

Revitalizing The Concept of *Adab* from Al-Ghazali's Perspective in The *Kitab Al-Adab Fi Al-Din* to Overcome The Moral Crisis of Generation Z in The Education Digital Era

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Abstract : *This study aims to reconstruct and revitalize Al-Ghazali's concept of adab (ethical conduct) as a response to the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital era. Rapid advancements in technology and social media have given rise to various ethical challenges, such as declining digital communication ethics, increasing narcissistic behavior, and weakened self-control regarding media usage. Employing a qualitative approach via a literature review, this study examines Kitab al-Adab fi al-Din as the primary source, supported by scholarly literature on digital education and the characteristics of Generation Z. The findings reveal a gap between classical *adab* values and the actual behavior of young people in digital spaces, largely attributed to the suboptimal integration of character education within the educational system, particularly in the digital age. To address this issue, the study proposes revitalizing the concept of adab by translating its values into social media ethics, digital self-control, and online moral awareness. Furthermore, it develops an adab-based character education conceptual model that encompasses curriculum integration, the cultivation of ethical digital habits, teacher role-modeling, and the strengthening of self-reflection. Ultimately, the study offers an adab-based educational framework that emphasizes not only digital literacy but also the reinforcement of moral and spiritual awareness in contemporary digital life.*

Keywords : *Revitalization, Ethics, Al-Ghazali, Moral crisis, Digital education.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the patterns of communication, social interaction, and identity formation among young people worldwide (Frizka Utami et al., 2025). The existence of algorithm-based social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, has made the digital space an integral part of Generation Z's daily lives. As a generation that has grown up alongside technology, Generation Z has gained broad, rapid access to information yet faces challenges such as information overload, a culture of instant gratification, and dynamic shifts in values (Khodijatul Karimah et al., 2026). This situation indicates that digital transformation affects not only technological aspects but also the character development, morality, and social behavior of the younger generation. If not balanced by moral maturity, easy access to

information can lead to deviant behaviors that threaten the quality of Generation Z's social life in the digital age.

In the national context, various studies indicate a trend toward declining ethical and moral standards in digital interactions. Phenomena such as cyberbullying, hate speech, the spread of misinformation, the use of disrespectful language, and a culture of seeking social validation through digital media are all signs of a moral crisis among Generation Z (Rosi et al., 2026). High levels of social media use are often accompanied by low self-control, increased impulsive behavior, and a weakening of ethical awareness in digital interactions (Hurriyati, 2026). This situation indicates that technological progress is not always accompanied by adequate character development, posing a serious challenge for the education sector in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually outstanding but also possesses strong moral and spiritual qualities.

Throughout history, education has tended to focus on the development of cognitive skills, digital literacy, and academic achievement, while character education has not yet been fully able to address the complexities of the digital age (Qoyimah & Ratnasari, 2025). In addition, character education is an integral part of educational goals. According to Thomas Lickona, character education is built on three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, which emphasize that good character is not only related to moral knowledge but also to awareness, attitude, and its implementation in real life (Naimah & Mujab, 2025). Therefore, strengthening the character of Generation Z requires an educational approach that focuses not only on technological proficiency but also on the continuous internalization of moral and spiritual values.

In the tradition of Islamic education, the concept of *adab* serves as the cornerstone of character development (Windi Lestari & Heldeyely Windri, 2025). *Adab* is not merely understood as politeness or good manners, but also encompasses human relationships with Allah the Almighty, fellow human beings, and the environment. Imam Al-Ghazali viewed the purpose of education as shaping individuals of noble character through *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *tahdzib al-akhlaq*, and *mujahadah al-nafs*, with self-control and the cultivation of good behavior at the core of education (Sari, 2023). These ideas are explained in the *kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*, which outlines values such as guarding one's speech, simplicity, controlling one's desires, cultivating righteous deeds, and social ethics (Ghazali, 2022). These values are relevant to various moral issues facing Generation Z in the digital age, particularly poor communication ethics, a culture of instant gratification, impulsive behavior, and weak self-control in the use of social media.

Several studies on the moral crisis among Generation Z have been conducted by researchers. The study by Santi et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of digital literacy in fostering ethical awareness among the younger generation, while Maulana et al. (2026) demonstrate that uncontrolled use of social media contributes to changes in students' behavior. Windi Lestari & Heldeyely Windri (2025) highlight the importance of character education in shaping one's personality. Meanwhile, Rozak et al. (2025) assert that Imam Al-

Ghazali's concept of adab serves as the foundation for moral development through habit formation and self-control. Muzammil & Kholis (2025) also demonstrate that classical Islamic texts (*turats*) play a role in character development. Nevertheless, most of these studies still examine character education, digital literacy, and the concept of adab separately. Studies of Imam Al-Ghazali's thought tend to focus on philosophical and normative aspects, whereas research on the moral crisis of Generation Z predominantly employs psychological, sociological, and digital literacy approaches.

