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Reconstructing the Concepts of Khauf and Khasyyah in Qur'an–Hadith Education: Integrating Spiritual, Psychological, and Student Character Development Dimensions

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The concept of fear in Islamic education encompasses theological, spiritual, and psychological dimensions. In practice, fear of Allah may be reduced to pedagogies emphasizing threats, punishment, and external compliance. However, the Qur'an distinguishes khauf, apprehension regarding undesirable outcomes, from khasyyah, reverential fear grounded in knowledge and awareness of Allah. This conceptual study reconstructs these concepts in Qur'an–Hadith education through spiritual, psychological, and character-development perspectives. Using qualitative library research, thematic Qur'anic interpretation, content analysis, and conceptual synthesis, it examines relevant verses, prophetic traditions, and contemporary educational scholarship. The analysis suggests that khauf can encourage moral vigilance, while khasyyah provides a basis for knowledge-based spiritual awareness. Integrated with raja' (hope) and mahabbah (love), both concepts offer a framework balancing responsibility, hope, love, and self-regulation. The article proposes a Spiritual-Psychological-Character Integration (ISPK) framework consisting of theological literacy, emotional awareness, spiritual reflection, self-regulation, and ethical action. Its effectiveness remains to be empirically tested.

Keywords Character Education; Islamic Educational Psychology; Khasyyah; Khauf; Qur'an–Hadith Education

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is concerned not only with the transmission of religious knowledge but also with developing individuals who possess awareness of God, emotional maturity, moral intelligence, and social responsibility. In Qur'an–Hadith learning, this orientation calls for integrating an understanding of revelation with students' spiritual experiences and conduct.

One fundamental concept in the formation of Muslim personality is fear of Allah. Terminologically, this concept is associated with khauf and khasyyah. A problem arises when fear in education is reduced to an instrument of external compliance: students may behave

well because they fear punishment rather than because they understand the moral value of their actions.

Fear of Allah as a spiritual disposition must be distinguished from fear of teachers as a psychological experience. Excessive threats can restrict dialogue and students' openness. Mogra (2025) highlights the importance of pedagogical care and inclusive approaches in maktab education.

A 2025 study of Muslim nursing students in Jordan, "The Role of Religious and Existential Spiritual Well-Being in Determining Self-Care in Jordanian Muslim Nursing Students," reported a positive association between religious-spiritual well-being and self-care behavior, although it did not specifically investigate khauf or khasyyah. Meanwhile, Educating with Love emphasizes compassion and care in transforming Islamic education (Abidin, 2025).

Therefore, the study of khauf (fear) and khasyyah (awe-filled fear/reverence) should move beyond a normative-doctrinal approach toward a framework that bridges spirituality, psychology, and character. Based on this background, the research questions are formulated as follows: 1. How are khauf and khasyyah conceptually constructed within the Quran and Hadith, and how do they differ when examined through the lens of an education-oriented Quranic exegesis (tafsir tarbawi)? 2. How can the integration of spiritual and psychological dimensions within khauf and khasyyah serve as a foundation for the character development of learners? 3. How can a humanistic and reflective educational model grounded in the Quran and Hadith and based on the concepts of khauf and khasyyah be formulated?

This study aims to explain the theological and pedagogical meanings of khauf and khasyyah; formulate their relationship with spirituality, self-regulation, and responsibility; and construct a learning model oriented toward religious character. Its proposed novelty is the integration of transcendental awareness, psychological regulation, and the enactment of moral conduct in the ISPK model. This claim of novelty is conceptual and requires a broader systematic literature review ("Islamic Spiritual Leadership of Kyai in Fostering Santris' Entrepreneurial Spirit and Independence in Boarding School," 2025).

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative library-research approach with a conceptual-interpretive design. Primary sources consist of Qur'anic verses and Hadith concerning khauf, khasyyah, raja', mahabbah, and moral responsibility. Secondary sources consist of recent scholarly articles. Classical Qur'anic commentaries are used as interpretive references.

The analysis involves identifying terms and verses, examining semantic and interpretive contexts, grouping spiritual and psychological implications, and developing a pedagogical synthesis. The methods employed are thematic exegesis (tafsir maudhu'i), content analysis, and conceptual analysis. This manuscript does not claim to have conducted interviews, statistical tests, or field observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reconstructing the Meanings of Khauf and Khasyyah

Khauf as Moral Awareness

Khauf refers to fear of the possibility that something undesirable may occur. In the Qur'an, the term encompasses fear of worldly threats as well as spiritual awareness of accountability before Allah. Qur'an 3:175 directs believers not to submit to human threats but to make fear of Allah an orientation of faith.

