



# THE CONCEPT OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL BALANCE IN STUDENTS WITHIN AL-FARABI'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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## Abstract :

*Education plays a vital role in developing human potential comprehensively, encompassing both physical and spiritual dimensions. However, contemporary educational practice tends to privilege cognitive and academic achievement, often at the expense of students' physical, moral, and spiritual growth. Although a growing body of research has examined Al-Farabi's educational philosophy, most studies address his thought in general terms and have not specifically analyzed how physical-spiritual balance is articulated within his conception of educational aims. This study addresses that gap by analyzing the concept of physical and spiritual balance (jasmani-rohani) within Al-Farabi's philosophy of educational objectives and its relevance for contemporary education. Using a qualitative descriptive approach through library research, primary and secondary sources on Al-Farabi's educational philosophy were analyzed using content analysis. The findings show that Al-Farabi conceived education as a path toward happiness (al-sa'adah), attained through the harmonious cultivation of all human faculties. Physical balance is realized through bodily health and the cultivation of practical skills, while spiritual balance is cultivated through moral formation, intellectual development, and the strengthening of spiritual values, oriented toward the formation of the virtuous human being (al-insan al-kamil) within the framework of the virtuous city (al-madinah al-fadilah). These findings resonate strongly with contemporary educational goals that emphasize the holistic development of learners. Al-Farabi's thought therefore offers a philosophical foundation for building a more holistic, humanistic, and character-oriented education system, one capable of responding to the erosion of moral character and student mental health documented in current Indonesian education discourse.*

**Keywords:** Al-Farabi, Islamic education, physical-spiritual balance, al-sa'adah, philosophy of education.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect of human life, functioning to develop learners' full potential optimally. From an Islamic perspective, education aims not only to enhance intellectual ability but also to shape learners' personality, morality, and spirituality. An ideal education must therefore be able to create a balance between physical and spiritual development, producing individuals who possess intellectual acuity, physical health, emotional maturity, and spiritual depth. Current educational practice, however, tends to place greater emphasis on academic achievement and the mastery of knowledge than on character formation and spiritual development, as underscored by neuroscience-informed



studies of Islamic education that highlight the importance of integrating cognitive, moral, and spiritual dimensions within the learning process (Damayanti et al., 2024).

The rapid advancement of science and technology, including the entry of artificial intelligence into the classroom, has brought significant change to the world of education. While this progress has facilitated the learning process in many respects, it has simultaneously introduced new risks, chief among them the neglect of moral and character formation among learners. Studies on Islamic education in the era of Society 5.0 find that the ideal of character-oriented education frequently collides with the realities of modern schooling, which tends to privilege cognitive achievement and technological efficiency, contributing to moral decline and to learners' insufficient readiness to face the challenges of the digital age (Qonita et al., 2024). This phenomenon indicates that an education oriented solely toward cognitive aspects has yet to meet human needs in their entirety. What is needed, therefore, is an educational concept that not only develops intellectual intelligence but also attends to the balance between physical and spiritual dimensions, while instilling ethics as the foundation for the responsible use of knowledge (Miftah & Nursikin, 2025).

One Muslim thinker who devoted considerable attention to the concept of balanced education is Abu Nasr Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE). Al-Farabi is recognized as the Muslim philosopher styled the "Second Teacher" (*al-mu'allim al-thani*) after Aristotle, owing to his success in integrating the Greek philosophical tradition with the intellectual and spiritual values of Islam (Rahmadini & Siregar, 2026). He formulated a hierarchical and systematic system of knowledge and education, encompassing both the theoretical sciences (logic, mathematics, natural science, and metaphysics) and the practical sciences (ethics, politics, and jurisprudence), as set out in his work *Ihsa' al-'Ulum* (Al-Farabi, 1996; Nafsi et al., 2025). For Al-Farabi, the ultimate aim of education is the attainment of true happiness (*al-sa'adah*) the state of human perfection realized through the harmonization of reason, morality, and action (Rahmadini & Siregar, 2026). In his view, human beings consist not merely of a physical component but also of a spiritual one, which must be developed in balance with the former if they are to achieve the perfection of life as members of a well-ordered society within the virtuous city (*al-madinah al-fadilah*).

