

The Concept of Moral Education According to Al-Ghazali and Its Relevance in Contemporary Islamic Education

Sandi Wiyanto^{1*}

¹ Islamic Religious Education Study Program State Islamic University Datokarama Palu, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Sandi Wiyanto, E-mail: sandiwiyanto.official@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Volume: 4 ISSN: 2963-5489 KEYWORD Moral Education, Al-Ghazali, <i>Tazkiyat al-Nafs</i>, <i>Murabbi</i>, Contemporary Islamic Education	This study discusses the concept of moral education according to Imam Al-Ghazali and its relevance to contemporary Islamic education. Al-Ghazali emphasizes education as a comprehensive process that not only focuses on the acquisition of knowledge but also on the formation of the soul, the purification of the heart (<i>Tazkiyat al-Nafs</i>), and the cultivation of moral character. According to Al-Ghazali, ideal education aims to develop individuals who demonstrate noble behavior, contribute positively to society, and achieve salvation in the hereafter, with teachers acting as <i>murabbi</i> who instill moral values through exemplary behavior and spiritual guidance. This research employs a library research method, collecting data from literature, books, and recent scientific journals (2019–2025) related to moral education and Al-Ghazali's thought. The findings indicate that Al-Ghazali's principles of moral education remain highly relevant in contemporary Islamic education. The implementation of <i>Tazkiyat al-Nafs</i> fosters students' moral and spiritual awareness, the cultivation of character and the soul balances academic achievement with ethical development, and the role of teachers as <i>murabbi</i> provides concrete moral exemplars. Thus, Al-Ghazali's moral education serves as a fundamental foundation for shaping a generation that is knowledgeable, ethical, and morally upright in the modern era.

1. Introduction

The moral crisis currently affecting the world of education poses a significant challenge for Islamic education teachers. Advances in science and technology, which should ideally bring about societal benefits, are often accompanied by a decline in students' moral behavior, such as diminished respect for teachers, increased acts of violence, and a decrease in religious values among students. In this context, the thought of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali remains highly relevant. He emphasized that true education is not merely oriented toward the acquisition of knowledge but also toward the cultivation of moral character and the purification of the soul. Moral education in Islam is not merely a supplementary component of the curriculum; rather, it is the primary foundation that shapes the character and ethical development of students comprehensively. This perspective is clearly reflected in Al-Ghazali's view that education is not only about knowledge acquisition but also about purifying the soul and developing noble character (Delviany et al., 2024).

*Sandi Wiyanto is a Student of Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Postgraduate School, State Islamic University Datokarama Palu, Indonesia. This paper was presented at the 4th International Conference on Islamic and Interdisciplinary Studies (ICIIS) 2025, as a presenter, held by the Postgraduate School State Islamic University Datokarama Palu, Indonesia.

Al-Ghazali stressed the importance of integrating intellectual and spiritual aspects so that knowledge does not merely become a tool for worldly prestige but also serves as a means to draw closer to Allah SWT and to build a just society imbued with noble moral values. In his view, knowledge without moral guidance loses its significance and may even lead humanity toward moral destruction. Therefore, Al-Ghazali's thought needs to be revisited and actualized within contemporary Islamic education systems to create a balance between intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions (Moh. Jupri et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

Before conducting this study, the researcher reviewed various scientific sources relevant to the theme under investigation. One of the studies closely related to this topic is the research conducted by Venny Delviany (2024) entitled "Moral Education in the Perspective of Al-Ghazali and Its Implications for Student Character Development." This study emphasizes that Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education is based on the purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) and the habituation of moral behavior as a means to achieve human perfection. Delviany explains that moral character is not merely a supplementary aspect of Islamic education, but rather the core objective of education itself, namely to shape individuals who are both knowledgeable and well-mannered.