إِنَّمَا ذَٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

Meaning: "It is only Satan who frightens you with his supporters. So do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are believers."

From an educational perspective, khauf can be cultivated as moral vigilance and the courage to do what is right despite social pressure. The objective of learning is not to produce students who obey only when supervised, but to develop their capacity to consider the consequences of their actions responsibly.

Khasyyah as Knowledge-Based Reverential Fear

Khasyyah is commonly understood as fear accompanied by knowledge and reverence for Allah. Qur'an 35:28 states:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

Meaning: "Only those of His servants who have knowledge truly fear Allah."

This verse connects knowledge with spiritual awareness. Qur'an–Hadith education should not end with cognitive mastery; it should lead students toward responsibility in speech, decision-making, and interpersonal relations. In this conceptual framework, khasyyah links knowledge with moral conduct. Khauf and khasyyah nevertheless have overlapping meanings rather than constituting entirely separate categories.

Table 1. Comparison of Khauf and Khasyyah

Aspect	Khauf	Khasyyah
Orientation	Anticipating adverse consequences	Knowledge-based reverence for Allah
Psychological	Vigilance	Internalization and awareness
Spiritual	Avoiding wrongdoing	Deepening God-consciousness
Pedagogical	Responsibility for choices	Integrating knowledge, reflection, and ethics
Character	Discipline and prudence	Integrity and humility

Source: Authors' conceptual synthesis

Interpreting khauf as moral vigilance must be distinguished from threat-based control. The dialogue between Islamic education and humanistic approaches discussed by Felsenthal and Agbaria (2025) leaves room to regard students as agents who understand the reasons and meanings behind their actions. Pedagogically, khauf can therefore be framed as awareness of ethical consequences rather than a justification for intimidation. This interpretation is the present study's conceptual synthesis, not a direct empirical finding about khauf from that research.

The interpretation of khauf also requires hermeneutical caution. Bowie (2025) discusses the importance of interpretive approaches in religious education curricula, while Smalley (2025) emphasizes historical ways of knowing in religious studies. These perspectives underscore the need to read Qur'an 3:175 in light of its discursive context and educational purpose. Students should not merely memorize the command to fear Allah but should learn to distinguish steadfast faith from fear produced by social pressure.

Balancing Khauf, Khasyyah, Raja', and Mahabbah

Education that emphasizes fear alone risks neglecting hope and compassion. Qur'an 39:53 reminds people not to despair of Allah's mercy, while Qur'an 2:165 associates faith with profound love for Allah. Khauf and khasyyah should therefore be taught alongside raja' (hope) and mahabbah (love).

Khauf cultivates caution; khasyyah deepens awareness of God; raja' encourages self-improvement; and mahabbah can strengthen the motivation to do good. This orientation is consistent with the compassionate approach to education discussed in Educating with Love (Abidin, 2025).

The combination of khauf, khasyyah, raja', and mahabbah can be understood as a balance of affective orientations: vigilance against wrongdoing, knowledge-based reverence for Allah, hope in divine mercy, and love that motivates good deeds. The compassion-based educational ideas outlined by Abidin et al. (2025) provide a normative point of convergence for avoiding religious instruction focused solely on punishment. Such balance, however, does not eliminate responsibility; compassion creates room to acknowledge mistakes and correct them.

From the perspective of social relations, teaching religious values must take students' diverse experiences into account. Foley's (2025) study of interreligious learning and religious identity reminds us that spiritual experience does not occur in a social vacuum. Strengthening mahabbah and raja' should therefore be accompanied by a classroom culture that respects questions, diverse experiences, and responsible freedom of discussion. Foley's relevance here is pedagogical and comparative, not evidence concerning the four Sufi concepts.

Psychological Dimensions

Psychological fear caused by intimidation from educators is not equivalent to khasyyah as a spiritual disposition. In teaching, teachers can use reflective dialogue instead of excessive threats. When students violate rules, responses can focus on understanding consequences,

taking responsibility, restoring relationships, and creating opportunities for improvement.

Theoretically, such learning experiences may be related to emotion regulation and intrinsic motivation. However, the cited research on Muslim students' spiritual well-being is correlational and does not establish that teaching khauf and khasyyah improves students' mental health. This causal relationship therefore remains an agenda for future research ("The Role of Religious and Existential Spiritual Well-Being in Determining Self-Care in Jordanian Muslim Nursing Students," 2025).

