

Conceptualizing spiritual resilience: A framework for student character formation in Islamic religious education

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Abstract

Strengthening students' character through Islamic Religious Education has become increasingly important amid contemporary moral and spiritual challenges; however, studies integrating the concept of *spiritual resilience* with the perspective of Islamic education remain limited. This study aims to analyze the concept of *spiritual resilience* in Islamic Religious Education and its contribution to students' character formation. A qualitative approach employing a *library research* method was adopted through *content analysis* of relevant scholarly literature. The findings indicate that *spiritual resilience* is a multidimensional construct developed through the internalization of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, and *shukr*, which strengthens students' emotional stability, moral integrity, adaptive behavior, and personal responsibility. Furthermore, this study proposes a conceptual framework integrating resilience psychology with Islamic epistemology as a foundation for developing a more holistic approach to character education within Islamic Religious Education.

Keywords: Spiritual resilience; Islamic religious education; Character formation; Self-purification; Character education.

Abstrak

Penguatan karakter peserta didik melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam semakin penting di tengah berbagai tantangan moral dan spiritual pada era kontemporer, namun kajian yang mengintegrasikan konsep resiliensi spiritual dengan perspektif pendidikan Islam masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis konsep resiliensi spiritual dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam serta kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan karakter peserta didik. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode *library research* melalui analisis isi terhadap berbagai literatur yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa resiliensi spiritual merupakan konstruk multidimensional yang dibangun melalui internalisasi nilai *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, dan *shukr*, sehingga mampu memperkuat stabilitas emosional, integritas moral, perilaku adaptif, serta tanggung jawab peserta didik. Selain itu, penelitian ini menghasilkan kerangka konseptual yang mengintegrasikan perspektif psikologi resiliensi dengan epistemologi Islam sebagai landasan pengembangan pendidikan karakter yang lebih holistik dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam.

Kata Kunci: Resiliensi spiritual; Pendidikan agama Islam; Pembentukan karakter; Tazkiyatun nafs; Pendidikan karakter.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of the digital era and globalization has transformed various aspects of students' lives, including the ways they access information, interact with others, and construct value systems in their daily lives (Akour & Alenezi, 2022). On the one hand, technological progress has created extensive opportunities for the advancement of knowledge and skills (Ra et al., 2019). On the other hand, the overwhelming flow of information, increasing social pressures, and shifting cultural values have contributed to various moral, emotional, and spiritual challenges that influence students' character formation (Sahin, 2018). These conditions require education not only to pursue academic achievement but also to cultivate individuals who possess resilience, moral integrity, and spiritual balance in navigating the complexities of contemporary life.

Within this context, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a strategic position as a vehicle for character formation by promoting a balanced development of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions (Nuryamin et al., 2026). IRE is intended not merely to transmit religious knowledge but also to internalize Islamic values as the foundation for students' ways of thinking, attitudes, and behavior. One concept that has become increasingly relevant in supporting this objective is *spiritual resilience*, which refers to an individual's capacity to endure, adapt, and recover from life's adversities by drawing upon spiritual values as a source of inner strength (Ayob et al., 2025). Through *spiritual resilience*, students are expected not only to overcome various challenges but also to develop greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stronger moral commitment.

In recent years, research on Islamic values-based character education has expanded considerably. Scholarly attention has shifted beyond evaluating the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education toward examining how Islamic education contributes to character formation, strengthens mental well-being, and fosters students' spiritual development. Concepts such as *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, *shukr*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs* have increasingly been explored as foundational principles of character formation that enhance individuals' capacity to cope with life's challenges (Apriyanti et al., 2023; Rassool, 2024). This growing body of scholarship indicates that spirituality is increasingly recognized as an essential element of holistic education, extending educational goals beyond intellectual development to encompass the comprehensive formation of students' character.

