

Psychosocial Intervention Based on Islamic Appreciation Approach in Addressing the Risk of Educational Dropout among Daily School Students

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Abstract

This concept paper discusses psychosocial intervention based on Islamic appreciation as an approach to address the risk of educational dropout among daily school students in Malaysia. Although school dropout is often explained through academic, socioeconomic, family, behavioural, and school-environment factors, limited attention has been given to Islamic appreciation as a culturally relevant psychosocial resource for strengthening students' motivation, self-control, emotional resilience, and school attachment. Daily school students are particularly vulnerable because they come from diverse social, economic, family, and religious-practice backgrounds, which may influence their commitment to schooling as well as their appreciation of *ibadah*, *aqidah*, and *akhlak*. Weaknesses in these areas may contribute to absenteeism, disciplinary problems, low self-esteem, emotional stress, and disengagement from school. This paper highlights the importance of Islamic psychosocial intervention, which integrates psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual elements based on Islamic values and teachings. The discussion focuses on the Islamic psychosocial framework of Imam al-Ghazali, particularly his emphasis on tazkiyah al-nafs, soul purification, emotional control, noble character, and strengthening of faith. This approach is significant because it provides a holistic and context-sensitive framework for helping students build resilience, improve motivation, strengthen spiritual well-being, and reduce the risk of educational dropout.

Keywords: Psychosocial Intervention, Islamic Appreciation, Educational Dropout, Daily School Students

Introduction

Education plays a central role in developing balanced human capital, promoting social mobility, and sustaining national development. In Malaysia, the National Education Philosophy positions education as a continuous effort to develop individuals holistically and

integratively in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical potential (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). This aspiration is consistent with the Philosophy of Islamic Education, which aims to produce knowledgeable, faithful, morally upright, and socially responsible individuals who can fulfil their roles as servants of Allah and khalifah on earth. Therefore, educational dropout should not be viewed merely as the failure of an individual student to complete schooling. Rather, it reflects a broader social, educational, and moral concern because it interrupts students' personal development, weakens future employability, reduces social participation, and limits the formation of balanced human capital.

At the broader social level, dropout is closely connected to issues of poverty, inequality, family instability, mental health, peer influence, and school disengagement. Although Malaysia has shown progress in reducing dropout, the problem remains important because the number of affected students is still significant. Recent figures reported by the Ministry of Education show that overall primary and secondary dropout cases decreased from 21,748 students in 2020 to 13,007 students in 2024, while the secondary school dropout rate decreased from 1.13 percent, involving 19,311 students, in 2020 to 0.64 percent, involving 11,412 students, in 2024 (Bernama, 2025). These figures indicate that dropout is not only a statistical issue but also a continuing educational challenge that affects thousands of adolescents. In addition, the Ministry of Education has strengthened the Student Tracking System (SiPKPM) through artificial intelligence to identify at-risk and dropout students, with lack of interest in schooling, the need to work, family issues, and chronic illness identified as key contributing factors (Bernama, 2025).

Daily school students require particular attention because daily schools represent the most common schooling context in Malaysia and serve students from highly diverse family, socioeconomic, cultural, and religious-practice backgrounds. Unlike boarding school students, daily school students return home after school and are therefore more directly exposed to home environments, neighbourhood influences, peer groups, digital distractions, transportation issues, and family responsibilities. Some students benefit from strong parental monitoring, positive peer networks, and regular religious guidance, while others experience poverty, limited supervision, family conflict, neglect, negative peer pressure, and low academic encouragement. These differences may influence how students perceive the meaning of education, how consistently they attend school, and how strongly they remain connected to teachers, peers, and school routines.

The research problem can be situated within several complementary theoretical perspectives. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory explains that adolescents' development is shaped by the interaction between individual characteristics and surrounding systems such as family, school, peers, community, and wider social structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). From this perspective, dropout risk does not emerge from a single cause but from the accumulation of pressures across multiple environments. Tinto's model of student departure further emphasizes the importance of academic and social integration in sustaining students' commitment to education (Tinto, 1993). Although Tinto's model was originally developed for higher education, recent Malaysian school-based studies have applied its logic to secondary school dropout by showing that weak academic integration,

negative classroom experiences, poor student interest, family issues, and peer influence can reduce students' motivation to remain in school (Tan et al., 2024).

