

# Reactualization of Al-Ghazali's Ethics: Internalizing the Values of *Ayyuhal Walad* in the Era of Digital Disruption Among Generation Z

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### ABSTRACT

For Generation Z, the boundless digital space often becomes a place devoid of civility, marked by the prevalence of hate speech, a loss of respect for scholarly authority, and an instant-gratification mentality that erodes perseverance. This study aims to reinterpret Imam Al-Ghazali's ethics as presented in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* as a means of strengthening the character of Generation Z in the face of the moral crisis caused by digital disruption. This research uses a qualitative method with a library research approach. The library research used to collect data, analyze, and draw conclusions regarding the reinterpretation of the value of *adab* in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* from Imam Al-Ghazali's, based on journals and previous studies. The research findings indicate that the internalization of values in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Ayyuhal Walad* among Generation Z in the era of digital disruption encompasses five key findings: the characteristics of Generation Z in the era of digital disruption; psychosocial profiles and mental health vulnerabilities; the identification of digital pathologies; the mapping of values and resolutions; and a model of internalization mechanisms. At its culmination, the success of the reactivation of *Ayyuhal Walad* culminates in the restoration of the essential function of the intellect of Generation Z; freeing them from the subjugation of artificial algorithms, and guiding them back to fully submit under the completeness of Sharia and Haqiqat, so that they are ready to face the future as digital subjects with integrity, noble manners, and high spiritual awareness.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The era of digital disruption has brought about fundamental transformations in the fabric of human life, including in the realms of education and social interaction. For Generation Z (the i-Generation), technology is not merely a tool but an ecosystem in which they grow and develop. While the ease of accessing information through Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) has indeed accelerated the transfer of knowledge, this phenomenon also presents a paradox in the form of a degradation of values. Alvara Research's 2020 survey showed that 52.4% of Indonesian Muslim adolescents trust religious content from social media more than they do religious scholars or formal religious teachers; Generation Z appears to prefer a form of religiosity that is fast, flexible, and visual over one based on process, chain of transmission, and authority (Chika et al., 2020). The boundless digital space often becomes an arena devoid of etiquette, marked by the prevalence of hate speech, a loss of respect for scholarly authority, and an instant-gratification mentality that erodes perseverance. This phenomenon of the erosion of etiquette poses a serious challenge for Islam Education. Today's students or learners often possess high digital literacy but are spiritually and ethically fragile. If left unaddressed, this situation has the potential to produce a

generation that is intellectually sharp yet spiritually empty and behaviorally unruly (Azis et al., 2026). To address this multidimensional crisis, we must strive to revitalize time-tested classical values. One authoritative reference in character formation is the thought of Hujjatul Islam, Imam Al-Ghazali. Among his many works, the book *I* holds a strategic position due to its format as direct advice (a letter) from a teacher to his student (Hafiza & Qayyum, 2024). This book specifically highlights the essence of knowledge, the dangers of knowledge without action, and the importance of sincere intention in learning points that are highly relevant for healing the spiritual ailments of the touchscreen generation. Previous research has revealed that there is a relevance of moral education in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* to the concept of Islamic education, including educational goals, curriculum, educators, and students (Oktavia et al., 2022).

Imam Al-Ghazali based education on moral education, such as the instillation of virtuous values and the cultivation of essential qualities in students (Mushoffa Zain & Manik, 2023). Additionally, there is character education that contains specific advice from Imam Al-Ghazali to his students (Khaliq, 2017) (Hidayah et al., 2024). Additionally, there is contextual meaning in the advice of the book *Ayyuhal Walad*, which also has relevance to contemporary life (Hidayah et al., 2024). Most previous research has focused on Al-Ghazali's general educational concepts without drawing specific connections to the current digital ethics crisis. In addition, the contextual meaning of the advice in the book *Ayyuhal Walad*, which is relevant to contemporary life. However, research that specifically contextualizes the advice in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* with the challenges of the digital disruption era for Generation Z still needs to be deepened. Therefore, This study aims to reinterpret Imam Al-Ghazali's ethics as presented in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* as a means of strengthening the character of Generation Z in the face of the moral crisis caused by digital disruption. This research seeks to answer the question: What is the relevance of Imam Al-Ghazali's advice in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* as an antithesis to moral decadence in the digital era? This research is important because it is expected to give birth to a perspective that aligns classical wisdom with contemporary challenges, offering solutions for the character formation of students who are civilized in both the real and virtual worlds.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive research design with a qualitative approach. Descriptive research is a type of research that uses narrative methods to describe research findings. The purpose of this type of descriptive research is to provide an explanation of a particular event. In this descriptive study, the research problem must be factual, have scientific value, and not be too broad or based on opinion. (Muhammad Darwin, 2021) This type of research is library research, which is used to collect data, analyze, and draw conclusions regarding the reinterpretation of the value of adab in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* from Imam Al-Ghazali's, based on journals and previous studies. The subject of this research is the ethical thoughts of Imam Al-Ghazali as outlined in the book *Ayyuhal Walad*. Additionally, this research also focuses on the phenomenon of digital behavior of Generation Z (i-Generation) as the material object analyzed thru the perspective of the values in the book. Data collection involves documentation, which entails searching for and synthesizing information from various sources, such as books, journals, and previous research studies. The data analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman method, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions (Muhammad Darwin, 2021). Data reduction involves grouping data according to their categories; in this study, data from different sources were grouped according to themes. Data display is used to present the data, which is then critically and