Several prior studies have examined Al-Farabi's educational thought from various angles. Nafsi et al. (2025) examined the relevance of Al-Farabi's thought for the development of primary education curricula and found his ideas to be holistic in character, emphasizing a balance between the cultivation of reason ('aql) and moral virtue (khuluq). Rahmadini and Siregar (2026) investigated the relevance of Al-Farabi's educational thought to the contemporary Islamic education system and concluded that his concept of happiness (sa'adah) remains pertinent to efforts at forming the perfect human being (insan kamil) in the modern era. Qonita et al. (2024), meanwhile, compared the epistemologies of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina within the context of Islamic Education 5.0 and identified common ground between the two in their shared aim of developing learners

physically, intellectually, morally, in character, and in skill. Other studies, by Humaedah and Almubarak (2021) and Hilmansah (2023), focus more broadly on Al-Farabi's educational thought and its relevance to contemporary Islamic education, without specifically examining the construct of physical-spiritual balance as a distinct unit of analysis.

A review of these studies suggests that research on Al-Farabi's educational thought has thus far concentrated on general themes curriculum relevance, comparative epistemology, and contextualization within modern education while the concept of physical-spiritual balance in students, as an integral part of Al-Farabi's educational aims, has not yet been examined specifically or in depth. This research gap constitutes the point of departure for the present study. Its novelty lies in positioning physical-spiritual balance as the primary unit of analysis within Al-Farabi's educational thought, while explicitly linking it to pressing issues in Indonesian education, such as declining discipline, rising deviant behavior, and mental health disturbances among students.

In light of the foregoing, this study aims to (1) analyze the concept of physical and spiritual balance in students within Al-Farabi's aims of education, and (2) examine the relevance of this concept to the development of modern education, particularly within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. It is hoped that this study will contribute theoretically to the development of the philosophy of Islamic education and serve as a reference for formulating a more holistic, humanistic educational model oriented toward the formation of the whole human being.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach in the form of library research. This approach was chosen because the object of inquiry Al-Farabi's philosophical ideas on education is contained within a body of literature comprising both primary works and secondary studies, rendering the research data textual and conceptual in nature. The data sources used in this study comprise both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of Al-Farabi's own writings on epistemology and education, in particular *Ihsa' al-'Ulum* (Al-Farabi, 1996), which sets out the classification of theoretical and practical sciences as the foundation of his educational system. Secondary sources comprise national and international journal articles, prior research findings, and other academic studies relevant to Al-Farabi's educational thought and the concept of physical-spiritual balance in Islamic education.

Data were collected through documentary study, involving the identification, tracing, collection, and examination of literature relevant to the concept of physical and spiritual balance within Al-Farabi's aims of education. The literature search was conducted using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and national scientific journal repositories, with the keywords "Al-Farabi," "Islamic education," "physical-spiritual balance," and "al-sa'adah."

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis, involving a systematic examination of the literature to identify key concepts related to physical and

spiritual balance in Al-Farabi's educational thought. The data obtained were then reduced, classified into thematic categories (the physical, the spiritual, and contemporary relevance), analyzed critically and interpretively, and synthesized to produce a comprehensive understanding of Al-Farabi's educational aims and their relevance to present-day education (Ramadhona et al., 2024).

To ensure the validity of the data, the researchers applied source triangulation, comparing and cross-checking findings across literature addressing similar themes, so that the resulting interpretation would rest not on a single source alone but on the consistency of findings across multiple prior studies (Nafsi et al., 2025; Rahmadini & Siregar, 2026; Qonita et al., 2024).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Concept of Education and the Aim of Happiness (Al-Sa'adah) According to Al-Farabi**

Al-Farabi is among the Muslim philosophers who gave close attention to education as a means of forming the perfect human being. For Al-Farabi, the primary aim of education is the attainment of happiness (*al-sa'adah*), the highest state a human being can attain through the optimal development of reason, morality, and spirituality (Rahmadini & Siregar, 2026). Happiness, in Al-Farabi's view, is not pleasure (*al-ladhdhah*) which is temporary and contingent on the satisfaction of material needs but rather the highest good, desired for its own sake, attained through the continuous perfection of reason, ethics, and spirituality (Putri, 2018). Education, accordingly, functions not merely as a process of transmitting knowledge but also as a means of character formation and the development of every aspect of human life.