Recent Malaysian literature also demonstrates that dropout is multidimensional. Awang Hashim et al. (2025), using a school administrative database of more than 100,000 students, identified predictors such as gender, academic achievement, and household income, and argued that early statistical identification can support intervention strategies. Similarly, studies on youth dropout in Malaysia highlight poverty, financial hardship, weak academic performance, lack of interest in education, peer influence, family conflict, and the need to contribute to family income as important factors (Mohammad Faisal et al., 2023; Youth Drop Out in Education, 2025). Learning loss, weak foundational mastery, emotional stress, and lack of confidence can further reduce students' motivation and increase their vulnerability to disengagement (Noorzally & Mahmud, 2023). These findings show that students at risk of dropout require support that goes beyond academic remediation alone.

The psychosocial dimension of dropout is especially important because students' decisions to remain in or withdraw from school are often shaped by emotions, self-belief, relationships, values, and coping ability. Globally, education systems are increasingly expected to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into schooling; UNICEF, for example, reported that by the end of 2024, 80 country offices were supporting governments to develop or strengthen mental health and psychosocial support policies and programmes, reflecting growing recognition of the link between well-being, engagement, retention, and learning (UNICEF, 2024). In the Malaysian context, this is relevant for daily school students who may experience anxiety, frustration, low self-esteem, poor emotional control, family stress, and weak school attachment. Without early psychosocial support, these problems may gradually develop into absenteeism, disciplinary issues, declining academic performance, and eventual dropout.

Within this psychosocial landscape, Islamic appreciation provides a meaningful and culturally relevant foundation for intervention among Muslim students. Islamic appreciation refers to the internalization and practice of Islamic teachings in daily life, particularly through ibadah, aqidah, and akhlak. Strong Islamic appreciation can nurture self-discipline, spiritual awareness, moral responsibility, emotional regulation, respect for others, and a sense of purpose in learning. Conversely, weak appreciation of ibadah, limited understanding of aqidah, and fragile akhlak may leave students more vulnerable to negative peer influence, emotional instability, disciplinary problems, and school disengagement. Therefore, Islamic appreciation should be understood not merely as religious knowledge but as a psychosocial protective factor that can shape motivation, behaviour, resilience, and identity.

Despite the growing number of studies on educational dropout, the research gap remains clear. Existing studies in Malaysia have largely emphasized socioeconomic predictors, administrative tracking, academic achievement, behavioural trends, and conventional psychosocial factors. However, fewer studies have developed a clear Islamic psychosocial framework that connects Islamic appreciation with dropout prevention among daily school students. In particular, limited attention has been given to how the spiritual and moral dimensions of ibadah, aqidah, and akhlak can be systematically integrated with counselling, mentoring, emotional intelligence training, peer support, and school-based intervention activities. This gap is important because Muslim students at risk of dropout may benefit from

an intervention model that is not only psychologically supportive but also spiritually meaningful and consistent with their religious worldview.

Based on this rationale, this concept paper proposes psychosocial intervention based on the Islamic Appreciation Approach as a holistic strategy to address the risk of educational dropout among daily school students. The paper is anchored in the Islamic psychosocial framework of Imam al-Ghazali, particularly the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs, which emphasizes purification of the soul, strengthening of faith, emotional control, self-discipline, and noble character. By integrating psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual elements, this approach has the potential to strengthen students' resilience, enhance school engagement, improve self-worth, reduce negative behaviour, and reconnect students with the meaning and purpose of education. Thus, this paper contributes to the literature by offering a context-sensitive and values-based framework for supporting daily school students who are at risk of dropout.