Consistent with these developments, Rahman & Karim (2022) have demonstrated that integrating spiritual values into education contributes positively to psychological well-being, emotional stability, prosocial behavior, and students' character formation. Hidayat and Nur (2021) further emphasized that Islamic Religious Education plays a pivotal role in instilling Islamic values that serve as the foundation of students'

character development. In addition, the study by Sari and Anwar (2023) has enriched scholarly understanding of the significance of spiritual values in educational processes. Nevertheless, these studies generally position spirituality as a component of character education or as part of instructional strategies, with limited attention given to *spiritual resilience* as an independent conceptual construct. Furthermore, the integration of psychological resilience theory with the concept of Islamic spirituality remains relatively underexplored. This situation highlights a significant research gap and underscores the need to develop a more comprehensive conceptual framework of *spiritual resilience* within the context of Islamic Religious Education.

Against this background, this study seeks to address two principal questions: how is the concept of *spiritual resilience* understood from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, and how does it contribute to students' character formation? Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the concept of *spiritual resilience* through a *library research* approach while developing a conceptual synthesis that integrates psychological resilience theory with Islamic spirituality, particularly through the concepts of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and Islamic character education. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to propose a conceptual framework that integrates these two perspectives, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between spiritual values, psychological resilience, and students' character formation. Consequently, this study is expected not only to enrich the theoretical discourse on Islamic Religious Education but also to provide a conceptual foundation for developing more holistic curricula and instructional strategies capable of addressing the challenges of contemporary education.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a *library research* design to analyze the concept of *spiritual resilience* in Islamic Religious Education and its contribution to students' character formation (Connaway & Radford, 2021). This approach was selected because the study sought to develop a conceptual synthesis based on relevant scholarly literature rather than to examine empirical relationships among variables. The data sources consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and other scholarly publications addressing *spiritual resilience*, Islamic spirituality, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, character education, and Islamic Religious Education. These sources were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research topic, source credibility, and publication recency to ensure that the literature was directly aligned with the objectives of the study.

Data were collected through documentation techniques involving the identification, classification, and critical examination of the selected literature. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using *content analysis* within a descriptive-analytical framework through the processes of data reduction, thematic categorization, meaning

interpretation, and conceptual synthesis to develop a conceptual framework of *spiritual resilience* in Islamic Religious Education (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). To ensure the credibility of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing relevant literature and evaluating the consistency of arguments, theoretical coherence, and the relevance of each source to the research objectives. Through these procedures, the study generated a comprehensive conceptual synthesis of *spiritual resilience* from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education.

Results and Discussion

Conceptualization of Spiritual Resilience in Islamic Religious Education

Spiritual resilience in Islamic Religious Education may be understood as a multidimensional construct that integrates psychological resilience with transcendental awareness. From this perspective, resilience is not merely defined as an individual's capacity to endure and recover from life's adversities but also as a process of self-development through the internalization of Islamic values. Values such as *ṣabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (reliance on Allah), *shukr* (gratitude), and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) constitute the foundational pillars that strengthen individuals' capacity to regulate emotions, make ethical decisions, and maintain moral commitment when confronted with various life challenges (Aziz & Kurniawan, 2021; Fauzan & Hakim, 2024). Therefore, *spiritual resilience* extends beyond the ability to overcome adversity, reflecting a continuous process of character formation grounded in divine values.

Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, the essence of *spiritual resilience* has long been embedded in classical Islamic scholarship, although the term *spiritual resilience* itself has only recently gained prominence in contemporary psychological discourse. One of the foremost Muslim scholars who provided a significant philosophical foundation for this concept was Al-Ghazālī (2005) through his concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*. In *Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*, Al-Ghazālī explains that the purification of the soul is a continuous process of cleansing the heart from blameworthy traits while cultivating virtues such as *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, *shukr*, *ikhhlāṣ* (sincerity), and self-control. According to Al-Ghazālī (1988), an individual's spiritual quality is reflected not only in the capacity to cope with adversity but also in one's closeness to Allah (*ḥabl min Allāh*), which serves as the ultimate source of inner peace, strength, and guidance throughout life. Accordingly, *tazkiyat al-nafs* may be regarded as both the philosophical and epistemological foundation for conceptualizing *spiritual resilience* within Islamic Religious Education.

This perspective converges with contemporary resilience theory, which regards the capacity to adapt, recover, and grow following adversity as the essence of resilience. Numerous studies have demonstrated that spirituality strengthens coping mechanisms by providing individuals with meaning, hope, optimism, and inner peace when confronted with life's challenges (Mahmud & Raharjo, 2022). Nevertheless,

unlike psychological approaches that primarily emphasize intrapersonal and social factors, the Islamic perspective positions one's relationship with Allah as the principal source of individual resilience. Consequently, *spiritual resilience* is understood as the integration of psychological capacity and spiritual quality, both of which reinforce one another in cultivating a resilient personality.

