

## **Spirituality Discipline in Building Insaniah Values for Selected At-Risk Youth Group in Malaysia: A Literature Review**

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### **Abstract**

There is a possible gap in constructing the virtues of good behaviour for at-risk youth from current world viewpoints when aspects of Insaniah values are disassociated with spiritual discipline. Based on Ghazali's (2017) writings, this article seeks to develop Islamic character-building components for certain target populations of at-risk youth in Malaysia. In developing the concept of the insaniah values and spiritual discipline, the central role of Islamic spiritual is referred from the words of the Quran, the daily practises that the Rasulullah (SAW) made up, and in the literature. The empirical evidence points to an association between at-risk youth activities and social problems that is both positive and statistically significant. In addition, the findings showed that when spiritual discipline is not addressed holistically, the situation for at-risk youth gets worse. To address concerns with at-risk youth, schools, teachers, and parents can make use of the spirituality elements modelled in this article. Finally, this paper identifies a number of knowledge gaps that could be filled by future research to better understand the high-level relationship between spirituality and positive development in at-risk youth.

**Keywords:** At-Risk Youth, Insaniah Values, Spirituality, Al Ghazali, Malaysia

### **Introduction**

In Islam, the insaniah values are derived from a sense of good character as a way of life. Islam is a religion and a way of life in and of itself that can physically, mentally, and spiritually transform a believer. A good character is associated with all of the benefits of good behavior. In Al-Quran, Surah 7, verse 199 guides people to understand Islam and teaches them to work hard, persevere, and be kind to others. As a result, it is critical to recognize and celebrate what is right while opposing what is wrong.

"Take to forgiveness, enjoin good, and turn aside from the ignorant."

The Quran, 7:199

This verse was also being cited by many Islamic scholars and one of them was Imam al-Qurtubi who emphasizes the importance of enjoining what is good and turning away from ignorance (Elius et al., 2019). He notes that this verse is a call to action, encouraging believers to promote good and discourage evil actively.

Historically, scholars have continued to draw important lessons from this verse to demonstrate Islamic character building (Safitri et al., 2023; Ab. Rahim, 2019; Al-Ghazali, 2017). One of the examples on working towards a better society is through the work of the scholar Muhammad Asad who emphasizes the importance of taking what is given freely. This is a reminder that believers should not be greedy or selfish in their actions. He also notes that seeking refuge in Allah is an essential aspect of Islamic practice and a reminder that believers must constantly turn to Allah for guidance and protection. This is an essential aspect of Islamic practice which can shape the insaniah value and that all Muslims must work towards a better society.

Besides the Quran and literature from Islamic scholars, in this paper, the *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, a book which was written by Al-Ghazali in the 11th century CE during his journey to developing concepts of knowledge. Various editions of the work have been published in different places and times. In this study, the book of *Ihya Ulum al-Din* by Al-Ghazali was a version translated by M. Akhyar in 2017 and published in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. By referring to Al-Ghazali (2017) work, this paper emphasizes developing insaniah value in character development (Safitri et al., 2023; Hasanah et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2022; Ab. Rahim, 2019; Elius et al., 2019). As a result, the research objectives in this paper are structured as follows:

1. to identify the levels of spiritual disciplines among selected target groups of at-risk youths in Malaysia.
2. to examine how spiritual disciplines explain insaniah values perceived by selected target groups of Malaysian at-risk youth.

The methodology used to analyze the literature review from previous empirical research is described in the following section.

### **Methodology**

The spirituality discipline and its dimensions which are used to formulate the merits of good conduct and character building are investigated using Imam Al-Ghazali's models (2017). This paper investigates extensive secondary data for a literature review on at-risk youth and their social problems (Ahmed et al., 2020; Al-Ghazali, 2017; Ab. Rahim, 2019) and also examines elements from the literature in spiritual disciplines in the development of insaniah values (Hasanah et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2022). This paper recites the words of the Quran and the daily practices that the Rasulullah (SAW) makes or examples of the Prophetic way as a central position of spiritual discipline. The guidance for Muslims in explaining insaniah values is known as the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), which was emulated and preserved by his family and most companions. The literature review is carried out to provide positive development for Malaysia's at-risk youth.

