

Spiritual intelligence as a foundation for student character development: an analysis based on the thought of Imam al-Ghazali

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Abstract: Character education is an important aspect in the world of education because it plays a role in shaping the personality, morals, and ethics of students. However, the reality of modern education today tends to emphasize the achievement of cognitive aspects, so that spiritual values are often neglected. This condition has the potential to cause a character crisis in students, therefore this study aims to examine the concept of spiritual intelligence as a basis for student character development according to Imam Al-Ghazali and its relevance in the context of modern education. This study uses a qualitative approach with a library study method. Data sources are obtained from various literature in the form of scientific journals related to spiritual intelligence, character education and Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts. Then explained using content analysis techniques to systematically identify and interpret relevant concepts. The study's findings indicate that spiritual intelligence plays a key role in shaping students' character, as it integrates intellectual and emotional intelligence with moral values and divine awareness. According to Imam al-Ghazali, character formation centers on cultivating the heart (qalb) through the process of takziyatun nafs (obedience to God), which fosters noble morals such as shiddiq (honesty), istiqomah (steadfastness), fatanah (trustworthiness), amanah (trustworthiness), and tabligh (discipline). These findings confirm that character education based on spiritual intelligence can shape students' character in a more profound, stable, and sustainable manner. Therefore, integrating spiritual intelligence into education is a relevant approach to addressing the challenges of the moral crisis in education.

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence, Character Education, According to Imam Al-Ghazali.

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Introduction

Character education is an important part of the education system that aims to shape students so that they are not only academically excellent but also possess good personality, morals, and ethics. Character education plays a role in building students' attitudes of responsibility, honesty, and discipline through a learning process integrated with moral values. Character education is also viewed as a strategic effort in addressing various social problems among students, such as low social awareness and declining ethical behavior in the school environment (Salsabila et al., 2025; Tambak et al., 2025; Firdaus et al., 2025; Rasyidi et al., 2025). Research conducted by Nggusuwaru and Bima (2024) shows that the consistent implementation of character education in schools is able to improve students' empathy, self-control, and positive behavior in daily life. Character education is not only delivered through formal learning materials but also through habituation, teacher role modeling, and a school culture that supports the internalization of moral values. Thus, character education becomes an important foundation in shaping the younger generation to be of noble character and capable of facing moral challenges in the modern era.

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Character building through the cultivation of tawhid values is carried out through the habituation of congregational prayer. Even though the school is small, students still perform prayers in congregation in the school yard. This is done so that they know, understand, and develop good habits, as congregational prayer carries the merit of 27 degrees of reward compared to praying alone. Among the forms of character implementation at MAN Deli Serdang are: saying the words "please," "sorry," and "thank you," along with the 3S principle *senyum, sapa, salam* (smile, greet, and salute). Quoting from the journal on the Implementation of Character Education in Students at Madrasah Aliyah: "Politeness education does not exist as a subject, but takes the form of habituation the habituation of greeting, saying sorry, asking for help, the 3S (greet, salute, smile), and saying thank you" (Adawiyah et al., 2024; Tambak & Sukenti, 2024; Yasin et al., 2025; Gusrianto et al., 2025; Namora et al., 2025).

Modern education today tends to focus on students' cognitive achievement, such as academic ability, exam performance, and intellectual competence. This causes spiritual value aspects such as moral development, ethics, and religious awareness to often be marginalized in educational policy, particularly in formal learning practices. When a person develops only their IQ, they will experience a character crisis (*split personality*), both as a human being living among other creatures and as a servant of Allah who always remembers, worships, and carries out all of His commands (Wahib, 2021; Tambak & Sukenti, 2024; Abdullah et al., 2025; Rasyidi et al., 2025; Widodo et al., 2025). It can be concluded that in order to achieve character education goals oriented toward character formation, the development of Islamic education must harmoniously integrate intellectual, emotional, and spiritual quotients, because these three aspects can shape students not only to be academically intelligent, but also to have emotional sensitivity, noble character, and strong spiritual awareness in living a balanced personal, social, and religious life.