The synthesis of Al-Ghazālī's thought (1987) and contemporary resilience theory suggests that *spiritual resilience* encompasses the strengthening of psychological capacities, purification of the soul, internalization of Islamic values, and character formation as an integrated process. This synthesis broadens the conventional understanding of resilience, which has predominantly been examined from a psychological perspective, by positioning spirituality as its fundamental dimension. Within the context of Islamic Religious Education, *spiritual resilience* functions as a bridge linking Islamic values with students' moral, emotional, and social development. Consequently, education is expected not only to equip individuals with the capacity to confront life's challenges but also to cultivate a strong spiritual orientation that guides their personal development.

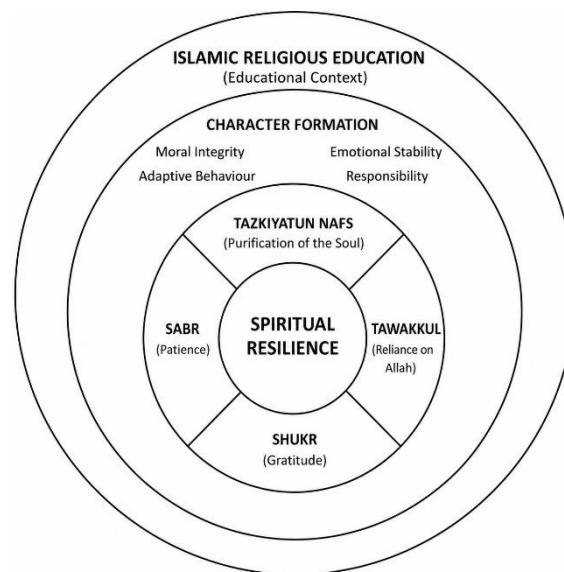


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Spiritual Resilience in Islamic Religious Education

Source: Developed by the Authors (2026).

Figure 1 illustrates that *spiritual resilience* constitutes the core of the character formation process within Islamic Religious Education. At its most fundamental level, *spiritual resilience* is developed through the internalization of four essential Islamic values, namely *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, and *shukr*. These interconnected values establish a spiritual foundation that enables individuals to confront life's adversities without losing their orientation toward Allah. The internalization of these values subsequently contributes to the development of moral integrity, emotional stability, adaptive behavior, and responsibility as the primary dimensions of character formation.

The conceptual framework further demonstrates that this entire process unfolds within the context of Islamic Religious Education, which functions as an educational environment that continuously facilitates the internalization of spiritual values. Consequently, character formation is influenced not only by the acquisition of religious knowledge but also by the successful development of *spiritual resilience* as a foundation integrating psychological and spiritual dimensions. This conceptual model offers a perspective in which Islamic Religious Education serves as an ecosystem that nurtures individuals who are psychologically resilient, morally mature, and spiritually grounded in responding to the complexities of contemporary life.

Spiritual Resilience as a Foundation for Student Character Formation

Spiritual resilience constitutes a fundamental foundation for students' character formation because it integrates psychological resilience with spiritual values that have been internalized within the individual. From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, character is understood not merely as a set of observable behaviors but as the manifestation of spiritual qualities cultivated through a continuous educational process. Accordingly, character formation cannot be separated from strengthening the spiritual dimension, as an individual's capacity to demonstrate honesty, responsibility, *ṣabr*, and empathy is rooted in the quality of one's relationship with Allah. This perspective reinforces the view that Islamic education seeks to nurture the holistic development of human beings by integrating intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions. This argument is supported by Putri and Hidayah (2021), who demonstrated that the internalization of Islamic values contributes significantly to the development of self-control, prosocial behavior, and students' moral consistency.