Based on a review of previous research, there is a research gap indicating that studies on the revitalization of the concept of adab in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* as a solution to the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital age remain relatively limited. Previous research has not comprehensively linked the values of adab from Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective to the digital moral problems faced by Generation Z. Furthermore, the concept of adab in classical Islamic thought is still largely positioned as a normative-historical concept and has not yet been reconstructed into a contextual educational paradigm. Therefore, there remains an academic scope to develop a synthesis between the intellectual heritage of classical Islam and modern character education theory in addressing moral challenges in the digital age.

In light of this gap, this study offers a new perspective by revitalizing Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of adab in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* as a paradigm for moral education for Generation Z in the digital age. The novelty of this study lies in the reconstruction of the values of adab in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* that are relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z and the dynamics of digital society. Unlike previous studies, which tend to discuss the concept of adab normatively or character education in general, this study presents a synthesis between the classical Islamic intellectual tradition and contemporary character education theory. Thus, this study not only offers a reinterpretation of the classical Islamic intellectual heritage but also produces a new conceptual framework regarding adab-based character building as a solution to the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital age.

Theoretically, this study employs Imam Al-Ghazali's Theory of *Adab* as a grand theory to analyze the educational values contained in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*, particularly those related to the concepts of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *tahdzib al-akhlaq*, *mujahadah al-nafs*, *hifz al-lisan*, and the cultivation of good behavior. Meanwhile, Thomas Lickona's Character Education Theory is used as a middle theory to explain the process of internalizing adab values through the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action in shaping the character of Generation Z.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze and revitalize the concept of adab from Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* as an effort to address the moral crisis facing Generation Z in education in the digital age. The research focuses on identifying the values of adab contained in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*, analyzing their relevance to the moral problems of Generation Z, and constructing a conceptual model for character-building based on adab through integration with Thomas Lickona's Theory of

Character Education. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution by enriching research on Islamic education based on classical heritage while expanding the development of character education theory in the context of a digital society. Furthermore, on a practical level, this study is expected to serve as a conceptual foundation for educators, educational institutions, and policymakers in formulating strategies to strengthen the moral character of the younger generation amid increasingly complex developments in digital technology.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the concept of *adab* from Al-Ghazali's perspective and its relevance in addressing the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital age. This approach was chosen because it focuses on exploring abstract meanings, values, and concepts through interpretive analysis of social phenomena and the thoughts of prominent figures, particularly in the study of Islamic education, which emphasizes normative and philosophical values (Creswell, 2018). The method used is library research with a philosophical and conceptual approach, which enables the analysis of written sources such as classical texts, books, and scientific journals. Literature review plays a crucial role in constructing a theoretical framework, identifying research gaps, and developing contextual concepts (Abdurrahman, 2024). The philosophical approach is used to explore the essential meaning of the concept of *adab* in Al-Ghazali's thought, while the conceptual approach is used to relate it to the moral crisis of Generation Z in the digital age.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. The primary data is sourced from Al-Ghazali's *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* as the main reference for the concept of *adab* in classical Islamic education. Secondary data was obtained from journals and scientific literature related to digital education, the characteristics of Generation Z, and moral phenomena on social media (Jamaluddin et al., 2025), which serve to strengthen the analysis with empirical and theoretical contexts. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: content analysis, interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. Content analysis was used to systematically identify the values of *adab* in Al-Ghazali's *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*. The interpretation stage involved interpreting the concept of *adab* within the context of Generation Z's moral crisis in the digital age, such as communication ethics and behavior on social media. The final stage is conceptual synthesis, which involves combining the results of the analysis to formulate a model for the revitalization of *adab* as a scholarly contribution to the development of Islamic education and a solution to the moral problems faced by the younger generation in the digital age. The research process was carried out systematically through several interconnected stages. To facilitate understanding of the methodological framework employed in this study, the overall research procedure is presented in Figure 1. The diagram depicts the sequence of activities undertaken, from

identifying the research problem to developing a conceptual model of adab revitalization as a response to the moral challenges faced by Generation Z in the digital era.

