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Reconstructing Ibn Miskawayh's Educational Philosophy: From Virtue Ethics to Contemporary Character Education

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the educational philosophy of Ibn Miskawayh and reconstructs its relevance to contemporary character education from the perspective of the philosophy of Islamic education. Drawing on his ethical thought, particularly *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, the article explores the relationship between moral knowledge, the cultivation of virtue, habituation, and the social environment in shaping human character. The study employs qualitative library research and document analysis, examining Ibn Miskawayh's primary ethical work alongside scholarly literature on the philosophy of Islamic education and contemporary character education. The analysis indicates that Ibn Miskawayh's educational philosophy regards moral development as a gradual process involving knowledge, disciplined practice, self-reflection, and the cultivation of balanced dispositions. Education therefore extends beyond the transmission of information to the formation of individuals capable of acting rationally, exercising self-control, and fulfilling social responsibilities. His account of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice provides a conceptual foundation for integrating intellectual development with ethical formation. This article argues that Ibn Miskawayh's thought can contribute to contemporary character education through the integration of moral understanding, habituation, reflective judgment, and responsible action. It also considers the implications of his philosophy for digital citizenship and the ethical use of artificial intelligence, while distinguishing these contemporary applications from Ibn Miskawayh's original historical context. The article concludes that his educational philosophy offers a productive framework for developing character education that is intellectually grounded, ethically oriented, and responsive to contemporary social challenges.

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Introduction

Education is commonly understood as a process of developing knowledge, skills, and competencies. However, education also has a fundamental moral dimension: it shapes how individuals understand themselves, relate to others, exercise freedom, and respond to

ethical dilemmas. Educational success cannot therefore be measured exclusively through academic achievement. It should also be evaluated in terms of the capacity to act responsibly, demonstrate integrity, exercise self-control, and contribute to the common good. This broader understanding of education has become increasingly important amid social fragmentation, the spread of digital misinformation, consumerism, and the growing influence of artificial intelligence on everyday life.

Within the intellectual tradition of Islam, the philosophy of Islamic education provides an important framework for examining the relationship between knowledge, human development, moral formation, and social responsibility. Muslim scholars have discussed the purposes of education in relation to the formation of virtuous individuals, the cultivation of the soul, and the establishment of a just social order. Among these thinkers, Ibn Miskawayh occupies an important position because of his systematic treatment of ethics, human character, and the possibility of moral transformation. His philosophical work Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa-Taṭhīr al-Aʿrāq, commonly translated as The Refinement of Character, presents moral development as a process through which individuals cultivate virtue and bring their dispositions into a balanced condition (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968).

Ibn Miskawayh's ethical philosophy is particularly relevant to the philosophy of Islamic education because it does not regard character as an entirely fixed quality. Human beings possess different dispositions, but these dispositions can be cultivated through learning, practice, discipline, and interaction with their surroundings. Moral education is consequently a formative process rather than merely the communication of ethical rules. Individuals must understand the good, develop appropriate dispositions, and repeatedly translate moral understanding into action.

This emphasis on the formation of character creates an important point of dialogue between classical Islamic ethics and contemporary character education. Modern character education likewise emphasizes the need to integrate moral understanding, emotional dispositions, and ethical conduct. Lickona (1991), for example, argues that character education requires more than knowing moral principles; it also involves caring about the good and acting accordingly. Research on character education has similarly highlighted the importance of educational environments, institutional culture, relationships, and consistent opportunities to practise moral conduct (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004).

Nevertheless, the contemporary relevance of Ibn Miskawayh's thought should not be assumed without critical examination. Classical ethical concepts emerged within specific philosophical, religious, and social contexts. Their application to modern educational institutions requires interpretation, conceptual clarification, and attention to contemporary circumstances. The purpose is not to reproduce a medieval educational model unchanged, but to identify principles that can contribute to current discussions about moral development, pedagogical practice, and the ethical responsibilities of educational institutions.

Research on Ibn Miskawayh has examined his concept of moral education, the cultivation of virtue, and the relevance of his ethical thought to character formation. Indonesian scholarship has also explored the implications of Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq for contemporary Islamic education (Eka, 2017; Maghfiroh, 2016). More recent studies have continued to discuss the reconstruction of his ethical concepts within contemporary educational frameworks (Muammar et al., 2026; Taufik & Kudrotullah, 2025). These studies demonstrate the continuing relevance of Ibn Miskawayh, while also indicating the need to connect philosophical interpretation with the concrete processes through which educational institutions develop students' character.

This article addresses that need by examining Ibn Miskawayh's educational

philosophy through several interrelated dimensions: its philosophical foundations, educational objectives, curriculum, pedagogical methods, educator–learner relationships, and the role of family, school, and community. It then reconstructs the implications of these ideas for contemporary character education, including digital citizenship and the ethical use of artificial intelligence. The latter discussion is presented as a contemporary extension of Ibn Miskawayh's ethical principles, not as a claim that he directly addressed modern digital technologies.