thoroughly analyzed to support the propositions and ideas. The final stage is drawing conclusions from the research findings.

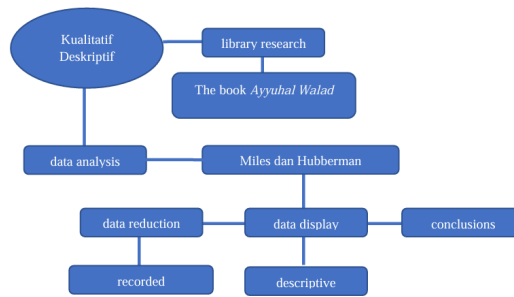


Figure 1 Research Methods Chart

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the internalization of values in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Ayyuhal Walad* among Generation Z in the era of digital disruption encompasses five key findings: the characteristics of Generation Z in the era of digital disruption; psychosocial profiles and mental health vulnerabilities; the identification of digital pathologies; the mapping of values and resolutions; and a model of internalization mechanisms. The following chart presents the research findings:

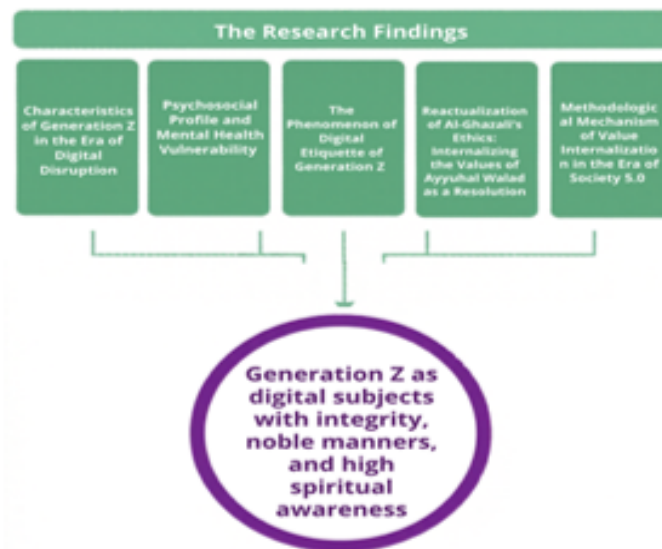


Figure 2 The Research Findings

#### 3.1 Characteristics of Generation Z in the Era of Digital Disruption

Generation Z, often referred to as the i-Generation and Post-Millennials, born between 1997 and 2012, is the first demographic cohort to be born as digital natives. Unlike the millennial generation (Generation Y), which experienced a cultural transition from analog to digital technology, Generation Z was born when internet infrastructure, search engines, and wireless connectivity were already established. They do not have a collective memory of a world without the penetration of smartphones, artificial intelligence algorithms, or social media ecosystems that dictate the pulse of social life (Tuada & Raihani, 2025). From an early age, Generation Z grew up

with very intense and continuous exposure to digital screens. This habit emerged during a period when the brain was rapidly developing, gradually reshaping the way they think and process information. As a result, their cognitive patterns have quite distinctive characteristics. They are used to processing information very quickly, even when it comes simultaneously from various directions. This ability is combined with a natural proficiency in using technology, from navigating interfaces to understanding new features, because technology has been a part of their lives from an early age. Moreover, they are much more interested in information presented visually or audiovisually. Videos, images, and animations feel easier and more engaging for them compared to reading long texts (Tuada & Raihani, 2025). The digital environment with a high level of connectivity has shaped the cognitive tendencies of Generation Z thru a continuous habituation process to dynamic user interfaces (UI/UX), making platforms based on short videos, infographics, and images far more effective in attracting and maintaining their focus compared to lengthy and complex academic textual literature (Annisa et al., 2025). Although this cognitive adaptation provides certain advantages for Generation Z, the change also brings about paradoxical consequences. On one hand, they are becoming faster at processing information, but on the other hand, they tend to experience fragmented attention and superficial analysis. The explosion of information makes Generation Z face challenges in sorting thru biases, verifying truths (*tabayyun*), and organizing scattered data into coherent knowledge (Muhammad Irvandi Permana et al., 2025). The habit of digital multitasking in daily life, such as listening to online lectures while scrolling thru social media timelines, replying to instant messages, and playing music, has empirically proven to damage the architecture of long-term memory and reduce the capacity for deep analytical understanding (deep work). They are accustomed to surfing the surface of the ocean of information, but often fail to dive deep to find pearls of wisdom (Anisa Miftahul Jannah et al, 2026). Generation Z shows a strong preference for social media platforms as their primary means of communication. They tend to choose platforms that offer visual interaction and short content, such as TikTok and Instagram, which allow for creative and instant self-expression. Based on research results, the facts show that the majority of Generation Z (66.7%) prioritize social media, while a smaller portion (23.3%) prioritize gaming, with only 10% allocating time to access educational sites (Khodijah et al., 2021).