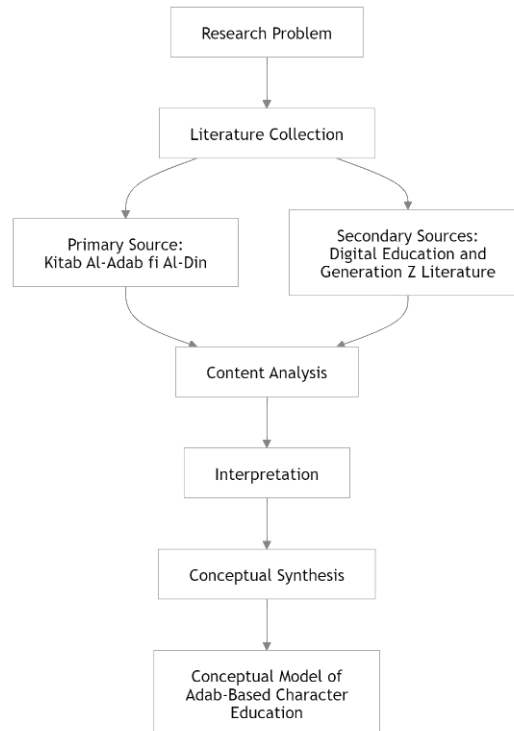


Figure 1. The Diagram of Research Stages

This research employed a library-based approach through a systematic process comprising problem identification, literature collection, content analysis, interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. The outcome of the research is a conceptual model of adab revitalization based on Al-Ghazali's perspective in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*, which is contextualized to address the moral challenges of Generation Z in the digital era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

a. The Concept of *Adab* in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi al-Din*

A study of the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* reveals that Imam Al-Ghazali regards adab as the core of human character formation—one that is not merely normative but also transformative in cultivating an individual's moral and spiritual qualities. In Al-Ghazali's perspective, *adab* does not stand as a concept separate from *akhlak* but rather is the embodiment of *moral* perfection arising from divine knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and the process of purifying the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) (Ghazali, 2022). Thus, *adab* is understood as a value system that guides human behavior holistically—in the vertical dimension (relationship with God), the horizontal dimension (relationship with fellow human beings), and the internal dimension (relationship with oneself).

The main findings show that the structure of *adab* in Al-Ghazali's thought is hierarchical and integrative. *Adab* is not merely understood as outward behavior but is rooted in the inner state of the human soul. A person's level of *adab* is largely determined by the clarity of their heart and their ability to control their desires. In this regard, *mujahadah al-nafs* serves as the primary foundation that determines the direction of character formation, as through this process individuals are trained to subdue negative tendencies that can undermine moral integrity.

آداب المتعلم
يبدؤه بالسلام، ويقل بين يديه الكلام، ويقوم له إذا قام،
ولا يقول له قال فلان ما قلت، ولا يسأل جليسه في
مجلسه، ولا يبتسم عند مخاطبته، ولا يشير عليه بخلاف
رأيه، ولا يأخذ بثوبه إذا قام، ولا يستفهمه عن مسألة في
طريقه حتى يبلغ إلى منزله، ولا يكثر عليه عند مله.

Figure 2. A student's conduct as described in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*

The meaning of Figure 2. "A student's etiquette begins with greeting others and not speaking immediately; standing up when someone enters; not saying, "Tell me what so-and-so said"; not smiling excessively when spoken to; not giving signals that contradict one's own opinion; not holding onto the person's robe when they stand up; not asking questions while they are on their way home; and not spending too much time with them once they've grown bored."

The research findings also identified several key pillars of etiquette in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*, namely guarding one's speech (*hifz al-lisan*), honesty (*shidq*), humility (*tawadhu'*), patience (*sabr*), and self-control (*mujahadah al-nafs*) (Ghazali, 2022). *Hifz al-lisan* holds a significant position as the primary instrument in maintaining the quality of social interactions, as speech – which, in a contemporary context, can be extended to include digital communication – serves as the primary medium for building or damaging social relationships. Meanwhile, the values of *tawadhu'* and *shidq* serve to rein in the ego and uphold moral integrity, while *sabr* acts as a mechanism for emotional stabilization in the face of life's dynamics.

A study of the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* reveals that Imam al-Ghazali conceptualizes *adab* as a system of moral education aimed at fostering a comprehensive ethical and spiritual consciousness (Ghazali, 2022). *Adab* is not merely understood as a set of formal behavioral rules, but as the ability to align every action with the guidance of sharia and the principles of wisdom. Within this framework, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of *hifz al-lisan*, *husn al-mu'amalah*,

and the attitude of *wara'* as the foundation of a harmonious life (Ghazali, 2022). Thus, *adab* possesses an educational character that fosters moral responsibility, so that a person's worth is measured not only by the breadth of their knowledge but also by their ability to maintain proper conduct and noble character in various aspects of life.