From Al-Ghazālī's perspective (2017), character formation begins with the process of *tazkiyat al-naḥs*, namely the continuous purification of the soul through the control of worldly desires, the cultivation of virtuous *akhlāq*, and the strengthening of one's relationship with Allah. This process not only transforms outward behavior but also nurtures moral consciousness, which serves as the foundation of a resilient character. Accordingly, *tazkiyat al-naḥs* may be understood as the cornerstone of *spiritual resilience*, as it enables individuals to cultivate values such as *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, and *shukr* in responding to life's challenges. Consequently, *spiritual resilience* does not emerge instantaneously but develops through an educational process that fosters reflection, self-discipline, and spiritual maturity. This perspective extends the argument advanced by Hakim and Fauzan (2022), who positioned spirituality as a component of character education, by demonstrating that spirituality itself constitutes the primary mechanism through which character is formed.

Drawing upon the synthesis of the existing literature, each dimension of *spiritual resilience* contributes uniquely to students' character formation while functioning as an integrated whole. The value of *ṣabr* strengthens emotional regulation, enabling

students to cope with adversity without compromising emotional stability. *Tawakkul* nurtures optimism and self-confidence through the conviction that every sincere effort is accompanied by Allah's guidance and assistance. Likewise, *shukr* fosters a positive outlook that encourages individuals to develop empathy, appreciate others, and respond constructively to life's experiences. Above all these dimensions, *tazkiyat al-nafs* serves as the foundational process that directs spiritual values toward the development of moral integrity. The conceptual relationships among these dimensions are synthesized in Table 1.

Table 1. Conceptual Synthesis of Spiritual Resilience Dimensions for Student Character Formation

Dimension	Islamic Meaning	Psychological Contribution	Character Outcome	Educational Implication
Tazkiyat al-nafs	Continuous purification of the soul	Self-control and moral awareness	Moral integrity	Character internalization through habituation and reflection
Şabr	Patience in the face of adversity	Emotional regulation	Emotional stability	Reflective learning and self-discipline
Tawakkul	Reliance on Allah after making one's utmost effort	Optimism and spiritual coping	Confidence and perseverance	Faith-oriented problem solving
Shukr	Gratitude toward Allah	Positive meaning-making	Positive attitude and empathy	Gratitude-based learning culture

Source: Synthesized by the Authors (2026).

As presented in Table 1, each dimension of *spiritual resilience* performs a distinct function while remaining inseparable from the others. *Tazkiyat al-nafs* serves as the foundation that guides the process of character formation through the purification of the soul, whereas *şabr*, *tawakkul*, and *shukr* represent the practical manifestations of spiritual values that reinforce both students' psychological resilience and spiritual well-being. This synthesis demonstrates that character develops through the continuous internalization of values rather than solely through the acquisition of religious knowledge. Accordingly, character formation in Islamic Religious Education should be understood as a process that integrates spiritual consciousness with the capacity to navigate life's challenges. This interpretation reinforces the findings of Mahmud and Raharjo (2022), who argued that spirituality provides meaning, hope, and inner peace in responding to adversity, while further demonstrating the systematic relationship between spiritual values and character formation.

Unlike previous studies that generally position spirituality as one of the supporting components of character education, the conceptual synthesis proposed in this study identifies *spiritual resilience* as the central mechanism linking Islamic values with students' character development. Within this framework, character is understood as

the outcome of a continuous process of internalizing spiritual values within the educational environment of Islamic Religious Education. In other words, the effectiveness of character education depends not only on the quality of religious instruction but also on the successful cultivation of *spiritual resilience* as students' psychological and spiritual foundation. This perspective reinforces the work of Yusuf and Anwar (2024), who emphasized the importance of integrating psychological, spiritual, and pedagogical dimensions in Islamic education, while offering a more comprehensive conceptual framework for explaining the relationship between *spiritual resilience* and student character formation.

Educational Implications of Spiritual Resilience in Islamic Religious Education

The integration of *spiritual resilience* into Islamic Religious Education underscores the need for a paradigm shift from knowledge-oriented instruction toward a more holistic approach to character formation. Islamic Religious Education should no longer be viewed merely as a means of transmitting normative religious teachings but also as a process of cultivating spiritual resilience that enables students to respond wisely to the complexities of contemporary life. From this perspective, educational success should be assessed not only by students' cognitive achievement but also by the development of their moral awareness, emotional maturity, and spiritual well-being. This argument is supported by Jenuri et al. (2025), who demonstrated that Islamic education becomes more effective when cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions are integrated in a balanced manner, thereby fostering more comprehensive character development.

