

## STUDENTS' SPIRITUALITY CRISIS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE DOMINANCE OF COGNITIVE APPROACHES IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING

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### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-01-2026

Revised : 07-02-2026

Accepted : 25-05-2026

### KEYWORDS

Cognitive Dominance;  
Digital Era;  
Islamic Religious  
Education;  
Student Spirituality;  
Tazkiyat Al-Nafs;

### ABSTRACT

This article examines the crisis of student spirituality in the digital era through a critical reading of cognitive dominance in Islamic Religious Education learning. The study was compiled from the fact that increasing access to religious knowledge does not always go hand in hand with the formation of students' inner awareness. The research uses a qualitative study based on literature studies with a critical conceptual analysis of the works of Paulo Freire, Thomas Lickona, and Al-Ghazali, accompanied by journal articles that discuss religious learning, character education, critical pedagogy, and student spirituality. The analysis was carried out through the identification of theoretical categories, comparative reading of the latest literature, and then interpretive synthesis. The results of the study show that the dominance of learning based on material mastery produces inequality between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Students know religious values verbally, but affective attachment to these values develops unevenly. The digital space expands access to religious materials, but knowledge is often received in fragments. Freire pointed out that one-way learning relationships still persist in religious learning. Lickona explained that moral knowledge has not automatically turned into moral action. Al-Ghazali emphasized that knowledge must move to the territory of tazkiyat al-nafs. This article offers a synthesis of reflective pedagogy as a direction for the renewal of religious learning.

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### INTRODUCTION

The increase in academic achievement in Islamic Religious Education subjects does not always move in the same direction as the formation of students' religious awareness. In many schools, students are able to explain the definition of morality, describe the pillars of worship, and mention the normative arguments of a teaching, but this knowledge often stops as the content of memorization that is not fully present in the choice of daily attitude. This symptom appears when religious material is understood as part of the demands of academic evaluation, rather than as a reflective experience that touches on the way of thinking and the way of judging actions. Religious knowledge is ultimately easier to identify through written answers than through the ability of students to read the moral problems

they face themselves. At this point, religious teaching produces the skill of correct answering, but it has not always given birth to a stable inner relationship between the values learned and the ethical decisions made. Salirawati (2021) It shows that the structure of religious learning in schools still gives much greater space to moral knowing than moral feeling and moral action, so that students know the categories of values, but have not fully built an affective attachment to these values.

Changes in knowledge consumption patterns through digital media reveal a more complicated layer of problems. Religious information circulates very quickly, coming through short videos, lecture snippets, verse excerpts, or legal explanations condensed into a visual form that is easily transferred from one platform to another. The intensity of this exposure increases students' access to religious materials, but it is not always followed by the habit of reading in depth. Students accept many normative terms, but often do not have enough space to weigh the meaning, origin of the argument, and the relationship of these values to their own life experiences. Religious material finally comes as a flow of information that continues to move without adequate pause for reflection. Ilmudinulloh et al. (2026) It shows that modern education still maintains a one-way pattern between the giver of the material and the recipient of the material, even though the learning apparatus has changed with technological developments. The shift in media does not automatically change the pedagogical pattern that has long relied on the transmission of teaching content.

This situation can be read through Paulo Freire's criticism of the educational model that he calls the Pedagogy of the Oppressed banking education. Freire places such education as a relationship when the teacher stores knowledge in the student as one puts a deposit into a storage place. Knowledge is treated as the final content that must be received, remembered, and then repeated. Such a structure does not provide enough space for learners to examine their own experiences through the material studied. When read through religious learning, the pattern appears to be the dominance of normative explanations that demand the accuracy of answers, while the space for dialogue about students' moral anxieties, conflicts of religious experiences, or social readings of teachings is relatively narrow. Research from Budnyk et al. (2023) emphasizing that Freire's critical pedagogy is still used today to explain why school modernization does not automatically produce critical awareness of students. In religious teaching, the problem appears when students know the formulas of right and wrong, but are not always able to explain why these values should be presented in the situation.