Further studies show that the development of good manners is viewed as a process of personal refinement through the cultivation of habits and the strengthening of the inner self (Rozak, et.al, 2025). Imam Al-Ghazali emphasized that the success of moral education depends on a person's ability to reform the heart (*ishlah al-qalb*) and cultivate virtuous character traits (*fadhail al-akhlaq*) (Ghazali, 2022). Therefore, the concept of *adab* encompasses not only interpersonal relationships but also emotional regulation, a simple way of life, and a balance between physical and spiritual needs. This perspective demonstrates that Al-Ghazali developed an integrative approach to character education by linking psychological, spiritual, and social dimensions to shape mature, principled individuals with sustainable moral intelligence (Muhajir et al., 2025).

Another dimension of the concept of *adab* developed by Al-Ghazali shows that *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* is oriented toward the formation of the perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*), grounded in sincerity, purity of heart, and closeness to Allah the Almighty (Ghazali, 2022). Imam Al-Ghazali viewed *adab* as a path toward moral perfection that impacts both individual lives and a civilized social order. Values such as *al-ikhlas*, *al-qana'ah*, *husn al-zann*, and *dawam al-muhasabah* serve as crucial instruments in shaping individuals of integrity who are oriented toward the transcendent (Ghazali, 2022). Thus, the concept of *adab* formulated by Al-Ghazali does not merely offer normative ethics but also presents a holistic model of moral education that remains relevant in the face of various contemporary social changes (Rozak, et.al, 2025).

Findings on Generation Z's Moral Crisis in the Digital Context

The study's findings demonstrate that Generation Z's moral crisis is most evident in the form of ethical deviations in digital communication. Phenomena such as hate speech, cyberbullying, the spread of false information (hoaxes), and the use of disrespectful language serve as key indicators of moral degradation in the virtual space (Anjani, 2024). In addition, a trend of "digital narcissism" has emerged—behavior characterized by the excessive display of one's self-image to gain social recognition through the number of likes, comments, and followers. This pattern indicates that the orientation of social interaction has shifted from substantive values toward algorithm-based symbolic validation.

Studies show that Generation Z's moral crisis is not merely individual in nature but is also influenced by structural factors within the digital ecosystem. Social media algorithms that promote viral and sensational content contribute to patterns

of impulsive and instant behavior. On the other hand, weak self-regulation and a lack of internalized moral values in the use of technology reinforce the tendency toward unethical behavior (Nisa & Asna, 2026). This situation is exacerbated by the education system's unpreparedness to holistically integrate digital literacy with character education.

Other findings indicate that Generation Z is experiencing a decline in self-control regarding digital media use. This is characterized by increased time spent on social media, a tendency toward compulsive behavior, and difficulty limiting their consumption of digital information. The impact is not limited to social behavior but also extends to psychological aspects such as anxiety, digital dependence, and a decline in the quality of real-world social interactions.

الآداب بين يدي الله تعالى
 أدب المؤمنين بين يدي الله تعالى : إطراق الطرف،
 وجمع الهم، ودوام الصمت، وسكون الجوارح، ومبادرة
 امتثال الأوامر واجتناب المناهي، وقلة الاعتراض،
 وحسن الخلق، ودوام الذكر، وتنزيه الفكر، وتقبيد
 الجوارح، وسكون القلب، وتعظيم الرب، وقلة الغضب
 وكتمان الحب، ودوام الإخلاص، وترك النظر إلى
 الأشخاص، وإيثار الحق، واليأس من جميع الخلق،
 وإخلاص العمل، وصدق القول، وتنزيه الاطلاع،
 وإحياء القربات، وقلة الإشارة، وكتمان الفائدة، والغيرة
 على تبديل الاسم والغضب عند انتهاك المحارم، ودوام
 الهيبة، واستشعار الحياء، واستعمال الخوف والسكون
 ثقة بالضمان والتوكل معرفة بحسن الاختيار، وإسباغ
 الوضوء على المكاره، وانتظار الصلاة بعد الصلاة،
 وارتعاش القلب خوف فوت الفرص، ودوام التوبة
 خوف الإصرار، ودوام التصديق بما غاب، ووجل
 القلب عند الذكر، وزيادة الأنوار عند الوعظ واستشعار
 التوكل عند الفاقة، وإخراج الصدقة من غير بخل مع
 الإمكان.