Within his epistemological framework, Al-Farabi divides knowledge into two major categories: the theoretical sciences (*al-'ulum al-nazariyyah*), comprising logic, mathematics, natural science, and metaphysics, and the practical sciences (*al-'ulum al-'amaliyyah*), comprising ethics, politics, and jurisprudence (Nafsi et al., 2025). These two categories do not stand independently of one another but are mutually complementary: the theoretical sciences direct human beings toward truth and knowledge of the nature of existence, while the practical sciences direct them toward action that is good and beneficial to communal life. This integrative structure of knowledge forms the basis of Al-Farabi's concept of balanced education, since both the rational-spiritual dimension (through the theoretical sciences) and the physical-social dimension (through the practical sciences) are alike positioned as inseparable parts of the educational process.

In Al-Farabi's view, human beings possess diverse potentials, each of which requires appropriate cultivation through education. Good education emphasizes not only the intellectual dimension but also attends proportionally to physical and spiritual development (Alfazri et al., 2024). Education must therefore be conducted in a balanced manner if the goal of forming the complete human being is to be fully realized, as affirmed likewise by recent studies that highlight the close relationship among reason, morality, and happiness as the core of Al-Farabi's educational aims (Rofiki, 2024).

The highest happiness, in Al-Farabi's view, can be attained only by individuals living within a well-ordered society, which he terms the virtuous city (*al-madinah al-fadilah*) (Rahmadini & Siregar, 2026; Yani, 2020). This concept affirms that education is not merely an individual matter but also a collective project aimed at forming citizens who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and capable of contributing to the common good. By implication, ideal education, according to Al-Farabi, must direct learners toward becoming individuals who are knowledgeable and virtuous and who can fulfill their role in communal life an orientation that implicitly demands a balance between physical cultivation (enabling them to function socially and physically) and spiritual cultivation (providing them with a firm moral-spiritual foundation).

### **Physical Balance in Al-Farabi's Education**

The physical dimension is one of the important elements in Al-Farabi's conception of education. A healthy body serves as the means by which human beings carry out life's various activities and sustain the learning process optimally. This physical dimension is closely bound up with the category of practical science in Al-Farabi's epistemology, since skills and life competencies fundamentally require sound physical condition if they are to be exercised effectively (Nafsi et al., 2025). Education must therefore attend to the maintenance of learners' physical health through activities that support bodily development, such as physical exercise, healthy lifestyle practices, and the cultivation of health-preserving habits.

Al-Farabi held that sound physical condition assists individuals in developing their intellectual capacities and in fulfilling their social duties, as affirmed by comparative studies of the epistemologies of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, which find that the aim of Islamic education is directed simultaneously toward the physical, intellectual, moral, character, and skill development of learners (Qonita et al., 2024). Conversely, physical weakness can impede the development of other potentials, since in the view of classical Muslim philosophy the human intellect and soul work through and together with the body, rather than apart from it. Physical balance is thus one of the factors determining the success of education in forming individuals of quality. In the context of modern education, attention to learners' physical health remains an important consideration, given its bearing on concentration, productivity, and academic achievement.

### **Spiritual Balance in Al-Farabi's Education**

Alongside the physical dimension, Al-Farabi likewise emphasized the importance of developing the spiritual dimension. For him, the spiritual encompasses reason, morality, the soul, and the spiritual values that underlie human conduct. Education must be capable of forming learners who possess noble character, sound thinking ability, and strong spiritual awareness. This dimension accords with studies of educational ethics in Islam, which affirm that morality forms the foundation for the wise application of knowledge, such that knowledge without morality risks being misused (Miftah & Nursikin, 2025).