The thought of Imam Al-Ghazali holds a very important position in the development of the concept of spiritually-based character education, particularly within the tradition of Islamic education. Al-Ghazali viewed the primary goal of education not merely as transferring knowledge, but as shaping human beings of noble character through the process of purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and controlling base desires. According to Al-Ghazali, the center of human character formation lies in the heart (*qalb*), because it is from the heart that a person's intentions, attitudes, and behaviors in daily life are born (Sudrajat, 2025). Therefore, education that only emphasizes the intellectual aspect without attending to spiritual development is deemed incapable of producing individuals of strong character and integrity. Al-Ghazali emphasized that a person's spiritual intelligence is reflected in their ability to distinguish between good and evil, and their awareness to always draw closer to Allah through praiseworthy conduct. Character education according to Al-Ghazali is not instantaneous, but is a continuous process involving habituation, role modeling, and consistent spiritual practice. Values such as sincerity, patience, humility, responsibility, and self-control form the core of student character formation from Al-Ghazali's perspective (Khairunnisa et al., 2024).

Thus, spiritual intelligence functions as a moral foundation that guides students to act not merely out of external pressure, but out of inner awareness that has been deeply instilled. In the context of modern education, the concept of character education according to Imam Al-Ghazali holds high relevance, particularly in responding to the challenge of moral degradation among students.

Literature Review

Spiritual intelligence in education

Spiritual intelligence is defined as the capacity of individuals to understand life meaning, connect themselves with transcendent values, and apply these values as a basis for behavior and decision-making. In educational contexts, spiritual intelligence is not limited to religious practices but also includes self-awareness, empathy, integrity, moral sensitivity, and the ability to internalize ethical values in everyday life. Students who develop strong spiritual intelligence tend to demonstrate better self-regulation, ethical awareness, emotional balance, and positive behavior in social interactions, both inside and outside the classroom. In contemporary education, spiritual intelligence is considered an essential dimension that complements intellectual and emotional intelligence. Cognitive achievement alone is insufficient to form students' holistic

character; therefore, spiritual intelligence plays a foundational role in shaping morally responsible individuals who are capable of facing ethical, social, and cultural challenges in modern life. This dimension also supports learners in developing a deeper sense of purpose and responsibility in their personal and academic lives (Firdaus et al., 2025).

Imam al-Ghazali's thought on character education and spiritual development

Imam Al-Ghazali is one of the most influential Islamic scholars who emphasized the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) as the core foundation of education. According to him, the primary aim of education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but the formation of noble character through continuous spiritual refinement. He viewed the heart as the central element of human behavior and moral orientation; therefore, education must focus on purifying the heart in order to produce individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also morally and spiritually upright. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali emphasized that character development is achieved through habituation, moral exemplification, self-discipline, and the consistent effort to avoid negative traits such as arrogance, envy, anger, and greed. He also stressed the integration of knowledge and practice, meaning that true knowledge must be reflected in ethical behavior in daily life, not only understood at a theoretical level. This perspective is highly relevant to the concept of spiritual intelligence, as both emphasize the integration of knowledge, values, and behavior in shaping students' character and life orientation. In this sense, education becomes a holistic process that nurtures both the intellect and the soul (Hamdi et al., 2025; Fauziah et al., 2025).

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using a concept analysis method, which focuses on the systematic examination of written sources without involving field data collection. The research is classified as qualitative descriptive research, aiming to interpret and understand theoretical concepts related to spiritual intelligence and student character development based on the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali. The data sources consist of secondary data obtained from national and international scientific journals, academic books, and scholarly articles that discuss spiritual intelligence, character education, and Imam Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy. Data collection is carried out through documentation techniques, namely by identifying, selecting, reading, and recording relevant literature that aligns with the focus of the study. The data are then analyzed using content analysis techniques, which involve organizing information into thematic categories, comparing relevant concepts, and interpreting their meanings to build a comprehensive understanding of spiritual intelligence as a foundation for student character development in accordance with Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective and its relevance in modern education.