The central argument is that Ibn Miskawayh's educational philosophy offers a framework for character education in which moral knowledge, the cultivation of dispositions, reflective judgment, and responsible action are mutually reinforced. From the perspective of the philosophy of Islamic education, such a framework can help bridge the gap between teaching values as abstract principles and cultivating them as consistent practices in everyday life.

Method

This study is a qualitative library research approach to examine Ibn Miskawayh's educational philosophy and its relevance to contemporary character education. Library research is appropriate because the principal objective is conceptual reconstruction rather than the measurement of educational outcomes in a particular institution. The study focuses on interpreting philosophical arguments, identifying recurring ethical concepts, and examining how those concepts can inform contemporary educational practice within the broader field of the philosophy of Islamic education.

The primary source is Ibn Miskawayh's The Refinement of Character, translated by C. K. Zurayk (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968). This work provides the principal basis for examining his understanding of human nature, virtue, the cultivation of character, and the relationship between moral development and rational self-discipline. The analysis also considers relevant scholarship on Ibn Miskawayh and Islamic character education, alongside selected literature on contemporary character education and moral development.

Document analysis is used to examine the content, context, and conceptual relationships within the selected literature. Bowen (2009) explains that document analysis involves systematically reviewing and interpreting documents to develop an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, the method supports a close examination of ethical concepts and their educational implications. The literature review also follows the general principle that a review should synthesize existing knowledge rather than merely list publications (Snyder, 2019).

The analysis proceeds through four interconnected stages. First, the study identifies the central concepts in Ibn Miskawayh's ethical philosophy, including virtue, reason, habituation, self-control, and moral balance. Second, these concepts are organized according to their educational implications, particularly in relation to objectives, curriculum, pedagogy, and educational relationships. Third, the analysis compares these implications with selected discussions of contemporary character education. Finally, the study develops a conceptual reconstruction that connects Ibn Miskawayh's ethical principles with present-day educational challenges.

This reconstruction is interpretive rather than historical in a strict sense. The proposed framework is therefore not presented as a model explicitly formulated by Ibn Miskawayh himself. Instead, it represents an analytical synthesis developed from his ethical thought and contemporary educational literature. This distinction is important to prevent modern concepts from being attributed anachronistically to a classical Muslim philosopher.

Results and Discussion

Philosophical Foundations of Ibn Miskawayh's Educational Thought

Ibn Miskawayh's educational philosophy is rooted in the relationship between human nature, rational capacity, and the cultivation of virtue. His ethical thought assumes that human beings are capable of moral development and that character can be improved through appropriate forms of intellectual and practical cultivation. Moral excellence is not achieved solely through the possession of knowledge, nor is it simply the product of spontaneous inclination. It requires the disciplined formation of dispositions so that individuals become increasingly capable of choosing and performing good actions.

A central element of this philosophy is the relationship between reason and the cultivation of the soul. Reason enables human beings to evaluate their desires, distinguish appropriately from inappropriate conduct, and direct their actions toward worthwhile ends. Nevertheless, rational capacity alone does not guarantee virtuous behaviour. Individuals may understand what is right while remaining unable or unwilling to practise it consistently. Ethical education must therefore bring rational understanding into a productive relationship with habits, emotions, desires, and conduct.

This perspective has important implications for the philosophy of Islamic education. Teaching ethical concepts is necessary, but it is insufficient if students do not develop the dispositions required to enact them. A student may understand the meaning of honesty yet still engages in academic dishonesty when faced with pressure to achieve high grades. Similarly, a student may know the importance of respect while behaving disrespectfully toward classmates whose backgrounds or opinions differ from their own. These examples illustrate why character education must connect moral understanding with repeated practice and reflection.

Ibn Miskawayh's ethical system gives particular importance to the balance of human faculties. His discussion of virtue is commonly associated with four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Wisdom concerns the appropriate exercise of reason; courage concerns the regulation of fear and the capacity to act appropriately in difficult circumstances; temperance concerns the disciplined management of desires; and justice concerns the proper ordering of relationships and actions. These virtues should not be treated as isolated qualities. They are interconnected dimensions of an ethically integrated personality (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968).

In educational settings, wisdom can be cultivated through critical inquiry, reasoned discussion, and the careful evaluation of information. Courage can be developed by encouraging students to defend what is right, acknowledge mistakes, and respond constructively to injustice. Temperance can be fostered through self-regulation, responsible decision-making, and the ability to delay immediate gratification. Justice can be developed through fair classroom practices, respect for others' rights, and equitable participation in collective activities.

