

# Towards A Philosophical Framework for Self-Leadership among Malaysian Islamic Schools in the Digital Age: Drawing Insights from Ibn Miskawayh's Ethical Theories

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## Abstract

Students' self-leadership in Islamic schools in Malaysia must negotiate the intricacies of contemporary technology while upholding their cultural and religious beliefs in the digital age. Based on the ethical and philosophical beliefs of renowned Islamic philosopher and ethicist Ibn Miskawayh, this research presents a profiling framework for encouraging self-leadership among Islamic schoolchildren in Malaysia. To evaluate the relevance and applicability of Ibn Miskawayh's ethical views in forming self-leadership, this study uses a qualitative research approach that includes content analysis of his writings as well as reflection on his book *Tata'thib Akhlaq* (Cultivation of Human Character). The findings highlight the continued significance of Ibn Miskawayh's contributions to Islamic thought and emphasize their potential to inform the development of self-leadership within contemporary educational frameworks. Ibn Miskawayh's philosophical work, particularly his concepts of self-development, moral integrity, and intellectual cultivation, offers a foundational approach to fostering self-leadership in modern education. His focus on developing important virtues like self-control, wisdom, and justice is in line with the goals of developing critical and responsible thinkers who can successfully negotiate the challenges of the digital age while upholding Islamic moral standards. The suggested framework seeks to give students the fundamental abilities required to meet the challenges of the digital world by fusing Ibn Miskawayh's ethical theories with modern teaching methods. This will foster a comprehensive development that incorporates moral, intellectual, and technological advancement.

**Keywords:** Philosophical Framework, Self-Leadership, Islamic School, Miskawayh's Ethical Theories

**Introduction**

In Malaysia, education is an ongoing endeavor to further develop people's potential in a comprehensive and integrated manner, aiming to produce individuals who are academically, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonious, founded on a strong belief in and devotion to Allah. The goal of this endeavor is to develop knowledgeable, competent, morally upright, and responsible Malaysian citizens who can contribute positively to society and national development while attaining personal well-being (Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE, 2013).

Furthermore, Malaysia's new education design, scheduled for implementation in the coming year, seeks to significantly transform the national education system to better address future demands. According to the Minister of Education, Fadhlina Sidek (2025), the framework has been meticulously developed to meet both the short- and long-term needs of students, educators, and society at large. This initiative aims to foster an education system that is adaptable, inclusive, and forward-looking, positioning Malaysia to thrive in an increasingly globalised and technologically advanced world. The blueprint emphasises innovation in teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and assessment practices to ensure that students acquire the skills, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities required in a rapidly evolving environment.

However, in a context where technological advancement is accelerating rapidly, Islamic schools particularly those in Malaysia face unique challenges in preparing students for both academic excellence and responsible leadership. While technology provides unprecedented access to information and learning resources, it also introduces challenges such as information overload, ethical dilemmas, and the need for strong personal accountability. Consequently, educational frameworks must intentionally integrate self-leadership development that aligns with contemporary demands while remaining grounded in Islamic values.

Within contemporary educational discourse, self-leadership is understood as the ability to regulate one's own behaviour, make independent decisions, and engage in continuous self-improvement (Neck et al., 2020). In the digital age—where students are exposed to diverse global perspectives and face persistent technological distractions—the cultivation of self-leadership is particularly critical for students in Malaysian Islamic schools. Developing self-leadership enables students to take responsibility for their personal growth and collective obligations, empowering them to make informed decisions and contribute constructively to their communities. This can be achieved through an integrated approach that combines classical Islamic philosophical foundations with modern pedagogical strategies. The incorporation of Ibn Miskawayh's ethical framework into self-leadership education offers a meaningful response to the challenges posed by the digital world. His emphasis on moral and intellectual virtues promotes the cultivation of wisdom, enabling students to discern between beneficial and harmful information in an information-saturated environment (Ibn Miskawayh, trans. 1968). Moreover, his focus on self-discipline and moral restraint provides ethical guidance for managing technology use in a manner consistent with Islamic principles. Striking a balance between technological engagement and personal integrity is therefore central to fostering effective self-leadership in a digitally dependent society.

The ethical teachings of Ibn Miskawayh can equip Malaysian Islamic school students with the competencies required to thrive in both physical and digital domains. His virtue-based framework emphasises the development of intellectual excellence, ethical reasoning, and emotional regulation—key attributes for cultivating self-aware and accountable leaders (Al-Attas, 1991). By integrating this framework, educators can nurture students' moral and intellectual capacities while fostering responsibility and accountability essential for future leadership roles.

Accordingly, this paper proposes a philosophical framework for cultivating self-leadership among students in Malaysian Islamic schools through the integration of classical Islamic ethics and contemporary educational realities. Drawing on the ethical philosophy of the tenth-century Muslim thinker Ibn Miskawayh, the study argues that his principles of moral development, rational self-control, and self-discipline remain highly relevant in addressing modern educational challenges. Using qualitative methods, particularly content analysis of Miskawayh's seminal work *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, the study explores how virtue ethics can support self-leadership development in an increasingly digital and information-driven context.

Miskawayh's philosophy centres on cultivating core virtues such as wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage through rational reflection and ethical self-regulation, forming a foundation for moral leadership and personal responsibility. The study identifies a gap in current Islamic educational practices, which often prioritise academic and religious instruction while insufficiently addressing self-leadership competencies required for navigating digital complexities. By embedding self-leadership education within an ethical framework rooted in Islamic tradition, students can be empowered to make morally sound decisions while managing digital distractions effectively. Ultimately, the paper introduces a profiling framework that integrates Ibn Miskawayh's ethical teachings with modern pedagogical approaches. This framework aims to prepare students not only for academic achievement but also for meaningful leadership grounded in Islamic moral values. By equipping students with critical thinking skills, ethical judgment, and self-regulation, the proposed approach supports their ability to navigate the challenges of the digital age while maintaining their cultural and religious identities.