The imbalance between material mastery and the formation of moral dispositions has also been discussed for a long time by Thomas Lickona through Educating for Character. Lickona divides character formation into moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The three elements do not stand alone. Moral knowledge only provides the basis for the recognition of values; a sense of morality connects knowledge with inner involvement; Moral action indicates whether values have become a habit. In the practice of religious learning in schools, the first element is often much more dominant because the curriculum is easier to assess the ability to explain concepts than to examine the depth of attitudes. Studies from Hafizallah (2024) shows that religious education in schools still strongly emphasizes moral knowledge, while the formation of a sense of attachment to values takes place unevenly. This situation explains why students can understand the categories of honesty, responsibility, or trustworthiness, but still have difficulty making those grades a spontaneous measure when faced with choices.

In classical Islamic education, Al-Ghazali does not place knowledge as a mere intellectual accumulation, but as a way of building the soul. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, knowledge acquires meaning when it gives birth to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, which is the inner work that changes the way a person views himself, others, and his relationship with God. Al-Ghazali shows that his criticism is directed at learning traditions that give too much space to rational abilities but do not organize the spiritual orientation of students. Research from Siregar et al. (2025) suggests that Al-Ghazali's criticism of modern education is directed at a formalistic tendency that measures the success of learning from intellectual achievement without paying sufficient attention to the formation of the soul. At this point, religious knowledge that does not touch the formation of the mind easily turns into symbolic legitimacy without personal changeability.

Islamic Religious Education learning in recent years has been more focused on technical updates of digital learning. Religious learning strategies based on social media and e-learning show that classroom digitalization is understood primarily as a way to increase student engagement through interactive platforms, strengthening digital

literacy, and variety of learning resources. Rodhiyana et al. (2025) It shows that the use of social media and e-learning provides a new space for the delivery of religious materials, but the focus of the study rests on media use strategies and teachers' competence in managing digital classrooms, and has not examined how these learning structures shape students' relationships with religious meaning. Similar studies also appeared in the study Shifa Annur et al. (2025) which places digital literacy as a means of building students' ability to read religious information in the digital space, with the main emphasis on the ability to sort sources and expand access to teaching materials.

Another direction of research is moving towards the integration of Islamic values and digital technology. The integration of digital technology with the values of monotheism, morals, and digital ethics is seen as a learning model that can strengthen students' moral awareness, but the analysis is still at the conceptual design level of the use of technology, so the relationship between cognitive dominance and the formation of spiritual depth has not been directly discussed (Jannah, Aini, et al., 2025). The development of children's spirituality through digital religious education also shows that interactive media can be used to introduce spiritual values from an early age, but the focus of the discussion is directed at innovative learning strategies, not on the epistemological structure of religious teaching that makes spirituality often stop at formal symbols.

Emotional and spiritual dimensions are also beginning to emerge, especially through humanistic readings of digital Islamic education. Religious teaching based on humanistic learning can help the development of students' emotional and spiritual intelligence, but the discussion still places spirituality as the result of the integration of technology and human values in general, not yet directed at criticism of the long-standing dominance of memorization-based teaching in religious classrooms (Putri et al., 2025). Digital religious education is more focused on media, strategies, and technological adaptation. A space that has not been touched much lies in readings that place the crisis of students' spirituality as a result of the way religious knowledge is produced and taught. This article places the problem through a synthesis of critical pedagogy, character theory, and classical Islamic educational thought so that the relationship between the mastery of religious knowledge and the spiritual depth of students can be read more fully.

This article is designed to read the relationship through three theoretical foundations. Freire is used to explain the pedagogical structure that places students as recipients of instructional content. Lickona is used to explain the distance between moral knowledge and the formation of character dispositions. Al-Ghazali is used to affirm the orientation of knowledge related to the development of the soul. The three frameworks are brought together to answer one main question: why religious learning that successfully transmits knowledge has not always given birth to the spiritual depth of students.

## METHODS

This study uses a qualitative study design based on literature studies with a critical conceptual analysis orientation. The method used has the reason that the problem discussed is not directed at measuring field symptoms, but at tracing the relationship between the structure of religious learning, critical pedagogical theory, character formation theory, and the spiritual orientation of Islamic education. The literature review in this article is not placed as a descriptive collection of references, but as a process of systematic reading of published scientific arguments, then rearranged through theoretical synthesis to obtain new explanatory constructions.