Figure 3. A Student's conduct in the presence of Allah Ta'ala

The Meaning of Figure 3. *"The Ethics of Believers Before Allah the Almighty Lowering one's gaze, embracing sorrow, maintaining silence, suppressing emotions, striving to obey commands and avoid the forbidden, offering little protest, embodying good character, engaging in constant remembrance of God, purifying the mind, subduing base desires, calming the heart, glorifying the Lord, rarely becoming angry while concealing one's love, remaining steadfast in loyalty, abandoning negative views of others, choosing the truth, relinquishing reliance on created beings, acting with sincerity, speaking honestly, guarding oneself against futility, observing the proper forms of worship, maintaining courtesy, using fear and tranquility as a foundation for trusting in God's assurance and reliance upon Him, discerning the best course of action, and giving charity generously whenever possible."*

The research findings confirm that Imam al-Ghazali, in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*, emphasizes the importance of *dawām al-dzikr* (consistency in remembering Allah), *tanzīh al-fikr* (purifying the mind), *taqyīd al-jawāriḥ* (controlling the limbs and behavior), *sukūn al-qalb* (tranquility of the heart), and *qillat al-ghaḍab* (controlling anger) (Ghazali, 2022). In addition, he also taught the attitudes of *kitmān al-hubb* and *kitmān al-fā'idah*—that is, not being excessive in self-promotion and not seeking human recognition—accompanied by the qualities of *al-ikhhlās* (sincerity), *ḥusn al-khuluq* (good character), and *isti'māl al-khawf wa al-raḡā'*, which foster spiritual balance (Ghazali, 2022).

One of the key findings of this study is the gap between the rise in digital literacy and the decline in moral awareness. Generation Z generally possesses high technical proficiency in using technology, yet this is not matched by ethical competence in managing information and digital interactions. This indicates that current developments in digital literacy focus more on technical aspects rather than on ethical dimensions and moral responsibility.

b. An Analysis of the Gap Between Imam Al-Ghazali's Concept of Adab and the Digital Reality of Generation Z

The findings regarding the concept of adab in the *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* and the actual behavior of Generation Z in the digital space reveal a fairly fundamental gap between the normative values of classical Islamic tradition and social practices in the digital age (Rozak, et.al, 2025). This gap is not merely conceptual but also practical, as it pertains to the weak internalization of the value of adab in actual behavior within virtual spaces.

The study successfully identified the concept of adab developed by Imam Al-Ghazali, which is grounded in spiritual awareness, self-control, and a transcendental moral orientation. However, in the digital realm, the meaning of this value has shifted. *Hifz al-lisan*, which should serve as the primary control in communication, has instead weakened, manifesting as impulsive speech, provocative comments, and the spread of hate on social media (Rozak, et.al, 2025). Similarly, *mujahadah al-nafs*, which demands self-control, is not fully present in digital behavior, which tends to be spontaneous, reactive, and based on fleeting emotions.

Further research findings also reveal that adab in Generation Z's social practices tends to be reduced in meaning to mere formal norms of politeness, lacking spiritual depth and ethical awareness. Adab is no longer understood as a comprehensive system of character development, but rather as a superficial code of conduct that is easily overlooked in anonymous and fast-paced digital interactions. This situation leads to a lack of consistency in moral behavior, especially when individuals are in digital spaces with minimal direct social control.

c. Revitalizing the Concept of Adab in the Digital Context of Generation Z

The results of the analysis demonstrate that the revitalization of adab is strongly aligned with Thomas Lickona's theory of character education, which emphasizes three key components—moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action—and is quite effective in addressing the moral crisis facing the younger generation in the digital age of education (Lickona, 2013). In this context, adab serves as a source of values (moral knowing), a process of spiritual internalization (moral feeling), and ethical behavior in the digital space (moral action) (Lickona, 2013). This integration demonstrates that the revitalization of adab does not stand alone but can be strengthened through a systematic and practical approach to character education.

Other findings from the analysis also indicate that a model for the revitalization of adab can be constructed around three main components: input, process, and output. Regarding the input aspect, the values of adab in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* —such as *hifz al-lisan*, *mujahadah al-nafs*, *shidq*, *tawadhu'*, and *sabr*—serve as the normative foundation (Ghazali, 2022). These values are then processed through Thomas Lickona's character education framework, which encompasses moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The end result of this process is the emergence of Generation Z, a generation possessing digital moral awareness, strong self-control, and responsible communication ethics in virtual spaces.