Islamic Psychosocial Based on Imam al-Ghazali

Psychosocial refers to the interaction between psychological aspects (such as emotions, thoughts, personality, and behaviour) and social factors (such as family, peers, school environment, and community) that influence an individual's development and well-being. In educational settings, psychosocial elements play an important role in shaping students' motivation, emotional stability, self-esteem, coping skills, and social relationships. Students who experience positive psychosocial support are more likely to demonstrate better academic performance, emotional resilience, and behavioural adjustment, while those with weak psychosocial support may face stress, disengagement, and risk of dropout (Sukenti et al., 2021; Mohammad Faisal et al., 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, psychosocial development is not limited to psychological and social dimensions alone, but also includes spiritual elements that shape human behaviour and personality. Islamic psychosocial emphasizes the integration of faith (iman), worship (ibadah), and morality (akhlak) in influencing thoughts, emotions, and actions. This approach aligns with the holistic view of human nature in Islam, where the soul (nafs), heart (qalb), intellect ('aql), and behaviour must be nurtured in a balanced manner. Islamic psychosocial also highlights values such as sincerity, patience, gratitude, self-control, and reliance on Allah as essential components of emotional and social well-being (Sa'ari et al., 2025; Kitota, 2023). The framework of Islamic psychosocial can be further understood through the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs as elaborated by Imam al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali views human development as a process of purifying the soul and cultivating noble character to achieve closeness to Allah. Tazkiyah al-nafs refers to the purification and growth of the soul through the removal of negative traits and the development of positive virtues. It involves two main processes, namely takhliyah (removal of blameworthy traits) and tahliyah (adornment with praiseworthy qualities), which ultimately lead to tahaqquq (realization of true servitude to Allah) and takhaluq (embodying the attributes reflected in Asma' al-Husna).

In terms of definition, tazkiyah al-nafs is the process of cleansing the soul from spiritual diseases such as arrogance, envy, hypocrisy, excessive love of worldly matters, and uncontrolled desires, while nurturing the soul with qualities such as sincerity, humility, patience, gratitude, and trust in Allah. According to al-Ghazali, the heart plays a central role in determining human behaviour; therefore, purification of the heart is essential in shaping

positive psychosocial outcomes. This process is not only spiritual but also psychological, as it involves emotional regulation, self-awareness, and behavioural transformation.

The elements of tazkiyah al-nafs include several key practices and internal developments. First is takhliyah, which involves eliminating negative behaviours such as anger, jealousy, pride, greed, and dishonesty. Second is tahliyah, which focuses on cultivating positive traits such as ikhlas (sincerity), sabr (patience), syukur (gratitude), tawakal (trust in Allah), zuhud (detachment from worldly excess), and mahabbah (love for Allah). Third is mujahadah (striving against the self) and riyadah al-nafs (self-discipline), which require continuous effort to control desires and maintain good conduct. Fourth is muraqabah (awareness of Allah's constant observation) and muhasabah (self-reflection), which help individuals evaluate their actions and improve themselves. In addition, acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, zakat, recitation of the Qur'an, remembrance of Allah (zikr), and contemplation (tafakkur) function as practical tools for strengthening the soul and enhancing psychosocial well-being.

This framework demonstrates that tazkiyah al-nafs is highly relevant to psychosocial development because it addresses both internal and external aspects of human behaviour. It helps individuals regulate emotions, build resilience, develop positive relationships, and maintain moral integrity. In the context of students, particularly those at risk of educational dropout, the application of tazkiyah al-nafs can strengthen self-control, improve motivation, enhance emotional stability, and foster a sense of purpose in life. Therefore, Islamic psychosocial based on al-Ghazali's concept of tazkiyah al-nafs provides a comprehensive and holistic framework that integrates spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions in human development (Sukenti et al., 2021; Sa'ari et al., 2025).

The Role of Islamic Psychosocial in Addressing Educational Dropout

Addressing Student Absenteeism through Self-Discipline and Spiritual Awareness

Absenteeism refers to the frequent absence of students from school without valid reasons and is often an early indicator of potential dropout. In the Malaysian context, absenteeism among daily school students is associated with low motivation, family issues, peer influence, and lack of interest in learning (Mohammad Faisal et al., 2023; Youth Drop Out in Education, 2025). Students who are frequently absent are more likely to experience learning loss and academic decline, which further increases their risk of disengagement and dropout (Noorzally & Mahmud, 2023). This situation is concerning and requires a holistic intervention approach. Islamic psychosocial intervention offers a meaningful solution by integrating spiritual and behavioural development. Based on the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs by Imam al-Ghazali, elements such as mujahadah (self-discipline) and muraqabah (awareness of Allah's supervision) can be applied. These elements help students develop a sense of responsibility, discipline, and accountability, encouraging them to attend school consistently. As a result, students demonstrate improved attitudes, stronger motivation, and better appreciation of responsibility as part of their religious and personal development.