The data sources are divided into two groups. The first group is in the form of primary literature containing the main works of three figures that are the basis of the analysis, namely Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire, Educating for Character by Thomas Lickona, and Ihya' Ulum al-Din and the reading of Al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal by Al-Ghazali. The primary literature is used to derive the original conceptual categories of each theory, so that the terms used do not depend entirely on secondary interpretations. The second group is in the form of scientific journal articles published in 2021 - 2026 which are selected through criteria: published in national or international indexed journals, discuss religious learning, critical pedagogy, character education, student spirituality, or digital Islamic education, and are directly related to the issue of cognitive dominance in religious learning. The articles used were not randomly taken, but were selected after reading the abstract, the purpose of the research, the unit of analysis, and the fit of the argument to the focus of the article.

Literature searches are carried out through open journal databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, religious

college journal portals, and several national Islamic education journals that contain articles in the last five years. The keywords used include Islamic religious education, students' spirituality, critical pedagogy, moral knowing, digital religious learning, and Islamic educational thought. Articles that only discuss learning media without conceptual analysis of the teaching structure are not included as the main data, but are used as comparative materials. Research from Zaenuri et al. (2025) It shows that a literature review that places primary works and cutting-edge articles in layers provides a stronger space to read the continuity of classical ideas and contemporary educational phenomena.

The analysis process is carried out through three stages of work. The first stage is in the form of a categorical reading, which is to identify the core terms of each theory. From Freire, the categories of banking education, dialogue, and critical awareness were taken. From Lickona moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action are taken. From Al-Ghazali is taken knowledge, tazkiyat al-nafs, and the orientation of soul formation. The second stage is in the form of a comparative reading of the latest journal articles to see how these categories have appeared in the discussion of religious education in the last five years. The third stage is in the form of interpretive synthesis, which is to put all these categories into one flow of explanation about the relationship between the dominance of knowledge-based learning and the symptoms of students' spirituality.

The unit of analysis of this research is not the entire content of the collected articles, but rather the part of the argument that speaks directly about the way religious knowledge is taught, how morality is formed through the learning process, and how spirituality is understood in modern Islamic education. Each article is read by looking at the position of the problem, the theoretical framework, the main results, and the limits of its analysis. Literature that does not show a direct relationship to the focus of the discussion is not used as the basis for the main argument (Bancong, 2025). The validity of the analysis is maintained through cross-reading between primary sources and the latest journal articles. Each major concept is re-examined on the character's original work before being used to read secondary articles.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Symptoms of Student Spirituality Crisis in the Digital Era

Changes in students' learning behavior in the digital space show a shift in the way they relate to religious knowledge. Religious materials are now available through short video clips, verse excerpts, infographic legal explanations, and short-duration lectures that circulate continuously through social media. This kind of information flow expands students' access to religious teaching materials, but it is not always followed by in-depth reading. Students receive many normative terms, recognize a number of postulates, and quickly repeat the content of newly obtained information, but the relationship between the material and the process of mental deposition is often not established in a stable manner (Ansya et al., 2025). Digital-based religious learning shows that the use of online media increases the intensity of exposure to religious material, but the quality of students' reflective engagement is highly dependent on how the material is processed during learning. Zakiyyah (2024) It shows that the digitization of religious learning increases the frequency of students' access to Islamic sources, but teachers remain the main determinant of whether the material stops being information or develops into a deeper process of meaning.

These symptoms appear when religious knowledge is remembered faster than it is appreciated. In many classrooms, students are able to explain prohibitions, obligations, halal-haram categories, and moral principles verbally, but these skills are not always accompanied by the ability to read moral situations that they face themselves. This phenomenon can be seen in the habits of students who can cite the value of honesty, but still consider minor manipulation of academic assignments as actions that are not related to ethical issues. Situations like this show that normative knowledge has not fully moved into personal moral consciousness. Mar'ah (2022) explained that religious education in schools still gives the dominant portion to moral knowing, while moral feeling develops more slowly because the learning process often stops at the explanation of value categories. When grades are taught mainly as material content, students' emotional connection to the grades becomes uneven.