In addition, the researchers selected a sample of school students from a directory list of private and public school students with disciplinary issues (Ministry of Education, 2022). According to the MOE Quick Facts (2022); and the Children Statistics, 2021 from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2021), in 2021, there were 446,428 students enrolled in Year Six. While in 2022, 406,504 students enrolled in Form One. Approximately 94% of students continued their studies from Year Six to Form One in 2022. In absolute numbers, this

means that 26,929 students dropped out of school in 2022. Overall, out of an average enrolment in Year One of 450,000 students, only an average of 370,000 reached Form Five, i.e., 82.2%. Thus, this indicates that an average of 80,000 students dropped out, or 18% of those who attended MOE schools. These statistics, as shown in Figure 1, may contribute to an issue of a learning loss, involvement in at-risk activities, and social implications for nations and the economy.

Enrollment /Dropped out	Primary – Secondary Education		Upper Secondary Education	
	Year 6 (2017)	Form 1 (2022)	Form 4 (2021)	Form 5 (2022)
Enrollment	446,428	406,504	373,943	371,243
Dropped out		26,929 (6%)		80,000 (18%)
Actual Enrolment		94%		82.2%

Figure 1. Statistics on Schools' Students Enrolment and Dropping Out In Malaysia  
Sources: MOE Quick Facts (2022); the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2021)

According to LeCroy and Anthony (2018), youth at risk have the tendency to be influenced by the background which places them 'at risk' and greater vulnerability for problem behaviour, such as substance abuse, school failure, juvenile delinquency and mental health disorders. The World Bank (2020) defines youth at risk as individuals between the ages of 12 and 24 who face "environmental, social, and family conditions that hinder their personal development and their successful integration into society as productive citizens." They have a greater propensity than their peers to engage in or be subject to risky behavior, including school absenteeism, risky sexual behavior, delinquency, violence, and substance use and abuse. The consequences of these risky kinds of behavior are extremely costly to young people in terms of their ability to make a successful transition to adulthood and include such negative outcomes as school dropout, unemployment (Kasim, 2023; Kasim & Salleh, 2023a), adolescent pregnancy (Rozmi et al., 2017), addiction (Ab. Rahim, 2019; Ibrahim, 2009), incarceration (Ibrahim et al., 2012), and social exclusion, (Hasanah et al., 2023).

### Literature Review

Besides the country coping with increasing social problems, Malaysia has accomplished some notable achievements in addressing the positive development of its nation (Indeks Belia Malaysia, 2015; Ab. Rahim, 2019; Kasim & Salleh, 2023b). Thus, essential pathways for a country and its aspiration to become a high-income nation and knowledge economy are not alone in addressing the modern way of building a good character of its people, but to embed the concept of religiosity whether it can offer the idea of success in one's quality of life (Safitri et al., 2023; Hasanah et al., 2023). Thus, in building quality human capital via insaniah value, the agenda sets by the education sector must address positive youth development and its associated strategies (Che Wil & Othman, 2021; Kasim & Salleh, 2023b; Chong et al., 2017).

In this paper, addressing positive youth development, education of knowledge and religious could be a shield to prevent them from being involved in unhealthy social problems that can destroy their morals and minds. Thus, to achieve the objective of this paper that is

to identify levels of spiritual disciplines among at-risk youths who are involved in behaviors problem is all about understanding their level of knowledge of religion which has connection to their spiritual discipline (Safitri et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2022; Kasim & Salleh, 2018a; Ab. Rahim, 2019).

This section will begin with the empirical analysis from the literature on social issues among at risk youth in Malaysia.

#### **a. Social issues among at-risk youths**

Ab. Rahim (2019); Rozmi et al (2017) discovered that the majority of at-risk youths come from low-income families with varying experiences of abusive parents and drug addicts. Furthermore, the vices of bad demerits of human character weaken their academic performance, and they appear to have low literacy, as studies have shown an increase in gang involvement, poor grades, absenteeism, and drug abuse (Hasanah et al., 2023; Rozmi et al., 2017). Another occurrence reported by Malaysia's National Anti-Drugs Agency, was drug abuse, with approximately 62 percent of drug abusers citing the influence of friends as a reason for abuse (Agensi Anti Dadah Kebangsaan, 2021).