### 3.2 Psychosocial Profile and Mental Health Vulnerability

Psychosocial perspective, Generation Z exhibits an ambivalent yet dynamic character. Various studies depict them as a generation with a higher global awareness compared to their predecessors, strongly achievement-oriented, and possessing the courage to take measured risks. They also highly value cultural diversity and position themselves as part of the social change movement. Global connectivity thru the internet expands their horizons of empathy, enabling them to engage with and care about major issues such as climate change, social injustice, and humanitarian crises in various parts of the world (Oktariani & Ayu, 2025). Social media for Generation Z has mutated in function; it is no longer just a communication tool or an extension of interaction means, but has become the primary ontological space for self-identity construction, social group affiliation search, status recognition, and existential validation (Jannah et al., 2024). Their social existence is validated thru quantitative metrics such as likes, followers, retweets, and the reach of the content they produce or distribute. Although Generation Z has a strong ability to adapt in the digital environment, the use of technology and interactions that heavily rely on touch screens actually create a paradox. On one hand, they are becoming more connected, but on the other hand, a sense of alienation and psychological vulnerability has emerged that has never been seen in previous generations. Several educational psychology studies confirm that continuous virtual connectivity does not necessarily

correlate with real-world relational competence. Many individuals in the Generation Z cohort experience serious deficits in face-to-face social skills (physical interpersonal communication), difficulties in reading non-verbal cues (body language), and tend to prefer completing tasks individually behind their screens (Khodijah et al., 2021). The near-total dependence on hardware (gadget addiction) triggers massive and endemic mental health complications. Exposure to social media algorithms that consistently present a curated, seemingly perfect life of others creates an extraordinarily heavy social comparison pressure. This is directly correlated with the high incidence of clinical anxiety disorders, academic stress, neurotic depression, Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) syndrome, as well as a drastic decline in overall emotional well-being (Chika et al., 2020).

### 3.3 The Phenomenon of Digital Etiquette of Generation Z

The transformation from direct communication in physical spaces to interactions thru the virtual world has changed the way we understand etiquette, morals, and ethics. The digital environment provides a false sense of security thru anonymity and psychological distance. These two factors make people bolder in taking actions they would usually avoid in face-to-face meetings. In the study of cyber psychology, this phenomenon is called the online disinhibition effect, which systematically works to lower a person's moral inhibition threshold (Abdillah et al., 2023). The loss of social barriers that usually regulate polite behavior in the real world catalyzes at least four main issues of digital etiquette among Generation Z students, all of which erode and threaten the foundation of Islamic morality.

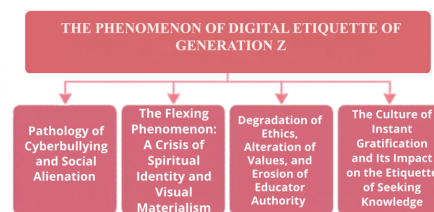


Figure 2 The Phenomenon of Digital Etiquette of Generation Z

#### Pathology of Cyberbullying and Social Alienation

Cyberbullying can no longer be viewed merely as deviant behavior among teenagers. This phenomenon has evolved into one of the most serious and damaging forms of digital social pathology, with direct impacts that can devastate the mental health of its victims. Unlike traditional bullying, which is bound by the constraints of space and time, such as occurring only in the campus cafeteria or parking lot during class hours, cyberbullying expands into the digital realm, operating continuously 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without being limited by geographical jurisdiction, reaching the most private spaces of the victims, namely their own bedrooms (Pinalis et al., 2024). In examining this phenomenon, empirical findings indicate that the issue has many layers and requires careful analysis to be fully understood. The phenomenon of cyberbullying currently shows concerning prevalence and extensiveness, dominating up to 42% of the total reported bullying cases. The high number is directly proportional to the massive penetration rate of social media, such as Instagram, among Generation Z, which reaches 51.90% (Pinalis et al., 2024). In the context of higher education, the involvement in cyberbullying is often fatally overlooked. A descriptive quantitative study of Generation Z students at University X (Aceh Utara Regency) found that 58.7% of the subjects fell into the low engagement category (P. S. Psikologi et al., 2023). These findings indicate that cyberbullying is often normalized among students as merely incidental