The digital space also changes the pattern of students' attention to religious materials. Information is received through the same screens as entertainment, social conversations, games, and various other forms of visual stimulation. Circumstances like this make religious material enter the attention area that continues to shift. Students read religious

quotes in between other activities, moving from one topic to the next without enough pause to build reflection. Islamic education shows that the current school generation more often interacts with religious knowledge in a fragmentary manner, that is, receiving information quickly but rarely exploring the arguments behind it (Taufiq, 2025). The ability to sort digital religious information is still not balanced with the ability to understand the depth of the content of the message received, so that students easily remember moral slogans without understanding the frame of mind.

The crisis of spirituality in students does not always appear in the form of rejection of religion. The more frequent symptom is in the form of religious formalities. Worship is carried out as a familiar routine, but the relationship between the practice and inner consciousness is often not developed in a balanced way. A number of students carry out ritual obligations due to school rules, family culture, or social customs, while reflection on the meaning of worship itself has not grown strong. The religious expression of the younger generation often appears through symbols, quotes, and visual identities, while talk of inner discipline, self-control, or deliberation does not always gain enough space. Jannah et al. (2025) explained that digital religious education in the younger generation often succeeds in attracting students' visual attention, but the process of internalizing spiritual values still requires more targeted guidance.

Another symptom can be seen in the student's relationship with religious authorities. In the digital space, students receive religious explanations from many sources at the same time: teachers, social media preachers, lecture snippets, religious motivational accounts, and online discussion forums. This diversity of sources expands the reading material, but it also gives rise to a highly selective pattern of acceptance. Students tend to choose material that is short, easy to understand, and close to everyday language. Material that demands long study is often left out. This situation forms a relationship with religion that relies heavily on the convenience of information consumption. If religious knowledge continues to be received in a concise form, then spiritual depth easily shifts to the satisfaction of receiving a quick answer. Research from Budnyk et al. (2023) It shows that modern education that relies heavily on the transmission of teaching content tends to produce students who quickly receive information, but do not automatically have the habit of critical reflection.

From the literature, it can be seen that the symptoms of a student spirituality crisis in the digital era do not lie in the reduced exposure to religious materials, but in the change in the way religious knowledge is received and processed. Information increases, but the space of inner deposition narrows. Religious material is present more closely, but it does not always enter the realm of reflective consciousness. At this point, the crisis of spirituality cannot be read as a simple decline in religiosity, but rather as a distance between the intensity of religious knowledge and the formation of a stable inner consciousness.

### **Cognitive Dominance in Islamic Religious Education Learning**

Cognitive dominance in religious learning can be seen since the determination of learning outcomes that are more measured through the ability to explain concepts, remember postulates, and repeat normative formulations according to textbooks. The school's evaluation structure places students' success on the accuracy of written answers, mastery of definitions, and the ability to identify legal categories. As a result of such an arrangement, the religious learning process moves according to the logic of material completion and evaluation targets, while the dialogue space regarding students' religious experiences gets a much narrower portion (Rohman & Qohar, 2026). In classroom practice, the material of faith, fiqh, morals, and Islamic history is often compiled as a sequence of information that must be completed according to the academic calendar. The teacher is in the position of delivering the teaching content, while students are directed to understand the material according to the formula that has been set by the curriculum. Digital religious learning shows that changes in learning media have not changed the basic structure; Technology only accelerates the distribution of teaching content without changing the learning orientation that still relies on mastery of the material. The digitalization of religious learning in schools is still moving towards strengthening the distribution of materials and the efficiency of delivering lesson content.

This tendency shows that religion is treated as an object of knowledge that must be completed gradually through academic indicators. Students learn the categories of halal and haram, the pillars of worship, types of uncleanness, the legal requirements of worship, and the formulation of commendable morals through a neat classification format. Such a structure makes it easier to measure learning outcomes, but the relationship between that knowledge and students'

moral struggles is not always seriously discussed. In a number of situations, students can explain the prohibition of lying conceptually, but do not gain enough space to discuss why academic manipulation is still considered mild by many students. Moral knowledge exists as completed information, not as material for the study of concrete experience. Research from Hafizallah (2024) It shows that religious learning in schools still puts the main emphasis on moral knowing, while the affective element develops more slowly because learning activities often stop at the explanation of concepts.