Furthermore, drug users are responsible for more than 60% of crime by chance, such as snatch theft and home burglaries (Agensi Anti Dadah Kebangsaan, 2021). According to the Rozmi et al (2017), the Statistics of Admission of Detainees to Moral Rehabilitation Center in 2020 reported that those aged 16 to 17 had committed 75 percent of juvenile crimes. Juvenile crime refers to those of legal drinking age who want to explore and test their role in society. This frequently begins as a violation of school rules — smoking, bullying, or truancy — and progresses to more severe crimes such as theft, rape, or murder (Rozmi et al., 2017). They also involved in property-related crimes, such as motorcycle theft, are the most common among Malaysian youth. Drug use is the second most common crime among youth, accounting for 30% (Statistics of Drug Addicts, 2020).

The empirical evidence points to an association between at-risk youth activities and social problems that is both positive and statistically significant (Hasanah et al., 2023; Rozmi et al., 2017). In addition, the findings showed that when spiritual discipline is not addressed holistically, the situation for at-risk youth gets worse, Ab. Rahim (2019). According to Kasim (2023), if the spiritual discipline is not addressed holistically, this is becoming more acute among at-risk youth. As a result, the primary motivation for this paper is to instill Islamic values and spiritual disciplines in at-risk Malaysian youth by investigating how the Quran and the excellent character of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) rekindle man's relationship with God. Aspects of all the virtues of good behavior guide and counsel the researchers to develop a close relationship and to be aware of the noble character qualities that must be developed for the target sample in this study, which is at-risk youth.

#### **b. Spirituality in Islam**

In the verse of 26 to 29 of Surah al-Hijr make it clear that humans are made up of both bodily and spiritual components. The physical human body is what is meant by the word "body." This body is visible, touchable, and odourable. The spiritual component, on the other hand, is viewed as something that occupies the space of the physical body. This spiritual presence cannot be felt or perceived through the senses of taste, smell, touch, or sight.

Since the word "spiritual" is not used explicitly in the Quran, modern Islamic scholars exercise caution when talking about it. This expression was created by Western society to help individuals comprehend the interconnectedness of the world (Elius et al., 2019). Ihya Ulumuddin, a book which modelled Imam al-Ghazali's perspective, has lengthy discussions of

spirituality. He explained that the term "spiritual" refers to the intrinsic quality that Allah SWT infused into the completion of the creation of His glorified creations, specifically humans. What is sought after, known, and loved is Allah SWT. Additionally, human nature and actions are motivated by spirituality. Four elements that are part of every person but cannot be seen, felt, touched, or conceived about in terms of their nature and substance together make up spirituality. Imam al-Ghazali mentions four spiritual aspects: ruh (spirit), "aql (mind), qalb (heart), and nafs (soul). Based on how Allah uses these expressions in the Qur'an, Imam al-Ghazali (2017), presented the four spiritual pillars. For instance

Then when I complete its creation and breathe into it the spirit of My (creation), you should prostrate to it, (al-Hijr, 15:29).

In the verse above, God clearly uses the word spirit. The spirit is a creature created by God. Imam al-Ghazali (2017), gives two definitions of the soul, namely; life; lathif mass (subtle), sourced from the hole of the physical heart (heart organ), moves along human blood's veins. There is a subtle aspect of the human being that feels and knows things without using their senses. Although this spirit is a wonderful creation of Allah SWT, the mind has not yet developed the capacity to comprehend it and recognise it for what it is.

In this paper, the researcher's observation is more focused on the second definition of the spirit, which is an entity in the human body but is not perceived by the many senses that Allah SWT has endowed, while evaluating Imam al-Ghazali's beliefs regarding the spirit he meant in the spiritual context. Thus, the spirituality context is always seeking to find, understand, and love Allah SWT. This force is in charge of fostering confidence in Allah SWT. The denial of Allah SWT is likewise the fault of this entity. However, nowhere in the Qur'an does Allah SWT mention the process of spirit generation. As a result, it is forbidden to go into great depth when discussing how, when, and what God did to create spirit for fear of distorting belief and pushing the boundaries of human cognition (Imam al-Ghazali, 2017; Ahmad, 2022).