### **Research Problem Statement**

Students, particularly those attending Islamic institutions, now face both opportunities and challenges due to the significant transformation of the educational landscape brought about by the rapid advancement of digital technology. Students in Malaysian Islamic schools are required to strike a careful balance between adherence to traditional Islamic values and effective engagement with contemporary digital tools and platforms. This dual challenge necessitates the development of educational frameworks that promote self-leadership, enabling students to participate actively in the digital world while making moral decisions aligned with their cultural and religious beliefs. Consequently, the central challenge lies in formulating a framework that integrates self-leadership with Islamic principles, allowing students to flourish in a technologically advanced environment while remaining grounded in values such as discipline, responsibility, and integrity (Neck et al., 2020).

Currently, Islamic schools tend to prioritise academic achievement and religious instruction, often placing less emphasis on the systematic development of self-leadership competencies. In the digital age, students are continuously exposed to vast amounts of information and digital stimuli, making skills such as critical engagement, time management, and self-regulation increasingly essential. Without a structured framework for cultivating self-leadership, students may struggle to manage digital distractions, make informed decisions, or behave responsibly in online environments. This gap underscores the urgent need for an educational approach that promotes both moral and intellectual development, equipping students with a strong ethical foundation to navigate the complexities of the digital era (Zimmerman, 2008).

Although the literature on self-leadership in contemporary education is steadily expanding, there remains a notable scarcity of frameworks that integrate Islamic teachings with modern conceptions of self-leadership, particularly within the context of digital learning environments. While self-leadership has been extensively examined in corporate and general educational settings, relatively few studies have explored its application within Islamic education, especially in Malaysia. This highlights a significant research gap: the absence of a comprehensive framework that synthesises contemporary self-leadership theories with classical Islamic ethical thought. The philosophical contributions of Ibn Miskawayh—particularly his emphasis on moral refinement, intellectual cultivation, and ethical self-discipline—offer valuable insights for bridging this gap (Ibn Miskawayh, trans. 1968).

In response, this study seeks to address this gap by proposing a profiling framework for the self-leadership development of students in Malaysian Islamic schools, grounded in the ethical theories of Ibn Miskawayh. Drawing on his articulation of core virtues such as wisdom, justice, and temperance, the study aims to integrate classical Islamic philosophy with modern educational frameworks to foster ethical leadership, critical thinking, and personal responsibility. The proposed framework aspires to enhance not only students' academic achievement but also their capacity to navigate the digital world ethically and responsibly, ensuring that technological engagement remains consistent with Islamic moral values in the face of contemporary educational challenges.

### *Research Questions*

1. What are the key components of Ibn Miskawayh's Theories of self-leadership framework that integrates Islamic values and digital literacy for students in Islamic schools?
2. How could Ibn Miskawayh's ethical theories of self-leadership framework promotes development of self-leadership in Malaysian Islamic school students in the digital era?
3. What is the proposed self-leadership based on Ibn Miskawayh's ethical theories for Islamic school students' navigation the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age?

### **Literature Reviews**

Ibn Miskawayh (Abū 'Alī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Miskawayh), a prominent Persian philosopher, ethicist, and moral psychologist of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, is widely recognised for his significant contributions to Islamic ethics, moral philosophy, and theories of personal development. His intellectual legacy has been particularly influential in shaping discussions on moral refinement, leadership, and self-

improvement within Islamic thought. Scholars have increasingly acknowledged that his views on ethical self-regulation and moral agency provide early philosophical foundations for what is now conceptualised as self-leadership in contemporary psychology and management studies (Ibn Miskawayh, trans. 1968; Al-Attas, 1991).

Ibn Miskawayh's conception of self-leadership is deeply rooted in his broader ethical and philosophical framework, which integrates rational thought, emotional regulation, and moral responsibility. His writings on virtue ethics, rationalism, self-mastery, and emotional control demonstrate a systematic approach to cultivating ethical behaviour through deliberate self-governance. These ideas remain highly relevant to modern discussions on both individual and organisational leadership, as they emphasise the harmonisation of reason, morality, and emotional discipline as prerequisites for effective leadership (Rahman, 1982).