activities, accidents, or widespread minor jokes, rather than being viewed as isolated behavioral anomalies. From a psychological review, correlational statistical analysis reveals a paradox where narcissistic traits do not have a significant correlation with the tendency for cyberbullying behavior in Generation Z ( $r = -0.016, p > 0.05$ ) (Christianty, 2024). On the contrary, a comprehensive study in Sulawesi confirmed that the most significant catalyst for this behavior is rooted in the intensity of commenting on social media, especially when triggered by visual aspects that invite negative comments with sexual undertones (Umar et al., 2024). Sociopsychologically, this bullying behavior does not stand alone, but is strongly mediated by vulnerable self-esteem, high peer conformity demands for group acceptance (in-group), and low social media literacy combined with latent drives from personality traits (Christianty, 2024).

These statistical data provide an advanced understanding of the patterns and characteristics of digital bullying among Generation Z. One important finding is that clinical narcissism is not the most influential factor in driving digital bullying behavior. Meanwhile, the factors of commenting intensity and the urge to conform to peers emerge as the most dominant triggers. These findings clearly show that cyberbullying among educated students is often not rooted in individual psychological disorders of a sadistic nature, but rather influenced by group dynamics and shallow, unreflective digital interaction patterns. Students often engage in actions of making derogatory comments that, from a fiqh perspective, can be categorized as digital gossip, buhtan, or slander because they are unconsciously swept away by the patterns of interaction in the algorithmic echo chambers of social media. In the fast-moving flow of information, the line between constructive criticism, sarcastic humor, and verbal bullying that degrades dignity is becoming increasingly blurred. Such behavior is fundamentally contrary to the principles of Islamic communication ethics, which explicitly prohibit actions that damage the honor of others. The prohibition is emphasized in the words of Allah SWT in QS. Al-Hujurat (49):12

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَحْسَبُوا وَا لَا يَعْتَبِ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا

*“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other.”* This verse explicitly emphasizes the principle of protecting respect, which is also reinforced by the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him): "A Muslim is abrother to another Muslim; he should not oppress him nor should he humiliate him." (HR. Muslim). Additionally, the Prophet also warned against harmful speech, even if it seems trivial, as mentioned in the hadith: "Indeed, a person may say a word that he considers light, but it can lead him to hell." (HR. Bukhari). These verses and hadiths affirm that maintaining the dignity and honor of others is part of karāmah insāniyyah, which forms the foundation of social ethics in Islam. Therefore, the practice of belittling others in the digital space, even if done in the context of jokes or impulsively due to social pressure, remains a prohibited behavior that must be avoided. The psychological impact caused by this verbal crime is extremely fatal and destructive. Victims of cyberbullying are highly vulnerable to prolonged psychological trauma that manifests as neurotic anxiety disorders, severe clinical depression, isolation and anti-social behavior, and even triggers suicidal ideation. This happens because the victims feel completely alienated and stripped of their dignity in front of an unlimited virtual audience, without any refuge to escape from the permanent digital footprint.

### **The Flexing Phenomenon: A Crisis of Spiritual Identity and Visual Materialism**

The next digital etiquette issue that requires serious attention is the rising culture of flaunting (flexing). This phenomenon describes a conscious and planned action by individuals to

display social status, material wealth, the use of luxury goods, or a hedonistic lifestyle on social media. These practices are used as a means to build social identity, enhance self-status, and gain recognition and validation from audiences in the digital space. For Generation Z, who are psychosocially navigating the phase of emerging adulthood (transition to maturity), social media has shifted its function from merely a communication networking platform to an arena of fierce social capital battles. There are three dimensions of fundamental crises born from the hegemony of this culture of display: Spiritual Crisis (Deconstruction of Intent and Heart Pathology): Theologically, flexing is closely intertwined and becomes a modern manifestation of the chronic heart diseases that have long been warned against in Sufi tradition, namely *riya'*, *sum'ah*, *ujub*, and *hubbud dunya*. This practice of visual worship creates a spiritual void where true happiness no longer stems from contentment and gratitude for Allah SWT's blessings, but is artificially measured by quantitative metrics of digital interaction, namely the number of likes, praise-filled comments, and view impression rates. Generation Z, trapped in this vortex of flexing, ultimately measures the intrinsic value of their humanity and spirituality thru the lens of external validation, leading to acute psychological exhaustion and disorientation of life's meaning (Chika et al., 2020).