Such an arrangement is close to Paulo Freire's critique of the learning model that places knowledge as a deposit. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire explains that teachers often act as fillers, while students are positioned as storage places for lesson content. This relationship does not stop at the transfer of information, but also shapes the way students understand science as something that is accepted in its entirety without the need to question it again. If read through religious learning, this pattern can be seen when students are required to accept the categories of right and wrong in the final without practicing examining the relationship between those values and the reality they face themselves. Budnyk et al. (2023) emphasizing that Freire's critical pedagogy is still used to read modern education which still relies on one-way transmission even though the form of the classroom has changed with technological developments.

Cognitive dominance is also seen in the way religious textbooks are arranged. A lot of material is presented through a list of points, brief definitions, quotations of postulates, and then ends with practice questions that require one correct answer. This pattern provides clarity on the structure of the material, but often cuts out the possibility of students dealing with real moral ambiguity. Students' social lives are full of situations that cannot always be answered through simple classification. Digital social conflicts, image-based social relations, peer pressure, and how to build academic honesty require longer reasoning exercises than simply recognizing normative categories (Rahman, 2025). When textbooks give only final answers, students are accustomed to seeing religion as a list of provisions, rather than as intellectual work that demands inner reasoning and precipitation.

Similar conditions can be seen in the relationship between teachers and students during learning. Teachers are often burdened with dense curriculum targets so that the explanation of the material is more directed at solving the topic than deepening the meaning. Class time is used to explain the core material, copy the main points, and then give evaluation exercises. Conversations about students' religious anxieties, the ethical conflicts they experience, or questions born of digital experiences often don't get enough space because they're considered out of the core. Even though students' spiritual symptoms often appear in the area. When the classroom only makes room for material that is ready to be tested, religious learning loses the opportunity to work as a space for consciousness formation.

Religious learning that relies too much on cognitive logic can also be seen from the way students' success is read administratively. Report card scores, exam results, and completeness of material indicators are the main markers of learning success. Such a measure makes it easier for the school system to work, but it is not fully able to read whether religious material has shaped the inner discipline of students (Iqbal, 2021). The update of teaching media has not automatically changed the orientation of the evaluation. The integration of technology in Islamic education is still more directed at accelerating access to materials than rearranging students' relationships with the meaning of the values learned.

From this arrangement, it can be seen that cognitive dominance is not just a matter of teaching methods, but the way schools understand religious knowledge itself. As long as religion is read primarily as the content of the curriculum that must be taught and tested, the space for the deposition of values will remain narrow. At this point, the issue of religious learning is not enough to be discussed through media innovations or variations in classroom techniques, but must touch on how religious science is positioned from the beginning of the learning process.

### **Inequality of Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action**

When religious learning moves more towards mastering concepts, the imbalance between elements of character formation becomes more visible. Students know the moral category quite well, can explain the meaning of trust, fairness, honesty, patience, and responsibility through the formulation that is appropriate to the textbook, but this knowledge does not always grow into an inner involvement in the values learned (Fitria & Ramatullah, 2026). This situation suggests that moral mastery as knowledge does not automatically produce emotional readiness to maintain

that value in situations that demand personal choice. In the classroom, the symptom appears when students are able to answer questions about academic integrity, but still see petty plagiarism, assignment copying, or attendance manipulation as less serious offenses. Moral knowledge is present, but the affective binding force on these values has not been steadily formed.

Reading like this is in line with Thomas Lickona's formulation through Educating for Character which divides character formation into three elements, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Moral knowing is related to the ability to understand value categories and distinguish between what is worthy and what is not. Moral feeling refers to the inner involvement that makes a person feel attached to those values. Moral action is related to real actions that are repeated until they become habitual. The three elements work interrelated; When one of the elements moves more dominantly, the character formation is lame. Hafizallah (2024) It shows that religious education in schools often stops at moral knowing because the learning system is easier to assess knowledge than reading students' affective involvement of moral values.

