, teacher training, adult learning, and even psychological therapy. Models in pesantren, character education programs, and Sufi institutions validate the adaptability and effectiveness of this approach. From classical thinkers like al-Ghazālī and al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī to modern integrative frameworks like those of Mulyadi, Fuad, and Hapsari, tazkiyah remains a living tradition in transformative education. Theologically, tazkiyah is the soul of Prophethood, and educationally, it is the missing soul in many contemporary models. To restore ethical clarity and spiritual coherence in Islamic education, tazkiyah al-nafs must be reintegrated as the core. It provides not only a moral compass but a holistic framework that aligns human purpose with divine will, preparing individuals to become *insān kāmil*.

This study recommends the structural integration of tazkiyah-based values into Islamic curricula, the reformation of teacher training institutions with tazkiyah as a core module, and the encouragement of interdisciplinary research combining Qur'anic

ethics, psychology, and education. Only through such integration can the goals of Islamic education – knowledge, character, and closeness to Allah – be fully realized.

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