Based on the conceptual synthesis, the revitalization of adab can be understood as a transformative process that connects Al-Ghazali's classical moral values with Thomas Lickona's character education framework. Revitalization does not merely preserve traditional values but reinterprets and contextualizes them to address the moral challenges of Generation Z in digital environments. The relationship between the values of adab, the stages of character formation, and the expected digital character outcomes is illustrated in Figure 4.

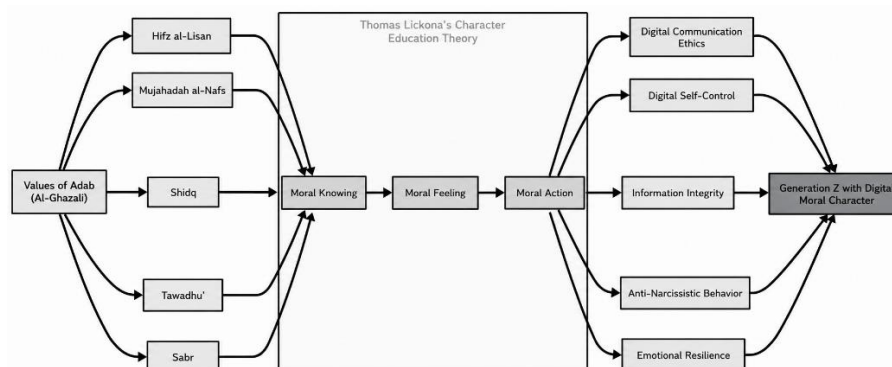


Figure 4. Model Revitalizing the Concept of Adab in the Digital Context of Gen Z

Figure 4 Illustrates the conceptual process of revitalizing the values of *adab* in the digital context of Generation Z. The model begins with the core values of *adab* derived from Al-Ghazali's thought, namely *hifz al-lisan* (guarding speech), *mujahadah al-nafs* (self-discipline), *shidq* (truthfulness), *tawadhu'* (humility), and *sabr* (patience). These values serve as the normative foundation for character formation and are subsequently integrated into Thomas Lickona's character education framework through three stages: *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. Through this revitalization process, classical values are transformed into contemporary digital character competencies, including digital communication ethics, digital self-control, information integrity, anti-narcissistic behavior, and emotional resilience. Ultimately, these competencies contribute to the formation of Generation Z individuals who possess strong digital moral character and are capable of navigating digital environments responsibly and ethically.

2. Discussion

The research findings demonstrate that the concept of *adab* in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* is highly relevant to addressing the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital age through efforts to revitalize the concept of *adab* in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* to overcome Generation Z's moral crisis in education during the digital era – which constitutes the novelty of this study. The results of the research analysis also show that the moral crisis is not only characterized by increasing ethical deviations in digital communication – such as hate speech, cyberbullying, the spread of misinformation, and the use of disrespectful language – but is also marked by weakened self-control, increased compulsive behavior in social media use, and the emergence of a narcissistic orientation centered on seeking social validation through digital media algorithms (Angkasa, 2026). These phenomena indicate that Generation Z's moral issues are no longer limited to outward behavioral aspects but have extended to the psychological, spiritual, and social structural dimensions that shape their digital behavior.

This finding reinforces Imam Al-Ghazali's view that the primary root of moral character lies in the inner state of the human soul. In *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din*, *adab* is not understood merely as etiquette or formal behavior, but as a manifestation of the purity of the *heart* (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and the ability to control one's carnal desires. According to Al-Ghazali, the quality of a person's behavior is largely determined by their ability to engage in *mujahadah al-nafs* – that is, the continuous struggle to control negative tendencies within oneself (Lupiah et al., 2025). Thus, the impulsive and reactive behavior commonly found in Generation Z's digital interactions indicates a weakening of the dimension of *mujahadah al-nafs*, which should serve as the primary foundation for character development.

Research studies highlighting the prevalence of hate speech, cyberbullying, and the spread of misinformation also point to a crisis in the aspect of *hifz al-lisan*, or guarding

one's speech. From Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective, speech is the primary instrument that determines the quality of a person's social relationships. In the context of digital society, the concept of *hifz al-lisan* is no longer limited to verbal communication but also encompasses virtual communication through social media (Rozak, et.al, 2025). This indicates that digital communication ethics are, in essence, a form of actualizing the value of *hifz al-lisan* in a contemporary context. Therefore, various forms of verbal abuse and the dissemination of false information carried out in the digital space can be understood as deviations from the principles of etiquette taught by Al-Ghazali.