The relevance of these virtues lies in their integrative character. They suggest that moral development cannot be reduced to a checklist of desirable behaviours. A student who speaks courageously but lacks wisdom may act recklessly; a student who pursues personal discipline without justice may become indifferent to others; and a student who possesses knowledge without temperance may use that knowledge for selfish purposes. Character education must therefore cultivate relationships among virtues rather than teach each value in isolation.

Ibn Miskawayh's approach also provides a basis for understanding the educability of character. If dispositions can be cultivated, then family practices, school culture, social relationships, and repeated activities become significant elements of moral formation.

Education should create conditions in which good conduct can be learned, practised, evaluated, and gradually internalized. This view is consistent with contemporary character education, which emphasizes the role of institutional climate and the opportunities students receive to practise ethical behaviour (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lickona, 1991).

At the same time, Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy should not be interpreted as suggesting that all individuals can be transformed through identical methods or at the same pace. Educational processes must recognize differences in maturity, experience, disposition, and social circumstances. The practical implication is that moral formation requires sustained guidance and appropriately designed learning experiences rather than a uniform set of instructions applied without regard to context.

Educational Objectives: Virtue, Moral Autonomy, and Social Responsibility

From Ibn Miskawayh's perspective, education should contribute to the development of human beings who can live virtuously. The purpose of education extends beyond the acquisition of information or the preparation of individuals for economic productivity. Knowledge has an important role, but its value is strengthened when it contributes to the improvement of character and the responsible exercise of human capacities.

One implication is that educational success should include moral development as a significant outcome. Academic competence remains important, but it should not be separated from honesty, self-discipline, fairness, and concern for others. An educational system that produces high academic achievement while tolerating dishonesty or abuse of power would fall short of a comprehensive conception of human development.

This argument is consistent with contemporary character education. Lickona (1991) emphasizes the relationship between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Although this framework emerges from a different intellectual context, it offers a useful point of comparison with Ibn Miskawayh's insistence that ethical improvement requires more than intellectual awareness. In both approaches, education must help learners translate moral understanding into patterns of conduct.

A second objective is the development of moral autonomy. Moral autonomy does not mean unrestricted individual freedom or the rejection of social norms. Rather, it refers to the capacity to understand moral reasons, evaluate competing considerations, and take responsibility for one's decisions. Students should not be trained merely to comply with rules when teachers are present. They should develop the ability to recognize why certain actions are right or wrong and to act responsibly even when external supervision is absent. This distinction is particularly important in contemporary education, where behavioural compliance can sometimes be mistaken for genuine character formation. A student may follow school rules because of fear of punishment rather than because the student understands their ethical significance. Although rules and consequences are necessary, lasting character development requires opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and the gradual internalization of values.

A third objective is social responsibility. Virtue is not exclusively an individual achievement; it also influences how people participate in social life. Honesty, justice, courage, and temperance have consequences for relationships, institutional trust, and collective well-being. An individual's moral development is therefore closely connected to the capacity to fulfil obligations toward others.

Within educational institutions, social responsibility can be cultivated through collaborative projects, peer support, community engagement, and fair participation in decision-making. Such activities enable students to encounter ethical questions in concrete

circumstances. They also demonstrate that values are not simply abstract concepts to be memorized but principles that guide action in relationships with others.

Indonesian research on character education similarly points to the importance of connecting values with the social and institutional environments in which students learn (Abdullah et al., 2019; Eka, 2017). In Islamic educational settings, moral formation may also be strengthened through the integration of ethical reflection, religious understanding, and everyday practices. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such integration depends on the consistency between the values taught and the conduct modelled by the institution.

Consequently, Ibn Miskawayh's educational objectives can be reconstructed around three mutually reinforcing dimensions: the cultivation of virtue, the development of responsible moral judgment, and the formation of individuals capable of contributing to the common good. These dimensions provide a broader basis for evaluating educational outcomes than academic performance alone and are relevant to contemporary discussions within the philosophy of Islamic education.

Curriculum: Integrating Knowledge and Ethics

A curriculum informed by Ibn Miskawayh's ethical philosophy should not separate intellectual development from moral formation. Knowledge is essential to education, but knowledge and virtue are not automatically identical. The possession of information does not guarantee the ability to use it wisely, justly, or responsibly. Curriculum design must therefore consider both what students learn and how learning contributes to their moral development.

This principle does not require every subject to become a moral instruction lesson. Rather, it calls for a thoughtful integration of disciplinary knowledge and ethical reflection. Science, technology, social studies, language, and religious education can each provide opportunities to examine the consequences of human decisions, the responsibilities associated with knowledge, and the values that should guide its application.

In science education, for example, students can examine questions about environmental responsibility, research integrity, and the social implications of technological innovation. In social studies, they can explore justice, inequality, civic responsibility, and the ethical dimensions of public policy. In language and literature, they can analyse moral conflict, empathy, and the consequences of human action. In Islamic religious education, ethical concepts can be connected to the interpretation of religious teachings and to the practical responsibilities of daily life.