### **Degradation of Ethics, Alteration of Values, and Erosion of Educator Authority**

The digitization of communication media has fundamentally changed the way knowledge is transmitted, which in turn affects the structure of etiquette and the hierarchical relationship between students and lecturers. However, in the tradition of Islamic education, the teacher-student relationship is built on the values of humility, respect, and the pursuit of blessings. Knowledge is believed to penetrate the heart only when accompanied by sincere respect for the teacher as the intermediary of that knowledge. This transformation has caused many nuances of respect, etiquette, and emotional sensitivity that were previously maintained in direct interactions to become blurred or completely lost (Marcindra et al., 2024). Salsabila (2023), in her communication sociology study, conceptualizes this collapse phenomenon as a manifestation of Value Alteration, which is a process of shifting, modifying, and degrading the quality of ethical values, moral norms, and the moral foundation of students caused by exposure to a fast-paced, mechanical, and superficial digital culture. The pattern of academic communication that in previous decades was characterized by moderation, caution, and rich in etiquette, is now gradually and systematically being replaced by a pattern of communication that is more instant, spontaneous, driven by momentary emotional impulses, and experiencing a significant deficit in ethical consideration (Feni Indriana et al, 2025). In the practice of daily academic interactions, this change in values is clearly visible and can be proven thru various forms of increasingly concerning ethical decline, including: Loss of Nonverbal Elements and Structural Ambiguity of Meaning: Digital textual communication inherently eliminates all paralinguistic elements such as tone of voice, intonation, softness of speech, and kinesic elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, and body posture inclination, which are the essence of civilized communication (Marcindra et al., 2024). Examples of Amoral Behavior in Academic Interaction: Empirical observations in communication ethics research have identified the worst forms of unethical behavior by students toward lecturers today, which include audacious actions such as sending messages to excuse absences from lectures due to sudden illness without bothering to include valid medical certificates from health authorities, addressing lecturers with informal greetings as if they were peers, and passive-aggressive attitudes manifested in deliberate delays in responding to lecturers' instructions or messages, despite the students being active on social media (Sudarto, 2024). This unilateral leveling of hierarchy egregiously violates the fundamental principles of *wara'* (cautious adherence to the boundaries of Sharia), *adab*, and *ta'dzim* in the Islamic scholarly tradition (Feni Indriana et al, 2025). In Islamic epistemology, complete

submission and respect toward the bearer of the chain of knowledge is an absolute ontological prerequisite for the functionalization and enlightenment of knowledge itself within the heart.

### **The Culture of Instant Gratification and Its Impact on the Etiquette of Seeking Knowledge**

The interface design of contemporary digital platforms is deliberately built on the principles of gamification and variable rewards, engineered by the engineers in Silicon Valley. This mechanism is designed to trigger the repeated release of dopamine in the human neural center, thereby encouraging users to keep returning, scrolling thru screens, and maintaining uninterrupted engagement (Nisa & Nisrina, 2025). This system gives birth to and reinforces the hegemony of instant gratification culture, where Generation Z is conditioned from an early age to expect that they should receive rewards, external validation, and access to information directly, instantly, efficiently, and without the need to exert hard effort or endure boredom. When this pattern of rapid information consumption enters the realm of higher education, it clashes with the fundamental principles and etiquette in thalabul ‘ilmi. In Islamic epistemology, authentic religious knowledge cannot be obtained merely by typing keywords into Google or watching short sermon clips on TikTok. Deep knowledge requires a process of struggle, diligence in reading authoritative texts, as well as patience and intellectual resilience to navigate complex dialectics of thought. The characteristics of Gen Z students, who are a priori reluctant, lazy, and refuse to read lengthy textual literature, and prefer consuming fragmented visual summaries out of their original context, essentially reduce the nobility of religious knowledge to mere shallow pop information commodities (Nisa & Nisrina, 2025). Even more concerning is when this generation becomes accustomed to relying on instant methods in academic activities, such as using generative artificial intelligence in a plagiaristic, massive, and unethical manner to compose papers, essays, or even theses, causing the learning process to lose its substance and spiritual essence. Without the involvement of dialectics, contemplation, and independent intellectual effort, academic activities merely become technical products devoid of the meaning of self-formation. Knowledge obtained thru shortcuts and instant methods tends to be fragile, not rooted in the heart, easily evaporating when tested by the problems of reality, and ultimately failing to transform into wisdom manifested in righteous deeds. The formation of a solid moral structure and a civilized civilization, as agreed upon by consensus among Islamic thinkers and scholars, does not recognize instant methodologies at all; it is a life project that requires repeated ethical habituation.