This inequality can be seen in the way grades are taught through categories that have been formulated from the beginning. The teacher explained that honesty must be maintained, responsibility must be carried out, and manners towards teachers must be maintained. Students receive the content of the material clearly. However, talk of how shame works when someone is dishonest, how inner conflict arises when students have to choose between peer pressure and moral principles, or how failure to carry out responsibility is read as an ethical issue is often not discussed in enough depth. As a result, students understand the content of grades, but do not always recognize the emotional experiences that accompany the application of those grades. The moral feeling that should grow through reflection exercises becomes less awakened because the learning process moves more on verbal explanations (Daniyarti et al., 2024).

Similar symptoms are also seen in students' relationships with digital spaces. On social media, students often share moral quotes, short verses, or messages of religious motivation. The activity shows that the moral category has been well known. However, the presence of moral symbols in the digital space does not always indicate an inner attachment to shared values. Many students may display religious identities visually, yet still engage in aggressive communication, the dissemination of information without verification, or any form of digital ridicule that goes against their own self-quoted values. Visual exposure to moral values does not automatically result in a stable moral appreciation if the reflection process is not built continuously. Religious digital literacy in students is still dominated by the ability to recognize the content of the message, while critical reading of the moral meaning of the message has not developed evenly (Aditia et al., 2024).

When moral feelings do not grow adequately, moral action also runs unstable. Students can express approval of certain grades, but their implementation is subject to external supervision. Discipline arises when rules are checked; honesty persists as long as control is still strong; Social concern appears in activities that have been scheduled by the school. In unsupervised situations, moral values often lose their practical force. Such circumstances show that moral action has not yet become an inner habit, but is still highly dependent on external structures. In Lickona's theory, moral action is only formed when knowledge and emotional involvement have met in a sufficiently stable manner. If one of the elements is weak, the action easily changes according to the pressure of the situation.

The structure of religious learning that emphasizes too much mastery of the material also widens the distance between these elements. Students are invited to recognize many categories of values, but the practice of linking values to self-experience is still limited. In fact, moral formation does not move only through the explanation of concepts, but through the habit of reading personal experiences ethically. When students are not given space to talk about their own moral conflicts, religious values are easier to understand as normative demands from without, rather than as consciousness that grows from within (Sari, 2023).

The update of learning media has not automatically touched this problem. The use of digital media in religious education is able to attract students' attention to the content of spiritual material, but the visual success is not always followed by the formation of affective depth if the learning process stops at the consumption of digital materials (Jannah, Jihada, et al., 2025). This situation confirms that the inequality between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action is not only a matter of learning tools, but related to the structure of learning relationships that still place value as the content of knowledge that must be mastered first before being connected to life experience.

From the reading, it can be seen that the crisis of student spirituality is not sufficiently explained through the weakness of religious knowledge, because there is often quite a lot of knowledge available. The main problem lies in the disconnection between what is known, what is felt, and what is carried out. As long as religious learning does not provide adequate space for emotional engagement and lively moral exercise, the three elements will continue to move unbalanced.

### **Al-Ghazali's Perspective: Science, Tazkiyat al-Nafs, and the Reconstruction of Spirituality in Islamic Religious Education Learning**

Reading on students' spirituality crisis does not stop at the problem of material distribution or inequality in character formation. In the tradition of classical Islamic education, similar issues have been discussed through the relationship between science and soul development. Al-Ghazali places knowledge not as an accumulation of information, but as a path of self-change that must move to the inner realm. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, knowledge is considered valuable when it presents a change in attitude, control of passions, and the regularity of human relationships with God and others. Knowledge that stops at the ability to explain is considered to have not achieved the goal of education. The measure of learning success does not lie in the breadth of memorization, but in the changes that appear in manners, intentions, and clarity of heart.

The framework gives a different reading to religious learning in schools. If religious material is taught mainly as the content of the curriculum that must be discussed, then knowledge is at the level of verbal mastery. Students can mention postulates, elaborate on laws, and answer normative categories well, but inner changes do not always move along with the knowledge acquired. At this point, knowledge is present as an intellectual mastery that has not met with the work of self-purification. A recent reading of Al-Ghazali's work shows that his criticism is directed at the learning tradition that gives a great deal of space to ratios, but lacks the spiritual orientation of the students. In research Hanafi and Achmad (2026) explained that Al-Ghazali considers that science loses its direction when the search for knowledge is separated from the development of the soul and morals.