Such integration also challenges the assumption that religious and general knowledge must occupy separate educational domains. From the perspective of character formation, different disciplines can contribute to a shared educational purpose, provided that their methods and content are treated with appropriate intellectual rigour. The objective is not to erase differences between disciplines but to enable learners to understand how knowledge can inform responsible action.

The four cardinal virtues can serve as an organizing perspective for curriculum development. Wisdom can be supported through inquiry, evidence-based reasoning, and critical evaluation. Courage can be developed through discussions of moral dilemmas and opportunities to express reasoned disagreement respectfully. Temperance can be strengthened through learning activities that require persistence, self-regulation, and responsible use of resources. Justice can be explored through questions of fairness, equal treatment, rights, and responsibilities.

However, curriculum integration should avoid turning ethical education into a superficial exercise in attaching a value label to every lesson. A lesson on justice, for instance, should involve more than asking students to repeat a definition. It may require

them to consider competing claims, examine evidence, listen to different perspectives, and justify a decision. Such learning activities help students understand the complexity of moral judgment.

Contemporary character education research reinforces the importance of a coherent educational approach rather than isolated moral messages (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lickona, 1991). The curriculum, classroom relationships, assessment practices, and institutional culture should support one another. If a school teaches fairness but applies its rules inconsistently, the institutional experience may undermine the intended lesson.

Assessment presents a related challenge. Knowledge can often be evaluated through tests, essays, and projects, whereas character development is more complex to measure. Ethical conduct is influenced by context and cannot be reliably inferred from a single performance or questionnaire. Assessment should therefore use multiple forms of evidence, including reflective writing, observations of participation, project evaluations, and student discussions. Such evidence should support learning and guidance rather than function as a simplistic measurement of a student's moral worth.

The curricular implication of Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy is thus an educational programme in which intellectual competence and ethical formation are deliberately connected. Knowledge should equip students to understand the world, while ethical reflection should help them consider how that knowledge ought to be used. This integration represents one possible contribution of Ibn Miskawayh's thought to the philosophy of Islamic education.

Educational Methods: Habituation, Reflection, and Moral Guidance

Ibn Miskawayh's ethical philosophy emphasizes that character develops through practice and the gradual cultivation of dispositions. Moral education therefore requires methods that enable learners to move from understanding ethical principles to incorporating them into everyday behaviour. Habituation, reflection, advice, and guidance can be interpreted as complementary elements of this process.

Habituation is important because ethical conduct cannot depend entirely on momentary motivation. Honesty, discipline, patience, and responsibility become more stable when they are practised repeatedly in meaningful circumstances. In schools, such practice can be encouraged through consistent expectations, shared responsibilities, collaborative work, and opportunities for students to make decisions and reflect on their consequences. For example, academic honesty can be cultivated not only by explaining the prohibition of plagiarism but also by teaching students how to cite sources, designing assessments that reward original thinking, and providing opportunities to discuss the pressures that lead to academic misconduct. Similarly, respect can be developed through classroom practices that require students to listen to others, respond without humiliation, and resolve disagreements constructively.

Habituation, however, should not be equated with mechanical obedience. Repetition may establish behavioural patterns, but it does not necessarily ensure that learners understand the ethical reasons behind their actions. Students who behave well only because they fear punishment may fail to act responsibly when supervision disappears. Habituation should therefore be accompanied by reflection, explanation, and the gradual development of moral judgment.

Reflection enables learners to examine their motives, consider the consequences of their actions, and evaluate whether their decisions are consistent with the values they profess. Teachers can facilitate this process through case discussions, reflective journals, guided conversations, and the analysis of everyday ethical dilemmas. The objective is not to

prescribe an identical response to every complex situation but to help students develop the capacity to reason carefully and accept responsibility for their decisions.

Advice and moral guidance are also important, if they are delivered in ways that preserve the learner's dignity. Educators need to communicate expectations clearly, correct harmful behaviour, and provide constructive direction. Nevertheless, moral guidance is more likely to support development when students are given opportunities to understand the reasons for expectations and participate in discussions about the consequences of their actions.

A teacher confronting a student who has bullied a classmate, for instance, should address the harmful behaviour while also helping the student understand its effects. Appropriate educational responses may include accountability, restorative dialogue where suitable, and sustained monitoring of behaviour. Humiliation and arbitrary punishment may produce immediate compliance, but they do not necessarily cultivate empathy, self-control, or a willingness to repair harm.

This approach is consistent with broader discussions of character education that emphasize modelling, relationships, reflection, and the creation of supportive environments (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Lickona, 1991). It also corresponds with Indonesian discussions of habituation as a means of translating Islamic ethical ideals into educational practice (Candra et al., 2021).