Distinguishing spiritual reverence from psychological anxiety is important because oppressive learning experiences do not automatically cultivate moral realization. The edited volume by Abdalla et al. (2025) on well-being in Islamic schools offers a broad framework for attending to mind, body, and soul in educational settings. Here, that framework encourages teachers to observe students' emotional atmosphere when teaching verses about accountability while avoiding the assumption that spiritual achievement can be measured solely by expressions of fear.

Sumari et al.'s (2025) study of a gratitude-based group intervention among university students provides a comparison showing that positive religious emotions can be addressed through well-being interventions. Its findings should not be treated as evidence for the effectiveness of khauf and khasyyah instruction in madrasahs because the populations, interventions, and variables differ. Conceptually, teachers may combine reflection on responsibility with exercises in gratitude, hope, and emotional awareness, and subsequently test their effects using an appropriate research design.

The need to develop emotional management aligns with the use of dialogue in halaqah activities. Ahmed (2026) examines professional-development support for educators introducing dialogic halaqah into classrooms. Its relevance lies in enabling teachers to create conversations in which students explain moral reasons, ask questions, and revise their understanding. Internalizing khasyyah can thus be designed as a process of reflection and meaning-making, rather than assumed to occur automatically after receiving advice.

Religious Character Development

Khauf and khasyyah can be formulated as normative foundations for honesty, discipline, integrity, self-control, and social concern. Honesty means telling the truth even when unsupervised. Discipline means acting from an understanding of obligations. Integrity is consistency between belief and action. Self-control is reflected in decisions that consider consequences. Social concern is demonstrated through respect for others' rights.

Research on the spiritual leadership of kyai in fostering santri independence illustrates the relevance of spiritual values in Islamic education, although it does not specifically test khauf and khasyyah ("Islamic Spiritual Leadership of Kyai in Fostering Santris' Entrepreneurial Spirit and Independence in Boarding School," 2025). The proposed character outcomes must therefore still be tested through observable indicators.

Character development grounded in khauf and khasyyah must involve moral reasoning. Syafri (2026) discusses teachers as moral agents in education attentive to ethical values and sustainability, while Othman and Mazlan (2026) propose a moral-theory debate model for developing critical reasoning. These references support designing case debates, values clarification, and evaluation of reasons for action. For example, when students face a dilemma between concealing a friend's mistake and telling the truth, teachers can invite them to assess obligations, consequences, and responsibilities toward others.

In Islamic education, educators' role modeling is also a social prerequisite for developing ethical habits. The study of kyai spiritual leadership and santri independence ("Islamic Spiritual Leadership of Kyai in Fostering Santris' Entrepreneurial Spirit and Independence in Boarding School," 2025) can serve as comparative literature on the importance of educational environments and figures. Nevertheless, the relationship between spiritual leadership and independence examined in pesantren does not directly test the relationship among khauf, khasyyah, and character in Qur'an–Hadith students. The ISPK model must therefore treat teacher integrity and school climate as contextual factors requiring further investigation.

Spiritual–Psychological–Character Integration (ISPK) Model

The ISPK model connects normative foundations (khauf, khasyyah, raja', and mahabbah), learning processes (theological literacy, emotional awareness, spiritual reflection, self-regulation, and ethical action), and expected character outcomes. This framework is a conceptual contribution and has not yet been empirically validated.

Table 2. Stages of the ISPK Learning Model

Stage	Learning activity	Indicator
Theological literacy	Reading and interpreting verses or Hadith	Explaining conceptual meanings
Emotional awareness	Recognizing emotions and consequences of actions	Expressing emotions in a healthy way
Spiritual reflection	Case discussion and personal reflection	Providing moral reasons
Self-regulation	Decision-making practice	Consistency in responsible choices
Ethical action	Behavioral projects and reflective journals	Honesty, care, and integrity

Source: Authors' conceptual synthesis

Operationally, theological literacy begins with reading verses and explaining their context; emotional awareness helps students recognize healthy fear and fear resulting from intimidation; spiritual reflection requires reasons connecting divine values with choices; self-regulation involves commitments to action that can be reviewed; and ethical action is directed toward observable behavior. This sequence separates understanding, internalization, and

behavior so that teachers do not infer the quality of faith directly from temporary compliance.