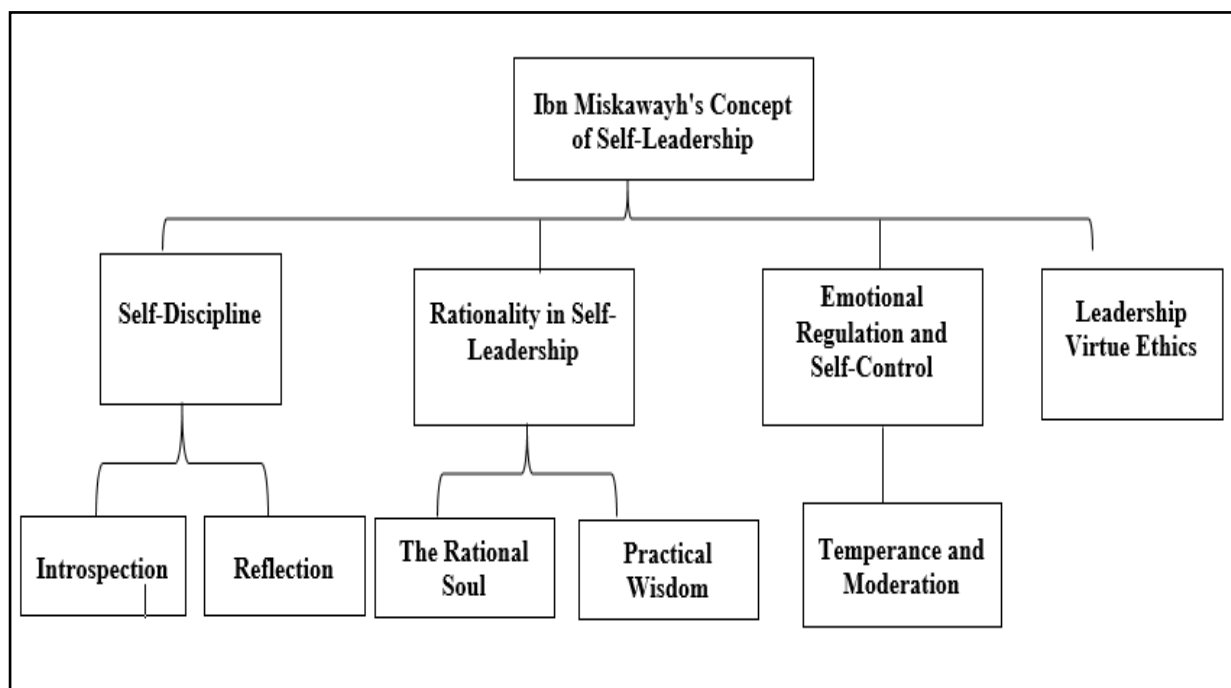
Ethics constitutes the central focus of Ibn Miskawayh's philosophical project and is extensively discussed in several of his major works, including *Tartīb al-Sa'ādah*, *Jāwīdān Khīrad*, and most notably *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*. In *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Ibn Miskawayh presents a comprehensive ethical theory grounded in the nature of the human soul (*nafs*). He conceptualises the soul as comprising three primary faculties: the rational faculty (*al-quwwah al-nāṭiqah*), the appetitive faculty (*al-quwwah al-shahwiyyah*), and the irascible faculty (*al-quwwah al-ghaḍabiyyah*). Corresponding to these faculties are the virtues of wisdom, temperance, and courage, whose harmonious balance leads to justice as the highest moral state (Ibn Miskawayh, trans. 1968).

With regard to human nature, Ibn Miskawayh asserts that while human existence is ultimately dependent upon the will of God, moral excellence is attained through human volition and conscious effort. Individuals are therefore morally accountable for their character development and ethical conduct. He maintains that goodness lies in the realisation of one's ultimate purpose, and that actions and behaviours are deemed good insofar as they contribute to achieving this ethical end (Ibn Miskawayh, trans. 1968).

Ibn Miskawayh strongly emphasises moral education as the foundation for human advancement. He argues that true human development does not consist solely of material prosperity, power, or sensory pleasure, but rather in the refinement of the soul through virtue. Human flourishing, in his view, requires a balanced integration of physical and spiritual needs, rejecting both excessive asceticism (*zuhd*) and unchecked indulgence. The process of moral cultivation begins with an understanding of the human being from both physical and psychological perspectives, as behaviour and attitudes emerge from the internal forces operating within the soul (Rahman, 1982).

Central to Ibn Miskawayh's ethical psychology is the concept of self-cultivation and personal discipline, particularly articulated in *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*. He promotes the development of leadership-related virtues such as wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage, viewing them as essential for ethical self-governance. From his perspective, self-leadership primarily involves the mastery and regulation of one's impulses, thoughts, and actions through rational deliberation and moral awareness. By achieving harmony among the faculties of the soul, individuals are able to exercise responsible leadership over themselves, which subsequently enables ethical leadership within society (Al-Attas, 1991). Accordingly, Ibn

Miskawayh's ethical framework offers a philosophically robust foundation for conceptualising self-leadership, grounded in moral discipline, rational self-control, and virtue-based development. The figure below illustrates how Ibn Miskawayh's theory conceptualises self-leadership through the integration of reason, moral virtue, and emotional regulation.



*Ibn Miskawayh's Concept of "Self-Leadership" Source: "Tahdhib al-Akhlaq"*

### *Self-Discipline*

Ibn Miskawayh thought that in order to properly lead oneself, one needed to develop self-discipline. Therefore, self-leadership begins with self-reflection and self-awareness, then the deliberate application of moral values in day-to-day activities.

**Introspection and Reflection:** Ibn Miskawayh believed that developing ethical leadership required reflection. He maintained that knowing one's strengths and shortcomings and developing one's character required self-reflection. This is in line with current ideas of self-leadership, which highlight the importance of self-awareness in leadership.

### *Rationality in Self-Leadership*

Greek philosophy, especially Aristotelian ethics, had a significant influence on Ibn Miskawayh, who saw reason as a key component of moral leadership. According to his concept, rationality included both using reason to regulate feelings and impulses as well as academic reasoning. According to him, a self-leader must use reason to subdue bad emotions like fear, greed, and rage.

- **The Rational Soul:** Ibn Miskawayh believed that the human soul consisted of three parts: the rational soul (aql), the spirited soul (ghadab), and the appetitive soul (shahwa). The rational soul must govern the other two to achieve harmony and self-mastery, a concept that directly parallels modern understandings of emotional intelligence and self-regulation in leadership (Gutas, 2001).
- **Practical Wisdom (Phronesis):** Ibn Miskawayh's emphasis on practical wisdom aligns with modern self-leadership theories, such as those presented by Manz (1986), where



individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and make decisions grounded in reason and ethical considerations.

#### *Emotional Regulation and Self-Control*

Ibn Miskawayh's views on the control of emotions and impulses play a significant role in his theory of self-leadership. He argued that the key to personal growth and leadership was to master one's emotions. This requires the practice of self-control and temperance to avoid being overwhelmed by desires or negative emotions, enabling individuals to make more rational and effective decisions.

- **Temperance and Moderation:** Ibn Miskawayh's idea of moderation or *'adl* (balance) in all aspects of life, including emotions and actions, is akin to modern self-leadership strategies, which emphasize emotional self-regulation as an essential leadership trait.