Results

Based on the results of the literature review conducted on various relevant literary sources, it was found that spiritual intelligence has a very significant role in the development of student character. Spiritual intelligence is understood as an individual's ability to find meaning in life, internalize moral values, and direct behavior based on divine consciousness. The review results show that spiritual intelligence functions as the primary foundation that integrates intellectual and emotional intelligence so that they are aligned with noble ethical and moral values. The research results also show that individuals with good spiritual intelligence tend to be able to display behavior that is consistent with moral values in daily life. Values such as honesty (*shiddiq*), consistency in goodness (*istiqomah*), wise intelligence (*fatanah*), responsibility (*amanah*), and the ability to convey truth and possess social sensitivity (*tabligh*) emerge as the main indicators of spiritual intelligence in character formation. These values are not only normative in nature, but have been internalized in the individual's inner consciousness, thus forming a stable and sustainable character.

In addition, the results of the review of Imam Al-Ghazali's thought show that student character formation is centered on the development of the *qalb* (heart) as the core of the human

personality. Education that emphasizes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) has proven to be an effective approach in forming noble character. The results of this review reveal that the condition of a pure heart has a direct influence on the quality of an individual's behavior, while a neglected heart has the potential to give rise to deviant behavior. This finding affirms that spiritual intelligence serves as a moral compass that guides individuals in distinguishing between good and evil.

The research results also show that the strengthening of spiritual intelligence in character education has a positive impact on the development of students' empathetic attitudes, social responsibility, and prosocial behavior. The integration of spiritual values in the educational process, both through the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum, contributes to a deeper and more sustainable internalization of moral values. A school culture that supports role modeling, habituation of spiritual values, and positive social interaction has been proven to holistically strengthen students' character formation. The review results show that character education oriented toward spiritual intelligence is able to shape students who are not only excellent in academic aspects, but also possess strong moral and ethical awareness. This approach is considered relevant in responding to the challenge of the moral crisis in the world of education, because character formation does not only rest on the control of external behavior, but on the inner consciousness that has been deeply instilled within students.

Discussion

Spiritual intelligence is a fundamental dimension in human character education because it is directly related to awareness of the meaning of life, moral values, and divine orientation. In contemporary educational studies, spiritual intelligence is understood as an individual's ability to integrate good values into their daily attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making. Several studies affirm that spiritual intelligence serves as a guide for intellectual and emotional intelligence so that they do not become detached from noble ethical and moral values (Ambo D, 2025). In the context of education, the presence of spiritual intelligence is important because it is capable of cultivating deep moral awareness, rather than mere compliance with formal educational rules.

According to the Indonesian Dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*), intelligence is defined as the perfection of mental development such as cleverness and sharpness of thought, while spiritual relates to matters of a psychological or spiritual nature. Thus, spiritual intelligence can be understood as an individual's ability to use their intellect to understand, appreciate, and practice spiritual values in life (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, 2023). A person who believes in the existence of the One God will recognize that human nature (*fitrah*) is a disposition (basic capacity) that contains the possibility or opportunity to develop. One of the advantages of humans as creatures of Allah is that they are endowed with *fitrah* (feeling and ability) to recognize Allah and carry out His teachings in other words, humans are bestowed with a religious instinct (*naluri keberagamaan*) (Aryani et al., 2022).

In Islam, spiritual intelligence is included in the intelligence of the *qalb*, as stated by Abdul Mujib and Jusuf Mudzakir, that spiritual intelligence is the intelligence of the *qalb* which is connected to the quality of a person's inner self. This intelligence directs a person to act in a more humane way, enabling them to reach noble values that may not yet have been touched by human thought. The *qalbu* is the conscience that receives an outpouring of divine truth, namely the spirit. Within the *qalbu*, moral feelings are gathered experiencing and contemplating right and wrong, good and bad, and so forth. According to Ary Ginanjar Agustian, spiritual intelligence is the ability to give meaning to worship in every behavioral activity, through steps and thoughts that are of a *fitrah* nature, becoming a complete human being with a monotheistic (*tauhidi*) mindset, and upholding the principle of "only to Allah" (Nurhasanah et al., 2024).

Spiritual intelligence also manifests as a person who has the ability to give meaning to every step they take. According to K.H. Toto Tasmara, the characteristics of a person who has applied spiritual intelligence in their life are:

1. *Shiddiq*, which is the spiritual dimension of every human being. *Shiddiq* means honest. A person with spiritual intelligence is always motivated and desires to be in an environment that upholds the value of honesty. Honest behavior is behavior accompanied by a sense of

responsibility for the actions carried out. This attitude of honesty includes being honest with God, with others, and with oneself.