In addition, the study conducted by Moh. Jupri (2024), entitled "The Relevance of Tarbiyah Concepts According to Imam Al-Ghazali in Contemporary Islamic Education," also serves as an important reference for this research. Jupri highlights that Al-Ghazali's concept of tarbiyah encompasses the principle of developing human innate potential (fitrah) through a continuous process of spiritual and moral guidance. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, this thought is considered highly relevant in addressing the challenges of modernization and moral decline, emphasizing the importance of synergy between intellectual knowledge and spiritual development.

Both studies provide a strong conceptual foundation for the researcher to further explore Al-Ghazali's moral education. However, this study differs from the previous ones by focusing on synthesizing Al-Ghazali's moral education concepts with their practical implementation in contemporary Islamic education. This research seeks to examine how Al-Ghazali's principles of moral education can be applied in modern learning as a solution to the moral degradation of students in the digital era.

3. Methodology

This study employs a library research method, which involves reviewing, examining, and analyzing various literature sources relevant to the research topic. The data sources consist of secondary literature, such as scientific journals and research articles, discussing the concept of moral education and its relevance in the context of contemporary Islamic education. The approach used is descriptive qualitative, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of Al-Ghazali's thought on moral education and to examine the relevance of these values to the current Islamic education system. Through this approach, the study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the understanding of Islamic moral education concepts and offering alternative ways to implement Al-Ghazali's moral values in Islamic educational institutions in the modern era.

4. Results and Discussion

Al-Ghazali, whose full name is Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), was a prominent scholar, philosopher, and Sufi. He was born in Tus, Khurasan (modern-day Iran). His life was marked by a long intellectual journey, spanning from philosophical rationalism to Sufism. In his monumental works, such as *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, *Ayyuha al-Walad*, and *Mizan al-'Amal*, Al-Ghazali emphasized that the primary purpose of education is to draw closer to Allah, rather than merely seeking social status or worldly wealth (Ahmad Fauzan, 2020).

In Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education, character formation is achieved through the processes of tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul) and riyadhah al-nafs (spiritual training). He argued that moral character is not innate but is the result of habituation and continuous education. The human soul can be shaped through practice, guidance, and the exemplary conduct of a righteous teacher (Nurul Hidayah, 2021). Therefore, the ideal educator, according to Al-Ghazali, is not only one who possesses knowledge but also one who upholds moral integrity and serves as a role model for others.

4.1 The Concept of Al-Ghazali's Moral Education Thought

Imam Al-Ghazali is one of the prominent figures in the realm of Islamic thought who paid profound attention to education and morality. For Al-Ghazali, education is a comprehensive process that not only focuses on the acquisition of knowledge but also on the formation of the soul, the purification of the heart, and the cultivation of moral character. True education, according to him, should guide individuals toward spiritual perfection and ultimate happiness, both in this world and the hereafter.

4.1.1. Education as the Purification of the Soul (*Tazkiyat al-Nafs*)

In Al-Ghazali's view, education serves as a means of purifying the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Through education, a person is expected to cleanse their heart from despicable traits such as envy, arrogance, and love of the material world, while cultivating noble qualities like sincerity, patience, trust in God (*tawakkul*), and humility. Al-Ghazali emphasized that true knowledge is the kind that leads a person to Allah, not merely knowledge that enriches logic without improving morality. (Busroli, A., 2019)

4.1.2. Education as the Formation of Moral Character and the Soul

Al-Ghazali viewed moral education as a means to shape individuals with noble character and to attain happiness in both this world and the hereafter. The process of moral education does not merely emphasize the acquisition of knowledge or skills but aims to guide learners in developing commendable traits, performing righteous deeds, and worshiping sincerely. (Suban, A., 2020)

4.1.3. The Role of the Teacher as a Moral and Spiritual Exemplary (*murabbi*)

Al-Ghazali emphasized that education should focus on the formation of the soul, not merely on intellectual instruction. The teacher plays a crucial role as a *murabbi* (spiritual educator), not just a *mu'allim* (conveyor of knowledge). A teacher must serve as a role model for students, as moral character cannot be instilled through theory alone but must be demonstrated through real-life example. Al-Ghazali also highlighted the importance of habituating good deeds, engaging in spiritual discipline (*riyāḍat al-nafs*), and offering heartfelt advice. The educational process should be carried out gradually, in accordance with the learner's capacity, so that the knowledge acquired is not only understood but also internalized and practiced. (Bahri, S., 2022)

Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education is oriented toward the holistic perfection of the human being—integrating intellect, heart, and behavior into a unified system of values. Education is not merely a tool for acquiring knowledge, but a path toward character formation and devotion to Allah. This perspective shows that the ultimate goal of education is to attain true happiness through knowledge that is practiced with sincerity and moral responsibility.