The central pedagogical implication is that character formation requires consistency between explanation, practice, reflection, and guidance. Ethical values become educationally meaningful when learners encounter them repeatedly in concrete situations and receive opportunities to understand, evaluate, and improve their conduct.

Educators, Learners, and Educational Relationships

An educational philosophy centred on virtue necessarily assigns significant responsibility to educators. Teachers do not merely transmit knowledge; they participate in the formation of learners through their conduct, decisions, communication, and relationships. Their behaviour can reinforce or undermine the values communicated through the formal curriculum.

This role requires teachers to demonstrate the ethical standards they expect students to develop. A teacher who demands honesty but manipulates assessment results, or who teaches respect while humiliating students, creates a contradiction between educational discourse and institutional practice. Such inconsistencies can weaken students' trust and encourage the perception that moral values are merely rhetorical.

Educator role-modelling should not, however, be understood as a demand for moral perfection. Teachers are human beings who may make mistakes and encounter difficult circumstances. Their educational responsibility includes acknowledging errors, explaining decisions, accepting legitimate criticism, and demonstrating how mistakes can be corrected. These practices can provide students with concrete examples of accountability and moral growth.

The relationship between educators and learners should also balance guidance with the development of student agency. Teachers need to establish boundaries, communicate expectations, and intervene when conduct causes harm. At the same time, learners should have opportunities to ask questions, articulate concerns, evaluate arguments, and participate in decisions appropriate to their level of development. This balance helps prevent character education from becoming a process of unquestioning conformity.

The learner, in this framework, is an active participant in moral development. Students must practise self-examination, learn from experience, and gradually assume responsibility for their choices. They should not be treated merely as recipients of moral

instruction. Their experiences, questions, relationships, and reflections are integral to the educational process.

Educational relationships also have a social dimension. Students learn about fairness and respect not only from what teachers say but also from how teachers distribute attention, respond to disagreement, address bullying, and manage classroom participation. Fairness becomes credible when it is experienced in institutional practice.

This perspective has relevance for inclusive and multicultural education. Students may come from different cultural, linguistic, economic, and religious backgrounds. Character education should help them develop the ability to engage with these differences without abandoning the principles of justice and respect. Teachers must therefore create environments in which disagreement can be expressed constructively and differences are not used to justify exclusion or humiliation.

Research on character education suggests that school culture and relationships can play an important role in the development of students' ethical behaviour (Abdullah et al., 2019; Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). From the perspective of Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy, these relationships are not secondary to moral education. They are among the contexts through which character is cultivated and tested.

The Role of Family, School, and Community

Character development does not occur exclusively in classrooms. Families, schools, peer groups, religious communities, and wider social environments all influence the formation of dispositions and behaviour. Ibn Miskawayh's emphasis on the cultivation of character can therefore be extended to a broader understanding of the social conditions that support moral development.

The family is often the first setting in which children encounter rules, responsibilities, emotional expectations, and examples of interpersonal conduct. Through everyday interactions, children observe how adults manage disagreement, respond to frustration, fulfil commitments, and treat people with different levels of power. These experiences can contribute to the development of habits that are later reinforced or challenged in educational institutions.

Family-based moral education is most effective when values are embodied in practice. Telling children to be honest while encouraging them to deceive others for convenience creates contradictory messages. By contrast, adults who acknowledge mistakes, fulfil commitments, and explain the reasons behind rules provide examples that children can observe and discuss.

Schools have a complementary responsibility. They bring together learners with different experiences and establish shared expectations for conduct. A school can cultivate character by ensuring that its rules are transparent, its disciplinary procedures are fair, and its relationships are consistent with the values it teaches. It can also provide structured opportunities for service, collaboration, and responsible participation.

The broader community further shapes the ethical environment in which learners develop. Community organisations, religious institutions, neighbourhood groups, and civic initiatives can offer opportunities to practise solidarity, responsibility, and respect. Community service, for example, can help students understand social problems through direct engagement rather than abstract discussion alone.

Nevertheless, cooperation among families, schools, and communities should not assume that all parties hold identical views or educational priorities. Differences may arise over discipline, technology use, cultural practices, or the interpretation of moral responsibilities. Constructive collaboration requires communication, mutual respect, and a

willingness to identify shared educational objectives without denying legitimate differences.

This point is particularly important in contemporary Indonesian society, where educational institutions operate within diverse social and cultural settings. Character education should contribute to the formation of individuals who can uphold ethical commitments while participating respectfully in pluralistic communities. Research on Indonesian character education illustrates the importance of considering the institutional and social contexts in which educational values are practised (Abdullah et al., 2019; Eka, 2017).

From the perspective of the philosophy of Islamic education, character education is best understood as a shared responsibility rather than a task delegated exclusively to teachers of moral or religious subjects. Families, schools, and communities need to establish mutually supportive environments in which ethical values are consistently modelled, discussed, and practised.