In addition to the term "spirit," Allah SWT also employs the term "aql" as in the following verse

"Verily in the events of heaven and earth; and (on) the change of night and day; and (on) ships that sail in the sea carrying things that are beneficial to humans; likewise (on) the rainwater that God sends down from the sky and then God revives the plants on the earth with it after it dies, and He breeds in it various kinds of animals; likewise (on) the circulation of wind and clouds that bow (to God's power) floating between the heavens and the earth; indeed (in all of that) there are signs (which prove the oneness of God, His power, His wisdom, and the breadth of His mercy) for the people who want to use common sense (al-Baqarah, 2:164).

In reference to the verse above, Allah SWT emphasises "aql (intelligence)," emphasising observation, comprehension, and belief in Allah SWT's majesty. The word mind, rather than the phrases "spirit," "heart," or "nafs," is more suited to the context of this passage, according to Al-Ghazali (2017). This is due to the fact that Allah SWT exalts mankind for being endowed with an intellect capable of distinguishing between the right (truth) and the incorrect (wrong/alarming) and for doing so. This spiritual element is aware of the reality of things. The



term "intellect" also describes the characteristics of knowledgeable people. According to Al-Ghazali (2017), human beings have reason in their hearts, which is evident from Allah SWT's statements.

Thus, the concept of 'aql is defined as intellectual knowledge such as the development of good character or conduct. As portrayed in making this insaniah value among young people meaningful, it is about bringing beauty and excellence to every act, thought, action, and deed (Al Ghazali, 2017). Developing good character or behavior is also synonymous with creating and regenerating quality human capital (Ahmed et al., 2020; Al-Ghazali, 2017; Kasim & Salleh, 2023a; Kasim, 2021). Consequently, there is a need to create and restore quality human capital as a response to the rising social problems among Malaysia's younger generation (Rozmi et al., 2017; Kasim, 2021).

With Malaysia's agenda geared toward achieving RMK12 (the Economic Planning Unit, 2022) objectives, quality insaniah values are all about addressing the development of an individual's character and the elements accompanying being a good citizen. The qualities of insaniah value are related to the concept of success, and Islam's criterion for determining who is successful is unique and innovative from a modern standpoint. For example, a person associated with more wealthy and powerful people appears successful in the contemporary world. However, in Islam, success is defined as believing in the knowledge that resides in one's iman, as well as believing in Allah, Muhammad (SAW), and other Prophets, the Quran, and Allah's other revealed books, the day of judgment, and the hereafter, and who establishes worship of One God, spends in the way of God, performs all the practices, rituals, and acts prescribed by Islam, and refrain (Al-Ghazali, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2020).

### **c. Insaniah Values**

Insaniah values are fundamental to the human condition. Improving one's conduct, as guided in Al-Ghazali's model (2017) by the elements of spiritual disciplines, is critical to investigate. Insaniah's value, which explains some of the connection with spiritual disciplines, appears to be missing in delivering the current education system outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Ministry of Education, 2015). Education, as one of the critical factors in developing quality human capital development, should promote and replicate Al-Ghazali's model (2017), in which insaniah values can and do offer many benefits (Ab. Rahim, 2019; Ahmad, 2022). Although education is commonly thought of as a process that assists individuals in gaining knowledge and skills (Kasim & Salleh, 2023b), knowledge of iman, 'aql (intellect), and ihsan, which explain spiritual disciplines (Ab. Rahim, 2019), should be thought of and geared towards immaterial pursuit for the positive building of individual character and its associated elements for young people to be good citizens (Che Wil & Othman, 2021). As a result, a positive outlook may keep young people from contributing to moral decay (Hasanah et al., 2023). These lead man in the right direction, bestowing an ace and righteousness on him. Throughout history, human values have been cherished and sought to be realized.