Overcoming Disciplinary Problems through Moral Purification and Character Development

Disciplinary problems refer to behaviours that violate school rules, including truancy, aggression, disrespect, and involvement in negative activities. Among Malaysian daily school students, such issues are often linked to weak emotional regulation, negative peer influence, and lack of moral guidance (Mohammad Faisal et al., 2023). These problems are alarming as

they disrupt the learning environment and increase the likelihood of dropout. Islamic psychosocial approaches address these challenges by focusing on internal moral transformation. In tazkiyah al-nafs, the process of takhliyah (removal of negative traits) involves eliminating harmful characteristics such as anger, arrogance, and jealousy, while tahliyah (adornment with positive traits) promotes values such as patience, humility, and sincerity. These elements help students regulate their emotions, improve behaviour, and develop respect for others. Consequently, students become more disciplined, emotionally balanced, and socially responsible, reducing their risk of school dropout (Sukenti et al., 2021).

Strengthening Self-Esteem through Spiritual Strength and Positive Self-Concept

Low self-esteem refers to negative self-perception, lack of confidence, and feelings of inadequacy, which can lead to withdrawal from academic and social activities. In Malaysia, low self-esteem among students is often associated with poor academic performance, lack of support, and emotional stress (Noorzally & Mahmud, 2023). This condition is concerning because it reduces students' motivation and increases their vulnerability to dropout. Islamic psychosocial intervention plays a crucial role in rebuilding self-worth through spiritual understanding. In the framework of tazkiyah al-nafs, elements such as tawakal (trust in Allah), syukur (gratitude), and mahabbah (love for Allah) help students develop a more positive self-concept. Students learn to value themselves beyond academic achievement and understand that effort and intention are also valued in Islam. This perspective enhances resilience, confidence, and emotional stability. As a result, students become more motivated, optimistic, and engaged in learning, while also strengthening their religious appreciation (Sa'ari et al., 2025; Kitota, 2023).

Reducing School Disengagement through Meaningful Learning and Spiritual Purpose

School disengagement refers to a lack of emotional, behavioural, and cognitive involvement in school activities, where students show minimal interest and participation in learning. In the Malaysian context, disengagement is often caused by uninteresting teaching methods, weak teacher-student relationships, and distractions such as excessive use of technology (Ng et al., 2016). This issue is worrying as it often leads to poor academic performance and eventual dropout. Islamic psychosocial approaches help address disengagement by reconnecting students with meaningful goals and values. In tazkiyah al-nafs, elements such as niyyah (intention), ikhlas (sincerity), and tafakkur (reflection) are emphasized. Students are guided to view learning as an act of worship and a means to contribute to society. This spiritual perspective increases intrinsic motivation and sense of purpose. Consequently, students become more engaged, responsible, and committed to their education, while also improving their ibadah, akhlak, and overall personal development (Sukenti et al., 2021; Sa'ari et al., 2025).

Significance of Islamic Psychosocial for Daily School Students

Strengthening Students' Emotional Resilience and Mental Well-being

One of the key significances of Islamic psychosocial approaches is their ability to strengthen students' emotional resilience and mental well-being. Adolescents today face increasing psychological pressures such as academic stress, social comparison, and family-related challenges, which may lead to anxiety, depression, and disengagement from school. Islamic psychosocial frameworks integrate spiritual elements such as sabr (patience), tawakal (trust in Allah), and zikr (remembrance of Allah), which have been shown to enhance emotional

regulation and coping mechanisms. Studies indicate that spiritual-based coping strategies are positively associated with lower psychological distress and higher resilience among Muslim youth (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015; Rothman & Coyle, 2018). By embedding these elements into psychosocial interventions, students are better equipped to manage stress, maintain emotional stability, and remain engaged in their educational journey.