#### *Leadership Virtue Ethics*

Ibn Miskawayh also discussed the role of virtues in leadership. He argued that a leader must embody virtues such as wisdom, justice, and courage, and these qualities must be cultivated through self-leadership. In this way, the development of personal virtues directly translates into effective leadership, as the leader must first master themselves before they can lead others.

- **Virtue Ethics:** Self-leadership in the context of Ibn Miskawayh's theory is an exercise in virtue ethics. Leadership, in his view, is not only about external achievements but about becoming a virtuous person. This aligns with modern research that highlights virtue ethics as essential for authentic leadership.

#### *Self-leadership in Islamic schools*

Self-leadership in Islamic schools, especially in the context of character education, entails the development of moral behaviour, personal accountability, and the cultivation of values that promote both social harmony and personal development. According to Pala (2017), character education includes a number of important ideas, including civic education, social-emotional learning, moral education, and positive school culture. In a multicultural, multiethnic country like Malaysia, these components are especially crucial for building strong communities and encouraging unity. In Malaysia, where the population is made up of several ethnic groups, a strong foundation founded on moral principles and common values is crucial to achieving this goal.

Based on Islamic beliefs, the idea of self-leadership places a strong emphasis on individual accountability, introspection, and ensuring that one's actions are consistent with moral and spiritual principles. As the cornerstones of both individual and societal well-being, self-control, justice, and integrity are emphasised in the Quran and Hadith. When used in a school setting, this idea not only promotes personal development but also helps create a peaceful and united community. In Malaysia's multicultural and ethnically varied society, it becomes imperative to inculcate these principles.

In spite of its multiethnic community, maintaining national harmony and togetherness is one of Malaysia's biggest challenges. Education, especially character education, which fosters ideals that cut beyond ethnic barriers, is a crucial way to address this issue. But doing so necessitates paying close attention to the educational traditions passed down from the

different ethnic groups—Malay, Indian, and Chinese. Every group has educational traditions that are impacted by their culture and religion. The educational system must find a balance between promoting universal ideals that are appealing to all communities and honouring their distinct cultural identities in order to promote harmony. According to Sakinah et al. (2020), character education ought to incorporate universal principles that direct moral conduct while simultaneously attending to the particular requirements of a multicultural society.

In Malaysia, character education is seen as essential for national unity and social stability. Razali, Nabihah, and Arifin Mamat highlights the importance of this through the Ministry of Education's efforts to incorporate religious and moral instruction into the curriculum, such as the teaching of Islamic Religious Knowledge and the revision of Civics and Local Studies syllabi. These changes were designed to foster moral values and promote good character, which are essential for both individual and societal development.

Effectively incorporating character education into the national curriculum is still difficult, though. According to Razali, Nabihah, and Arifin Mamat, national unity emerged as a key theme in Malaysia's educational system following the racial riots of 1969. The development of the nation was considered to depend on this endeavour, and schools were charged with fostering good citizenship, character, and personality. Despite these initiatives, there have been obstacles to integrating moral education and values, especially when it comes to exam evaluation. Concerns about youth social issues and lack of discipline have arisen as a result of the emotive domains being neglected in favour of academic achievement.

In character education, self-leadership can be crucial in addressing these issues. In addition to fostering characteristics like honesty, empathy, and respect for others, it pushes pupils to become emotionally intelligent and take ownership of their actions. In addition to enhancing individual character, this personal growth helps Malaysian schools' different ethnic groupings form solid bonds and feel more connected to one another. Incorporating Islamic self-leadership principles, such as the development of *Taqwa* (God-consciousness), self-discipline, and accountability, can also give students a moral and spiritual framework that helps them match their behaviour with higher ideals.

One effective strategy for promoting harmony and moral growth in Malaysia's heterogeneous society is the incorporation of self-leadership into the character education curriculum in Islamic schools. Students can navigate the difficulties of living in a multicultural and multireligious setting while also making a positive contribution to a peaceful and harmonious community by emphasising personal responsibility, ethical contemplation, and emotional management. All students, regardless of their ethnic or religious origin, must be prepared to lead with integrity, empathy, and a strong sense of justice in order to accomplish these goals, which require the education system to foster a balance between universal principles and cultural diversity.

### Research Methodology

This study uses a document analysis methodology to examine the development of a self-leadership framework for Malaysian Islamic school children in the digital age based on Ibn Miskawayh's ethical concepts (Al-Attas, 1995; Miskawayh, 1983). This technique was chosen



because it enables a critical examination of current educational frameworks, procedures, and materials while also identifying opportunities and gaps for incorporating traditional Islamic philosophical principles into modern educational environments (Bowen, 2009). The document analysis methods allow the researcher to extensively investigate relevant materials, assess how well current frameworks align with self-leadership principles, and propose a theoretical model that integrates digital literacy with Islamic ethics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data derived from document analysis were interpreted through a comparative lens, examining how current educational practices correspond with Ibn Miskawayh's theories (Nasr, 2006). This analysis involves identifying key areas where self-leadership can be enhanced in the context of digital education and how Islamic values such as wisdom, justice, and temperance can be incorporated into these frameworks (Rahman, 2010). A thematic approach was employed to organize the findings from the document analysis and critique. Themes such as the role of moral virtues in leadership development, the application of self-regulation in the digital world, and the integration of Islamic ethical principles guided the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings contribute to building a comprehensive self-leadership framework that incorporates both modern educational needs and the timeless teachings of Ibn Miskawayh, with the goal of preparing students to become responsible, ethical leaders in the digital age (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Sulaiman, 2017).