In Al-Farabi's thought, spiritual development takes place through the study

of knowledge, the cultivation of good conduct, and the instilling of religious and moral values. This is consistent with the findings of Humaedah and Almubarak (2021), who show that Al-Farabi's education is oriented toward forming the perfect human being through the integrated development of reason, morality, and social ability. Spiritual awareness, within this framework, is not merely a matter of religious ritual but a stable inner state integrated with the correct exercise of reason good character being a sign of the soul's health, and a healthy soul enabling one to enjoy spiritual happiness (Putri, 2018).

Spiritual balance plays an important role in guiding human beings to use knowledge wisely. In the absence of sound spiritual cultivation, an individual may experience moral crisis despite possessing high intellectual ability a condition identified by Hilmansah (2023) as one of the principal challenges of contemporary Islamic education, namely the gap between the mastery of knowledge and the moral maturity of learners. Al-Farabi accordingly held that education must integrate intellectual development with moral and spiritual cultivation. Through this process, learners are expected to become responsible, virtuous individuals who benefit society.

### **The Dialectic of Physical-Spiritual Integration: Toward the Perfect Human Being (Insan Kamil)**

On closer examination, the separation between physical and spiritual balance in Al-Farabi's thought is analytical rather than ontological in nature. That is, the two dimensions are distinguished only for the purposes of conceptual explanation, whereas in practice they operate jointly and mutually sustain one another. True happiness (*al-sa'adah*), as Rahmadini and Siregar (2026) affirm, is the state of human perfection realized through the harmonization of reason, morality, and action three elements that together represent both the spiritual dimension (reason and morality) and the physical dimension (action, or concrete deeds).

The individual who succeeds in harmoniously integrating physical and spiritual balance is termed, in Al-Farabi's language, the complete human being or *insan kamil* a figure who excels not only intellectually but is also physically healthy, morally mature, and spiritually deep (Rahmadini & Siregar, 2026). This concept of the *insan kamil* is then projected onto a broader scale through the notion of *al-madinah al-fadilah* (the virtuous city), in which individuals who have attained physical-spiritual balance come together to form a society that is just, ethical, and well-ordered (Yani, 2020). In other words, physical-spiritual balance within the student, in Al-Farabi's framework, constitutes not merely an educational aim at the individual level but also the foundation for the creation of an ideal social and political order.

### **A Brief Comparison with Other Muslim Thinkers**

To enrich our understanding of the position of Al-Farabi's thought, it is useful to compare it briefly with that of other classical Muslim thinkers who likewise addressed the relationship between the physical and the spiritual in education, particularly Ibn Sina. The comparative study by Qonita et al. (2024) finds that, although Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina alike emphasize the physical,

intellectual, moral, character, and skill development of learners, a difference in emphasis exists between the two: Al-Farabi gives greater prominence to education as an instrument of social contribution and the formation of the virtuous city, whereas Ibn Sina focuses more on the formation of occupational skills built upon the foundation of individual morality.

This difference in emphasis indicates that the concept of physical-spiritual balance is not the sole property of a single thinker but rather a common thread running through the thought of classical Islamic educational philosophers, albeit articulated and emphasized differently. Al-Farabi's distinctive position lies in his placement of happiness (*al-sa'adah*) as an ultimate aim that is at once socio-political and personal-spiritual, such that physical-spiritual balance within the student is consistently linked to the student's role as part of the wider society a perspective relevant to addressing criticisms of modern education for its tendency toward individualism and an orientation limited to personal achievement.

### **The Relevance of Al-Farabi's Concept of Physical-Spiritual Balance to Modern Education**

Al-Farabi's concept of physical-spiritual balance remains highly relevant to the current state of education. Modern education frequently confronts the challenge of imbalance between academic achievement and the character formation of learners. Many educational institutions focus more on raising academic scores than on developing students' moral character, spirituality, and physical health. The result is a range of problems, including weak discipline, rising deviant behavior, and mental health disturbances among students.

This phenomenon has grown more complex with the entry of digital technology and artificial intelligence into the educational ecosystem. Studies on Islamic Education 5.0 affirm that the dominance of technology in the learning process, if not counterbalanced by the strengthening of moral and spiritual values, risks widening the gap between learners' cognitive intelligence and their character maturity (Qonita et al., 2024). It is in this context that Al-Farabi's framework of integrating theoretical and practical knowledge with physical and spiritual balance offers a philosophical foundation for designing education that remains humane amid technological acceleration. The pattern of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) education in Indonesia, which combines the study of religious knowledge with moral cultivation and the exemplary conduct of the *kyai*, may be regarded as a concrete practice reflecting the spirit of physical-spiritual balance consonant with Al-Farabi's thought (Hakim, 2021).