Digital Citizenship and Artificial Intelligence: A Contemporary Extension

Although Ibn Miskawayh did not address digital platforms or artificial intelligence in their contemporary forms, his ethical philosophy can provide a basis for analysing the moral responsibilities associated with these technologies. This section is therefore a contemporary application of his principles, not a claim about the historical content of his writings.

Digital technologies have expanded access to information, communication, and learning opportunities. At the same time, they have introduced ethical challenges involving misinformation, privacy, cyberbullying, manipulation, academic dishonesty, and the irresponsible use of automated systems. These challenges demonstrate that access to knowledge does not automatically produce wise or ethical conduct.

The virtue of wisdom is relevant to the evaluation of digital information. Students need to distinguish reliable evidence from unsupported claims, identify possible bias, and recognize the limits of their own knowledge. Digital literacy should consequently involve more than technical proficiency. It should also include critical judgment about the credibility, purpose, and consequences of information.

Courage is relevant when students encounter online harassment, discriminatory content, or pressure to participate in harmful behaviour. Ethical courage does not require reckless confrontation. Rather, it involves responding appropriately, seeking assistance when necessary, and refusing to contribute to actions that cause harm. Educational institutions should help students understand how to intervene safely and responsibly.

Temperance can inform discussions of self-regulation in digital environments. Social media platforms and digital applications often compete for attention, making it difficult to balance online engagement with study, rest, interpersonal relationships, and other responsibilities. A character-oriented approach should help learners develop habits of intentional technology use rather than relying exclusively on external restrictions.

Justice is relevant to privacy, fairness, digital inclusion, and the treatment of others online. Students should learn that digital communication does not remove their responsibilities toward other people. Sharing humiliating images, spreading unverified allegations, or using technology to exclude others can cause real harm even when such actions occur through a screen.

The ethical use of artificial intelligence raises additional questions. Students may use AI systems to generate explanations, summarize texts, translate materials, or support writing. These activities can be educationally valuable, but they also require critical evaluation, transparency, respect for intellectual work, and accountability for the final

product. A learner should not treat an AI-generated answer as automatically accurate or assume that the availability of a tool removes the responsibility to think independently.

A virtue-based approach would ask students to consider several questions: Is the information reliable? Does the use of the tool support or undermine genuine learning? Have relevant sources and forms of assistance been acknowledged? Could the output mislead or harm others? Who is responsible for the final decision or claim? Such questions connect technological practice with wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice.

These principles also have implications for educators and institutions. Policies on AI use should be clear, proportionate, and educationally meaningful. Rather than relying exclusively on prohibition or detection, institutions can explain acceptable and unacceptable uses, design assignments that require independent reasoning, and provide opportunities for students to disclose how AI tools have been used. Such approaches can help cultivate responsibility rather than merely encourage compliance.

The contemporary significance of Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy therefore lies not in providing technical rules for digital technologies, but in offering an ethical vocabulary for evaluating their use. His emphasis on the cultivation of virtue can support a form of digital citizenship in which technological competence is accompanied by critical judgment, self-regulation, fairness, and responsibility. This application demonstrates how the philosophy of Islamic education can engage with new challenges without attributing modern technological concepts to classical thinkers.

Challenges and Limitations in Contemporary Character Education

Despite its potential, the application of Ibn Miskawayh's ethical philosophy to contemporary education involves several challenges. The first concerns the gap between stated values and actual practice. Educational institutions may formally endorse honesty, justice, discipline, and respect while tolerating practices that contradict these principles. Excessive competition, inconsistent discipline, unfair assessment, and the misuse of authority can weaken the credibility of character education.

Addressing this gap requires more than adding ethical content to the curriculum. Institutions need to examine whether their policies, leadership practices, assessment systems, and relationships reflect the values they promote. Character education becomes more credible when students encounter consistency between formal instruction and everyday institutional experience.

A second challenge concerns the risk of moral indoctrination. Character education may become problematic when students are expected to repeat approved statements without understanding their rationale or being allowed to raise questions. Although schools require clear ethical boundaries, students also need opportunities to examine reasons, discuss difficult cases, and develop responsible judgment. The cultivation of virtue should not eliminate critical inquiry.

A third challenge concerns the assessment of moral development. Character is complex, context-sensitive, and difficult to measure through a single instrument. Behavioural indicators may provide useful information, but they cannot reveal every motive or dimension of moral reasoning. Institutions should therefore avoid making sweeping judgments about a learner's moral worth on the basis of limited observations.

A more appropriate approach would combine observation, reflective activities, student self-assessment, constructive feedback, and evidence from collaborative projects. Such methods should be used to support growth and identify educational needs rather than to label students as inherently good or bad. Research on character education provides grounds for taking implementation and evaluation seriously, while also requiring attention to the specific context in which a programme operates (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004).