## Results and Findings

### *Components of Ibn Miskawayh's Theories Self-Leadership Framework That Integrates Islamic Values for Digital Literacy for Students in Islamic Schools*

Three primary research questions were addressed using the study's findings. Using insights from Ibn Miskawayh's theories, the study investigates the framework for self-leadership of Islamic schoolchildren in Malaysia in the digital age. The ethical and philosophical theories of Ibn Miskawayh, particularly those pertaining to moral philosophy, virtue ethics, and self-development, can offer a significant framework for encouraging self-leadership in Malaysian Islamic schoolchildren in the digital age. His theories place a strong emphasis on virtue development, self-discipline, and personal accountability—all of which are critical for successful self-leadership in any time period, but particularly in the intricate and rapidly evolving digital environment. Several sub-themes that are pertinent to the Islamic educational context and the current difficulties that students confront might be used to examine the implementation of his ethical views.

### *Self-Awareness and Self-Reflection in the Digital Era*

The cultivation of self-awareness and the practice of introspection are central to Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy. According to him, the cornerstone of moral conduct and self-leadership is self-awareness. He held that in order for people to properly control their behaviour, they must be aware of their own desires, shortcomings, and selves. This idea can be modified for use in Malaysian Islamic schools to help students deal with the challenges of the digital age.

- **Digital Self-Awareness:** Students are exposed to an excessive amount of information in the current digital era, which can result in online distractions, false information, and even dangerous behaviour. By using Ibn Miskawayh's approach, educators can help students think critically about their online conduct, choose carefully how they present themselves online, and comprehend how their activities affect their morals and character. Students

can identify their digital habits and how to match them with Islamic ideals by engaging in self-reflection, particularly through journaling or conversations in Islamic schools.

- **The Role of Tazkiyah (Purification of the Soul):** Ibn Miskawayh stresses the significance of using introspection to purify the soul. It is possible to motivate students to regularly reflect on their interactions in the digital realm and conduct self-evaluation (*Muhasabah*). For example, students might consider if their behaviours are in line with Islamic ethical principles before publishing on social media or participating in online discussions, fostering a positive online persona.

#### *Emotional Regulation and Self-Control in the Digital World*

In order to live a moral life, Ibn Miskawayh placed a great emphasis on the necessity of regulating one's emotions and impulses (**Ghadab and Shahwa**). There are particular difficulties in this area because of the digital age's rapid information flow and instant gratification. For instance, social media sites can cause instantaneous emotional reactions.

- **Self-Control in the Digital Context:** The development of emotional regulation is a crucial application of Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy. By comprehending the nature of emotions and learning to act rationally rather than impulsively, Islamic schoolchildren can be taught to control their emotional reactions in the digital sphere. Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy, for example, might be used to teach students the value of responding with kindness, patience, and wisdom rather than with emotion when engaging in online debates.
- **The Concept of Temperance (Ithmādn):** According to Ibn Miskawayh, temperance necessitates moderation in everything. Students can use this to learn how to balance their internet time with other worthwhile pursuits when it comes to digital consumption. In order to prevent technology from overpowering their personal development or undermining their moral and spiritual progress, Islamic teachings can help them develop a sense of discipline in their use of it.

#### *Virtue Ethics and Moral Development in the Digital Era*

The foundation of Ibn Miskawayh's virtue ethics framework is the development of important qualities including temperance, justice, courage, and wisdom. These qualities are essential for living a fulfilling life and are not merely personal characteristics. These qualities can be modified for use in Malaysian Islamic schools to assist students in navigating the digital world with moral and ethical integrity.

- **Developing Digital Virtues:** In their online interactions, students can learn how to cultivate qualities like justice, kindness, and integrity. Ibn Miskawayh's emphasis on wisdom can help students make sure that their acts are in line with Islamic ethical standards by encouraging them to exercise critical thought before participating in online debates or exchanging information. Additionally, virtue ethics can help students make moral choices about technology use, such as how to behave with others online and how to stay away from harmful.
- **Justice and Fairness in Online Engagements:** Ibn Miskawayh highlighted the importance of justice (*adl*) in his ethical framework. In the digital world, this can be translated into fair and respectful online interactions. Students can be educated about online justice, such as the importance of being honest in digital communications, respecting the privacy of others, and avoiding harmful or divisive content. These principles align with Islamic teachings on the importance of fairness and justice in all aspects of life, including the digital realm.

*The Role of Rationality and Decision-Making in Digital Leadership*

According to Ibn Miskawayh, rationality (**Aql**) is essential for directing one's life and behaviour. According to him, rationality was the means by which one might overcome primal urges and desires and behave morally. In the digital age, students must be able to make logical decisions in order to manage the plethora of options available to them online.

**Critical Thinking and Discernment:** Students in Islamic schools can be taught to critically evaluate information, distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources, and make wise judgements online by implementing Ibn Miskawayh's emphasis on reason and reasoning. Students can be trained, for example, to assess internet content by applying Islamic ethics and reason to determine whether it is consistent with honesty, justice, and truth.

- **Fostering Ethical Digital Leadership:** The development of digital leadership abilities is likewise a rational aspect of self-leadership. Islamic educational institutions can teach students how to use reason to constructively influence others in online forums and social media groups. In these online communities, students can learn how to assume leadership positions in encouraging moral behaviour, helping others make morally right decisions, and cultivating a feeling of accountability.

*Spiritual Growth and Self-Leadership in the Digital Era*

Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy incorporates the spiritual dimension, emphasizing that self-leadership is not merely a matter of intellectual or emotional mastery but also a matter of cultivating *taqwa* (God-consciousness). In Islamic schools, this aspect of his theory can be especially relevant in the digital era, where students often struggle to find a balance between their spiritual and digital lives.

- **Integrating Digital and Spiritual Lives:** Islamic schools can help students realise how Islamic spiritual development and digital self-leadership are compatible. Students can be encouraged to use technology, for instance, to read Quranic texts, participate in online community service projects, or receive Islamic lectures, all of which contribute to their spiritual and moral growth. According to Ibn Miskawayh's viewpoint, digital instruments should be used in ways that uphold a relationship with God and strengthen *taqwa*.
- **Digital Detox and Spiritual Reflection:** Students should benefit from Ibn Miskawayh's emphasis on regular self-reflection (*muhasaba*) in order to better manage the digital distractions, they encounter. Frequent times of withdrawal from technology, also known as "digital detoxes," can help students examine their behaviour, realign their objectives, and deepen their spiritual practices.