#### **3.4 Reactualization of Al-Ghazali’s Ethics: Internalizing the Values of *Ayyuhal Walad* as a Resolution**

In facing the increasingly massive, endemic, and systemic digital moral pathology, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum can no longer remain passive or merely convey ritual teachings in a textual and dry manner. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) needs to adopt a more contextual, critical, and transformative approach to effectively address the real challenges of digital ethics in the lives of students. Religious education must be reformed immediately and returned to its ontological nature as a medium for the restoration and transformation of the human soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) that is responsive to the spirit of the times (Nisa & Nisrina, 2025). Hujjatul Islam Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111 AD), one of the most influential rationalist and Sufi figures in the history of Islamic intellectual thought, produced a monumental work that deeply elaborates on ethics, the epistemology of knowledge, and moral education. Among his intellectual legacies, one of the most relevant, pedagogical, and incisive treatises is the book *Ayyuhal Walad*. This epic work was composed as a direct and enlightening response to the existential anxieties and epistemological confusions of one of his senior students, who questioned the essence of the usefulness of knowledge,

the direction of the search for truth amidst a sea of theories, and what practices would truly be able to save the soul in the hereafter (Riyanti & Ningsih, 2022). This book is relevant as a moral shield because of its position bridging academic rationality and the depth of applicable Sufi spirituality. The relevance of Al-Ghazali's *thot* for Generation Z lies in the foundation of his approach, which is not at all dogmatically blind. On the contrary, the approach of *Ayyuhal Walad* is highly reflective, affective, and fully centered on the purification of the heart as the highest instrument of cognition and the central locus of human moral decision-making. The synthesis of various academic literature reviews on the book *Ayyuhal Walad* successfully extracted and formulated eight pillars of fundamental religious character education values, namely: (1) religious, (2) honest, (3) tolerant, (4) disciplined, (5) hardworking, (6) environmentally conscious, (7) socially responsible, and (8) responsible (Hafiza & Qayyum, 2024).



Figure 3 Reactualization of Al-Ghazali's Ethics: Internalizing the Values of *Ayyuhal Walad* as a Resolution

To reactualize this great *thot* and directly intervene in the four previously described issues of digital etiquette, educational institutions and PAI lecturers must implement the following thematic internalization strategies:

### **Deconstructing the Flexing Phenomenon thru the Internalization of Religious and Honest Values**

Imam Al-Ghazali, in his various works including *Ayyuhal Walad* and *Ihya Ulumuddin*, consistently and sternly warns about the destructive power of the disease of *hubbud dunya* and the transactional motives in seeking a false position in the eyes of people. The internalization of deep religious values and absolute honesty from *Ayyuhal Walad* aims strategically to dismantle, destroy, and neutralize the illusion of false identities constantly produced by the flexing trend. The value of religiosity is placed as the primary and foremost ontological foundation in the entire pyramid of Muslim personality formation. Without religiosity, other ethical values will lose their transcendental basis and be reduced to mere social agreements that are easily changeable (Saepudin, 2019). In Al-Ghazali's moral architecture, honesty is not merely reduced to the alignment between words and material facts. Honesty occupies a much higher hierarchy, intertwined with the concept of *Ikhlas*; a sincerity of intention, the wholeness of inner integrity, and the purity of motivation free from any tendencies other than Allah. Generation Z must be made aware that every touch on the gadget screen, such as typing a comment (*qaul*), sharing a status (*fi'il*), or ignoring hoax news (*tatruk*), is a form of deeds that are absolutely bound by Sharia and supervised by God (Damanik & Trimurni, 2025). The value of digital religiosity demands that they use Sharia as their internal filter bubble. Meanwhile, the value of *Tawakal* serves as a psychological shield. Amid the constant exposure to a hyper-reality lifestyle that triggers future anxiety or quarter-life crisis due to digital comparison, *Tawakal* injects peace of mind that sustenance, the future, and destiny are not determined by algorithms or human validation, but are entirely in the hands of Allah. For Generation Z, the social media landscape is a massive infrastructure built entirely on external validation. The culture of flexing is a tangible manifestation of the absence of the value of honesty caused by a hunger for human praise (Jannah et al., 2024).

## Cultural Resolution of Cyberbullying thru the Values of Tolerance and Social Concern (Ukhuwah)

The empathy crisis that is the root of cyberbullying can only be addressed by strengthening the values of tolerance and social concern. Al-Ghazali emphasized the obligation to guard the tongue from slander, and in the digital context, this principle extends to the responsibility of safeguarding the "fingertips" from hurtful writing. The internalization of social concern necessitates the presence of *muraqabah*, the awareness that Allah is always watching every time we type on our devices, so that digital interactions remain within the framework of etiquette. In explaining the path to the perfection of the soul for a seeker of truth, Al-Ghazali places a strong emphasis on the resolution of interpersonal conflicts:

وَالْقَائِلُ اسْتِزْجَاءَ الْخُصْمِ حَتَّى لَا يَبْقَى لِأَحَدٍ عَلَيْكَ حَقٌّ

*Meaning: The third is the heart's willingness toward enemies until no one has any obligatory right over you.* Al-Ghazali emphasized that a seeker of truth (*salik*) must purify himself thru four main actions, the third of which is to achieve social tolerance thru the effort of *istirdha' al-khusum*. This phrase literally means seeking the willingness of enemies or parties that have previously been in conflict to such an extent that no rights of others, whether material or moral, remain entangled with the individual (Martasila & Abidin, 2025). When Generation Z is constantly presented with illusions of success, luxurious vacations, and instant achievements from their peers on Instagram or LinkedIn, the seeds of envy flourish. This triggers a toxic climate of competition and social alienation, even giving rise to *slacktivism* (artificial concern without real action). Al-Ghazali's advice serves as a soothing oasis that de-escalates that psychological tension. PAI needs to redirect the energy of Generation Z from patterns of narcissistic competition driven by envy toward more productive forms of social collaboration. This value can be realized by encouraging them to utilize technology for genuine care, such as participating in digital philanthropy thru online donation platforms, advocating for marginalized groups, and building empathy-based communities that can enhance grassroots community welfare (Nisa & Nisrina, 2025).

## Restoration of Etiquette to Educators thru Values of Discipline and Academic Responsibility

The degradation of communication ethics and the erosion of respect toward the figure of lecturers, which has become a common complaint in campus interactions (Makassar, 2024) can only be addressed if the structure of etiquette is restored to its rightful throne, positioning etiquette far ahead and above the hierarchy of the pursuit of knowledge. The book *Ayyuhal Walad* contains a stern reminder for every seeker of truth that knowledge without being adorned with etiquette is a form of intellectual arrogance, and conversely, knowledge that does not culminate in the manifestation of righteous deeds is a form of futile madness (Djamaluddin et al., 2025). Etiquette does not grow in a vacuum; it is nurtured thru strict discipline. Al-Ghazali specifically demanded his students to discipline themselves not only physically but also spiritually. The values of discipline and responsibility contained in the work must be extracted and internalized into the form of regulations for academic digital communication ethics protocols (Martasila & Abidin, 2025). Language discipline is a process of character formation of self-defense (*wara'*) for students, to ensure that a piece of knowledge successfully transferred has a guaranty of a legitimate continuity of spiritual lineage (*sanad*) and is accompanied by a shower of blessings (*barakah*) from the pleasure of the giver of knowledge.

## **Dismantling the Hegemony of Instant Gratification thru the Values of Hard Work and Perseverance (Mujahadah)**

The Generation Z's urge to obtain everything quickly, reluctance to delve into deep literature, and full dependence on AI to complete academic tasks need to be confronted with the principle of mujāhadah, which is spiritual and intellectual hard work. This principle emphasizes that scientific achievement cannot be attained without sincere effort, perseverance, and the practice of independent thinking. In the perspective of Islamic education, the learning process requires riyāḍah, which means repeated practice, discipline, and earnestness both spiritually and intellectually. Riyāḍah in education is not merely an activity of reading or memorizing, but encompasses the ability to endure boredom, consistency in critical thinking, and diligence in deeply processing texts. Thus, students must realize that scientific character, depth of understanding, and the blessing of knowledge can only be achieved thru prolonged and directed intellectual training, not thru technological shortcuts. The process of riyāḍah is what makes knowledge firmly embedded in memory and contributes to the formation of mature scholarly ethics. Hard work in the digital world is now interpreted as the ability to demonstrate resilience and high patience to resist distracting impulses from social media notifications while studying knowledge. Mujāhadah in the modern context also includes mental resilience in processing religious literature, both classical and contemporary, which often demands deep thinking (Martasila & Abidin, 2025). This effort is important to safeguard common sense from the dangers of oversimplifying religious issues, shallow puritanism, and theological radicalization, which often begin with the consumption of instant content snippets without adequate scholarly transmission.