A fourth challenge concerns cultural and social diversity. Ethical education takes place in communities whose members may interpret certain practices differently. A framework informed by Ibn Miskawayh must therefore be applied through careful interpretation rather than through assumptions that all contemporary circumstances can be resolved by direct reference to historical formulations. The enduring value of the framework lies in its concern with virtue and moral cultivation, while its concrete application requires reasoned engagement with present-day circumstances.

A fifth challenge is the danger of reducing character education to individual self-discipline while neglecting structural conditions. Students' opportunities to act responsibly can be influenced by poverty, exclusion, unequal access to educational resources, and institutional injustice. It would be inadequate to explain every instance of misconduct as a personal failure without considering the social conditions that shape behaviour.

This does not eliminate individual responsibility. Rather, it indicates that educational institutions should address both personal conduct and the environments in which conduct develops. A school that teaches justice should also examine whether its rules and opportunities are fair. An institution that teaches responsibility should provide learners with meaningful opportunities to exercise it.

These limitations do not diminish the relevance of Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy. Instead, they indicate that its contemporary application should be critical, context-sensitive, and attentive to the relationship between individual virtue and institutional practice. Such an approach is consistent with the broader concern of the philosophy of Islamic education to consider not only educational ideals but also the conditions under which those ideals can be realized.

A Reconstructed Framework for Contemporary Character Education

Based on the preceding analysis, Ibn Miskawayh's educational philosophy can be reconstructed into a framework that connects moral knowledge, the cultivation of dispositions, reflective judgment, and responsible action. This framework is a contemporary analytical synthesis rather than a model explicitly formulated by Ibn Miskawayh. Its purpose is to translate the central concerns of his ethical philosophy into dimensions that can inform educational planning and practice.

The first dimension is moral knowledge. Learners need to understand ethical concepts, recognize the reasons behind moral expectations, and identify the consequences of different courses of action. Moral knowledge involves more than memorizing definitions of honesty, justice, courage, or responsibility. It requires the ability to interpret these values in concrete situations and distinguish between competing claims. Teachers can develop this dimension through discussion, ethical case studies, inquiry-based learning, and the examination of everyday dilemmas.

The second dimension is the cultivation of moral disposition. Ethical knowledge must be supported by habits and attitudes that make responsible conduct more likely. Students need repeated opportunities to practise honesty, patience, self-control, empathy, and fairness. Habituation is important here, but it should be accompanied by explanation and reflection so that conduct is not reduced to mechanical compliance. Classroom responsibilities, collaborative projects, and consistent institutional expectations can support this process.

The third dimension is reflective moral judgment. Learners must be able to evaluate their motives, consider the perspectives of others, and assess the consequences of their decisions. This dimension is particularly important when ethical principles appear to be in conflict or when a situation cannot be resolved by simply applying a rule. Reflective

judgment enables students to examine why an action is appropriate and to accept responsibility for the reasoning behind their choices.

The fourth dimension is responsible action. Character formation should ultimately be reflected in conduct. Students should have opportunities to demonstrate ethical commitments through academic work, interpersonal relationships, community engagement, and digital participation. Responsible action is not limited to visible conformity with school regulations. It also involves acting appropriately when supervision is absent, acknowledging mistakes, and making efforts to repair harm.

These four dimensions are interrelated rather than strictly sequential. Responsible action can deepen moral understanding; reflection can reveal weaknesses in existing habits; and new knowledge can lead learners to reconsider their conduct. Character education should therefore be understood as an ongoing process of development.