This paradigm shift also redefines the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers as facilitators of *spiritual resilience* rather than merely transmitters of religious knowledge. Teachers are expected to create meaningful learning experiences that encourage students to engage in self-reflection, cultivate spiritual awareness, and develop the habit of making decisions based on Islamic values. Through this educational process, values such as *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, *shukr*, and *tazkiyat al-naḥs* are understood not merely as religious concepts but as practical principles that guide students in responding to everyday challenges. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Muzakkir et al. (2024), who reported that teacher role modeling, reflective learning, and value habituation exert a more substantial influence on character formation than instructional approaches focused solely on knowledge transmission.

Another important implication concerns the development of Islamic Religious Education curricula, which should provide greater emphasis on strengthening *spiritual resilience* as one of the intended learning outcomes. This objective may be achieved by integrating spiritual values into learning objectives, instructional materials, teaching strategies, and assessment practices that balance religious understanding with the internalization of Islamic values. Consequently, educational assessment should extend beyond conceptual mastery to include students' capacities for emotional regulation,

ethical decision-making, and moral integrity when confronting life's adversities. This perspective expands the work of Umam and Hasan (2025), whose study primarily focused on classroom-based character education, by proposing *spiritual resilience* as a conceptual framework for developing Islamic Religious Education curricula that are more responsive to contemporary educational challenges.

Beyond curriculum development, the educational environment plays an equally significant role in strengthening students' *spiritual resilience*. A school culture that promotes reflection, social responsibility, collaborative learning, regular religious practices, and interactions grounded in Islamic values reinforces the continuous internalization of character. Within this context, character formation is understood as the outcome of dynamic interactions among learning experiences, the social environment, and the reinforcement of spiritual values. Accordingly, *spiritual resilience* should not be regarded as an exclusively individual attribute but rather as a capacity cultivated through an educational ecosystem that supports students' moral and spiritual development. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Luo et al. (2023), who demonstrated that supportive learning environments contribute significantly to psychological resilience, prosocial behavior, and students' spiritual well-being.

From a theoretical perspective, this study offers a new lens for understanding character formation by positioning *spiritual resilience* as the conceptual mechanism linking Islamic values with character development in Islamic Religious Education. Unlike Niemiec et al. (2020), who regarded spirituality primarily as a supporting component of character education, the present study argues that *spiritual resilience* constitutes the foundational mechanism through which Islamic values are internalized and translated into sustained moral conduct and character development. This conceptual framework not only enriches scholarly discourse on character education from an Islamic perspective but also provides a theoretical foundation for the development of instructional models, curriculum innovation, and future empirical research. Consequently, this study extends previous scholarship by proposing an integrated conceptual framework that unifies psychological, spiritual, and pedagogical dimensions into a coherent model for character formation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *spiritual resilience* serves as a conceptual foundation linking Islamic values with students' character formation within the context of Islamic Religious Education. Unlike perspectives that regard spirituality merely as a supporting component of character education, this study argues that *spiritual resilience* functions as the primary mechanism through which psychological resilience, transcendental awareness, and the internalization of Islamic values are integrated to shape students' character. By synthesizing the concepts of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *ṣabr*,

tawakkul, and *shukr* with contemporary resilience theory, this study demonstrates that character formation is a gradual process of internalizing spiritual values that fosters emotional stability, moral integrity, adaptive behavior, and personal responsibility. Accordingly, Islamic Religious Education should be understood not merely as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but as a holistic educational process that nurtures well-rounded individuals through the cultivation of *spiritual resilience*.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes a conceptual framework that integrates resilience theory with Islamic epistemology, thereby extending scholarly discourse on character education within Islamic Religious Education. The proposed framework provides a foundation for the development of curricula, instructional strategies, and future research aimed at strengthening students' spiritual development. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its *library research* design, meaning that its findings remain conceptual and have not yet been empirically validated in specific educational settings. Therefore, future research is encouraged to develop valid and reliable instruments for measuring *spiritual resilience*, empirically examine the proposed conceptual framework using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and investigate its implementation across different educational levels and contexts of Islamic Religious Education to strengthen the empirical validity and practical applicability of the proposed framework.

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