Al-Farabi's thought offers a solution through a holistic approach to education. Education, on this view, aims to produce individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also physically healthy, spiritually strong, and morally virtuous. This concept can be implemented through the integration of character education, religious activities, the cultivation of healthy living habits, and the development of social skills within the school environment. In Indonesia, this orientation is consistent with the spirit of the Pancasila Student Profile within the

Merdeka Curriculum, which likewise positions noble character, health, and independence as integral components of learners' overall learning outcomes. Education can thus produce a generation possessing a balance of academic ability, physical health, and spiritual maturity, enabling it to meet the varied challenges of life in the future.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the discourse of Islamic philosophy of education by affirming that physical-spiritual balance is not merely a supplementary aspect but a core structural element of Al-Farabi's educational epistemology, closely interwoven with his concepts of theoretical-practical science, *al-sa'adah*, and *al-madinah al-fadilah*. This framework offers an alternative to studies in philosophy of education that have tended to treat the cognitive and non-cognitive as separate dichotomies.

Practically, this concept can be translated into a range of educational policies and practices, including: (1) integrating physical education (sport and health) as an inseparable part of the curriculum, rather than a merely supplementary subject; (2) strengthening character and religious education in a manner integrated with academic learning, rather than as a stand-alone supplementary program; (3) developing a school climate that supports learners' mental health as a precondition for achieving spiritual balance; and (4) strengthening the role of educators as moral exemplars, in line with Al-Farabi's emphasis that the teacher's exemplary conduct is an important means of shaping learners' character.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the study undertaken, it can be concluded that Al-Farabi regarded education as a means of developing the full range of human potential to attain happiness (*al-sa'adah*). In his view, human beings possess both physical and spiritual dimensions that must be developed in balance through the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge. Physical balance is realized through the maintenance of physical health, the cultivation of skills, and the development of abilities that support life's activities, while spiritual balance is realized through moral cultivation, intellectual development, the strengthening of spiritual values, and the formation of noble character, oriented toward the formation of the complete human being (*insan kamil*) within the framework of a well-ordered society (*al-madinah al-fadilah*).

The concept of physical-spiritual balance within Al-Farabi's aims of education shows that education is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward the formation of the whole, well-mannered human being. Ideal education, in Al-Farabi's view, is education capable of harmoniously integrating the physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions, enabling learners to develop optimally in both their personal and social lives. This study further affirms that physical-spiritual balance is not a free-standing idea but is rooted in the structure of Al-Farabi's epistemology, which distinguishes while simultaneously integrating theoretical and practical knowledge, and which



culminates in a socio-political vision of the virtuous city.

Al-Farabi's thought also holds strong relevance for the needs of modern education, particularly in Indonesia. A range of current educational problems declining moral quality, weak spiritual awareness, rising psychological pressure on learners, and the challenges posed by the dominance of digital technology and artificial intelligence in the learning process underscore the importance of adopting a holistic educational concept. Al-Farabi's concept of physical-spiritual balance can therefore serve as one philosophical foundation for developing an educational system that produces individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also physically healthy, emotionally mature, and possessed of strong character and spirituality consistent with the spirit of strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile within the Merdeka Curriculum.

This study is limited by its nature as library research focused on conceptual-philosophical analysis, and it therefore does not incorporate empirical data on the application of Al-Farabi's concept of physical-spiritual balance within specific educational institutions. Further research is accordingly recommended to test the relevance and effectiveness of this concept empirically, for example through case studies of schools or pesantren that explicitly integrate physical, character, and spiritual education within their curricula. Future research might also extend the comparative analysis between Al-Farabi's thought and that of other classical and contemporary Islamic educational thinkers, so as to enrich the holistic scholarship of Islamic philosophy of education.

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