The ISPK model also requires attention to institutional contexts. Articles on the revitalization of Islamic studies at state Islamic universities ("Revitalizing Islamic Studies: A Two-Decade Conversion in Indonesia's State Islamic Universities," 2025), institutional value transformation ("The Transformation of State Islamic Higher Education Institutions into World-Class University: From Globalisation to Institutional Values," 2025), and integrative research ("Integrative Research of Islamic Studies in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education," 2026) offer background perspectives on scholarly and institutional dynamics. Although these studies primarily concern higher education rather than school-level khauf–khasyyah instruction, they help explain why integrating exegesis, psychology, and pedagogy requires curricular support and teacher capacity.

Implications for Qur'an–Hadith Teaching

For example, teaching Qur'an 35:28 may begin by reading the verse and introducing the meaning of khasyyah. Teachers then ask students to connect knowledge with responsibility through cases involving cheating, spreading misinformation, or violating classmates' rights. Students discuss possible choices, ethical reasons, and corrective actions.

Assessment may use reflective journals, behavioral rubrics, virtue projects, and ongoing observation. Teachers must not equate rubric scores with a definitive measure of an individual's inner piety. Research on character assessment in elementary schools using the Rasch model is relevant as an initial reference for developing assessment instruments, but does not establish the validity of the ISPK model ("How Can Educational Policy Support the Application of the Rasch Model for Character E-Assessment in Elementary Schools during Indonesia's New Normal Era?," 2025).

In one lesson, a teacher may begin with Qur'an 35:28, guide discussion of knowledge and reverence for Allah, and then present a scenario involving cyberbullying or cheating. Students write down their emotions, explain what they consider the right decision, debate their reasons in groups, and prepare a one-week action plan. Discussion activities may draw inspiration from Ahmed's (2026) dialogic halaqah and Othman and Mazlan's (2026) moral reasoning framework, but the effectiveness of combining these approaches in the ISPK model remains to be tested.

Evaluation instruments can distinguish conceptual understanding (verse-interpretation tests), moral reasoning (rubrics assessing justifications in dilemmas), reflection (structured journals), and behavior (repeated observation). Studies of exploratory factor analysis of Islamic education teachers' self-assessment instruments ("Exploratory Factor Analysis of Secondary School Islamic Education Teacher Self-Assessment Instrument: A Pilot Study," 2025) and Rasch-based character assessment ("How Can Educational Policy Support the Application of the Rasch Model for Character E-Assessment in Elementary Schools during Indonesia's New Normal Era?," 2025) provide initial methodological references for testing instrument validity and reliability. Research on gamification and self-directed learning in

learning management systems ("Assessing Learning Outcomes and Self-Directed Learning through Gamification in LMS," 2025) also informs the design of digital reflection activities, without assuming that digital media are always more effective than face-to-face dialogue.

Model development must consider equitable access to learning. A review of disability and Islam ("The Interface of Disability and Islam: Insights from a Bibliometric Analysis," 2026) offers interdisciplinary context for sensitivity to students' diverse needs. Likewise, research on Islam and sustainability ("Islam and Sustainability Issues, How Far Has the Relationship Progressed? A Bibliometric Analysis," 2025) provides a background for extending moral responsibility to the environment. Both studies offer contextual support; they do not demonstrate that khauf and khasyyah directly produce inclusion or sustainable behavior.

The next research agenda includes content validation of the model by experts in Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic education, and psychology; testing the clarity of indicators with teachers and students; limited classroom trials; and quasi-experimental studies where feasible. Future research should distinguish intimidating fear, moral vigilance, and spiritual reverence; measure behavioral change longitudinally; and document potential influences of school climate and teacher–student relationships. Thus, interdisciplinary references should serve as a basis for hypothesis development rather than evidence of the ISPK model's success.

CONCLUSION

Khauf and khasyyah are spiritual concepts relevant to Qur'an–Hadith education. Khauf can function as moral vigilance regarding the consequences of actions, whereas khasyyah connects knowledge with reverence for Allah and ethical responsibility. Teaching these concepts requires balancing them with raja' and mahabbah so that religious education does not become intimidating.

The proposed ISPK model integrates theological literacy, emotional awareness, spiritual reflection, self-regulation, and ethical action. Its contribution is conceptual: it offers a humanistic, reflective learning framework oriented toward intrinsic moral responsibility. Further research is needed to validate the model through expert review, instrument development, and field testing.

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