The concept of tazkiyat al-nafs is at the core of the structure. Tazkiyat al-nafs does not simply mean individual spiritual practice, but educational work that organizes the mind so that knowledge gives birth to self-awareness. In the religious learning room, this idea shows that the material is not enough to be presented as a list of concepts, but needs to be linked to self-reading exercises. When students learn honesty, the conversation doesn't stop at definitions, but moves into the territory of how fear, group-accepted desires, and tendency to cover up mistakes work on their moral decisions. When discussing the mandate, students need to be taken to read how responsibility is present in the small habits they live every day. Without this kind of process, knowledge remains in the verbal realm (Zuchdi, 2023).

Al-Ghazali also placed intention as an inseparable part of science. Knowledge is not seen as neutral; The direction of knowledge is determined by the purpose of the seeker. If science is studied only to solve academic demands, then the mental relationship with science becomes thin. Modern religious learning often shows such symptoms. Students learn to meet exam demands, get good grades, or complete school obligations. Learning activities take place, but the relationship between science and self-formation is not always talked about openly. In this arrangement, religion is easily understood as school material that has the same academic burden as other subjects. Al-Ghazali's criticism emphasizes that religious knowledge cannot be separated from the development of inner orientation from the beginning of the learning process.

This reading also provides corrections to the relationship between teachers and students. In the Al-Ghazali tradition, teachers not only function to convey the content of knowledge, but also maintain the moral direction of the knowledge given. Teachers are understood as figures who arrange the learning path, not just the conveyor of the content of the material. If read in today's classrooms, this function means that religious teachers do not stop enough to explain the material and academic evaluation. Conversations about students' moral anxiety, the way they read digital social pressures, and the inner problems they experience need to enter the classroom. When teachers only complete the content of the textbook, the function of tarbiyah becomes reduced.

The crisis of student spirituality in the digital age shows that religious information is widely available, but the structuring of the soul proceeds much slower. Students can acquire religious knowledge from a variety of sources, but

that knowledge is often not accompanied by self-immersion exercises. Digital media-based learning is able to accelerate access to teaching materials, but the development of self-reflection still depends on the structure of learning interactions built by teachers. Digital media can draw students' attention to spiritual material, but the depth of internalization remains dependent on how the material is reflexively re-discussed.

From Al-Ghazali's point of view, the reconstruction of spirituality in religious learning means rearranging the position of science from the beginning. Religious material is not read only as the content of knowledge, but as a means of forming inner manners. Learning activities need to provide space for the deposition of meaning, self-reading exercises, and conversations that connect knowledge with students' concrete experiences (Siregar et al., 2025). If science continues to move only at the cognitive level, then the symptoms that arise remain the same: knowledge increases, but spiritual depth progresses slowly. At this point, the reconstruction of religious learning is not enough to be carried out through changes in the media or variations in classroom techniques, but through changes in the way science is understood and taught.

### **Integration of Reflective Pedagogy in Islamic Religious Education Learning**

A reading of the previous three theoretical frameworks shows that the main problem of religious learning does not lie in the lack of material, but in the way the material is treated during the learning process. Religious knowledge is widely available, textbooks are neatly arranged, digital resources continue to grow, but the learning structure still gives the most space for mastery of content. In such circumstances, students accept religion as a collection of normative categories that must be understood, while the process of linking knowledge with self-experience is slower. If this pattern persists, religious learning will result in a good mastery of concepts, but it does not always bring about a stable moral consciousness.

Paulo Freire's critique shows that one-way learning relationships make students more familiar with answers than with thought processes. In religious learning, this symptom appears when the material is compiled as a final formulation that must be accepted without enough space for students to interpret their relationship with the life problems they face. The teacher's explanation ends with the accuracy of the content of the material, while the student's religious experience is not included as part of the class discussion. Freire places dialogue as a way so that knowledge does not stop at the transfer of content. If read for religious learning, dialogue means opening up a space where students can bring their own moral experiences into the classroom, and then read them through the values learned. Research Budnyk et al. (2023) It shows that critical pedagogy remains relevant to be used to read modern education which still relies on the transmission of teaching content even though learning media has changed.