### **3.5 Methodological Mechanism of Value Internalization in the Era of Society 5.0**

Understanding the conceptual anatomy of Al-Ghazali's teachings is insufficient if not accompanied by accurate and adaptive pedagogical transmission instruments to the cognitive landscape of Generation Z. The traditional monological paradigm has proven to lose its traction when faced with a generation accustomed to interacting in peer-to-peer ecosystems and multidimensional communication. Recent literature analysis indicates that the implementation of Al-Ghazali's Sufi values in higher education requires strategic intervention thru four structured phases of internalization (Saepudin, 2019). The first phase is Epistemological Exemplification or Modeling. In the context of education that often separates the roles of scientists and scholars, Al Ghazali emphasizes that PAI educators essentially function as mursyid, or spiritual guides, who not only transfer cognitive knowledge but also shape character (Martasila & Abidin, 2025). This exemplary behavior is evident when lecturers are able to maintain the integrity of their digital footprint, avoid uncivil debates on social media, and demonstrate academic competence alongside humility. Lecturers who consistently practice the values of etiquette as taught in Ayyuhal Walad, including sincerity, simplicity, and caution in speech, will naturally cultivate trust and moral obedience from students. Thus, the quality of exemplary behavior becomes the main foundation in establishing both scientific and spiritual authority in front of Generation Z. The second phase is a radical intervention called Focus Space Conditioning or Digital Takhalli (Martasila & Abidin, 2025). As mentioned in the introduction, Al-Ghazali's recommendation to periodically isolate and sever ties with the outside world during the character formation period is a highly visionary methodology. Referring to the Sufi hierarchy, this process is a form of Takhalli, which is the emptying of the soul's recesses from harmful external interventions, before entering the phase of Tahalli. The third phase involves the Process of Axiological Habituation, which is directly integrated with solving contemporary social problems (Kurniawan, 2019). Ethical values will not

crystallize into a fixed character (*malakah*) if they only reside in the realm of memory. This process of enculturation requires continuous practice (*tajribah and riyadhah*). In the PAI curriculum, assessment instruments no longer rely solely on multiple-choice written exams, but have evolved into real-action projects (Project-Based Learning). For example, to internalize the values of Social Care and Tolerance, Islamic Education lecturers can assign students to produce interactive digital campaigns against cyberbullying, or build micro-scale fundraising platforms to help the underprivileged in the nearest campus circle. For the internalization of Environmental Care, students are assigned to conduct an audit of their personal digital carbon footprint and design real actions to reduce plastic waste. The integration of such practices will make Generation Z aware that Al-Ghazali's Sufism is an extraordinarily proactive instrument for transforming society, and not merely a passive ritual of isolation. The fourth phase, and perhaps the one that most represents the spirit of the book *Ayyuhal Walad*, is the implementation of the Dialogical-Affective Approach based on Personal Advice and Critical Reflection (Widyastuti & Dartim, 2025). Al-Ghazali's letter does not use a repressive authoritative tone, but rather employs an emotionally warm greeting: "O My Beloved Child". This paternalistic approach imbued with compassion (compassionate pedagogy) is greatly yearned for by Generation Z, who often feel lonely amidst the artificial crowds of the cyber world. Moral education should not be positioned as a platform for judgment. On the contrary, Islamic education lecturers are required to create a psychologically safe environment, where existential dialogs about future doubts, religious identity crises in the scientific era, and the fears of this generation can be discussed openly and elegantly, and then addressed using the wise arguments of Al-Ghazali that stimulate critical reasoning while also soothing the heart (Widyastuti & Dartim, 2025).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion outlined, it can be concluded that the era of digital disruption brings a paradox for Generation Z; alongside high digital literacy, there is a significant degradation of moral and ethical values. Digital etiquette pathologies such as cyberbullying, the culture of flaunting (flexing), the loss of academic respect toward educators, and the hegemony of instant gratification threaten the foundation of Islamic morals. As a response to this crisis, the reactivation of character education values from the book *Ayyuhal Walad* by Imam Al-Ghazali offers a highly relevant and applicable antithesis. This research formulates four pillars of resolution based on Al-Ghazali's that to address the digital moral decadence of Generation Z: (1) Deconstruction of Flexing: Achieved thru the internalization of religious values and sincerity (*ikhlas*) to free students from the bondage of algorithmic validation and false praise.(2) Cyberbullying Resolution: Addressed by instilling values of tolerance and social concern (*ukhuwah*) that mandate the safeguarding of speech and writing from actions that demean the dignity of others.(3) Restoration of Academic Etiquette: Achieved thru the enforcement of discipline and responsibility values that position etiquette far above the hierarchy of knowledge pursuit, thereby dismantling the illusion of excessive digital egalitarianism.(4) Eradication of Instant Mentality: Carried out by prioritizing the values of hard work and perseverance (*mujāhadah and riyādah*) in the pursuit of knowledge, rejecting the use of superficial shortcuts. The process of internalizing these masterpiece values in Islamic Education must be carried out thru a methodological orchestration that transcends the dogmatic-textual paradigm. Its execution requires the synergy of exemplary educators as *murabbi*, the creation of digital *takhalli* momentum to detoxify information noise, the conditioning of moral habituation environments integrated with solving real problems in society, and dialogical communication grounded in human empathy. At its culmination, the success of the reactivation of *Ayyuhal*

*Walad* culminates in the restoration of the essential function of the intellect of Generation Z; freeing them from the subjugation of artificial algorithms, and guiding them back to fully submit under the completeness of Sharia and Haqiqat, so that they are ready to face the future as digital subjects with integrity, noble manners, and high spiritual awareness.

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