2. Istiqomah, which is a consistent attitude and steadfastness within oneself to uphold and build something toward perfection or a good condition. This attitude of istiqomah can be seen in a person who has goals, is creative, values time, and is patient.
3. Fatanah, which is expertise or mastery in a particular field or many fields. Having professionalism in one's area of expertise based on moral attitudes and noble character (akhlaqul karimah), and being wise in thinking and acting.
4. Amanah, this becomes a spiritual aspect of human life, just as religion and the trust (amanah) that Allah places upon humanity becomes the starting point in the human journey toward a promise.
5. Tabligh, a person who possesses the attitude of tabligh will have the ability to understand the feelings of others and to learn more from experience in facing the problems of their life.

Spiritual intelligence in the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali is the primary foundation in the development of student character. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that true education must be oriented toward the purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs), so that intellectual and emotional intelligence are directed to support the formation of noble character. Such education does not only produce individuals who are academically intelligent, but also possess strong moral and spiritual awareness. With this approach, students' character is formed internally through inner consciousness, rather than mere compliance with external rules (Hasyim et al., 2025).

The thought of Imam Al-Ghazali provides a strong conceptual foundation regarding spiritual intelligence as the center of character formation. Al-Ghazali places the qalb (heart) as the core of the human personality that determines the good and bad of a person's behavior. According to Al-Ghazali, a pure heart will give birth to good character, while a corrupt heart will give birth to deviant behavior. This is also mentioned in the 6th Hadith of Arba'in, which means: "From Abu 'Abdillah An-Nu'man bin Bashir, may Allah be pleased with them both, he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah Saw say: "Verily, the lawful (halal) is clear and the unlawful (haram) is clear. Between the two there are doubtful matters (syubhat) that are not known by many people. Whoever guards himself from doubtful matters has indeed protected his religion and his honor. Whoever falls into doubtful matters will fall into the unlawful, like a shepherd who grazes his flock around a protected area, nearly entering it. Know that every king has a protected area, and know that the protected area of Allah is the things He has forbidden. Know that in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Know that this piece of flesh is the heart."

This Hadith statement shows that the essence of spiritual intelligence lies in the inner consciousness that is capable of guiding humans in distinguishing between what is lawful, unlawful, and doubtful matters. In this context, spiritual intelligence functions as a moral compass that directs individuals to always maintain the purity of the heart and the integrity of behavior. This concept shows that character formation cannot be separated from deep spiritual development. This view is in line with contemporary research which states that spiritual intelligence functions as the primary foundation in the development of students' character, because spiritual values guide individuals to act based on moral awareness, rather than external compulsion. In addition to the Hadith, the concept of the importance of the heart in character formation is also affirmed in the Qur'an, where Allah says:

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّهَا ۝۱۰ فَذُفِّلَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۝۹

Which means: "Indeed, successful is the one who purifies it (the soul) (9), and indeed, ruined is the one who corrupts it (10)." (QS. Asy-Syams: 9–10)

Surah Asy-Syams verses 9–10 explain that the fortune and loss of human beings are very dependent on the condition of their soul. Allah affirms that the fortunate are those who are able to purify their soul, while those who are ruined are those who corrupt it with various sinful deeds. In the interpretation of the mufasssirun (Quranic commentators), this verse serves as an affirmation that humans possess the potential for both good and evil within themselves, and are

therefore required to control and cleanse their soul in order to remain on the path of goodness. According to the interpretation of Ibn 'Ashur, the expression *qad aflaha man zakkaha* is the answer to the series of Allah's oaths in the preceding verses, affirming the importance of purifying the human soul. The word *zakkaha* is understood as an effort to nurture and cleanse the soul with good values, while *dassaha* means to drown or conceal the soul's potential for goodness with sinful deeds. Meanwhile, al-Baidawi explains that such fortune can be achieved through a combination of knowledge and righteous deeds (*amal saleh*) that are capable of guiding humans to cleanse their soul from blameworthy traits. Thus, this verse shows that true human success lies in one's ability to maintain the purity of the soul and develop the potential for goodness within oneself (Ahady et al., 2025).