From Thomas Lickona's reading, it can be seen that such a dialogue is needed so that moral knowing does not stop as verbal knowledge. Moral values gain strength only when students recognize how those values work on their own emotional experiences. In the religious classroom, the conversation about honesty is not enough to be explained through definitions, but needs to be linked to students' experiences when dealing with academic pressure, friendships, or the need to maintain social image. When students only know the definition of morality, the sense of attachment to values develops unevenly. Hafizallah (2024) It shows that religious learning that is still dominant in the explanation of value categories produces an imbalance between moral knowing and moral feeling. The integration of reflective pedagogy requires teachers to turn grades into experiential study materials, not just memorized content.

From Al-Ghazali's point of view, such reflective work is directly related to mental formation. Science does not stop when students understand the material, but moves to the area of muhasabah, which is the ability to read oneself through the knowledge received. In religious learning, muhasabah can be present through the habit of reassessing personal actions after the discussion of the material is completed. As students learn trust, teachers can bring the conversation to small habits that are often overlooked, such as how to keep group assignments, keep simple appointments, or treat digital information received from others. Research Siregar et al. (2025) shows that Al-Ghazali's criticism of modern education is directed at a learning tradition that gives a great deal of space to intellectual achievement but does not adequately organize the development of the soul. Reflective religious learning means placing knowledge as a means of continuous self-reading.

The integration of reflective pedagogy also demands a change in the way of reading learning success. As long

as the main measure remains based on the accuracy of the written answers, the teacher will continue to be encouraged to complete the material as quickly as possible. Moral knowledge will still be treated as the content of the curriculum that must be mastered before evaluation. In fact, the formation of awareness is not always seen in the speed of answering, but in the ability of students to weigh grades when dealing with real situations. In the classroom, small changes can begin through an assignment that asks students to write down a moral experience they experienced, discuss ethical conflicts that arise in a digital space, or reread a single everyday event through a category of religious values. This kind of work makes religious material move out of the area of definition.

Digital media can also be used differently if it is not only used as a distribution channel for materials. Short material that circulates through videos or infographics can be used as a trigger for reflective discussions, not just quick consumption materials. Teachers can ask students to compare the content of digital religious messages with their own social experiences. Martiana et al. (2024) shows that digital materials that attract students' attention have not enough to form the internalization of values if they are not discussed again through directed guidance. In such a way, the media no longer works only as a means of conveying content, but as a trigger for reflection.

This synthesis shows that the reconstruction of religious learning requires a shift from the logic of material completion to the literal reading of values. Freire provides a dialogical basis, Lickona provides a structure for moral formation, while Al-Ghazali gives an orientation for the formation of the soul. The three meet at one point: new religious knowledge works in its entirety when students not only understand the content of the teaching, but also read themselves through the knowledge learned.

## CONCLUSION

The crisis of student spirituality in the digital era is not born from reduced access to religious knowledge, but from the way that knowledge is received and positioned during the learning process. Religious materials are widely available through classrooms, textbooks, and digital media, but the relationship between knowledge, inner engagement, and action formation has not yet moved in balance. Islamic Religious Education learning still strongly relies on mastery of concepts, accuracy of answers, and completion of material targets, so that religion is more often present as academic content than as a way of self-development.

Reading through Paulo Freire shows that one-way learning relationships still shape the way students accept religion as the final knowledge that must be remembered. Thomas Licon's framework shows that the dominance of moral knowing widens the distance between the understanding of values and the affective attachment to those values. From Al-Ghazali's point of view, science only achieves the goal of education when it moves to the area of tazkiyat al-nafs, which is the inner development that organizes intentions, manners, and self-awareness.

The novelty of this article lies in the unification of the three frameworks to read one issue that has been discussed separately. Critical pedagogy, character theory, and classical Islamic education are placed on a single path of analysis to show that the main problem of religious learning lies in the epistemological structure of teaching, not solely in the media, classroom techniques, or curriculum variations. From this reading, it can be seen that the reconstruction of religious learning requires a space for dialogue, moral reflection exercises, and self-reading that is directly connected to the knowledge learned.

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