4.2 The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Moral Education Concept to Contemporary Islamic Education

Al-Ghazali's thoughts on moral education remain highly relevant in the context of contemporary Islamic education, particularly because they emphasize character, moral, and spiritual development as integral parts of the learning process. In the modern era, education often focuses on mastering science, technology, and practical skills. However, many studies and field observations indicate a decline in students' moral behavior today—for example, the rise of selfish attitudes, lack of discipline, quick temper, consumerism, and a lack of empathy toward others. This situation reflects that formal education has often failed to instill strong moral and spiritual values.

4.2.1. Concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

This concept emphasizes the importance of purifying the heart from reprehensible traits and cultivating noble qualities such as sincerity, patience, trust in God (*tawakkul*), humility, and honesty. In the context of contemporary moral education, this concept is highly relevant, as many students today tend to exhibit selfish behavior, lack of discipline, quick temper, consumerism, and minimal empathy toward others. This phenomenon indicates that modern formal education often falls short in fully instilling moral and spiritual values.

By applying *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (the purification of the soul), contemporary moral education can guide students to control their emotions, restrain negative traits, and develop both spiritual and social awareness. For example, through the regular practice of self-reflection, routine worship, personal mentoring, and social activities, students can learn to nurture empathy, responsibility, and sincerity. (Fitria et al., 2024)

4.2.2. Education as the Formation of Moral Character and the Soul

In today's era, many students are overly focused on academic or worldly achievements, often neglecting moral and spiritual development. By emphasizing the holistic goal of education—namely, to shape individuals who are beneficial in this world and

attain happiness in the hereafter—Al-Ghazali's principles become highly relevant for forming a generation with strong character, ethics, and integrity. (Al Muhlasin, 2022)

4.2.3. The Role of The Teacher

The role of the teacher as a *murabbi* (spiritual and moral educator) becomes increasingly important, given the many moral challenges students face today. Amid the strong influences of globalization, social media, and rising individualism, students' moral behavior often declines—evidenced by a lack of discipline, selfishness, consumerism, and limited empathy toward others. This is where the teacher's role as a *murabbi* becomes crucial in instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, patience, empathy, and sincerity. As a *murabbi*, the teacher models moral and spiritual excellence, allowing students to emulate their virtuous behavior. (Hidayati et al., 2025)

The implementation of Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education in contemporary Islamic education is not only relevant but also necessary. This is because strong moral values can serve as a solution to the current moral decline among students and help shape a generation that is intelligent, ethical, and prepared to face global challenges without losing their Islamic identity.

5. Conclusion

Based on Al-Ghazali's thought, moral education is a comprehensive process that integrates the acquisition of knowledge, the formation of the soul, and the purification of the heart in order to achieve human perfection and true happiness in both this world and the hereafter. Key concepts such as *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (purification of the soul), the development of character and inner self, and the role of the teacher as a *murabbi* emphasize the importance of instilling moral and spiritual values through role modeling, spiritual discipline, and continuous guidance.

In the context of contemporary Islamic education, these principles remain highly relevant, as many students today face moral challenges such as selfishness, lack of discipline, and low empathy. The application of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* helps foster spiritual and social awareness, the formation of character and soul balances academic focus with character development, and the role of the teacher as a *murabbi* ensures that students receive consistent moral guidance and exemplary behavior. Therefore, Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education serves as a vital foundation for modern Islamic education in shaping a generation that is intelligent, possesses integrity, and upholds noble character.

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