The concept of 'value' is expressed in various life situations as necessary in meeting an individual's mental, emotional, spiritual, or practical needs. It can also be used to describe what someone finds excellent or meaningful. It is common to comment on the worth of things one prefers or likes and may consciously try to acquire. Nonetheless, we may be particularly struck by the values we see in human relationships or men's actions and behavior (Kasim & Salleh, 2023a). As a result, value is embedded in this paper as a concept of optimizing the use of spirituality, all of which should be widely used in man's life. The concept must be explained in light of the variety and diversity of human life. For example, respect, acceptance,

consideration, appreciation, listening, openness, affection, empathy, and love can reflect good behavior toward other humans. The interaction of the family, society, nation, and individual creates a unique set of values in each person. The insaniah values shape a person's personality and influence their development, family, society, nation, and humanity (Rozmi et al., 2017).

Strong human insaniah and capital value will lead to human or economic development in the future (Ahmed et al., 2020; Kasim & Salleh, 2023a; Kasim, 2021). Quality human capital is defined as insaniah elements incorporated into educational offerings to balance the acquisition of material pursuits through knowledge and skills that make people more productive and capable of contributing to the economy. As a result, 'aql's behavior may be reflected in the success of both material and immaterial pursuits, which can be one of the primary factors determining the economic outcomes of communities and individuals (Hasanah et al., 2023).

The evolution of this type of value has received a great deal of attention in philosophy and theology. For example, Imam Al Ghazali (Ab. Rahim, 2019) developed character building as one of the moral values. Al-Ghazali (2017) has successfully modeled and linked his knowledge to the development concept in children's education theory. The design and color of a religious and just life, for example, are the responsibility of the child's parents. This implies that family institutions are essential as sociological agents in shaping individuals' values. A value system encompasses all qualitative characteristics inherent in man and society, such as faith, morals, cultural thought, and psychology (Safitri et al., 2023; Hasanah et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2022). Values are the guiding principles in one's life. They are required for positive human behaviors and actions. They are formed based on an individual's interests, choices, needs, desires, and preferences; values considered necessary and inherent in humans, such as truth, honesty, loyalty, love, peace, and so on, because they bring out the fundamental goodness of human beings and society at large.

Previous research and literature have focused on the material and immaterial pursuits of human insaniah values in separate directions (Zsolnai & Illes, 2017). However, only a few human development scholars have emphasized the balance of these two continuums as integrated insaniah values (Al-Ghazali, 2017; Ahmed, 2020). There is a significant gap that this current study seeks to fill. As a result, the present research motivates the researchers to investigate and develop a model for Insaniah values among at-risk youth in Malaysia. The current study defines Insaniah's values as derived from knowledge of Islamic spiritual discipline which promotes good conduct and character habits, such as positive personal qualities and a sense of purpose in the future.

## **Conclusion**

In Islamic tradition, spiritual masters are directly inspired by the Quran and the Prophet (SAW), his family, and his closest companions, as modeled by Al Ghazali. The review of literature provides some insights to reframe and guide the researchers back to love for the One, which is sometimes lost in the modern educational system. As a result, the importance of the paper is twofold. First, from a macro perspective, it will provide some insights into developing insaniah values through spiritual dimension concepts. Spiritual dimensions can explain insaniah values and therefore it is critical to understand how insaniah values work together to build quality human capital and combat social issues, particularly among at-risk youth in the country. As the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) explains, even if every human on Earth attained the pinnacle of spiritual excellence or piety, it would make no difference to

Allah's sovereignty. It can improve values and quality skill mastery among future talents from the ground up, which offers some relief from moral decay and crisis among at-risk youth. The study will be particularly relevant to several government policies that will assist the Malaysian government and policymakers in strengthening the existing Malaysian Education Blueprint (under the Ministry of Education, 2015), early childhood development policy (under the Ministry of Women and Family Development), and human development policy (under the Ministry of Human Resources). This paper's literature evidence allows policymakers and implementors to develop comprehensive guidelines and monitoring assessments for Insaniah's Values and students, schools, teachers, and parents.

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