Ibn Miskawayh's ethical and philosophical theories provide important insights towards developing self-leadership in Malaysian Islamic school pupils in the digital age, when social media and technology have a big influence on how students behave and grow. Islamic schoolchildren can be prepared to navigate the digital world with integrity, responsibility, and alignment with Islamic values by developing their self-awareness, emotional control, virtue ethics, logical decision-making, and spiritual development. Students can grow into moral leaders who have a beneficial impact on their communities and society at large by applying these timeless ideas to the problems of the digital era.

*Ibn Miskawayh's ethical theories of self-leadership framework promotes development of self-leadership*

Ibn Miskawayh's ethical theory places a strong emphasis on soul purification as a means of achieving a higher plane of existence, one that is more intimate with God, other people, and the universe. His theory of self-leadership starts with acknowledging the internal conflict (*nafs*) within oneself, determining which part of oneself is in charge, and determining what goals or ideals are being pursued. Three faculties make up the soul, according to Miskawayh: the concupiscent soul (*shahawiyyah*), the irascible soul (*ghadabiyyah*), and the reasoning soul (*al-natiqah*). Since the rational soul is moral by nature and able to direct the other two, each of them contributes differently to a person's ethical and spiritual growth.

From the standpoint of self-leadership, Miskawayh's paradigm provides a path to inner mastery. Real self-leadership entails choosing to follow reason and wisdom deliberately while acknowledging one's own emotional responses and urges (from the irascible and concupiscent souls). The inner battle, or *mujahidin*, is analogous to the contemporary concepts of self-control and emotional restraint. The rational soul progressively teaches the irascible soul to respond with measured strength and channels the wants of the concupiscent soul in a balanced and controlled manner by means of consistent self-reflection and ethical effort.

In the end, Miskawayh's ethical philosophy supports conscious internal governance, which is consistent with self-leadership. According to him, a self-led person is one who, guided by reason, reconciles the self's contradictory aspects rather than suppressing it. A life of purpose and virtue are the outcomes of this harmony. Self-leaders must first govern their own souls with morality, discipline, and a strong sense of duty, just as leaders must lead others with discernment and integrity. Miskawayh composes:

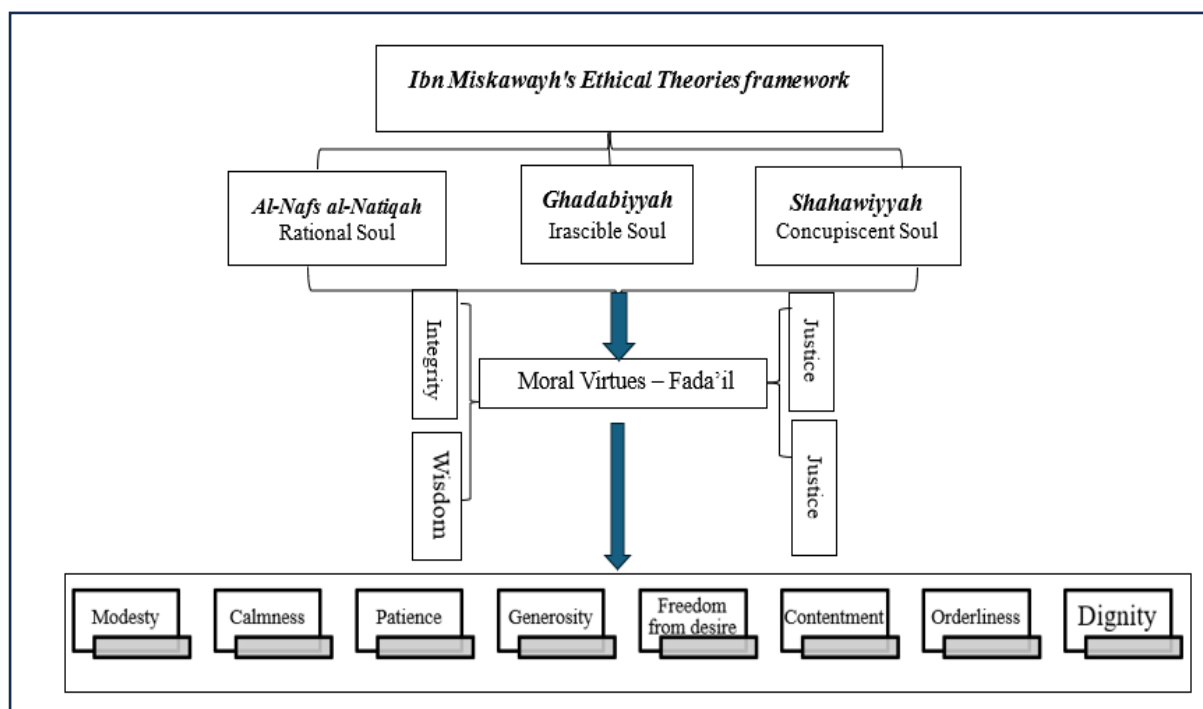
"If a person wants to attain wisdom (*hikmah*), he should begin by purging his heart (irascible soul) of all things that are in opposition to it, including whims, destructive impulses, hatred, envy, love of prestige, impulsive rage, and the like. And once a man's heart is free of these things, he receives philosophy (*hikmah*) and absorbs as much of it as possible".