This study aligns with other research indicating that generations raised in a digital environment tend to experience changes in social interaction patterns, increased individualism, and a decline in the quality of interpersonal relationships due to the dominance of technology in daily life (Anggraini, 2026). These conditions lead to more impulsive behavior and a lower sensitivity to the social consequences of actions taken in virtual spaces. Similar findings were also presented by Turkle (2015) who stated that excessive use of technology can create the phenomenon of "alone together" – a condition in which individuals are physically connected to many people but experience emotional isolation (Pratama, 2025).

Subsequent research findings also indicate that Generation Z's moral crisis is not solely caused by internal individual factors, but is also influenced by the structure of the digital ecosystem, which encourages instant and sensational behavior (Al-Kahfi & Arifi, 2025). Social media algorithms designed to maximize user engagement tend to prioritize content that is viral, emotional, and controversial (Nasoha et al., 2025). This environment indirectly shapes a digital culture that encourages individuals to seek attention and social recognition through various forms of excessive self-representation. This phenomenon demonstrates that Generation Z's moral crisis cannot be understood solely as an individual issue but is also linked to the social and digital cultural structures that influence human behavior patterns.

From Al-Ghazali's perspective, this condition indicates a weakness in *taqyid al-jawarih* (behavioral control), *qillat al-ghadab* (emotional control), and *sukun al-qalb* (peace of mind) (Ghazali, 2022). Imam Al-Ghazali asserts that a person who is able to control their limbs and desires will attain inner peace and will not be easily swayed by momentary emotional impulses (Hasyim, 2005). Conversely, individuals who have lost their ability to exercise self-control will easily fall into impulsive and destructive behavior. Research findings regarding the rise in compulsive social media use, digital addiction, and the emergence of psychological anxiety indicate that the loss of self-control has become one of the defining characteristics of Generation Z's moral crisis.

These findings are consistent with the Self-Regulation theory developed by Zimmerman (2000). According to Zimmerman (2000), self-regulation is a key factor in the development of responsible behavior. Individuals with strong self-regulation skills are able to control their emotions, manage their behavior, and make rational decisions.

Conversely, weak self-regulation makes a person easily influenced by external stimuli and prone to difficulty in controlling momentary impulses (Hasyim, 2005). Therefore, the moral crisis experienced by Generation Z is essentially a reflection of the weakening of self-regulation abilities in the face of an increasingly complex digital environment.

One of the key findings of this study is the gap between Generation Z's high level of digital literacy and their low level of moral awareness. Generation Z possesses strong technical skills in accessing and utilizing technology, but these skills are not accompanied by ethical maturity in the use of digital media (Rosi et al., 2026). This indicates that the digital literacy paradigm that has developed so far has placed greater emphasis on technical aspects than on moral and character dimensions. This finding aligns with Ribble (2015) view, which explains that digital citizenship is not only related to technological skills but also encompasses aspects of ethics, responsibility, and moral awareness in digital interactions.

Al-Ghazali's perspective suggests that education should not be limited to the acquisition of knowledge but must also be directed toward the development of a well-rounded personality through the process of purifying the soul (Rozak, et. al, 2025). Within this framework, values such as *shidq* (honesty), *tawadhu'* (humility), *sabr* (patience), and *mujahadah al-nafs* serve as mechanisms for ego control and emotional stabilization (Ghazali, 2022). Research findings on digital narcissistic tendencies—characterized by the need to obtain likes, comments, and followers—indicate a shift in social orientation from substantive values toward algorithm-based symbolic validation. This condition contradicts the concepts of *kitman al-hubb* and *ikhlas* taught by Imam Al-Ghazali, namely, not to be excessive in self-presentation and not to make human recognition the primary goal of one's actions (Hasyim, 2005).

On the other hand, other studies have shown that the education system has not yet been able to holistically integrate digital literacy and character education (Heluka & Mbelanggedo, 2025). In fact, character development requires a continuous process of internalizing values. This situation reinforces Thomas Lickona's theory of character education, which asserts that moral education must involve three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 2013). In the context of this study, Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of *adab* can be positioned as a source of values (moral knowing), while the processes of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and spiritual discipline serve as moral feeling. The implementation of these values in ethical digital behavior is a tangible form of moral action (Sumarni & Rochbani, 2025).