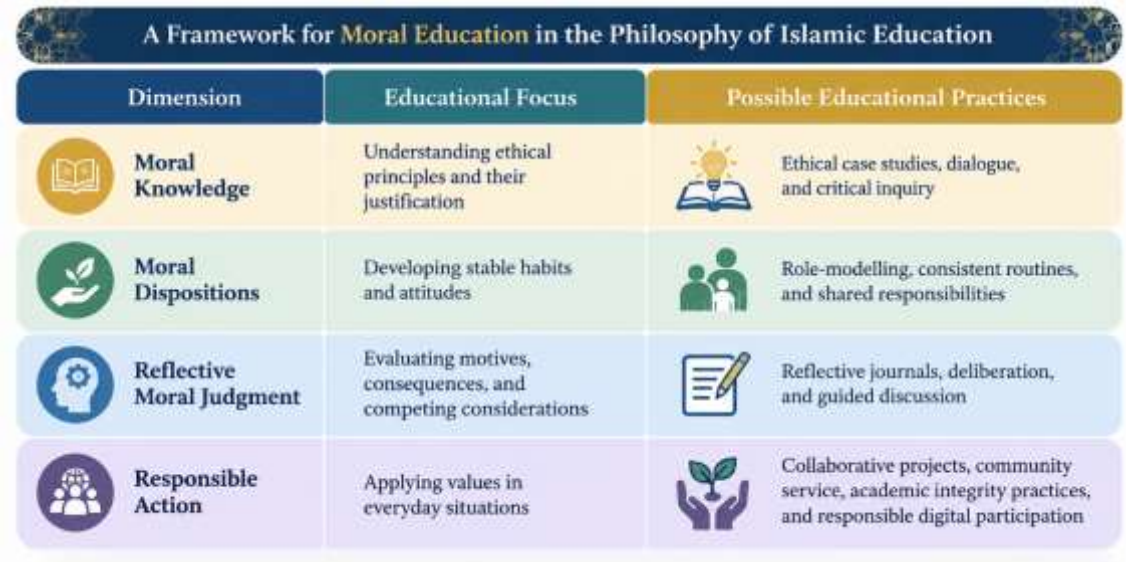


Figure 1: A Frmaework for Moral Education in the Philosophy of Islamic Education

The framework can be used to review curriculum design, classroom practices, and institutional policies. For example, a school seeking to strengthen academic integrity should explain the ethical importance of honest work, establish consistent expectations, provide opportunities to practise proper citation, invite students to reflect on academic pressure, and respond fairly to violations. In this way, moral understanding, dispositions, judgment, and action reinforce one another.

Implementation also requires institutional commitment. Teachers need professional development that helps them facilitate ethical dialogue, model responsible conduct, and respond constructively to student behaviour. School leaders must ensure that disciplinary policies, assessment practices, and relationships reflect the values communicated in the curriculum. Families and communities can reinforce these efforts by providing compatible opportunities for ethical practice.

The framework should not be treated as a universal measurement instrument or a substitute for empirical evaluation. Its effectiveness would need to be examined through further research in different educational contexts. Studies could investigate how the four dimensions are reflected in classroom interactions, how students interpret ethical dilemmas, and how institutional culture influences the relationship between moral understanding and conduct.

The contribution of this reconstruction lies in connecting philosophical emphasis on virtue with practical educational processes. It offers a way to discuss character education without reducing it to either abstract moral instruction or behavioural compliance. In doing so, it preserves the central ethical orientation of Ibn Miskawayh's thought while allowing its educational implications to be critically developed for contemporary circumstances. It also provides a conceptual point of departure for further inquiry within the philosophy of Islamic education.

Conclusion

Ibn Miskawayh's educational philosophy offers a significant contribution to contemporary discussions of character education because it places the cultivation of virtue at the centre of human development. His ethical thought emphasizes that moral excellence requires more than the acquisition of knowledge. It involves the disciplined cultivation of dispositions, the appropriate exercise of reason, and the development of conduct consistent with ethical principles.

The analysis demonstrates that his philosophy can inform several dimensions of educational practice. Educational objectives should integrate intellectual development with virtue, moral autonomy, and social responsibility. Curriculum design should connect disciplinary knowledge with ethical reflection without reducing learning to superficial moral instruction. Pedagogical methods should combine habituation, reflection, advice, and guidance, while educational relationships should provide credible examples of fairness, accountability, and respect. Families, schools, and communities must also work together to establish environments that support the formation of character.

The contemporary relevance of Ibn Miskawayh's thought extends to digital citizenship and the use of artificial intelligence. Although these technologies were not part of his historical context, his emphasis on wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice offers a useful ethical basis for evaluating digital behaviour and technological decisions. Such applications must remain clearly distinguished from his original writings and should be developed through critical interpretation.

This article proposes a reconstructed framework consisting of moral knowledge, moral dispositions, reflective moral judgment, and responsible action. The framework is intended as an analytical contribution to contemporary character education, not as a direct reproduction of Ibn Miskawayh's own educational model. Its central premise is that ethical understanding, the cultivation of habits, critical reflection, and actual conduct should be developed in an integrated manner.

Ultimately, the relevance of Ibn Miskawayh's educational philosophy depends on whether its ethical principles can be translated into credible educational practices. Character education cannot succeed through curriculum statements alone. It requires consistency between what institutions teach, how educators behave, how students are treated, and how ethical responsibilities are exercised in everyday life. Further empirical research is needed to examine how this reconstructed framework can be implemented and evaluated across different educational settings.

From the perspective of the philosophy of Islamic education, Ibn Miskawayh's thought offers a valuable foundation for reconsidering the relationship between knowledge, virtue, and human development. Its contribution lies not simply in preserving classical ethical concepts but in critically interpreting their educational significance for contemporary society. By connecting intellectual growth with moral cultivation and social responsibility, his philosophy provides a meaningful basis for character education that seeks to develop not only knowledgeable individuals but also thoughtful, virtuous, and responsible human beings.

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