Miskawayh suggests that when the *Mujahadah* is successful in achieving moderation, the rational soul reaps the virtue of *hikmah* (wisdom), the irascible soul gains the virtue of *Shaja'ah* (courage) and the concupiscent soul accomplishes the virtue of *'iffah* (temperance). When all these three virtues reach a proper level and have the proper relations of harmony in their activities, another virtue is produced, namely, *al-'adl* (justice). Hence justice exists in the balanced development of all faculties which also means that justice is always a comprehensive virtue achieved through all the other virtues of the soul. Miskawayh's reference to the four cardinal virtues in the *Wasiyyah*: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice logically follows his resolution for *Mujahadah*. It implies that Miskawayh's soul is already moving away from its concupiscent station and is perceiving the possibility of its growth. Although Miskawayh's four divisions of virtues are not very different from those of Plato, their treatment is mostly his own and sometimes drawn from Qur'anic ideas. For example, his theory of temperance, that is restraint of the body from *Al-Sarf* (extravagance or immoderateness).

Miskawayh highlights that *Mujahadah*, or the internal fight against basic impulses and cravings, is the path to self-perfection. Since the ability to encourage others and recognise their merits when they are due is a sign of a perfected spirit, this process is not just personal but also external. Therefore, achieving self-perfection is intrinsically relational and social rather than solitary or egocentric. Through external deeds and judgements, the elevated soul reflects its inner harmony and becomes a source of virtue and moral clarity for others.

According to Miskawayh's view, a person who has transcended self-interest and ego and is using their moral strength to inspire and influence others around them is genuinely self-led. This degree of leadership results from intense inward effort, where the soul develops empathy, justice, and fairness in addition to disciplining itself. One important indicator of advanced self-leadership, which is based on moral excellence and humility (*fada'il*), is the capacity to see others' strengths and encourage their development.

The Qur'anic expression *la khawfun 'alayhim wa la hum yahzanun* (no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they mourn) describes the condition of serenity and spiritual confidence that eventually befalls those who attain it—God's successful servants, victorious advocates, and secure worshippers. A life guided by inner truth, divine harmony, and a dedication to moral service is the epitome of self-leadership, and this calm mood embodies it. These people represent the ideal of moral and spiritual growth and serve as both self-leaders and moral role models in their communities.

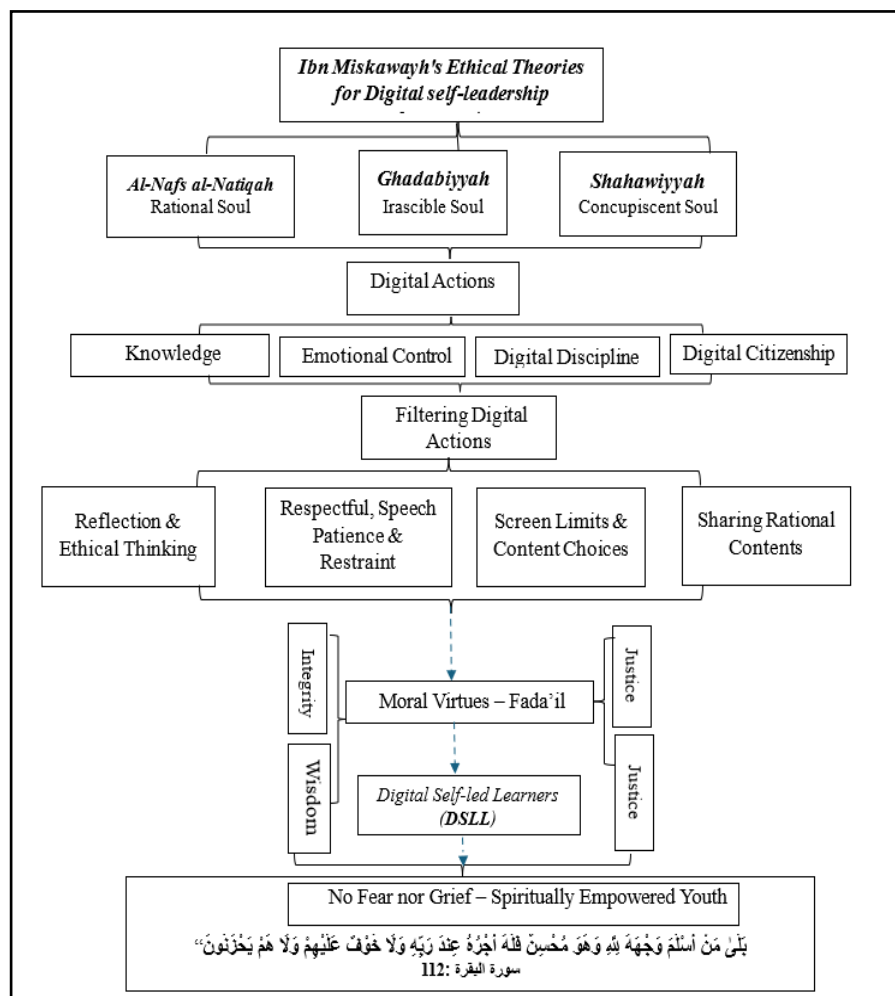


#### *Self-Leadership Framework of ibn Miskawayh's Ethical Theories for Islamic School Students' Navigation the Digital Age Challenges*

The purification and discipline of the soul (*nafs*) by deliberate moral effort (*Mujahadah*) would be the focal point of the self-leadership model for Islamic schoolchildren navigating the digital age, according to Ibn Miskawayh's ethical ideas. Students need to be taught to let the rational soul (*al-natiqah*) to direct their behaviour in a world full of digital diversions, false information, and rapid satisfaction. In order to resist the allure of damaging content or rash

online behaviour, they must develop critical thinking, emotional control, and ethical discernment. This will enable them to interact with digital platforms in a way that is consistent with Islamic principles and promotes personal development.