Based on the research findings, the revitalization of the concept of *adab* in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* holds tremendous potential as a paradigm for character education in the digital age (Rozak et al., 2025). The value of *hifz al-lisan* can serve as the foundation for digital communication ethics; *mujahadah al-nafs* functions as the basis for strengthening self-regulation; *shidq* forms the foundation of information integrity; *tawadhu'* plays a role in reducing digital narcissism and *sabr* serves as a mechanism for

emotional control in the face of rapid and massive information flows (Rozak, et.al, 2025). The integration of these values with Thomas Lickona's character education framework results in an educational model that is oriented not only toward technological mastery but also toward the development of moral and spiritual awareness.

Thus, the findings of this study indicate that the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital age is, in essence, a crisis of *adab*. This problem is not merely related to superficial behavior but is rooted in the weakening of the spiritual dimension, self-control, and moral consciousness. Therefore, revitalizing Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of *adab* in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* is highly relevant for development as a philosophical and pedagogical foundation for shaping a Generation Z that is not only digitally competent but also possesses strong character, integrity, and moral awareness. Based on the synthesis of the research findings and relevant theoretical perspectives, a conceptual framework was developed to explain the relationship between Generation Z's moral crisis, the factors contributing to its emergence, and the revitalization of *adab* as a character education solution. This framework integrates Al-Ghazali's concept of *adab* with Thomas Lickona's character education theory and is presented in Figure 5.

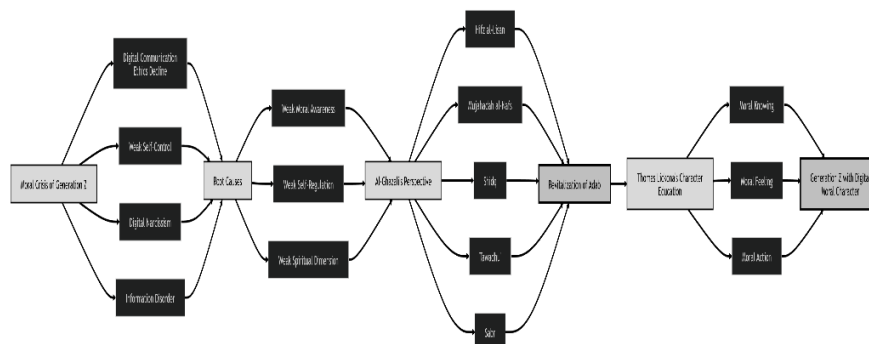


Figure 5. The framework integrates Al-Ghazali's concept with Thomas Lickona's concept

Figure 5 illustrates that the moral crisis of Generation Z in the digital era is reflected in declining communication ethics, weak self-control, digital narcissism, and information disorder. These problems stem from weak moral awareness, self-regulation, and spiritual values. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, these challenges can be addressed through the revitalization of the values of *hifz al-lisan*, *mujahadah al-nafs*, *shidq*, *tawadhu'*, and *sabr*. These values are integrated with Thomas Lickona's character education framework through the stages of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. The expected outcome is the formation of Generation Z with strong digital moral character, characterized by ethical communication, self-control, integrity, humility, and emotional resilience in digital environments.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital age is, in essence, a crisis of manners characterized by a weakening of self-control, ethical awareness, and spiritual orientation in the use of digital technology. The research findings reveal a gap between high digital literacy and low moral awareness, as reflected in phenomena such as cyberbullying, hate speech, the spread of misinformation, digital narcissistic behavior, and poor communication ethics in virtual spaces. In this context, the concept of adab from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* has proven to be highly relevant as a foundation for character development among Generation Z. Values such as *hifz al-lisan*, *mujahadah al-nafs*, *shidq*, *tawadhu'*, and *sabr* not only have a normative dimension but are also transformative in fostering moral awareness, self-control, and responsible digital ethics. Thus, the revitalization of Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of adab serves as a relevant and strategic approach to addressing the moral crisis facing Generation Z in the digital age.

The implications of this study suggest that character building in the digital age should focus on integrating technological literacy with the internalization of ethical values in the educational process. Theoretically, this study enriches the body of Islamic education through a synthesis of Imam Al-Ghazali's classical thought and contemporary character education theory, while practically, the research findings can serve as a foundation for educators, educational institutions, and policymakers in designing character education models that are more contextually relevant to the challenges of the digital society. The novelty of this study lies in the reconstruction and revitalization of the concept of adab in *Kitab Al-Adab fi Al-Din* into a moral education paradigm that is adaptable to the characteristics of Generation Z, as well as in the development of a conceptual model that integrates Imam Al-Ghazali's values of adab with Thomas Lickona's framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, thereby producing an adab-based educational framework that not only emphasizes digital literacy but also strengthens moral and spiritual awareness in contemporary digital life.

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