Promoting Positive Behaviour and Moral Development

Islamic psychosocial approaches play a significant role in promoting positive behaviour and moral development among students. Unlike conventional approaches that focus primarily on behavioural control, Islamic psychosocial emphasizes internal transformation through the development of akhlak (moral character). This includes values such as honesty, humility, respect, and responsibility, which are essential in shaping students' behaviour both inside and outside the classroom. Research highlights that religious and moral education contributes significantly to reducing behavioural problems and promoting prosocial behaviour among adolescents (Halstead, 2007; Sahin, 2013). By internalizing these values, students are more likely to exhibit self-discipline, respect authority, and avoid negative behaviours, thus reducing the risk of disciplinary issues and school dropout.

Enhancing Students' Sense of Purpose and Academic Motivation

Another important significance of Islamic psychosocial intervention is its role in enhancing students' sense of purpose and intrinsic motivation toward learning. In Islam, seeking knowledge is considered an act of worship, which provides students with a higher purpose beyond academic achievement. This spiritual perspective helps students develop a meaningful connection with education, encouraging persistence and commitment even in the face of challenges. Research in educational psychology suggests that students who possess a strong sense of purpose are more motivated, engaged, and resilient in their learning process (Damon, 2008; King & McInerney, 2014). Islamic psychosocial approaches reinforce this by linking learning with niyyah (intention) and ikhlas (sincerity), ultimately fostering a deeper commitment to education and reducing the likelihood of disengagement.

Supporting Holistic Development and Balanced Personality Formation

Islamic psychosocial approaches are significant in supporting holistic development and balanced personality formation, which aligns with both educational and spiritual goals. This approach integrates cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions, ensuring that students develop not only intellectually but also morally and spiritually. Such holistic development is essential in preparing students to face real-life challenges and contribute positively to society. Scholars have emphasized that Islamic education aims to produce balanced individuals who are capable of fulfilling their roles as responsible members of society (Al-Attas, 1991; Nasr, 2012). By incorporating Islamic psychosocial elements, students are guided toward becoming individuals with strong identity, ethical awareness, and social responsibility, thereby supporting long-term personal and societal well-being.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should focus on developing and validating a comprehensive Islamic psychosocial intervention module based on the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs by Imam al-Ghazali specifically tailored for daily school students at risk of educational dropout. This module should integrate key elements such as mujahadah, muraqabah, tahliyah, and

takhliyah into structured school-based programmes, including counselling sessions, mentoring systems, peer support groups, and spiritual development activities. Empirical studies are needed to examine the effectiveness of such interventions in improving students' attendance, behaviour, emotional well-being, and academic motivation. In addition, future studies may employ mixed-method approaches to explore students' lived experiences, teachers' perspectives, and parental involvement in strengthening Islamic psychosocial support within the school ecosystem.

Furthermore, future research should also explore the integration of Islamic psychosocial approaches within national educational policies and curriculum development, particularly in alignment with holistic education goals. Comparative studies between different types of schools, such as daily schools, religious schools, and boarding schools, may provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of Islamic-based interventions across diverse contexts. Researchers should also examine the role of digital platforms, social media, and technology in delivering Islamic psychosocial interventions to students, especially in addressing contemporary challenges such as emotional distress and school disengagement. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the long-term impact of tazkiyah al-nafs-based interventions on students' personal development, academic achievement, and spiritual growth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, educational dropout among daily school students is a complex issue influenced by psychosocial, academic, and environmental factors such as absenteeism, disciplinary problems, low self-esteem, and disengagement from school. These challenges not only affect students' academic achievement but also their emotional well-being and level of Islamic appreciation. Therefore, a holistic and integrated approach is necessary to address this issue effectively. Islamic psychosocial intervention based on the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs by Imam al-Ghazali provides a comprehensive framework that combines spiritual, psychological, and social elements in nurturing students' development. By emphasizing self-discipline, moral purification, emotional regulation, and spiritual awareness, this approach can help students build resilience, improve motivation, and strengthen their connection to education and religion. Ultimately, the application of Islamic psychosocial approaches has the potential to reduce dropout rates and contribute to the development of balanced, responsible, and morally grounded individuals in line with national educational aspirations.

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