According to Miskawayh's paradigm, pupils should be able to identify the internal struggle that exists between the soul's concupiscent, irascible, and rational aspects. While the concupiscent soul may seek pleasure through frequent scrolling, entertainment, or validation through likes and comments, the irascible soul may show up in the digital world as online hostility or reactionary behaviour. Therefore, self-leadership entails teaching the logical soul to control these urges, encouraging digital etiquette, content moderation, and purposeful use that advances both individual growth and the good of the community. Furthermore, Miskawayh asserts that the pinnacle of self-leadership entails both improving oneself and helping others become more morally upright. With the help of this ethical paradigm, Islamic schoolchildren can develop into good digital citizens who use their platforms to encourage, inform, and help their peers. In online interactions, they represent the condition of those who "no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve" by exhibiting fada'il (moral attributes) including honesty, respect, and compassion. As a result, Miskawayh's vision offers a strong ethical and spiritual basis for navigating the digital age with honour and purpose. The following model is taken from Ibn Miskawayh's framework of Ethical Theories for Self-Leadership:





*Self-Leadership Framework Based on ibn Miskawayh's Ethical Theories for Islamic School Students' Navigation in the Digital Age Challenges. Source: (PK. Hamed,2025)*

### **The Foundation of Self-Leadership in Miskawayh's Ethics**

The core of Ibn Miskawayh's ethical theory is the idea of *Mujahadah* (inner struggle) in conjunction with *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* (purification of the soul). According to his definition, the soul (*nafs*) is a singular entity with three faculties: concupiscent soul (*shahawiyyah*), irascible soul (*ghadabiyyah*), and rational soul (*al-natiqah*). According to him, the rational soul must be given the freedom to direct the other two faculties in order for self-leadership to be effective. This serves as the philosophical cornerstone for today's Islamic schoolchildren to navigate the digital environment with morality, discipline, and purpose.

Students are continuously exposed to a variety of content in the digital era, some of which are helpful, some of which are distracting, and some of which may even be detrimental. The lower faculties of the soul—impulsivity, want, and anger—are frequently triggered by social media, online gaming, and digital entertainment. According to Miskawayh's concept, students achieve real achievement and moral greatness when they are able to identify and control these tendencies via the use of reason. As a result, the digital age turns into a contemporary setting for *Mujahadah*, where students' capacity to live morally and spiritually is put to the test on a regular basis.

It is necessary to develop the rational soul via education, introspection, and moral consciousness. In actuality, Islamic schools may promote this by fusing moral instruction based on Islamic principles with digital literacy. This involves instructing children on how to critically assess information found online, use social media in an appropriate manner, and preserve their Muslim identity online. Students who practice *al-natiqah* are better able to control their emotions and desires in a healthy, intentional manner in addition to making informed decisions.

Although the irascible soul is a symbol of bravery and boldness, when left unchecked, it can show itself as verbal abuse, online bullying, or an excessive reaction to criticism. Miskawayh thought that the logical soul might change this soul to act with strength rather than violence. In a digital setting, this entails fostering patience and empathy in pupils, assisting them in controlling their emotional reactions to online disagreement, and promoting polite discourse. Here, *akhlaq al-nabawiyyah*, or digital character education based on prophetic etiquette, is crucial.

Seeking pleasure and satisfaction, the concupiscent spirit frequently engages in excessive internet use, becomes fixated on likes and validation, or consumes unsuitable content. As Miskawayh noted, the other faculties must subjugate this soul in order for it to become moral. By establishing boundaries for screen time, selecting educational materials, and creating a digital routine that is motivated by their values and objectives, educators can assist kids in managing this. The development of *fada'il*, or moral qualities like honesty, integrity, humility, and fairness, is the aim of this self-leadership approach. According to Miskawayh, a perfected soul guides and sees the good in others in addition to elevating itself. This translates into becoming positive influences in digital arenas by helping peers, having polite conversations, and offering helpful knowledge. By doing this, students fulfill the role of

God's successful servants, as outlined in the Qur'anic verse *la khawfun 'alayhim wa la hum yahzanun*, by moving from being passive consumers to active contributors in their digital environments.

### Summary

Ibn Miskawayh's ethical theory serves as the foundation for the self-leadership framework, which provides Islamic schoolchildren with a morally sound approach to negotiating the challenges of the digital age. Understanding the three faculties of the soul—the rational (*al-natiqah*), irascible (*ghadabiyyah*), and concupiscent (*shahawiyyah*)—allows pupils to better comprehend their inner conflicts and guide themselves via morally conscious endeavor (*Mujahadah*). This entails controlling wants for rapid fulfilment, disciplining emotional responses, and fortifying the logical soul via knowledge and introspection in digital situations. Students can develop moral qualities, or *fada'il*, and become responsible, morally-driven digital citizens through this approach. Islamic schools must incorporate digital literacy with moral and spiritual development, according to the framework. All facets of the ego are directed toward virtue and service, both online and offline, when the rational soul is in charge. With each click, post, and interaction, students are empowered to actively contribute to positive digital environments in addition to resisting harmful digital influences. According to Miskawayh's teachings, the perfected soul encourages others and joins the group of God's safe and successful servants—those who do not mourn or dread.

The ethical theory of Ibn Miskawayh provides a timeless and comprehensive method of self-leadership that is extremely applicable to the current digital era. Students in Islamic schools can use his methodology to turn their use of technology into a path toward moral and spiritual development. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct morally in digital environments, control their emotions, and lead themselves wisely. This framework guarantees that students stay true to their faith and develop into well-rounded, resilient, and spiritually aware people in addition to preparing them to succeed in a fast-paced, technologically advanced society. Islamic schools can create a systematic self-leadership curriculum that combines digital literacy and Miskawayh's ethics in order to successfully apply this concept. Reflective journaling, values-based conversations, digital detoxification techniques, and practical applications such as student-led digital campaigns should all be incorporated into the framework. This self-leadership must also be modelled by parents and teachers. This all-encompassing method will eventually result in pupils who are not just tech-savvy but also emotionally educated, morally upright, and spiritually rooted.

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