As for the book *Shahih Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, it explains that the meaning is: Truly successful is the one who purifies his soul through obedience to Allah. This is as stated by Qatadah: "And he cleanses his soul from base and lowly character." A similar opinion was also narrated from Mujahid, 'Ikrimah, and Sa'id bin Jubair regarding this verse:

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّهَا ۝۱۰

"And indeed lost is he who corrupts it." (QS. Ash-Shams: 10).

That is, those who corrupt their souls meaning they neglect and lead their souls astray by distancing them from guidance, so that they commit sins and disobey Allah. It can also mean: truly fortunate is the person whose soul is purified by Allah, and truly lost is the person whose soul is left impure by Allah. This is in accordance with the opinion of Al-'Afi and 'Ali bin Abi Talhah from Ibn 'Abbas. Ath-Tabrani narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, who said: "When the Messenger of Allah recited this verse, 'By the soul and He who proportioned it, then inspired it with its wickedness and its righteousness,' he would pause and then supplicate, meaning: 'O Allah, grant piety to my soul. You are its Owner and its Protector, and You are the best of those who purify it.' (Al-Mubarakfuri, *Shahih Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 9, p. 610).

This verse is in line with Al-Ghazali's thought, which emphasizes that true education must be oriented toward the process of purifying the soul and nurturing the heart (*qalb*). In Al-Ghazali's view, the heart is the center of the human personality that determines the good or bad of a person's behavior. Therefore, spiritual intelligence becomes an important foundation in character formation, because through spiritual intelligence a person is able to cleanse the heart, control base desires, and cultivate noble character in daily life.

Character education is a basic concept applied to a person's thinking in order to make their physical, spiritual, and moral character more meaningful than before, so as to reduce the moral crisis that has befallen this nation. According to experts, the understanding of education must be applied to a person's mind from an early age, adolescence, and even adulthood, so that it can shape a person's character to become more valuable and moral. Meanwhile, according to Ratna Megawangi, character education is an effort to educate children so that they can make wise decisions and practice them in daily life, so that they can make a positive contribution to their environment. The importance of character education to be promptly developed and internalized both in the world of formal education and in non-formal education is because it has a sufficiently noble purpose as a provision for students' lives so that they are always ready to respond to all the dynamics of life with full responsibility (Triana, n.d.).

Character education will tend to never be genuinely realized if it only exists as theory or a process of understanding about character without any action, role modeling, and practice being carried out. The key to character education is discipline, commitment, and application. Character cannot be inherited, but must be consciously built and developed every day through a process. Every person is responsible for their own character; we cannot blame others for our good or bad character, because we are fully responsible for our own character (Ainiyah, 2022).

This shows that in the formation of a child's character, patience and perseverance are required from educators, which must be supported by a balance between parental education at home and education at school. Because most parents tend to fully surrender to the educational process at school and demand faster change for the better in their children without regard for the process that must be gone through gradually (Faisol, 2023).

As for the implementation of character education, it is a process carried out by humans to apply, execute, and develop a person's personality in accordance with values in order to obtain an increase in the potential within human beings in the form of morals or ethics such as religious values, honesty, responsibility, discipline, independence, mutual respect, and values of goodness in a concrete action, so that the emotional and intellectual aspects reach maturity, thus becoming a perfect human being (*insan kamil*) (Syaukani et al., 2017).

In the perspective of character education, spiritual intelligence has a strategic role because it is capable of instilling ethical values internally and sustainably. Character education that is only oriented toward cognitive and behavioral aspects tends to produce character that is temporary and easily changed. On the contrary, character education rooted in spiritual values will form a more stable personality, because those values have been internalized in the inner consciousness of students. Research by (Hasyim et al., 2025; Tambak, Amril & Sukenti, 2021) shows that the strengthening of spiritual intelligence contributes to the improvement of empathy, social responsibility, and students' moral commitment in daily life. This finding reinforces Al-Ghazali's view that character transformation must begin from inner development, not merely behavioral regulation.

Al-Ghazali's concept of spiritual intelligence also emphasizes the importance of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) as a process of character formation. This process involves efforts of self-reflection, control of base desires, and habituation of ethical behavior grounded in divine consciousness. In the context of modern education, this concept is relevant to character education approaches that emphasize moral reflection and students' self-awareness. Recent literature studies show that educational strategies that integrate spiritual reflection are able to significantly improve the quality of students' character, particularly in the aspects of honesty, discipline, and responsibility (Anisa et al., 2024; Firdaus et al., 2025; Sukenti et al., 2025). Furthermore, spiritual intelligence in Al-Ghazali's thought does not only function at the individual level, but also has social implications. Individuals who possess good spiritual intelligence will be able to establish harmonious social relationships, because their behavior is based on values of compassion, justice, and moral responsibility. This is in line with research findings stating that spiritual intelligence has a positive effect on students' prosocial behavior and social awareness (Hasyim et al., 2025). Thus, spiritual intelligence serves as a bridge between personal character formation and social responsibility in education.

In the context of contemporary education, the integration of spiritual intelligence as a basis for character development can be carried out through both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum allows spiritual values to be instilled indirectly through school culture, teacher role modeling, and social interaction in the educational environment. Research by (Anisa et al., 2024; Tambak et al., 2022; Yasin et al., 2022; Gusrianto et al., 2025) shows that the integration of spiritual values in the hidden curriculum is able to strengthen the internalization of students' moral values more effectively compared to a purely instructional approach. This indicates that character education based on spiritual intelligence requires a holistic and contextual approach.

Furthermore, the relevance of Al-Ghazali's thought in modern character education lies in its emphasis on the balance between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Education that only emphasizes intellectual intelligence has the potential to produce individuals who are academically intelligent but morally impoverished. Therefore, Al-Ghazali's concept of spiritual intelligence makes a significant theoretical contribution to the development of a more comprehensive model of character education.

Conclusion

Based on the presentation and literature review that has been discussed, it can be concluded that spiritual intelligence is a fundamental dimension in the development of students' character. Spiritual intelligence is not only related to religious aspects, but also encompasses an individual's ability to find meaning in life, internalize moral values, and direct behavior based on divine consciousness and the voice of the heart (*qalb*). In the context of character education, spiritual intelligence serves as a primary foundation that integrates intellectual and emotional intelligence so that they remain aligned with ethical values and noble character. The thought of

Imam Al-Ghazali affirms that the formation of true character must begin from inner development through the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*). A pure *qalb* will give birth to good behavior, while a corrupt *qalb* has the potential to lead to moral deviation. Therefore, education is not sufficient if it only emphasizes cognitive aspects and external compliance, but must also cultivate moral awareness originating from within the students themselves. The values of spiritual intelligence such as *shiddiq*, *istiqomah*, *fatanah*, *amanah*, and *tabligh* are important indicators in forming a stable, consistent, and sustainable character.

The review results also show that strengthening spiritual intelligence has a positive impact on students' empathy, social responsibility, and prosocial behavior. The integration of spiritual values through the formal curriculum and hidden curriculum, educator role modeling, and a conducive school culture is effective in strengthening the holistic internalization of moral values. Thus, character education based on spiritual intelligence is relevant and strategic in responding to moral challenges in contemporary education. However, this study has several limitations. This research is based on a literature review so it does not involve direct empirical testing in specific educational settings. In addition, the sources used are limited to selected classical and contemporary references, which may not fully represent all perspectives on spiritual intelligence in education. Future research is recommended to conduct field studies or mixed-method approaches to examine the implementation of spiritual intelligence-based character education more empirically in schools or madrasahs.

The implication of this study is that educational institutions are encouraged to integrate spiritual intelligence values more systematically into learning processes, school culture, and teacher practices. Educators are expected to act not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral role models who strengthen students' inner awareness. Furthermore, curriculum developers and policymakers can use the findings of this study as a reference in designing character education programs that are more holistic, integrating cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Contributions of the authors in this article: First author, contributed as concepts and drafters of the article, data analyzers, interpreters, writing the manuscript and critically revising the article; Second author, as the critically revising the article, and editing of the language of manuscript, collecting data and critically revising the article. All authors agree to take responsibility for all aspects of this work. Both authors contributed equally and approved the final version of the article for publication.

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The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of use artificial intelligence

The author uses generative artificial intelligence in this paper for the data analysis process.

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